

**From Mosques to Cafes:
Muslim Youth and the *Mawlid* Celebration in
Yogyakarta**

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Abstract

The celebration of *mawlid* (Ar.: *mawlid al-nabī*; the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad) has sparked ongoing discussions among traditionalist and modernist Muslims. Traditionalists see *mawlid* as a cherished tradition symbolizing joy and love for the Prophet Muhammad, passed down through generations. Conversely, modernists often deem it heretical, a sign of societal decline. Within this discourse, an unconventional *mawlid* phenomenon has emerged—celebrations hosted in cafes in Yogyakarta, primarily attended by Muslim youth, which contrast with the traditional mosque gatherings of older generations. The cafe-based *mawlid* celebration is characterized by a relaxed atmosphere, humor, simplified lectures, and diverse participation, highlighting their uniqueness. This qualitative, phenomenological study delves into the dynamics of *mawlid* celebrations in Yogyakarta's cafes, seeking to reveal the motivations propelling Muslim youth participation. This paper argues that the evolution of *mawlid* celebrations, initially confined to mosques and exclusive to traditionalist Muslim groups, has now transitioned to public spaces like cafes, welcoming a diverse range of participants. This shift underscores the dynamic interplay between religious traditions and the changing socio-cultural landscape.

Keywords: Mawlid, muslim youth, social action, Husein Ja'far

Introduction

The celebration of the *mawlid al-nabī* (the Prophet Muhammad's birthday) constitutes a religious ceremony intricately linked to faith, belief, or, at the very least, an esteemed phenomenon embraced by a specific cohort or community engaged in its commemoration (Derani, 2020). This practice is founded on the premise that the individual whose birth is marked during this celebration is the bearer of the prophetic message and is acknowledged as the final prophet within the Muslim community. Consequently, for participants, the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, is construed as an expression of jubilation and affection towards the revered persona of the Prophet (Nadia, 2011).

The celebration of *mawlid* extends beyond Indonesian Muslim communities, with Muslim communities in other nations also commemorating the event. Nevertheless, accepting and participating in this celebration is not universal among all Muslim communities. Some refrain from endorsing the event and actively criticize it (Hermansen, 2017; Schielke, 2005). Their dissent and critiques stem from the conviction that commemorating the birthday constitutes *bid'ah*, a deviation from authentic Islamic teachings, as it is perceived to be a contrived innovation not upheld by the exemplary practices of the first generation (*ṣalaf al-ṣāliḥ*) of the Muslim community.

Yogyakarta, recognized as a city steeped in tradition, stands as a bastion of rich cultural heritage. The region showcases numerous religious festivities and endeavors to preserve its cultural legacy through initiatives led by the Sultan's court (*keraton*) and the local people. Examples of these cultural practices include *sedekah bumi* (the offering of food to deities on land and sea) and *sekaten* (a

ceremonial observance marking the day of Muhammad's birthday) (Kato, 2021). Moreover, Yogyakarta holds historical significance as the birthplace of Muhammadiyah, a reformist-modernist Muslim organization. This organization, known for its progressive stance on social issues, occasionally rejects certain traditions perceived as heretical, such as celebrating *mawlid* (As'ad, 2019). Consequently, the perspectives of people in Yogyakarta on religious and traditional matters, including the *mawlid* celebration, are diverse and not monolithic.

The celebration of *mawlid* in Yogyakarta, as in other regions, is inherently intertwined with the mosque serving as the focal point for religious rituals. Typically, these celebrations take place within mosques, exemplified by the Mlangi community's observance (Nadia, 2011). Alternatively, certain Mawlid events, such as the *Grebeg Mulud* procession, commence at the Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat Palace and culminate at the Kauman Grand Mosque, emphasizing the central role of mosques in concluding these celebratory activities (Suriadi, 2019).

