



SOCIAL COMPETENCE OF MINORITY MUSLIMS: EXPRESSION AND ARTICULATION OF CHINESE MUSLIM IDENTITY IN SURABAYA

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Abstract

This study explores the social competence of the Chinese Muslim minority community in Surabaya, focusing on the expression and articulation of their identity within a diverse societal context. The background of the research lies in the unique dynamics faced by this minority group in navigating their religious and cultural identity amid a predominantly non-Chinese and non-Muslim environment. The research investigates the modes of expression employed by Chinese Muslims to manifest their identity and the challenges they encounter in articulating their distinct cultural blend. Utilizing a sociological perspective, the study employs qualitative research methods, including in-depth interviews and content analysis of relevant materials. The findings illuminate the multifaceted aspects of social competence exhibited by the Chinese Muslim community, encompassing effective engagement, cultural preservation, and social integration strategies. Notably, the study reveals the community's commitment to upholding social norms, steering clear of practical politics, and actively contributing to societal harmony. The research contributes to the broader discourse on religious and cultural diversity,

offering insights for policymakers and community leaders seeking to foster inclusivity in multicultural societies.

Keywords: Chinese Muslim Minority, Social Competence, Identity Expression.

A. Introduction

Chinese Muslims in Indonesia are a minority in the minority because the existence of Chinese ethnic in Indonesia is mostly Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists, and Confucianists. Mahfud (2018) termed the Chinese Muslim community a small minority. Muzakki (2010) termed it minority within the minority. The term “Chinese Muslim” in this context refers to individuals who identify both ethnically as Chinese and religiously as Muslims. Surabaya, being a melting pot of cultures and religions, provides a fascinating backdrop to explore how this minority group navigates and expresses their social competence within the broader societal framework.

This research delves into the multifaceted aspects of social competence exhibited by Chinese Muslims in Surabaya. It examines their ability to effectively engage with their surroundings, articulate their religious and cultural identity, and navigate the intricate dynamics of being a minority within a predominantly non-Chinese and non-Muslim environment (Wahyudi, 2020a).

Key areas of exploration include the modes of expression employed by Chinese Muslims to manifest their religious identity, the challenges they face in articulating their unique cultural blend, and the strategies they employ to foster social cohesion within both the Muslim and Chinese communities.

By understanding the social competence of Chinese Muslims in Surabaya, this research contributes to the broader discourse on religious and cultural diversity, shedding light on the lived experiences of a minority group within the Muslim community. Moreover, it provides valuable insights for policymakers, community leaders, and scholars seeking to foster inclusivity and social harmony in multicultural societies

The social reality which confirms that the Chinese Muslim community has a small quantity demanded them to make the right cultural strategy so that Islam becomes a tool to strengthen the social competencies that fit the characteristics of general Indonesian society. This effort is based on the reality that this ethnic group still has a lot of negative stigma for the people of Indonesia (Wahyudi & Zuhri, 2019).

Several associations or organizations have provided a place for Chinese Muslims in Indonesia. One of them is the famous Chinese Indonesian Islamic Union (PITI). In addition to Surabaya, this organization, which was first established in 1961, there are at least 16 offices of the organization's management in major cities in Indonesia, such as Jakarta, Semarang, Yogyakarta, and Pontianak.

In Indonesia, especially the province of East Java, the conversion of Chinese ethnic to Islam revealed a rapid development. This can be seen from the increasingly stretching establishment of Cheng Hoo mosques in five districts (Surabaya, Pasuruan, Jember, Banyuwangi, and Malang). Following the increase of Chinese ethnic conversion to the Islamic religion, the concept of cultural assimilation was developed, especially by Chinese figures such as Bambang Suyanto with the initiation of his Cheng Hoo Mosque by

adopting and combining three mainstream cultures; Chinese, Javanese, and Arabic (Mahfud, 2013).

Muzakki (2010) commented on this cultural assimilation of Chinese Muslims that this phenomenon would negate all ethnicity-based problems both politics and social differentiation of China in Indonesia because they would be assimilated into the community of local Muslim-majority. This sociocultural strategy is important by considering that Chinese ethnic in Indonesia had an obscured history includes the distinctive historical traces of the PITI organization, which became a place for the Chinese Muslim community.

The study of Chinese ethnicity in Indonesia concerning Islamic education is still unexplored. This is following the literature review of a study by Al-Qurtuby, (2009); Sen (2010); Muzakki (2010);(Mahfud, (2014); (Rahmawati et al., (2018) who revolved around the traces of the history of Chinese Muslims informing the third stream of the spread of Islam, government discrimination, and the contribution of Chinese community civilization to the historical dynamics of Islam in Indonesia. The gift of the Chinese Islamic discourse study above has given a massive contribution to enriching the development of the treasures of Islamic civilization in Indonesia. Thus, there seems like a space that escaped to study that is an investigation about Islamic education and the social competences of Chinese Muslims.

As a result, this research focuses on examining the practice of Islamic religious education implemented by the Chinese Muslim community by aiming at the development of their social competences. This study attempted to create relevance between the existential problems of ethnic Chinese

in Indonesia and decisive social skills which must be balanced concerning the role of the Chinese Muslim community in Islamic teaching of social competence in the society.

