

# Assessing Local Hijrah Movement's Persistence: Rabbani Generation Community in Langsa, Aceh, Indonesia

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## *Abstract*

*This paper attempts to assess the persistence of a Hijrah movement, the Rabbani Movement Community (KGR, 'Komunitas Gerakan Hijrah') in Langsa, Aceh, using social movement theory. In the midst of the growing trend of the Hijrah movement at the national level, it is intriguing to comprehend the existence of local Hijrah movements, particularly those with movement bases in areas where Islamic sharia is applied, such as Aceh. This region is believed to have a political opportunity structure that optimally supports the continuation of movements whose central tenets are Islamic values. However, KGR shows the opposite fact. Using a qualitative approach consisting of in-depth interviews and documentation, the research reveals that although the existence of KGR is strongly supported by a conducive political opportunity structure in Aceh and the framing of Islamic values that encourage widespread social acceptance of the Acehnese people, its consistency in terms of resource mobilization is weak, making it difficult for this movement to maintain its existence. This is due to the KGR's excessive dependence on its founder, which makes the movement vulnerable without the drive of its most influential figure.*

## **Keywords :**

*Hijrah Movement, Persistence, Social Movement*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Islamic movement and the desire to restore Islamic values amid modernization are gaining popularity. The movement's ideological mission is to realize Puritan ideals in Islam, which the nation-state's secular authority frequently opposes (N. Hasan 2000). Moreover, the ideological mission is broadening its foundation, including the movement's awareness to target non-Muslims through social activities,

such as what the *dakwah* (sermon) movement in South Africa did (Haron 2000), and to strengthen further social ties and relationships with movement personnel (Hwang and Schulze 2018). Consequently, the movement employs various channels, including recitation groups, local conflicts, kinship, and institutions (Hwang and Schulze 2018).

Moreover, other scholars have described a variety of Islamic movement strategies.

ISIS, for instance, translates Islamic law independently, so it frequently obscures differences in interpretation (Pelletier et al. 2016). In extreme cases - Islamic terrorism, for instance, which employs violence such as suicide bombings (Snow and Byrd 2007); or HTI (in Uzbekistan), which opposes the use of force (Karagiannis and McCauley 2016); as well as the Fethullah Gulen which centralizes on the popularity of figures and the Sufistic which emphasizes on the spirit of morality (Aziz and Huda 2018). The movements' various strategies adopted the ideals and agenda of each country's population because populist support determines the movement's strength (Collins 2007).

The Islamic movement is expanding in the Asian context too. Religion has developed relationships amidst the upheaval of modern market culture and postmodernism, demanding a connection between private life (religion) and the public, particularly to combat the capitalist economy (Kitiarsa 2008). In inverse proportion to Islam's mission to resist modernism, in Indonesia, for instance, the proliferation of digital media makes expanding Islamic movements among young people possible. This kind of movement is famous as the Hijrah movement, where a group of middle-class urban Muslims becomes its driving force. They utilize digital technology to assimilate religious values and popular culture among young people. This digital technology development affects the expansion of public religiosity, creating new spaces for negotiating religiosity and secularism. While promoting Islamic values,

the Hijrah movement also adapts to modernity through popular culture and digital technologies because they know how globalization impacts individuals' consumption of religious teachings.

The dynamics in Indonesian socio-political life also strengthen the wave of the Hijrah movement in Indonesia among Muslim youths. Increased freedom of expression in the Reformation era (Qodir 2011); capitalizing on economic expansion; popular culture, and the development of communication technology such as the Internet (H. Hasan 2019; T. Y. Sari, Husein, and Noviani Ratna 2019) have contributed to the movement's growth. They also affect the movement's strategy, distinct from those employed by Islamic movements in the previous era. It currently appears to integrate religious, political, and welfare (economic) activities (Meuleman 2011; T. Y. Sari, Husein, and Noviani Ratna 2019), as evidenced by the Pen Circle Forum (FLP, *Forum Lingkar Pena*), SHIFT, Indonesia without Dating (ITP, *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran*), Dare-to-Hijrah Community (KBH, *Komunitas Berani Hijrah*), Koran Musician Community (KMM, *Komunitas Musisi Mengaji*), and others.

Political structures and opportunities, the background of the movement, and so on can influence the persistence of this movement. For instance, "Indonesia without Dating exists to resist the existing political system, specifically by demonstrating support for the caliphate and the 212 movements before the 2019 elections"

(Ismail et al. 2020; T. Y. Sari, Husein, and Noviani Ratna 2019; Y. Sari 2016). A community with a nearly identical pattern, the KBH, employs a strategy to centralize prominent religious teachers in their *dakwah* to influence young people's behavior to become more Islamic (Dari, Zainun, and Samosir 2021). Zulaiha et al. (2020) argue that this phenomenon is a new religious classification because this fundamentalist movement attempts to employ young people's language through religious symbols. In addition, the KMM attempts to combine music and recitation despite the persistence of conservative values, namely the belief that music is a component of ignorance, *bid'ah*, and blasphemy. Similarly, the identity of the SHIFT Community is "social youth who are religiously submissive" (Zulaiha et al. 2020), as shown by their fashion and way of life (Fajriani, S, W. & Sugandi Y 2019).