In recent years, an unusual phenomenon has emerged in Yogyakarta. The celebration of *mawlid*, traditionally held in mosques, has taken an unconventional turn and found a new venue in cafes. This shift is noteworthy, particularly considering that *mawlid* celebrations typically involve older Muslims attending the commemorations with their children. In contrast, the *mawlid* celebrations at cafes present a distinct scenario where most participants are Muslim youths from diverse backgrounds. This phenomenon challenges the assumption that younger generations exhibit indifference towards religious rituals and traditions. This paper explores this phenomenon in depth, delving into the adaptation and migration of *mawlid* celebrations from mosques to cafes. Questions arise regarding the motivations driving Muslim

youths in Yogyakarta to engage actively in *mawlid* celebrations within this unconventional setting. Understanding the factors contributing to their enthusiasm for participating in *mawlid* celebrations at cafes serves as a focal point of investigation, seeking to unravel the underlying dynamics of this cultural shift and its significance for younger demographics.

This research draws upon a foundation established by various prior studies, including the noteworthy work of Samuli Schielke. In his thesis, “Snacks and Saints: Mawlid Festivals and the Politics of Festivity, Piety, and Modernity in Contemporary Egypt,” completed at Leiden University, Schielke explores the intricate dynamics surrounding the celebration of *mawlid* in Egypt (Schielke, 2005). A critical insight from this research is the profound debate surrounding *Mawlid* celebrations, involving both proponents and critics. As highlighted by Schielke, the crux of this discourse revolves around the interplay between habitus and ideology.

The second is “Going to the Mulid Street-smart Spirituality in Egypt,” a chapter penned by Peterson and featured in *Ordinary Lives and Grand Schemes: An Anthropology of Everyday Religion* (2016). Like Schielke’s investigation, Peterson’s research also centers on *mawlid* celebrations in Egypt. However, Peterson’s contribution distinguishes itself by delving into the expressive dimensions of *mawlid*, traditionally considered a manifestation of joy and affection for Prophet Muhammad. Notably, Peterson sheds light on incorporating music and dance into *mawlid* celebrations, elements that serve as compelling draws for Muslim youth engagement. Peterson’s work captures the essence of *mawlid* as a platform for negotiation between the moral expectations of religious practices and the need for Muslim youth to assert their identities through expressive means (Peterson, 2012). The inclusion of music and dance in *mawlid* celebrations is portrayed as

a form of cultural negotiation, allowing space for vibrant expressions of being among Muslim youth. This nuanced perspective provides valuable insights into the interplay between religious traditions and the dynamic ways contemporary youth assert their presence within the framework of these celebrations.

The third is Pierret's ethnographic study titled "Staging the Authority of the Ulama: The Celebration of the *Mawlid* in Urban Syria." Pierret's research delves into the celebration of *mawlid* within Muslim society in Syria, providing insights into the central role played by the 'ulamā', or religious scholars, in the authority and orchestration of religious rituals. Pierret's observations highlight the significance of the 'ulamā' in shaping the ceremonial aspects of the *mawlid* celebration, from the arrangement of the ceremonial space to the theatrical presentation of revered figures. Through these elements, Pierret underscores the dominant role of the 'ulamā' in contributing to the construction of an idealized social order during *mawlid* festivities (Pierret, 2012).

The fourth is "Milad/Mawlid: Celebrating the Prophet Muhammad's Birthday" by Hermansen. Hermansen explores the adaptive and evolving nature of *mawlid* celebrations within the American Muslim community in her work. Notably, she traces the trajectory of *mawlid* celebrations, even in the face of challenges during the Islamization wave in the 1970s, when Islamist groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood, Jama'at-i Islami, and the Deobandis, deemed *mawlid* celebrations as heretical. Hermansen's work highlights the resilience of *mawlid* celebrations despite opposition from Islamist factions. Furthermore, she highlights a transformative trend wherein *mawlid* celebrations shifted from private to public spaces, gaining traction among the younger, multi-ethnic generation. This shift signified a broader evolution in the expression and participation in *mawlid* celebrations, shedding light

on the complex interplay between religious traditions and the dynamic sociocultural landscape within the American Muslim community. Hermansen's insights contribute significantly to understanding the adaptive processes and continuities in celebrating *Mawlid* in a diverse and evolving cultural context (Hermansen, 2017).

