

Emotion and Religious Practices

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Abstract

This study aims to identify emotions underlying Muslim religious practices/rituals. The sample used in this study consisted of 310 Indonesian Muslim adults from several large cities in Indonesia, using a purposive sampling technique. Participants completed several psychological measurements regarding (1) types of emotions based on Emmons' theory and (2) religious rituals and contemplative rituals (MAAS). Data was analysed through descriptive statistics and exploratory factor analysis. The results of this study show that the forms of emotion related to Muslim religious practices are emotions of gratitude, security and fear. Emotions of gratitude underlie fasting, such as Ramadhan fasting and *Sunnah* fasting, *zakat* and *infaq*. The emotion of feeling secure underlies forms of worship that are obligatory, such as Daily Prayer. Last, the form of prayer related to feeling secure is the type of prayer intended to obtain Allah's protection when humans are experiencing disaster, namely *Istisqo* prayer, *Istikharah* prayer, and Eclipse prayer.

Keywords: Emotion, Muslim religious practices, religiosity

Introduction

Religion and emotions have a long-standing history of relationship, as religion has always been considered a catalyst for profound emotional experiences. Pruyser (1967) stated, "There is something about emotion that has always fascinated its adherents." The connection manifests in how religious beliefs often shape attitudes toward emotions. Watts (1996) added two concepts about the roles of emotions in individual religious life. The first is related to instilling the importance of intense positive emotions in religious experiences and collective religious rituals (McCauley, 2001), while the second, contemplative traditions, emphasise dealing with negative emotions and developing harmony and tranquillity. Allen (1997) added that such ascetic practices strongly link religion with higher emotional awareness, emotional intelligence, and more creative emotional expressions.

Within Islamic communities, emotional states often play a crucial role in driving religious practices, such as praying or reciting the Qur'an during moments of sadness. Another example of religious practice, dhikr, also displays certain expressions as it is often sung or vocalised by individuals and sometimes by a community led by a Sheikh. To this point, what is interesting is to understand which emotions motivate a person's devotion to dhikr. Understanding emotions in religious contexts may offer deeper insights into the intricate relationship between faith and feelings. However, exploring emotions' critical function in religious life, especially in the Islamic context, is a relatively under-explored area and, therefore, motivated this study to identify what emotions underlie Muslim religious practices.

Emotions underlying religious practices

Emotions are pivotal in discussions related to religious experiences where religion presents much affection. Schleiermacher (1799), for example, placed emotion at the centre of conscious religious experience and viewed feelings of respect, humility, gratitude, compassion, regret, and spirit as essential elements of religious experience.

Arnold (1960) dedicated a segment to exploring religious emotions in his scholarly work. He expanded upon the foundational categorisations of religious emotions, such as reverence and admiration, initially identified by Otto (1958). Arnold proposed that a broader spectrum of emotions could be directed towards God, a criterion he established as essential for defining emotion as religious. Specifically, love, joy, and happiness are "reactions to the extraordinary abundance, the infinity, of the good and the beautiful" (1960, p. 328) and contain "a hint of eternity" (p. 160). This emotion was imbued with spiritual meaning for Arnold. They served the function of motivating people towards a state of perfection, towards total fulfilment. His phenomenological analysis of happiness as a religious feeling and its distinction from joy, calm, and contentment was a significant early contribution to understanding the differences between positive emotions.

Emmons (2005) stated that certain emotions or emotional experiences are sacred and have several characteristics. First, sacred emotions are more likely to occur in religious settings (e.g., churches, synagogues, mosques). However, this does not justify that sacred emotions cannot be experienced in non-religious settings. Second, sacred emotions are more likely to be elicited through spiritual or religious activities or practices (e.g., worship, prayer, meditation). However, those emotions can also be activated through non-religious practices. Third, sacred emotions are more likely to be experienced by people who identify as religious or spiritual (or both) than those who do not consider themselves religious or spiritual. However, sacred emotions can be felt (at times) by people who do not consider themselves religious or spiritual. Fourth, sacred emotions are emotions that religious and spiritual systems worldwide have traditionally sought to instil in their adherents. Fifth and finally, sacred emotions are experienced when individuals imbue seemingly secular aspects of their lives (e.g., family, career, events) with spiritual meaning (Mahoney et al., 1999).

The search for the sacred is a characteristic of religion (Hill et al., 2000). The term "sacred" refers to a divine being, divine object, ultimate reality, or Ultimate Truth as perceived by the individual (Hill et al., 2000, p. 68). Pargament (1999) argued that understanding spirituality in terms of the ability to imbue everyday experiences, goals, roles, and responsibilities with sacredness opens up new avenues for empirical exploration. Furthermore, viewing aspects of life as sacred will likely give rise to spiritual emotions. Spiritual emotions such as gratitude, awe and reverence, love and hope will likely result when people feel sacredness in various aspects of their lives. Mahoney et al. (1999) found that when marital partners viewed their relationship as imbued with divine qualities, they reported greater marital satisfaction, more constructive problem-solving behaviour, less marital

conflict, and greater commitment to the relationship.

