

The Perspective of Puritan Moslem on the Family Planning Program: The Case of Salafimovement in Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia

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Abstract

Family Planning Program is one of the policies in Indonesia related to the issue of population and family development that has been widely considered as successful. However, some obstacles emerged during the process of policy implementation, one of which was related to religious believes on family planning. An Islamic group called the Salafi Movement, for example, believes in pro-natalism and forbids the use of contraception. One of the sub-districts in the City of Semarang, called Banyumanik, has experienced a significant growth in the number of this group's members. Using a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews to collect data. Most members of this group have more than two children. Interestingly, many of them hope to have many more children in the future. Most informants considered the Family Planning program is limited to control or restrict births using particular contraceptives. The value of the Family Planning program challenged by the Salafi movement is related to the issue of limiting the number of children. The government should extend the scope of the campaign, especially dialogues with them.

Keywords: *Perspective, Puritan Muslims, Salafi Movement, Family Planning Program*

Introduction

Indonesia is the world's 4th most populous country after China, India and the United States ⁽¹⁾. According to the Indonesia's Central Bureau of Statistics, the population in Indonesia is about 255,461,707 ⁽²⁾. One of the problems with this huge population is its low quality. In 2015, the Human Development Index (HDI) of Indonesia rank 110th out of 188 countries ⁽³⁾. To overcome the problem of population, since the 1970s, the Indonesian government issued a policy called *Keluarga Berencana* (KB) or Family Planning program. In general, the goal of the Family Planning program is to achieve a balanced population growth and to improve the quality of population and families in order to realize

a more advanced and independent community, and to accelerate the realization of sustainable development ⁽⁴⁾. The success of the Family Planning program is generally measured by the declining *Total Fertility Rate* (TFR). In recent years, the TFR in Indonesia has been stagnant 2.6 from 2002 until 2012 and slightly decreased to 2.4 in 2017.

Widowati *et al* explain that the external obstacles in the implementation of the Family Planning program could include knowledge/education of the community, cultural values, religion, and socio-economic conditions⁽⁵⁾.

The performance of family planning services since decentralization has stagnated and some has declined. Considering their belief on and views that contradict the Family Planning program, this study suggests that the Salafi movement contribute the declining trend in practice of the Family Planning program. For example, in terms of fertility, the average couples in reproductive age have more child between 5-6 children per family ⁽⁶⁾. The main reason behind the

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high fertility is the belief embraced by the pronatalist Salafist movement stating that having more children will increase the number of people who are ready to face the external challenges.

The Salafist movement has developed massively in Indonesia. The estimated number of Salafists in 2013 was only 1% of the total Indonesian population – that

is, 240 million. The number has increased into 1.5% to 2%. The increase in the number of the Salafi members creates more challenges for the implementation of the Family Planning program. As the number of the Salafists is about 1.5% of the total population, it means that there are at least 3.5 million Salafists in Indonesia, not to mention the inclusion of the new members of this group.

Table 1. The Estimated Member Salafi 2010 - 2035

No	Year	The number of Indonesians based on IBS projection (Bappenas, et al , 2013)	Estimated Percentage of number of Salafist members	Estimated number of Salafist members in Indonesia
1	2010	238.518.800	1%	2.3 million
2	2015	255.461.700	1.5% - 2%	4 - 5 million
3	2020	271.066.400	2.5% - 3%	6 - 8 million
4	2025	284,829,000	3.5% - 4%	9 - 11 million
5	2035	305.652.400	4.5 - 5%	13 - 15 million

In Semarang, according to Rokhmad (2012), the Salafi movement can be identified using these characteristics: Middle Eastern styles, the *letterlijk* or literal understanding of Islam, and the use of Arabic terms such as *daurah*, *halaqah*, and *mabit* for their group activities. This Salafist movement’s pattern of dissemination includes the introduction of religious teachings to students at school, madrasah, and college levels, which then continues to spread to the members of general community⁽⁷⁾.

In Banyumanik, a sub-district in the City of Semarang, whose Islamic population is about 108,343 people out of 132,508 ⁽⁸⁾, we can spot a significant development of the Salafist movement. This is evidenced from our field observations that many Holy Qur’an studies or *halaqah* are frequently held in several mosques in this sub-district. Because of this frequent activities of *halaqah* held by the Salafist movement in several Banyumanik mosques, this subdistrict was selected as the area of this study. In addition, the Banyumanik area is located in the area adjacent to Semarang regency (semi-urban area), which allows us to have a

variation of interviewees based on their occupation and education.

Methods

This study is a qualitative descriptive study using a case study⁽⁹⁾. This study was conducted in Banyumanik, Semarang. This location was selected because of a significant development of the Salafist movement in the area.

This study was used a primary and secondary data. The data were analyzed using an interactive technique as mentioned by Miles & Huber man ⁽¹⁰⁾. In this interactive analysis model, data analysis is divided into three components: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The data triangulation by Patton is an attempt to test the validity of the data, by comparing the same data from different sources, which is expected to minimize the errors that may occur ⁽⁹⁾.

Results

The Salafist movement in Banyumanik, Semarang,

tends to become an accommodative movement, carrying puritan ideology disseminated to society through religious preaching and sermons (*halaqoh* and *dauroh*).

In addition, the dissemination of the Salafist ideology is also conducted through their own online media. They disseminated their ideology on social media. They also spread their teachings through a radio, which is managed by the center of the Salafi movement. Furthermore, the Salafi movement also disseminated their ideology and teachings by making flyers and publishing religious magazines and books. They put the flyers and make it available in several mosques so everyone in the mosques can freely take the flyer and read it. Meanwhile, the magazines and books were circulated through some bookstores around Banyumanik area. The ideology of the Salafi movement in Banyumanik spread through the hands of religious teachers (*ustadz*).