The last body of research is "Women Remembering the Prophet's Birthday: Maulid Celebrations and Religious Emotions Among the Alawiyin Community in Palembang, Indonesia," conducted by Seise in 2018. Seise's work highlights the distinct nature of *mawlid* celebrations among the Alawiyin community in Palembang, Indonesia, where gender segregation is observed. Seise reveals a noteworthy aspect of these celebrations, emphasizing that *mawlid* festivities among women, particularly the *sharīfāt*, afford a liberated space for expressing religious emotions. Within this framework, women find a platform to convey feelings of joy and love for Prophet Muhammad, reflecting an internalization of Islamic teachings by the Alawiyin community (Seise, 2018). This gender-specific approach to *mawlid* celebrations underscores the diverse ways religious emotions and expressions manifest within the cultural and social context of the Alawiyin community in Palembang. Seise's findings contribute significantly to the broader understanding of how *mawlid* celebrations can be shaped by specific cultural and religious dynamics, particularly gendered expressions of religious emotions.

In contrast to several previous studies, this paper investigates the deviation from traditional norms in celebrating *mawlid* in Yogyakarta. Typically, *mawlid* celebrations in this region are held in conventional settings such as mosques, Islamic boarding schools, or the residences of religious leaders, attracting participation predominantly from the older Muslim generation. However, this

study seeks to understand the unconventional shift of *mawlid* celebrations to cafes—a setting traditionally unrelated to religious rituals—and the notable participation of a predominantly younger Muslim demographic. The central focus of this paper is uncovering the factors fueling younger generations' enthusiasm for engaging actively in *mawlid* celebrations at this non-traditional venue. Unlike the conventional spaces associated with religious observances, cafes are not considered sites for religious rituals. Therefore, exploring the motivations and dynamics that draw younger Muslim populations to these cafe-based *mawlid* celebrations serves as the primary objective of this research. By delving into this unique phenomenon, the study aims to contribute insights into the evolving expressions of religious and cultural practices among youth in Yogyakarta.

This paper employs a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach to highlight the unique phenomenon of *mawlid* celebrations in cafes among Muslim youth in Yogyakarta. The theoretical framework guiding this research is Max Weber's concept of social action. This theoretical perspective aligns with the research objective, which seeks to uncover Muslim youth's motivations for participating in *mawlid* celebrations in cafes. By adopting a phenomenological lens and leveraging Weber's theoretical framework, this paper delves into the lived experiences and subjective perspectives of the participants in the *mawlid* celebrations at Basa-Basi Cafes in Yogyakarta.

***Mawlid* Celebration at Cafés?: Bringing the Mosque to the Jamā'ah (Community)**

The celebration of *mawlid* conducted at two different locations, namely the Basa-Basi cafes in Nologaten and Tamantirto, shared a

similar event structure. The only variation was the choice of moderator accompanying the event's star, Habib Husein Ja'far al-Hadar (b. 1988). In the Nologaten celebration, Fairuz assumed the moderator role, whereas, in the Tamantirto event, Fauzi took on this responsibility. Notably, Fairuz and Fauzi are graduates of the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) in Yogyakarta.



Figure 1 Basa-Basi Café in Yogyakarta

The celebration of *mawlid* commenced with a warm welcome from the cafe owner, Edi Mulyono. Following this, Kiai Faizi from Madura led the *tawassul* (seeking intercession) and a brief recitation of *ṣalawāt Julūs*. Subsequently, Habib Husein and a designated moderator took the stage. During the introduction, Habib Husein was playfully introduced as a “Guardian with a Level-Three Armor.” Fairuz said: “*This is Habib Husein Ja’far, the guardian with level-three armor, the protector of pemuda tersesat (lost youth).*” This lighthearted introduction elicited laughter from the participants, serving as a means to alleviate the fatigue of those standing due to the limited availability of seating.