Several studies mentioned above describe these Hijrah communities' patterns, strategies, and objectives. Nonetheless, it is intriguing to investigate the Hijrah movement's efforts to maintain its existence. According to a study by Setia and Dilawati (2021), SHIFT maintained its existence by accommodating traditional religious traditions in learning and symbolic methods and engaging in economic activities, such as selling products under their brand (Kusumawati and Arrahim 2021). SHIFT is a community that emerged in a region that does not implement Islamic Sharia, but it exists even to this day. Consequently, the author is interested in analyzing a Hijrah community in Aceh known as the

Rabbani Movement Community (KGR, *Komunitas Gerakan Rabbani*), which appears less persistent despite its location in a region with the potential for an accommodative political structure.

KGR is a Hijrah community founded by young people in 2016 with a nearly identical structure to SHIFT. As Aceh is a region that implements Islamic law, it will likely that the Hijrah community will persist strongly in this region. As a province that expressly implements Sharia law, Aceh is conducive and provides structures and political opportunities that do not impede the growth of the Hijrah movement. It is because the values promoted by the Hijrah movement have a strong association with the spread of Islamic Sharia in this province. However, the actual outcome was the opposite. In Aceh, particularly in regions viewed as providing a favorable political opportunity structure for communities like KGR, the persistence of KGR is quite feeble.

In light of the phenomenon mentioned earlier, this article argues that although the political structures and opportunities in Aceh appear to support the existence of the Hijrah movement, it has not yet provided opportunities for adopting the modernity values exemplified by popular Hijrah movements at the national level. Consequently, it does not have a collective value to support KGR's popularity among youths, which eventually affects its low persistence. This article consists of several sections to build up this argument. The first section describes the Hijrah move-

ment from the perspective of social movements. The following section explains KGR's existence as one of the Hijrah communities. Finally, there is an attempt to analyze the persistence of KGR in the area governed by Islamic Sharia.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs qualitative methodologies. The following factors lead to the conduct of the research in Langsa City: 1) KGR is located in Langsa Town; 2) Langsa is a city that exhibits a high level of diversity and heterogeneity; and 3) we consider the semi-peripheral nature of the territory. The data collection methods employed include conducting comprehensive interviews and acquiring relevant documents. The participants in this study included young individuals who were members of KGR, the founders of KGR, and young individuals who were not part of KGR. The goal was to observe their reactions during subsequent encounters. The methodology used involves triangulating the source through interviews. Data processing involves three main steps: 1) data reduction, which involves simplifying the data; 2) data presentation, which involves presenting the data in a visual or organised format; and 3) conclusion derivation, which involves drawing conclusions based on the processed data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Rabbani Generation Community in Aceh as the Hijrah Movement: the Existence*

Even though such movements characterized by adopting more Islamic teachings and values are not new to Indonesian society, the current so-called Hijrah movement leaves new impressions that set it apart from its predecessors. In terms of terminology, for instance, the current Islamic movement is commonly referred to as the "Hijrah movement," which appears to follow the most popular Hijrah community name, the Pemuda Hijrah or SHIFT (another name created to avoid a too-Arabic image), which was founded in 2015 by Hanan Attaki, a famous young preacher who continues to popularize the Hijrah movement. Interestingly, although the term 'Hijrah' is derived from Arabic, it appears most prevalent in Indonesian contexts. Most literature discussing Hijrah as a movement has been dominated by case studies from Indonesia and written by Indonesian authors. In other nations, the same occurrences signed by a group of individuals who wish to live in a more Islamic manner are not considered a movement but a trend or popular culture.

Scholars hold differing opinions regarding the Hijrah movement itself. Some view it as a form of popular culture, while others view it as a social movement. However, Watson's (2016) prior work effectively locates the intersection of popular culture and social movement. In his study, he used the British working class as an example of those who used popular culture, such as folk songs, to articulate their opposition to capitalism, ultimately leading to the rise of the British labor movement. The Hijrah trend in Indonesia probably experiences

the same thing as the Hijrah phenomenon, which manifests people's opposition to Western lifestyles. Thus, it appears that popular culture can become a movement if it can call for social enlightenment and emancipation to spark social change. Regarding the Hijrah movement, the desired change is adopting Islamic values for better living.

The Hijrah phenomenon at the national level appears to inspire local populations to establish similar movements. The Rabbani Generation Community (KGR, *Komunitas Gerakan Rabbani*) in Langsa City, Aceh, is a Hijrah community established following the expansion of the Hijrah movements nationally. Several Langsa City youths whose desire to become proficient Koran readers initiated this community. Ust. Dr. H. Awwalul Zikri, Lc, MA (usually called UAZ) accommodated this wish and later founded KGR in 2016. UAZ is a lecturer at one of the city's universities. His being an educator makes it relatively easy for him to convince more young people to join KGR. As it comprises adolescents, this community emerges as the only community in Langsa City that is wholly led by youth, as opposed to the majority of other Islamic communities and congregations in that city. This community aims to facilitate the meeting of young people from diverse backgrounds to adopt more Islamic ways of life.

The following section will employ the theory of social movements, as it is the most compelling explanation for the emergence and advancement of social move-

ments to delve deeper into the existence and development of this movement. This theory prescribes political opportunity structures, mobilizing structures, and cultural framing as its fundamental theoretical components. Classifying the Hijrah movement as a social movement is essential to illuminate how Indonesia and Aceh, as the setting, may have allowed this type of movement to emerge and develop.

#### *Political Opportunity of Structure: From National to Local Trend*

Social movement theory prescribes that alterations in political opportunity structures facilitate the existence of social movements. A large body of research has also confirmed that the proliferation of democratic institutions will positively affect the growth of social movements. In 1998, the democratic wave emerged in Indonesia, coinciding with the Asian financial crisis that barely affected this nation. The failure of the new order government to protect its population from the crisis's adverse effects led to unrest and protests demanding President Soeharto's resignation. With the collapse of the authoritarian regime that had ruled the country for more than 30 years, Islamic social movements, previously repressed and prohibited, flourished in this country.