On average, the informants of this study have a high educational background, although some of the informants have not graduated yet from the university. It is one of the strengths of the Salafi movement that the average members of this group are people considered intellectuals with a high educational background. In terms of employment, most members of the Salafi movement prefer to do a freelance work or business, although some of the members work formally as civil servants and private employees. It is important to note that most members of this group use their occupations as a means of *da'wah* (a means to spread their teachings). They sell an Islamic style of herbal medicines such as honey and *habbatus sauda* (black cumin), and offer Cupping therapy, which they believe as an Islamic treatment according to the tradition of the prophet (*thibbunnabawiyah*).

Most members of this group have more than two children. Interestingly, many of them hope to have many more children in the future. An informant has expressed his dream to have more than five children as he believed that it is suggested by the Quran and Sunah. When he was asked about the target of the number of children that he expected, he said that the target is twelve children. He said, "*The prophet loved to have a lot of followers*".

This dogmatic belief is an absolute conviction of the Salafist members, which is quite difficult to change. They consider that that the value of this belief is final. We will give the explanation about this in more detail in the later section of this paper on the conflict between the Salafi

movement and the Family Planning program.

Most informants considered the Family Planning program is limited to control or restrict births using particular contraceptives. This view seems to ignore a more substantive objective of this program – that is, reproduction health. As far the educational background is concerned, the informants of this study have various educational background, from high school to college and postgraduate levels. However, the meaning of the Family Planning program to the Salafists' members is almost the same. They think that Family Planning program is merely a program to limit the number of children or to regulate births using certain contraceptives.

When we investigate more on this view, we found that most information was obtained from the secondary sources, such as from religious teachers, advertisement, and other secondary information. The information on Family Planning program was not obtained from official sources such as from government officers, health workers, or community members who have received training on Family Planning programs.

A similar opinion was expressed by several Salafist online media. Badri (2009) argues that the Family Planning program, which encourages a restriction of children, is considered a program belongs to the enemies of Islam and is deviated far from the truth and guidance of Islam⁽¹¹⁾. Furthermore, the program is against the reality and the needs of human nature. Moreover, limiting and preventing births, according to him, may damage economic, social, physical, spiritual and other aspects of human life.

Other online site said that Family Planning program is exactly the government's efforts to limit children⁽¹²⁾. Islam teaches its followers to have children through legitimate marriage. It is a mistake for people who do not want to have children. The Family Planning program, which has an agenda to limit the number of children. Accordingly, Muslims are not allowed to participate in such a child restriction program. The Salafist movement argues Muslims should not be afraid of poverty, because fortune is controlled by Allah, the God.

The informants' responses and rejection on the Family Planning programs are similar to the statement in religious decree made by the religious leaders of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which states that Muslims should not refuse pregnancy for fear of poverty because Allah provides fortune to all of His creatures (Hayati,

2015: 79-80). According to Hisham (2010), the Salafi movement tends to be oriented towards the Saudi and Middle Eastern scholars⁽¹³⁾. Therefore, the decision taken by the Salafist movement tend to be resemble to that of the Saudi Arabia and the Middle East.

One of articles, argues that the FP program is illegal so that every Muslim should not join the program for fear of poverty. Hakim (2007) argues that preventing births for the fear of poverty is the belief of ignorant people in the pre-Islamic Arab community and is the belief of *kuffar* (non-believers)⁽¹⁴⁾. These ignorant people and the *kuffar* thought that having many children will lead to poverty. They attempt to prevent children from various methods ranging from *azl* (coitus interruptus) to using contraceptives. Such an action should not be performed by Muslims.

An article states that someone joining the family planning programs for fear of poverty has a bad prejudice to Allah⁽¹⁵⁾. He argues that the fear of poverty is just like the acts of the infidels, who killed their children because they were afraid of not being able to provide a good living for their children. Muslims should need afraid of becoming poor because their lives and fortunes are set by Allah.

Conclusions

This study comes to these four conclusions:

1. Salafi movement's perspectives on family planning programs include:

a. The knowledge of the Salafi members on the benefits of the family planning program tends to be very technical and implementation. Their knowledge is limited to the technical nature of the family planning program, including its implementation to control the births and the use of contraception, without their understanding of the more substantive objectives of the policy – that is, to improve the women's reproductive health.

b. The positive transformation to create more prosperous families in Indonesia, as the core objective of the family planning program, are not of the concern of the Salafi movement.

c. The influence of technical and implementation knowledge of the Salafi movement leads to the assumption that the family planning program run by the Indonesian Government is an instrument of authoritarian regime, and it is influenced by the other nations' and the

other religious policies.

d. The Salafi movement considers the family planning program forbidden. However, there are certain religious considerations that allow the implementation of the family planning program under certain conditions. Explicitly those considerations of the permissibility of family planning programs are education and welfare of children and the maternal safety and health.

2. The value of the Family Planning program challenged by the Salafi movement is related to the issue of limiting the number of children.

3. Salafi movement will act according to their beliefs in opposing the family planning program by having more children and campaigning the rejection of family planning programs through their medias.

4. Involving the Salafi movement on the family planning programs can be achieved by the participatory strategy.

Recommendation

Based on the conclusion, this study suggests these recommendations:

1. The government should extend the scope of the campaign on the family planning program to cover not only the technical aspects of implementation, such as the use of contraceptives and children's restrictions, but also the substance of the program.

2. The government should open the media of dialogue on the internet as a consultation media.

3. The government should facilitate a dialogue on the family planning program from the perspective of Islamic law (*fiqh*).

4. The government should facilitate a study discussing about the sharia clinics serving the family planning program to provide services for those who do not allow the touch between non-*mahram* men and women.

Ethical Clearance: NILL. This research was conducted without treating informants

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