The terminology used to frame the *mawlid* celebration at Basa-Basi Cafe deviated from the formal language commonly associated with

such events, opting instead for the term “*Mawlid* Party.” Fairuz provided insight into this choice, recounting a narrative from the *Mawlid Sharaf al-Anām*, authored by a medieval poet Ahmad b. ‘Ali al-Hariri. The story revolved around a Jewish couple whose neighbor, a Muslim, regularly hosted parties, expressing joy and sharing wealth to celebrate the birth of the Prophet. Intrigued, the Jewish wife inquired about the neighbor’s festivities, and upon learning the reason, the couple felt inspired. Driven by a dream of meeting with the Prophet, they embraced Islam, attributing their conversion to the festive celebrations held by their neighbor every *mawlid*. Fairuz drew a parallel, praising Mr. Edi for organizing the *mawlid* party, colloquially called *geger gedhen*, emphasizing the joy and amazement inspired by these festive occasions.

Muslim youth made up the majority of participants at the *mawlid* celebration, with a limited presence of older individuals. The participants sported a diverse spectrum of attire, showcasing a variety of clothing styles. Some attendees opted for traditional garments, such as sarongs and *kopyah* (skullcaps), resembling attire appropriate for religious gatherings. However, most participants favored more casual outfits, including pants and t-shirts. Notably, Iqbal mentioned that there were even female participants who did not wear headscarves (*hijab*). He said:

“People who attend mawlid usually are reluctant to wear pants. Mawlid is synonymous with sarongs or neat clothes. However, everyone here is free to wear pants and shorts. The outfits are different because they come from different backgrounds. People who came had different motivations, maybe because they saw who would the preacher was. Some don't wear the hijab.” (M. I. Ramadan, personal communication, February 7, 2022)

The differences in clothing choices were attributed to various motivations, including considerations regarding the preacher and personal backgrounds. The inclusive atmosphere allowed for freedom in clothing choices, contrary to the customary association of *mawlid* with more formal and traditional attire.



Figure 2 A crowd of youths at a Mawlid café celebration

Consistent with Iqbal's observations, Ahnaf also noted the presence of female participants who did not wear *hijab* (Ar.: *hijāb*) during the celebration at the café. Ahnaf emphasized that the distinction went beyond participant demographics and attire; it extended to the informal nature of the proceedings and the interactive dialogue during the sermon. He highlighted the significant departure from the formality of *mawlid* celebrations in *pesantren*, where the structure typically involves formal readings like premodern popular *mawlid* texts *Simṭ al-durar* or *Mawlid al-Daybā 'ī*, rituals such as *maḥall al-qiyām* (metaphorically stand to greet the Prophet's presence), traditional lectures by preachers, and appearances by students. In contrast, the café setting allowed for a more dynamic approach, with Habib Husein delivering a sermon while engaging in dialogue (A. Rafif, personal

communication, February 7, 2022). The inclusive nature of the gathering further set it apart, welcoming participants from diverse backgrounds and accommodating different choices, such as the choice not to wear the *hijab* among some women attendees. This adaptability contributed to a more engaging and enthusiastic atmosphere, fostering an environment where the young congregation felt comfortable and free to pose questions.

The *mawlid* celebrations at the two Basa-Basi cafes were characterized by a lively atmosphere infused with humor, eliciting laughter from participants. Whether delivered by the moderator, Habib Husein, or Mr. Edi, jokes played a prominent role in creating a jovial environment. After Habib Husein ended his sermon and before Mr. Edi led the *maḥall al-qiyām*, he took the opportunity to share a story and crack jokes. Mr. Edi recounted a humorous incident from his pilgrimage, where confusion arose about his name. He told:

“In the past, when I was on pilgrimage, one of the people there asked me my name. I answered ‘Edi Mulyono,’ but he did not understand; then I answered ‘Abdul Ghani (servant of the all-rich Lord),’ then he understood.”