The democratic political system affords every citizen the opportunity to articulate themselves in both the private and public spheres. This encompasses the extremely private expression of "faith". This is also concurrent with the rise of Islamism in Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia.

With access to digital information, it spreads quite rapidly, including the trend of youth Hijrah.

In addition, realizing a political opportunity structure is facilitated by the mutually dependent influence of social movements and political parties on politics. How political parties respond to the issues raised by social movements will determine the outcomes of those movements, while the support provided by social movements will significantly impact the outcomes of elections contested by political parties. In the case of the Hijrah movement, historical data indicate that the movement's prominence peaked in 2019, just before the presidential election. It took place during the movement's height of popularity. Even though there was no official statement from the movement supporting a particular candidate pair, an increasing number of preachers who propagated the Hijrah movement expressed their preference for the second candidate pair (Prabowo-Sandiaga Uno) over Joko Widodo-Ma'ruf Amin at the time. It was the case even though the movement had not formally declared its support for a particular candidate tandem. Preachers Abdul Somad and Adi Hidayat are examples of those who have supported the candidate pair. In addition, it was well-known that certain Hijrah groups had affiliations with other organizations or political parties opposed to the regime in power. For instance, Sari et al. (2020) discovered a link between the the Anti-Dating Movement (ITP, *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran*) and Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), an Islamist group prohibited

during the first term of Joko Widodo's presidency. According to Ardianto (2018), there is a connection between #IndonesiaWithoutJIL and Masyumi, *Dewan Dakwah Islamiah Indonesia* (DDII), the Justice and Prosperous Party (PKS, *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*, and other transnational Islamic movements such as the Salafist and Hizbal-Tahrir (HT) movements. Karim et al (2022) further provide evidence to support the claim that several Hijrah communities in the Makassar region have political ties to the PKS. These movements are known for their vision to uphold the Islamic system.

In the subsequent development, the Hijrah turns to be a national phenomenon that influences local phenomena. This trend originated in Bandung's youth communities, and then spread via the internet to influence young people in other areas. Some of them are hijrah groups leaving opposite sex relationships before marriage, such as what was done by Indonesia Without Dating (ITP, *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran*) fronted by La Ode Munafar, Hijrah groups leaving music, such as *The Strangers Al-Ghuroba* which was initiated by musicians, groups that focus on clothing that cover their private parts like the Hijab Squad pioneered by Muslim women like Shireen Sungkar, Alyssa Soebandono, Dewi Sandra and others.

*Socio-Cultural Dimensions: Social Demographics, Religion, and Community Diversity*

Langsa City is a semi-periphery (buffer zone), a region that is located on the out-

skirts but is also an urban location. It is geographically near to the border between Aceh and North Sumatra. As the consequence, even though the city is part of the Aceh province, the metropolitan life of Medan City influences the geographical diversity of community characteristics. The approximate distance between Langsa City and Medan is 100 kilometres. According to data from the Langsa City website, residents of Langsa City have diverse ethnic backgrounds. The predominant ethnic group is the Acehnese, followed by the Chinese, Malay, Batak, and Javanese. There are even Javanese settlements in this area, which was the result of the central government's 1960s-era transmigration programme (Siregar and Wibowo 2019). From a total population of 148,945, they number approximately 20,000 in 2010. They reside in several villages such as Sidorejo, Sidodadi, Karang Anyar, Lengkong Kedubang Jawa, Lengkong Kedubang Aceh, Selala, and Kemuning. The names of the villages even indicate the prevalence of Javanese ethnicity in Langsa city.

In terms of religious demographics, the non-Muslim population is growing. In 2014, there were approximately 700 Protestant and Catholic Christians and approximately 200 Buddhists; the remainder was dominated by Muslims (Febriandi 2018). In contrast, the number of non-Muslims increased in 2020, specifically by 783 Protestant and Catholic Christians, 659 Buddhists, 15 Hindus, and eight other religions, and the remainder were Muslims (Azhari and Halili 2020).

The Langsa population's engagement with social issues is typically lackluster. People have been more inclined to engage in economic activities, including production and consumption. As one scholar has explained:

*Langsa was indeed not set by the Dutch as a city of discourse, but rather as a city of leisure. Therefore, it is natural that the population is more inclined towards hedonistic characteristics. Because the discourse on hedonism is indeed more prevalent (AK. Interview. Conducted by Rizkika Darwin. 20 August 2021).*

This pattern strongly supports the existence of the Hijrah trend, which displays an increasingly materialistic and consumptive side. This is supported by the social context of society, which demonstrates an increasing demand for Islam and "faith" consumption. The existence of a strengthening superstructure and a weakening infrastructure, supports the transformation of a hedonistic society with an increasing desire for religion.

#### *Local Regulation: Local Elites and Sharia Law Implementation*

Since 2000, the Islamic Shari'a has been in effect in Aceh. Due to the formalization of Islamic Shari'a in Aceh, this implementation follows a top-down structure with the reasoning of a legal or judicial approach. Socialization that emphasizes preventative measures, rather than punishment, is not prioritized. Besides, the implementation of Islamic Sharia has been centered in Banda Aceh, the capital city of Aceh province. It

affects the implementation of the law is getting weaker in the area far from the capital city, such as Langsa, which is located in the most eastern part of Banda Aceh.