Spirituality is not something that stands in itself but is experienced. This experience is what is called a spiritual experience. Many spiritual experiences are connected with supernatural things. Spiritual experience itself is the meaning of something experienced. People may experience ordinary experiences, for example, being advised by a beggar, but the person interprets the incident as something extraordinary and inspires him to think, feel and do something. This is also called a spiritual experience. According to Maslow, spiritual experience is a peak experience, a plateau – the farthest reaches of human nature. Spiritual experience is the highest peak that can be achieved by humans as well.

Research Method

This study aimed to answer the research questions by employing quantitative methods. Initially, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was carried out to prepare the instruments, which later was analysed quantitatively. The sample taken in this study consisted of 310 Indonesian Muslim adults from several large cities in Indonesia, using a purposive sampling technique.

Categories	Description	Ν	%
Gender	Male	122	39.4
	Female	188	60.6
Regions	DKI Jakarta	78	25.8
	Banten	111	35.8
	Jawa Barat	80	25.8
	Others	41	12.6
Educational	Religious based university	205	66.1
Background	Non-religious based university	47	15.2
	Religious-based high school	26	8.4
	Non-religious high school	26	8.4
	Others	6	1.9

Table 1	Particinants	Description
Table I.	Furneipunis	Description

Based on Table 1, an overview of the sample characteristics based on the majority is 60.6% (188) women, 35.8% (111) living in Banten, and 66.1% (205) have a religious-based university educational background.

Instrumentation and analysis

Participants participated in FGD sessions to identify and discuss study questions using FGD instruments and questionnaires. The participants also completed several psychological measurements regarding (1) types of emotions based on Emmons' theory (2005) and (2) religious rituals and contemplative rituals (MAAS). Data was analysed through the following four analysis processes: (1) descriptive statistics, (2) psychological scale development, and (3) construct validation using exploratory factor analysis for each instrument.

Findings

Religious	Specific Religious	Frequent emotions	
Practices	Practices		
Obligatory	Daily Prayer	Feeling secure (41.0%)	
practices	Ramadhan Fasting	Feeling gratitude (40.6%)	
	Nazar Fasting	Feeling gratitude (20.6%)	
	Zakat Fitrah	Feeling gratitude (43.2%)	
	Zakat Maal	Feeling gratitude (29.4%)	
	Hajj	Feeling secure (12.6%)	
	Qur'an Recitation	Feeling secure (31.9%)	
	Sujud Tilawah	Feeling gratitude (27.1%)	
	Sujud Sahwi	Feeling secure (26.5%)	
Sunnah practices	Rawatib Prayer	Feeling gratitude (35.2%)	
(suggested by	Tahiyyatul Masjid Prayer	Feeling gratitude (31.6%)	
Prophet	Tahajud Prayer	Feeling gratitude (29.0%)	
Muhammad)	Dhuha Prayer	Feeling gratitude (43.9%)	
	Tarawih Prayer	Feeling gratitude (38.1%)	
	Istisqo Prayer	Feeling secure (22.9%)	
	Tasbih Prayer	Feeling gratitude (24.2%)	
	Istikharah Prayer	Feeling secure (25.8%)	
	Eclipse Prayer	Feeling secure (23.9%)	
	Funeral Prayer	Feeling fear (24.5%)	
	Funeral Arrangements	Feeling fear (17.1%)	
	Monday-Thursday Fasting	Feeling gratitude (46.1%)	
	Daud Fasting	Feeling gratitude (28.1%)	
	Other Sunnah Fasting	Feeling gratitude (39.4%)	
	Infaq	Feeling gratitude (49.9%)	
	Umroh	Feeling gratitude (12.3%)	
	Dhikr	Feeling secure (33.9%)	
	Wirid	Feeling secure (28.1%)	
	Tahlil	Feeling secure (25.8%)	
	Istighosah	Feeling secure (24.2%)	
	Sujud Syukur	Feeling gratitude (46.1%)	
	Qunut Recitation	Feeling secure (29.4%)	
	Qunut Nazilah Recitation	Feeling secure (21.3%)	

The forms of emotion underlying Muslim religious rituals can be seen in Table 2.
Table 2. Emotion Type and Religious Practices

If grouped into the name of emotion, the explanation is as follows:

Types of Emotions	Relevant Religious Practices
	Ramadhan Fasting
	Nazar Fasting
	Monday-Thursday Fasting
	Daud Fasting
	Other Sunnah Fasting
	Zakat Fitrah
	Zakat Maal
	Infaq
Feeling Gratitude	Tahajud Prayer
	Dhuha Prayer
	Tarawih Prayer
	Tasbih Prayer
	Rawatib Prayer
	Tahiyyatul Masjid Prayer
	Sujud Tilawah
	Sujud Syukur
	Umroh
	Daily Prayer
	Најј
	Qur'an Recitation
	Sujud Sahwi
	Istisqo Prayer
	Istikharah Prayer
Feeling Secure	Eclipse Prayer
	Dhikr
	Wirid
	Tahlil
	Istighosah
	Qunut Recitation
	Qunut Nazilah Recitation
Feeling Afraid	Funeral Prayer
	Funeral Arrangements

Table 3. Emotion grouping

From the EFA test results on the worship practice variable, the grouping of religious practice forms is as follows:

Table 4. EFA result of religious practices grouping

Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
V1	V3	V2	V11
V6	V7	V4	V14
V8	V17	V5	
V13	V19	V9	
V15	V20	V10	
V16	V21	V12	
V18	V22		
Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Daily Prayer	<i>Tahiyyatul Masjid</i> Prayer	Rawatib Prayer	Nazar Fasting
Tarawih Prayer	Istisqo Prayer	Tahajud Prayer	Zakat Maal
Ramadhan Fasting	Wirid	Dhuha Prayer	
Zakat Fitrah	Dhikr (beyond	Monday-	
	praying moment)	Thursday Fasting	
Infaq	Wirid	Daud Fasting	
Qur'an Recitation	Tahlil	Other <i>Sunnah</i> Fasting	
Dhikr (after praying)	Istighosah		

Discussion and Recommendation

The results of this study show that the forms of emotion related to Muslim religious practices are emotions of gratitude, security and fear.

Emotions of gratitude underlie fasting, both Ramadhan fasting and *Sunnah* fasting. This study showed that Muslims worship based on their gratitude to God. From Islamic teachings, fasting is a relationship between creatures and their God. It is only known by the individual himself—people who fast perceive themselves as needing to thank God through fasting. Apart from fasting, emotions of gratitude also underlie the worship of *zakat* and *infaq*, and related *Sunnah* prayers receive additional rewards due to carrying out these prayers. *Sujud Sahwi, Sujud Syukur*, and the implementation of *Umrah* are also motivated by emotions of gratitude.

Gratitude is an emotional response to a gift—Some of the most profound reported experiences of gratitude may be religiously based or associated with reverent awe at the recognition of the universe (Goodenough, 1998), including the perception that life itself is a gift. In the major monotheistic religions in the world, the concept of gratitude permeates texts, prayers and teachings (in Islam, researchers suspect, this emotion of gratitude is closely related to the worship of prostration of gratitude, prayers/rituals of thanksgiving, fulfilling promises, fasting, *zakat/infaq*). Worship with gratitude to God for His many gifts and mercies is a common theme, and believers are encouraged to develop these qualities.

Meanwhile, the emotion of feeling secure underlies forms of worship that are obligatory (if not carried out, there is a sin), such as Daily Prayer and compulsory worship. A feeling of security underlies the form of *Sujud Sahwi*. The law of Sujud Sahwi itself can explain this—a *Sujud* done at

the end of the prayer because of a shortage, either by unintentionally abandoning what is commanded or unintentionally doing what is prohibited.

Apart from that, the form of prayer related to feeling secure is the type of prayer intended to obtain Allah's protection when humans are experiencing disaster, namely *Istisqo* prayer, *Istikharah* prayer, and Eclipse prayer. The Istisqa prayer is a *Sunnah* prayer to ask Allah to send the rain to that area. It is usually performed when a devastating drought due to a prolonged dry season leads to extremely limited water sources. In addition, the services of dhikr, *Wirid, Tahlil, Istighosah* and *Qunut* are also carried out based on the emotion of feeling secure.

Conclusion

Emotions are critical in discussions about religious experiences where religion presents much affection. Schleiermacher (1799) placed emotion at the centre of conscious religious experience. Feelings are central. Reverence, humility, gratitude, compassion, contrition, and zeal are described as essential elements of religious experience by Schleiermacher. He views intellectual beliefs as too rational and lacking spontaneity, where religion should be seen using the heart, not the head. Arnold (1960) noted that besides the prototypical religious emotions of reverence and admiration identified by Otto (1958) and others, several other emotions can be experienced towards God (which is his criterion for religious emotion). Specifically, love, joy, and happiness are "reactions to the extraordinary abundance, the infinity, of the good and the beautiful" (1960, p. 328) and contain "a hint of eternity" (p. 160). This emotion was imbued with spiritual meaning for Arnold.

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This study offers insights for individuals, religious leaders, and future research. Individuals can use specific forms of worship, like daily prayers, Istisqo, Istikharah, and eclipse prayers, to alleviate fear and insecurity, gaining a sense of security through acts like dhikr, wirid, tahlil, istighosah, and qunut. Religious leaders can use these findings to enhance community psychological well-being. Further studies should delve deeper into each worship form's impact on psychological aspects beyond emotions.

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