Mr. Edi concluded with a playful promise to give IDR 50,000 for each question posed by participants, generating further amusement among attendees and even drawing laughs from the Habib, who had descended from the stage.

The event continued with a solemn reading of *maḥall al-qiyām*, during which all participants stood, including the parking attendants, as highlighted by Ahnaf. Ilyas expressed that the *maḥall al-qiyām* held a central significance for him during the *mawlid* celebration. He described it as the most anticipated and essential

moment of the event (I. F. Ramadlan, personal communication, February 8, 2022). This sentiment resonated with Iqbal, who perceived a distinct and consistently solemn atmosphere during this recitation. In line with certain Indonesian Muslim beliefs, some communities hold that the presence of Prophet Muhammad is invoked during the reading of the *maḥall al-qiyām*, prompting participants to stand as a gesture of welcome (Kaptein, 1993, p. 135). The emotional impact of the *maḥall al-qiyām* was evident, with some participants shedding tears during the recitation. Serving as the culmination of the *mawlid* celebration, the *maḥall al-qiyām* marked the concluding and profoundly significant chapter of the event.

This *mawlid* celebration exemplifies a shift in religious practices within contemporary Muslim society. Historically, individuals would gather in mosques to engage in religious rituals such as *mawlid* celebrations. However, in the present era, there is a notable transformation where the essence of the mosque's solemn atmosphere extends beyond its physical confines. This kind of celebration brings the mosque environment to the people, allowing them to partake in religious festivities from various locations while still experiencing the reverential atmosphere typically associated with mosque gatherings. This shift reflects an adaptation to modern times, where the reach of religious rituals extends beyond traditional spaces, embracing a more inclusive and accessible approach to communal celebrations.

Habib Husein Ja'far : Friendly Preacher among Muslim Youth

Habib Husein Ja'far has gained prominence as a renowned preacher, particularly among Muslim youths, partly due to his unconventional appearance. Unlike other Habibs who typically don

traditional robes and turbans, Habib Husein often opts for casual attire such as sarongs and t-shirts, occasionally complemented by a white cap. Many Muslim youths have become familiar with him through his writings published by Gramedia or Mizan. However, the primary avenue through which most of them encounter Habib Husein is via his videos on YouTube. Habib Husein has established his own YouTube channel called “Jeda Nulis” (‘Taking a Break from Writing’) in response to Indonesian audiences’ preference for video content over written materials. Launched on 6 May 2018, the channel has garnered 1.37 million subscribers and features 302 uploaded videos. This platform serves as a contemporary means for Habib Husein to disseminate his teachings and connect with a broader audience, especially tech-savvy younger generations.



Figure 3 *Habib Husein Ja'far*

One popular video on Habib Husein’s YouTube channel is titled “Kultum Pemuda Tersesat”. In this video, Habib Husein collaborates with Tretan Muslim and Coki Pardede. The videos address religious questions posed by netizens through the *Majelis Lucu Indonesia* (MLI – Indonesian Funny Council), presenting responses in a simple and engaging format tailored for younger generations. It has led to Habib Husein being affectionately

nicknamed “The Protector of Lost Youth, The Light in The Darkness, The Guardian with Level 3 Armor”. Ahnaf expressed his admiration for Habib Husein, emphasizing that the religious materials delivered were presented in a straightforward and comprehensive manner, making it easily accessible to younger audiences (A. Rafif, personal communication, February 7, 2022). Ahnaf remarked, *“I heard Habib Husein’s lectures were more relaxed, simpler, and easier to digest for young generations. So, the discussion is not too patronizing and is suitable for youth; some do not like being taught too much about religion. So, the lectures were more relaxed, unlike others in mosques.”* This approach underscores the effectiveness of Habib Husein’s communication style in resonating with and catering to the preferences of the younger demographic.