Sharia Islam itself has been in force for approximately 20 years. Yet, in Langsa City, the government has only become more serious about enforcing this law in the last decade. In prior years, neither the local community nor the government paid much heed to Islamic sharia. This is the result of resistance from society, both directly and indirectly. Nurhidayati's in her undergraduate thesis (2020) explains that opposition to the implementation of Islamic Sharia in Langsa City is a result of the city's location in the east of Aceh Province, on the administrative border with North Sumatra Province. Its location in a border region with a large number of newcomers renders another difficulty to implement Islamic law (DW. Interview. Conducted by Rizkika Darwin. 20 August 2021). Consequently, this issue represents "another variant" of the Islamic perspective in this province.

Currently, local elites are beginning to be concerned with a variety of policies deemed essential to upholding sharia. Even the sharia policy is employed by the majority of politicians as a populist measure. The political dynamics in Langsa City during the two regional head election periods (Pilkada) demonstrate that the elected elites are Islamic narrative-carrying elites. Tgk. Usman Abdullah, SE, and Drs. Marzuki Hamid, MM, defeated five other can-

didate pairings to win Pilkada in Langsa City for the 2012-2017 and 2017-2022 periods. The pair's vision and mission for the 2017 Pilkada is "Langsa City as a progressive and Islamic city of services and industry." The vision's Islamic narrative is reflected in its mission and work program. One of the duties of the elected mayor and deputy mayor, specifically issue 6, is to implement Islamic law in a *kaffah* manner in Langsa City using the following work program:

1. Enhancing the function of Islamic law supervisors in rural areas
2. Facilitating the arrangement of qanun gampong (village law) regarding the implementation of Islamic law/order.
3. Quran Education Houses (TPA, *Taman Pendidikan AlQuran*) Jamboree, and mosque youth.
4. Competition for the cleanest and most prosperous mosque / prayer room.
5. Engaging in operations of Islamic law enforcement
6. Proceeding with the *maghrib* and dawn safari to the villages
7. Increasing the reach and intensity of community awareness in collaboration with village administrations, schools, universities, government agencies, and the private sector, among others.

Furthermore, in its research, the Setara Institute summarizes several discriminatory policies enacted by local elites in Langsa City, ranging from the socialization to prevent deviant sects in Langsa City (Langsa 2019), the instruction to not celebrating Valentine's day (Syafriзал 2020) and New Year's Eve, the instruction for



the the Head of the Islamic Sharia and Dayah Education Office to intervene in one of his residents cases who had converted away from Islam (Langsa 2019), the arrangement of the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD, *Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Daerah*) for the city of Langsa which lacks support for promoting religious tolerance and harmony while discriminating against the freedom of religion and gender, to the declaration of Langsa's Ulema Consultative Assembly (MPU, *Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama*) that PUBG is haram so the Islamic Sharia Office will cane PUBG participants and those who play similar games.

The Langsa government, through the *wilayahul hisbah*, the Shariah policemen, routinely conducts raids to discipline those improperly dressed or do not cover their *aurat* (private parts). The Langsa government also facilitated the arrival of popular ustads to preach in the centre of Langsa crowds, such as in the Merdeka square. The city government also mandates weekly routine recitations and Safari Subuh (collectively visiting mosques during Subuh prayer time to pray and attend to sermons). In addition, material and non-material support from the political elite was apparent in a variety of KGR activities. Hidayat, a politician from the Golkar party, volunteered to teach *tahsin* to young people in order to enhance their Koran recitation. Haji Kamarudin, a prominent figure in Langsa, also frequently donates items from the café he owns. These examples demonstrate that the

political dimension of Langsa City, commencing with its system, structure, and ruling elite, facilitates Islamic narrative trends and the Hijrah movement. Consequently, the Hijrah movement is identical to a new paradigm of social movement that receives state support for achieving its goals, in contrast to previous social movements that lacked state affiliations. To sum up, political opportunities that support the presence of the Hijrah movement like KGR in Langsa are quite comprehensive in Aceh, both in terms of the superstructure, which consists of the political system, regulations, and elites, and the infrastructure, which consists of social culture in society and youth trends.

#### *Resource Mobilization: From Actual to Virtual World*

Morris (2000) suggests focusing more on the resource mobilization process of a social movement in order to comprehend its development better. Through this formal and informal channel, movements mobilize resources and engage in collective action. In the contemporary Hijrah movement, social media plays a pivotal role in mobilizing resources (Addini 2019; Karim et al. 2022), with Instagram and YouTube becoming the most prominent instruments due to their popularity among youth. Moreover, compared to traditional platforms, such as television channels, which have specific requirements and administrative procedures, these digital platforms have comparatively limited intervention. Moreover, the most notable mobilization characteristics of this movement are its

preaching communication style, which is so youth-style (Karim et al. 2022), preaching content raising youth-related issues such as love, entertainment, and family (Akmaliyah 2020), and youth styles used on every preaching occasions (Akmaliyah 2020) indicating that its primary target audience is youth. In addition, they establish study communities and invite a larger audience to participate in the sessions (Karim et al. 2022). For KGR itself, its resource mobilization focuses on several important strategies, mobilizing young resources, utilizing social media, and spotlighting a prominent Ustad.

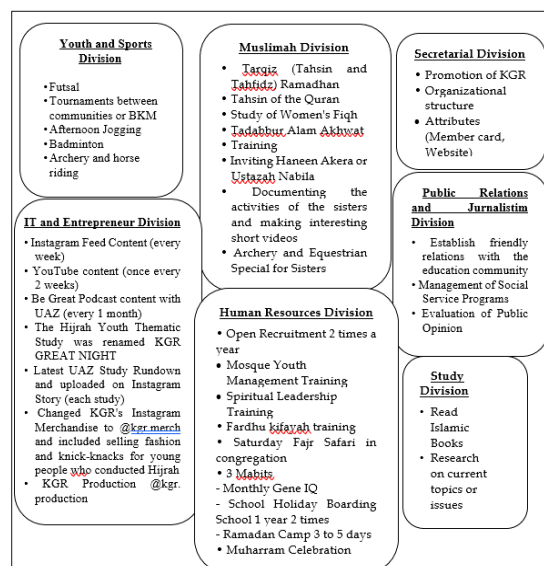
### *Mobilizing Young Resources*

From its mobilization pattern, it is obvious that KGR highly puts their attention on attracting more young participants. KGR established a structure to expand the scope and influence of its movement, particularly among young people. There is a fairly organized structure, beginning with the advisor, chairman, and secretary and extending to six divisions (the cadre regeneration and human resources; secretarial; public relations and journalistic; IT and entrepreneurship; Muslimah; and Sport divisions). In addition, they have youth consultants who can provide guidance to adolescents who are in the process of discovering their identities. The youth consultant himself is a trained psychologist. Each division has duties in implementing the planned programs. Of all divisions, only the Muslimah division is populated by women out of all the divisions. The remainder of the structure is male-dominated.

As a strategy to reach more young people to join the community, KGR strengthens the movement, particularly cadre regeneration, through the HR division. They conduct open recruitment twice per year. KGR conducts management circulation procedure every two years during a single work meeting. KGR's primary programming consists of weekly, biweekly, and monthly offerings. The following are examples of some of KGR's activities:

1. Weekly activities, including Tahsin Al Quran, Tausiah, and Imaniah, occur every Saturday so that many youth can participate.
2. Two-week activities, such as an Al-Quran safari, consist of visiting multiple mosques in Langsa City once every two weeks.
3. Monthly activities, including Jaulan Al Quran, by inviting youths to visit natural or touristic sites. It may be necessary to revert to nature to learn the Koran and Islam.

Figure 1. Divisional Work Programmes



Each division's work programs contribute to fortifying internal ties and reaching out to external parties. The formulated programs are simple to accept by young people, particularly because they are formulated based on observations toward youth favorite activities ranging from sports such as futsal game and motorcycle ridings to art activities such as poetry readings and public speaking. In addition, KGR also chose youth-friendly places when conducting their *dakwah*. It begins with *tausiah* (preaching) activities, discussions, to joint studies in coffee shops where most young people love to hang out. In turn, the activities successfully attract more youths to join, then slowly persuade them to participate in other KGR activities. In addition, KGR has an IT and Entrepreneur Division to develop opinions and recruit more young people. The community also has a public relations and journalism division that regularly evaluates public opinion.

#### *Utilizing Social Media as a Preaching Facility*

KGR, as a forum for young people who perform Hijrah in Langsa City, uses digital facilities as its campaign instrument. Therefore, they are very active in using digital media platforms for promotions, particularly the IT and Entrepreneurial division. Compared to Facebook and Twitter, Youtube and Instagram have a significantly higher proportion of youthful users in Aceh. KGR has a Facebook page but is not actively used as part of its media campaign. Similarly, KGR's Twitter account has no followers or posts. In addition,

KGR looks upon SHIFT as an example of how social media can be used as a campaign instrument as admitted by a KGR informan:

*We imitate the Hijrah youth movement in Bandung, namely SHIFT. With the development of youth Hijrah in Bandung, that's why we are also interested in developing Youtube and Instagram as campaign media* (TK. Interview. Conducted by Rizkika Darwin. 30 October 2021).

KGR's first Instagram post occurred on September 24, 2018 with the account name @generasirabbani.official, while its Youtube @GenerasiRabbaniLangsa has been active since January 27, 2018. By October 2021, the KGR Instagram account has published 199 posts with followers reached 8,669. Meanwhile, the KGR Youtube account has uploaded 23 videos with 736 subscribers. In addition to the KGR official Instagram and Youtube accounts, UAZ personal Instagram accounts @ustadzawwaluzzikri (671 posts and 9911 followers) and KGR merchandise IG account @merch\_kgr (3 posts and 82 followers) support the KGR campaign. The following are KGR's social media usage trends between 2018 and 2021 in its both Instagram and Youtube official accounts.

Chart 1. KGR Instagram Activities

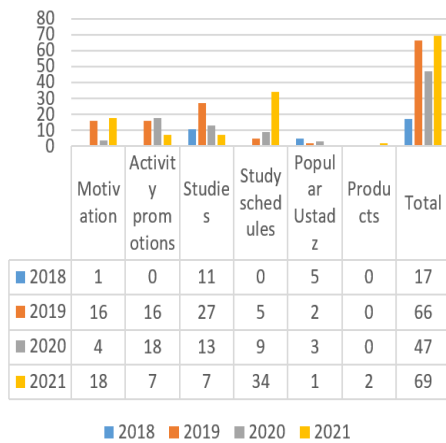
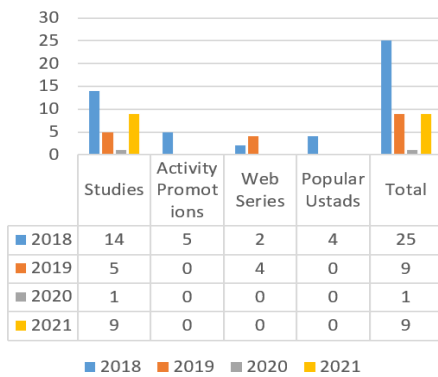