Fikru echoed sentiments similar to Ahnaf’s, highlighting the ease with which he and others comprehend Habib Husein's lectures. Fikru mentioned, *“It is easy for us to understand his lectures because he has a strong approach to millennials. So the language is a language that is easily understood by ordinary (awam) people.”* This underscores the preacher’s adeptness at communicating with the younger generation, employing a language and style that resonates with millennials (F. Jayyid, personal communication, 7 February 2022). Fikru also disclosed that his decision to attend the *mawlid* celebration was influenced by his familiarity with Habib Husein through social media. Intrigued by this non-mainstream preacher, Fikru attended the event alone, standing for two hours as he could not secure a seat. Arriving slightly late, he found the venue packed, with many participants even standing in the parking lot. Fikru stood throughout the event, including the culmination with the *maḥall al-qiyām*. The constraints imposed by the COVID-19 period further limited the available space inside, leading to a scenario where latecomers, including Fikru, had to remain outside

the venue due to capacity restrictions. Even some attendees inside were compelled to squat down due to a shortage of seating.

Ahnaf had a similar experience to Fikru's; even though he arrived before the scheduled start of the celebration, the cafe was already filled with participants. Ahnaf recounted, "*I arrived there after maghrib (evening prayers, generally between 5.30-6.00pm in Yogyakarta), even though the celebration was scheduled to start at 8 pm, so that I could get a place. But when I got there, it was already full. The gazebo outside was full, too.*" This highlights the high demand and enthusiasm among attendees, resulting in a crowded venue before the event commenced. On the other hand, Ilyas anticipated the potential overwhelming turnout for the event and chose to arrive early. Despite the *mawlid* starting at 8 pm, Ilyas reached the cafe before *maghrib*, recognizing the importance of securing a spot. He described a more relaxed perspective while waiting in the cafe, noting that the extended wait provided an opportunity for informal conversations and laughter with friends (I. F. Ramadlan, personal communication, February 8, 2022). This showcases the varying strategies participants employed to navigate the anticipated crowd and ensure their participation in the *mawlid* celebration.

Habib Husein's reputation as a friendly preacher among youths is not solely due to his sense of fashion and his use of language. It is rooted in his ability to convey rational and reasoned perspectives on religious teachings. His skill in rationalizing these teachings makes them more palatable and acceptable to the younger generation, who often exhibit an inclination to questioning and critically evaluating ideas presented to them. This aligns with the natural tendency of youth to scrutinize existing thoughts and explore alternative paths or perspectives (Nisa, 2018). Habib Husein's rational approach resonates with the inquisitive nature of

youth, creating a connection that fosters voluntary acceptance of religious teachings among this demographic.

Muslim Youth Enthusiasm at the *Mawlid* Party: An Analysis of Max Weber's Social Action Theory

"I am sure those of you here did not come with the intention of worship. Maybe you intend to hang out at the cafe, laughing and giggling with friends, but in the middle of your hangout, you feel at home, sincere in your desire to talk about Kanjeng Nabi (the Prophet Muhammad). You guys are actually slowly picking up pahala (spiritual rewards). Slowly, we are turning the cafe into a mosque!"
(Habib Husein Ja'far)

This statement by Habib Husein Ja'far provides an indication of the participants' diverse motivations in attending the *mawlid* celebration. While some may have come to the cafe primarily to socialize or hang out, the atmosphere and discussions about the Prophet Muhammad during the event led to a sincere engagement with religious topics. Habib Husein suggests that, unintentionally, the participants are accruing spiritual rewards and, figuratively, transforming the cafe into a sacred space akin to a mosque. Recognizing these varied motivations, this research employs Max Weber's social action as a theoretical framework to delve into the multifaceted reasons behind participants' engagement in *mawlid* café celebrations.



Figure 4 *Participants of the mawlid celebration stand during the recitation of Ṣalawāt al-nabī bi-l-qiyām*

Weber's concept of social action is a fundamental element of sociology. Turner emphasized that Weber's introduction of social action formed the basis for his conception of sociology (Turner, 1983). Weber himself defines sociology as a science that seeks an interpretative understanding of social action, aiming to arrive at a causal explanation of its trajectory and consequences. In essence, Weber's approach to sociology revolves around comprehending the meaning individuals attach to their actions within a social context and how these actions contribute to the overall course and outcomes of social phenomena.

In the above definition, 'action' refers to all human behavior in which the acting individual assigns a subjective meaning. When this action is associated with the social context, it encompasses all human behavior that holds subjective meaning for the individual and is directed toward the behavior of others (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2017). In other words, within Weber's framework, social action

involves human behaviors that are not only individually meaningful but are also shaped by and oriented toward the actions of others in a social environment. This understanding underscores the interplay of subjective meanings and social interactions in analyzing human behavior within a societal context.

In his book *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, Weber categorized social action into four types based on their forms of orientation. First is *Zweckrational* (instrumentally rational action), which is a type of action characterized by a rational orientation toward a system of discrete individual ends or goals. Individuals engage in actions with a strategic and calculated approach, weighing the means and ends to achieve specific objectives. Second is *Wertrational* (value-rational action), where individuals are guided by a rational orientation to absolute values or principles in this type of action. Actions are driven by a commitment to specific values or ethical considerations, often independent of the anticipated outcomes. Third is affectual (emotionally driven action), which involves actions that stem from emotional or affective impulses. Individuals engaging in affectual actions are driven by their feelings, emotions, or personal affections rather than calculated reasoning. Finally, there is tradition-oriented, which is action guided by adherence to established traditions, customs, or social norms. Individuals participating in tradition-oriented actions follow established practices and behaviors based on historical or cultural continuity. Weber's classification provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the diverse motivations and orientations that underlie social actions in different contexts (Weber, 2009).

Meanwhile, Pip Jones simplifies the explanation of various social action types into a more practical format for comprehending the actions undertaken by individuals. Instrumental rationality

(*Zweckrational*) signifies that “this action is the most efficient way to achieve this goal, and this is the best way to achieve it.” Value rationality (*Wertrational*) is characterized by understanding “All I know is doing this.” Affectual action involves “What can I do.” Finally, traditional action is encapsulated by the notion of “I do this because I always do it” (Jones et al., 2011).

When viewed through Weber’s theory of social action, we find a diverse set of motivations and interests behind Muslim youths’ desire to participate in *mawlid* café celebrations in Yogyakarta. Their engagement can be primarily categorized as Instrumental Rational (*Zweckrational*), indicating a goal-oriented approach. Participants recognize that they can attain their desired objectives by undertaking a specific action. In this context, several participants expressed their enthusiasm for joining the *mawlid* celebration due to their curiosity about Habib Husein Ja’far, recognized as a ‘Protector of Lost Youth, A Light in the Darkness, A Guardian with Level 3 Armor’. Hence, attending the celebration was perceived as the most efficient means to accomplish their goal, enabling them to learn from, listen to, and have direct contact with a genial preacher.

The second motivation falls under value rationality (*Wertrational*), signifying actions grounded in the values embraced by the individual. This implies that the actor engages in an action due to the values they hold dear. One informant believed the *mawlid* celebration is a manifestation of joy and love for the Prophet Muhammad among Muslims. He believed that the joy and love for the Prophet expressed through the *Mawlid* celebration can serve as a means (*waṣīlah*) to seek intercession (*shafā’ah*) on the Day of Judgment. Ilyas articulated this sentiment as follows: “*I consider Mawlid a tradition handed down from my parents and family. However, I also think of Mawlid as a form of joy and love from*

Muslims for their Prophet (I. F. Ramadlan, personal communication, February 8, 2022).