Chart 2. KGR Youtube Activities

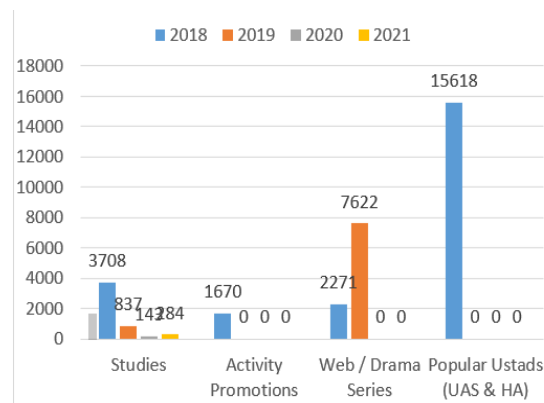


The graphs demonstrate that KGR posted more content to its Instagram account than it did to its YouTube account, with content pertaining to studies being the most prevalent. The majority of the study's contents concern adolescent anxiety and marriage. The majority of Instagram's content was published in 2019 and 2021, whereas YouTube's was in 2018. As depicted in the graph, KGR's social media activity fluctuated, indicating that digital evangelising enthusiasm was less consistent.

### Spotlighting the Figure of Well-known Ustads

Centralizing a particular figure becomes another Hijrah movement strategy since they observe that Indonesian society tends to love personalities more than organizations (Akmaliyah 2020). SHIFT, for instance, accentuates the figure of Ustadz Hanan Attaki, who is also its founder, and successfully becomes a so-called celebrity preacher who currently wields almost 10 million followers. Besides, SHIFT also frequently invites social media influencers and celebrities who possess a substantial following in their communities (Akmaliyah 2020).

Chart 3. Pubic Responses to KGR Youtube Contents



Similarly, KGR utilizes the notoriety of well-known ustads to garner support. Its social media posts frequently feature Ustad Hanan Ataki, Ustad Abdul Somad, and Babe Haikal. The ustads were even invited to KGR-sponsored events as an attraction. The presence of these popular preachers seems to significantly boost people's attention towards KGR existence. Youtube contents displaying prominent

preachers received highest public responses, instead of study contents as the KGR's most uploaded contents.

Ustad Hanan Ataki (UHA) and Ustad Abdul Somad (UAS), two well-known ustads whom KGR frequently posts, contribute to the website's allure. The abbreviation for Ustad Awalul Zikri, UAZ, is nearly identical to that of the well-known ustads. Even Ustad Hanan Ataki and Ustad Abdul Somad were invited to Langsa City by KGR. In addition, UAZ frequently publishes its alliance with the two renowned ustads, which dates back to their university days.

Furthermore, there is an indication that KGR wants to centralize the figure of UAZ as what has conducted by SHIFT to UHA. The centralistic of UAZ figure in KGR is very strong in which UAZ plays major and dominant roles in KGR existence, starting from its establishment to its operations. His profession as a lecturer in one of Langsa universities makes him able to approach broader young participants in Langsa City. In addition, as the alumni of middle east university, he has close connections with other prominent alumnies such as UHA and UAS, allowing KGR to easily garner supports from those figures. Therefore, KGR has tried to endorse the UAZ figure with the expectation that it could follow the SHIFT's footsteps.

#### *Cultural Framing: Limited Modernity*

Framing is commonly understood as constructing meaning and identity to mobilize potential constituents and

demobilize opponents. Benford and Snow (2000) describe cultural framing as a constructed comprehension of problematic situations that require many people to effect change while simultaneously identifying the responsible individuals or entities. In the case of the Hijrah movement, the urban life of Indonesian society, portrayed as being significantly influenced by westernization, serves as the basis for initiating change. Sexual activity prior to marriage, drug and alcohol addiction are examples frequently used to convey the message that drastic change is required to prevent further devastation. Westernization is portrayed as the primary adversary, prompting people to perform Hijrah to attain a better existence. In addition, the Hijrah movement has frequently taken multiple measures to portray the movement as a group of young slang people who are pitiful at the same time. With this new identity, the Hijrah movement hopes to communicate that modernity and religiosity can coexist (Zahara and Wildan 2020).

In regards with KGR, this movement arose from the concern of a number of young people regarding the lack of youth interest in mosques and the Quran. Their anxiety is associated with the dominance of motorcycle community, online activities, and others. Therefore, it is deemed essential to provide a place for young people to perform Hijrah and get closer to mosque and the Quran.

As the consequence, this community was initially only concerned with the Quran

because UAZ had recently returned from Egypt, where he was regarded as having extensive knowledge. As a new lecturer in IAIN Langsa, he observed that many students were Quran illiterate, that he then allocating his every Saturday dawn to teach *tahsin* to his students and public. This led to the establishment of a Hijrah movement publicly known as KGR. With this objective in mind, KGR has a vision, mission, and structure. KGR vision is to transform young people into civilized leaders. This vision is backed by the following mission: (1) To foster faith and morality in the context of faith strengthening; (2) To form character and personality in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah; (3) To promote adolescent solidarity and Islamic ukhuwah; and (4) To cultivate and channel youth intelligence and creativity. Furthermore, UAZ through KGR Youtube Channel also explained that the community has five pillars: they are (1) Young individuals pray fervently in congregation; (2) Read the Quran with diligence; (3) No day should be devoid of activity; (4) Remaining in the community is required so that we do not tremble against adversaries who cause us to engage in negative activities; and (5) Young people respect and adore their parents. As the consequence, the key element of the community was productive youth who adore the Quran, mosques, and parents. According to its vision, KGR's primary objective is to alter their hobbies from hanging out in internet cafes or coffee shops to love mosques.