The third motivation corresponds to Affectual Action, which is directed toward the emotional connection of the actor. For some participants, the *mawlid* celebration holds profound significance and is considered indispensable. The absence of the *mawlid* celebration creates a sense that something crucial has been lost. Ilyas, a Sunan Pandanaran *pesantren* graduate, expressed this sentiment by emphasizing that after leaving the *pesantren*, his emotional attachment to celebrating *mawlid* intensified. He shared, “*Since I have no longer been at the pesantren, I look for Mawlid celebration events because they give me special energy. What I felt from Mawlid when I was at the pesantren and when I graduated was so different, as if the feeling was getting stronger.*” In contrast, Mukhlis regarded *mawlid* as a moment to rejuvenate faith by recalling the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (M. Rahman, personal communication, February 8, 2022). He stated, “*Mawlid is a refreshing moment. I have a Prophet, you know that. I may have forgotten for a year, even though I recited the Salawat at the time of salat.*” Furthermore, he added, “*Mawlid is a reunion. Long time no see, long time no remember, then suddenly there is a moment to cherish it.*”

The fourth incentive aligns with ‘traditional action,’ emphasizing adherence to established traditions. Participants engage in activities driven by the prevailing customs within their community or surrounding environment. Most respondents asserted their familiarity with *mawlid* celebrations from childhood, influenced by the practices imparted by their parents and educators. Fikru, a participant from South Sulawesi, stated, “*I grew up in a village. This is a cultural practice from the village*” (F. Jayyid, personal communication, February 7, 2022). Similarly, Iqbal, who belongs to

a traditionalist Muslim family affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), said he consistently took part in Mawlid celebrations, whether he was in Yogyakarta or at home. He said, “Yes, I am [affiliated with] NU. I often attend, whether I am in Yogyakarta or at home. In Yogyakarta, I frequently sought information on mawlid celebrations, even though I did not know about them. Even this year, I celebrated it with my college friends in our rented house” (M. I. Ramadan, personal communication, February 7, 2022).

Conclusion

The *mawlid* celebration at two Basa-Basi cafes in Yogyakarta took place with a clear-cut agenda. It commenced with a warm welcome from the café owner, Mr. Edi Mulyono, followed by the recitation of *tawassul* supplication and short *Ṣalawāt Julūs*. The event continued with a sermon by Habib Husein Ja’far and a moderator and culminated with a recitation of the *maḥall al-qiyām*, led by Mr. Edi. Noteworthy elements of the *mawlid* celebration at the cafe included its festive atmosphere characterized by humor and laughter among participants. The sermons, presented in easily comprehensible language, rationalized Islamic teachings, fostered acceptance among the young congregation. The diverse participant backgrounds of participants and their varied attire, including shorts, sarongs, and t-shirts, with some females opting not to wear *ḥijāb*, contributed to a space where youths felt liberated to express themselves. Muslim youth participated in these *mawlid* celebrations for varying reasons, aligning with Max Weber’s social action theory. These motivations encompassed: 1) instrumental rationality (*Zweckrational*), where some participants sought to meet Habib Husein Ja’far, with attendance at the Basa-Basi Café’s *mawlid* celebrations being seen as the most efficient means to achieve this goal, 2) value rationality (*Wertrational*), where some

participants viewed *mawlid* as an expression of joy and love for the Prophet Muhammad, believing that those taking part in commemorations will receive *syafaat* on the Day of Judgment, 3) affectual actions, where, for some, not celebrating or missing *mawlid* creates a sense of incompleteness, emphasizing the emotional bond associated with the event, and 4) traditional action, where participants from families with a tradition of celebrating *mawlid* actively preserve and continue this cultural practice.

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