Furthermore, synergizing with modernity seems to be another framing that some of the current Hijrah movements have constructed. In Bandung, for instance, the Hijrah movement's orientation appears more fashionable within the hobby community, as opposed to Jakarta, which is more egalitarian. Additionally, Yogyakarta is more grounded with the community and in the East Java, where traditionalism is still deeply rooted (Republikam 2018 in tirta). Young people in KGR acknowledge that their movement is influenced by the trend of Hijrah communities outside of Aceh, particularly Ustad Hanan Ataki's SHIFT. Similar to the Hijrah movement in other regions, the KGR attempts to integrate modern elements into the community. In terms of the types and venues of the activities, the KGR has successfully adopted several activities and selected places deemed convenience to its youth audiences. However, even though the SHIFT character functions as a model for moving KGR, it cannot be replicated in its entirety in terms of fashion. This is because Aceh's social and political dimensions are distinct with other provinces. Therefore, the characteristic that the Hijrah community develops in Aceh is quite distinct from those popular in national level. In terms of fashion, for instance, if Ustad Hanan Attaki is popular with its young fashion style, KGR ustad, UAZ maintains the Acehnese cultural attributes, such as wearing *peci* (typical caps popular in Indonesia) and *gamis* (long robes), as the proprietor of KGR explained:

*The context in Aceh is different from the youth movement outside Aceh because Aceh is a sharia area. If, for example, outside Aceh, the appearance of the ustad is slang, we here don't act like that in fashion. So we maintain Acehnese culture, namely continuing to use caps, Islamic clothing, an approach with knowledge accompanied by sports activities and refreshing activities. Youth in other Hijrah places may be less [Islamic], but in Aceh, they have strong knowledge of Fiqh, monotheism, and fardhu ain (UAZ. Interview. Conducted by Rizkika Darwin. 30 October 2021).*

Figure 2. The Difference of Fashion between UHA's SHIFT and UAZ's KGR



For the purposes of acquiring social acceptance from Acehnese society as a whole and recruiting more young people, KGR has imbued its movement's characteristics with a limited degree of modernity. Although modernity is crucial for attracting young people, KGR understands that in order to gain social acceptability, it must be mindful of the appearance acceptable to the local population. Even though combining Islamism and modernism is one of the KGR's cultural defining characteristics, the

Acehnese sociopolitical perspective is still taken into account.

Moreover, the KGR has devised another framing to portray the movement as politically neutral. In every routine study conducted by KGR, political-dynamic issues were never addressed. Almost every concern raised is one that young people confront on a daily basis. This is partially due to the fact that youthful KGR members have also expressed a lack of interest in discussing politics, and also because political discourse can be so delicate. According to this informant, they chose not to bring up political issues in order to avoid any potential unrest that could have resulted from doing so.

*We happened to have internal discussions with UAZ about political issues that became the subject of study. However, UAZ did not wish to bring up the topics. UAZ wants us to make them comfortable with us first, so that they will want to join our study; later when there are many who regularly take part in the study, he is willing to move on to other issues (TK. Interview. Conducted by Rizkika Darwin. 30 October 2021).*

### ***Assessing the Persistence of Rabbani Generation Community in Aceh***

KGR as a Hijrah movement inspired by SHIFT and developed along with the surge of the Hijrah phenomenon in Indonesia demonstrated inconsistency in its operation as the Hijrah movement whose primary objective is to influence a wider audience to adopt more Islamic lifestyles. When contrasted to earlier Hijrah

communities such as SHIFT and ITP, the KGR's existence appears questionable. KGR's enthusiasm for conveying dakwah messages on Instagram and YouTube appears to be inconsistent, despite the fact that social media have become its primary means of spreading its influence. Its final Instagram post was dated January 8, 2023 with the caption "KGR will return." The preceding content was uploaded in May of 2021, nearly two years prior to the creation of this piece. Similarly, its presence on YouTube does not indicate improved performance, as its most recent content was uploaded ten months ago, on June 3, 2023, after a hiatus of more than two years. Members of the KGR corroborated the decline in performance, noting that Covid-19 marked the beginning of the KGR's performance decline.

*Covid is very influential, so indeed we decided to vacuum for a while. We calmed down for a moment, because most of KGR's activities are big events. We often call on even big ustadz (TK. Interview. 30 October 2021).*

Three aspects from the theory of social movement: political opportunity structures, resource mobilization, and cultural framing provide a comprehensive framework in explaining the establishment and expansion of a social movement. However, these three aspects need to be scrutinized further to shed light how a social movement could persist. Previous work showed that the political opportunity structures do not always influence the

existence of a movement due to the explosive development of social media usage. In his critique of the social movement theory, Morris (2000) demonstrates that agency-rich institutions can produce collective action despite closed political opportunity structures. In the case of the Hijrah movement, the spread of democratic values, for instance, through such an accessible information channel as social media, makes it nearly impossible to prevent the growth of social movements, even when they bring a political agenda that is in opposition to the prevailing regime, or other words when the political system is primarily closed. Despite their opposing political agenda, it appears to explain the continued existence of the contemporary Hijrah community, such as the ITP.

For KGR, Aceh's special autonomy, which enables this region to implement Sharia law, appears conducive to the growth of a typical Hijrah movement. They face no opposition in operating and implementing their programmes and even receive material and non-material aid from political elites to help the movement develop and spread.

*Many parties were involved in the Hijrah movement driven by KGR, such as politicians and members of parliament, Mr. Adi Hidayat, who supported us through funds, as well as Mr. Komaruddin and Mr. Sofyan Pakeh who were entrepreneurs. Therefore, we just need to focus on getting it going and invite more friends (PD. Interview. 19 August 2021).*



Consequently, the KGR case demonstrates that favourable political structure opportunities do not ensure the survival of a Hijrah community. Interestingly, although the Aceh political structure provides a convenient environment for the Hijrah community to flourish, it also influences the cultural framing that a Hijrah community seeks to construct for its collective identity. As a result, KGR was unable to implement the entire framework employed by previous successful Hijrah movements. To be pertinent within the sociopolitical context in which it operates, it must judiciously choose certain framings while ignoring others. In this instance, KGR adopted similar framings as SHIFT, such as being a Hijrah movement that embraces modernization but restricts it in one respect. For example, while modernising its dakwah to be in youth-friendly areas and addressing youth issues, it avoids fashion-related modernization. KGR employs this strategy for the sake of social acceptability, which it believes will prevent the emergence of resistance, thereby ensuring the longevity of the movement.

According to Kebede et al. (2007), what KGR did in relation to its framing strategy is equivalent to constructing a dynamic collective identity. This type of identity enables a social movement to endure for an extended period. Thus, they believe that a dynamic collective identity, which is the result of cultural framing, plays an essential role in maintaining a movement's persistence because of how the dynamics

can ensure the movement's continued relevance in their prevailing context. However, we learn that this dynamics collective identity, apparently does not lead KGR to a persistence. Then, it is necessary to proceed on to an additional essential aspect of social movement theory, namely resource mobilisation.

According to the preceding description of KGR's resource mobilisation, KGR has three primary mobilisation strategies: mobilising its youthful resources, utilising social media, and highlighting influential figures. In spite of this, the employment of these strategies is extremely dependent on the centralist nature of UAZ. For KGR, UAZ does not only act as the symbol to help KGR to a prominence, but more than that, KGR is too dependent on this single figure whom they look up to the most, make it difficult to operate independently, as admitted by UAZ in an interview:

*When I went back and forth to Egypt, KGR's activity experienced ups and downs. KGR is too attached to me, even though I want them to be independent. But they need a symbol to move this community (UAZ. Interview. 30 October 2021).*

In his study on the persistence of individuals in social movements, White (2010) argues that life changes, which generate new relationships and identities, impact individuals' availability for activism. This modification may require them to decide whether to remain or leave the movement. Even though White's study

only explains an individual's persistence and not a social movement's, but individual persistence could considerably affect the whole social movement's persistence if this individual's roles is too central and decisive for the social movement's life. The alterations in UAZ's life eventually have a substantial effect on KGR's determination. It is because since July 2021, a businessman has entrusted UAZ with the administration of Langsa's Dar Faqih Qur'ani residential school. In addition to serving as a professor, a father, and a public figure, UAZ must now also fulfil this responsibility. UAZ clarified:

*My challenge facing young people is that they want to be together all the time, whereas I have many roles, namely the head of the family, and an ustadz/ummah figure who has many duties and responsibilities. So sometimes I hold meetings once a week or twice a month. They felt they weren't enough, so I was overwhelmed (UAZ. Interview. 30 October 2021).*

This KGR case demonstrates that resource mobilisation is the most important factor in determining the persistence of movements. Despite its conducive political structure and dynamic cultural framing, the KGR struggles to maintain its existence due to its over-reliance on a single figure, which makes this movement vulnerable without the energy of the most dominant individual.

## CONCLUSION

The Hijrah movement, established with the intention of bolstering the sanctity of Islamic values in the midst of intensifying modernization, faces significant and very local obstacles. Each region presents its own difficulties, beginning with modifying the characteristics and even symbols associated with the movement. An anomaly exists when the movement is determined by the political opportunities of the structure, but this factor does not become dominant enough to influence the movement's existence. Similarly, dynamic cultural framing, which ought to promote broader social acceptability, does not always influence the persistence of movements.

In this investigation, KGR demonstrates that persistence will be primarily determined by the independence of movement. It is impossible to isolate the KGR's lack of independence from its excessive dependence on the movement's leader. As a movement, it comes out that reliance on specific figures or funding sources will not necessarily affect the institution's persistence. The stability of the movement must be predicated on the perseverance of consistently fought-for values.

In addition, this article explains how the hijrah movement is also part of a social movement. Although the Hijrah community originated from surges that emerged at the national level, it turned out to be highly dependent on each local context. In this instance, KGR was established in a region that implements Islamic law, so that

modernism cannot be adopted as a whole as was done by other Hijrah movements that tried to combine Islamic values and modernism.

Therefore, this article serves as a springboard for further inquiry into the Hijrah movement in regions that implement Islamic Sharia or at least adopt Islamic values in people's daily lives, such as West Sumatra, Banten, South Sulawesi (Bone), etc. Is it conceivable for the Hijrah movement to exist in regions where Islamic law is implemented or where Islamic narratives predominate? What are they battling for that has brought them together? In addition, how persistent is the Hijrah movement in each of these regions? How then do they maintain their perseverance? We believe that further research will enrich research on Hijrah movements in the future.

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