B. PITI and Cheng Hoo Mosque: Chinese Muslim Existential Symbols

The existence of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia institutionally can be identified by two elements; the presence of the PITI organization and the Cheng Hoo Mosque. Both have become cultural identity symbols as well as Chinese Muslim social movements in Indonesia. Through these components, this community is more intensive and free to socialize, able to provide positive contributions to the city, and ready to minimize their existential problems which are in their history often got negative stigma and discriminatory treatment.

The urgency of this cultural symbol is very relevant, given the obscured history of this community. In the old order era, for example, on May 14, 1959, the government issued government regulation/ PP No. 10 of 1959 which affirmed that foreigners have not permitted to carry out a small business in the village. This policy has triggered an exodus of 100,000 Chinese people went out of Indonesia because they carried out many small trading businesses in the village (accessed via www.tionghoa.info)

Furthermore, in the new order era, social discrimination of Chinese ethnic showed even massive and systematic escalation. The space for them both in the social and political fields was minimal. For example, with the issuance of the Cabinet Presidential Instruction of Republic of Indonesia/ RI

No. 37 / U / IN / 6/1967 concerning the Principal Policy for Settling Chinese Problems and the Presidium Circular Letter of the RI Cabinet No. SE-36 / Pres / Kab / 6/1967 concerning Chinese Issues. Even during Soeharto's presidency, he had issued Presidential Instruction No.15 / 1967 concerning the establishment of Special Staff for Chinese Affairs. There was also a prohibition on the issuance and printing of literary and Chinese-language posts or advertisements explained in the Minister of Information Circular No. 02 / SE / Di.

The limitation of the social movement for Chinese ethnic in Indonesia has also impacted on the PITI organization. Following the issuance of Government Instruction on December 14, 1972, prohibiting organizations from using specific ethnic names, PITI turned into the Unity of Faith in Indonesia (Mahfud, 2013).

In mid-May 2000, two years after the resignation of the New Order regime in 1998, a congress in Jakarta was held to discuss the extension of PITI whether it was going back to as initially intended, the Indonesian Chinese Islamic Union or still the Unity of Faith in Indonesia. Mahfud reported that there was a heated debate in the conference because there were two groups that had strong arguments between those who retained and returned to their initial stands.

PITI which was founded by Abdul Karim Oei Tjeng Hien, Abdusomad Yap A Siong, Kho Goan Tjin and others were intended to be a missionary organization to help Chinese people convert to Islam, study Islam and practice Islamic teachings through social activities since its initiation.

The next symbol of the existence of the Chinese Muslim community in Indonesia is the existence of the Cheng Hoo

Mosque. There are five out of more than a dozen Cheng Hoo mosques in East Java, Indonesia. The presence of Cheng Hoo Mosque is a centre of intellectual and a centre of social movements for the Chinese Muslim community. In other words, the implementation of faith fostering, especially among converts, is supported by socio-cultural considerations.

To actualize the principle of peace, the Foundation of Haji Muhammad Cheng Hoo Mosque imposed norms on sermons/ khatib or lecturers who provided an understanding of Islamic teachings to the Chinese Muslims community. Hariyono Ong, for example, as one of the sermons stated that lecturers are not allowed alluding to ethnic, religious, racial and customary sensitivity in their material both the content of lectures, speeches and deepening other Islamic insights.

Hariyono Ong affirmed Mahfud's acknowledgement stated that every speaker or sermon is not permitted to address issues related to three concerns; politics, ethnicity, religion, race and inter-group relation and controversial matters in the public sphere (*khilafiyah*). According to him, this is strictly prohibited because it is potentially worsening the social atmosphere and friendship in the heterogeneous community in Surabaya. Moreover, as a Chinese ethnic group that is a minority in Surabaya, the intake of patient and peaceful information is very important to knit social harmony among other communities.

Even the mosque manager was rigorous in taking action if he found that the lecturers did not heed the norms regulated by the Cheng Hoo Mosque Foundation. On occasion, there is a sermon which discussed political issues in his lecture. This turned out to be a red record for the managers/

Ta'mir because the speech violated the norms regulated by Ta'mir who finally crossed his name from the list of sermons, and he was no longer invited to give the lecture at the Cheng Hoo mosque.

The above attitude seems to be a manifestation of Cheng Hoo's mosque commitment to construct social expressions in the community actively. As the researcher's observation revealed a brief description of Cheng Hoo mosque's profile that a quote from the verse surah Ali Imron verse 112 is repeated four times, completed by three languages; Indonesian, English and Mandarin (observation at Cheng Hoo Mosque).

ضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذِّلَّةُ أَيْنَ مَا تَقِفُوا إِلَّا بِحَبْلٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَحَبْلٍ مِّنَ النَّاسِ وَبَاءُوا
بِعُضْبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَسْكَنَةُ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ
بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقِّ ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ

"They are overcome with humiliation wherever they are unless they hold on to the rope (religion) of Allah SWT and the cord (agreement) with humans and they again get the wrath of Allah SWT and they are overcome by humility. That is because they disbelieve in the verses of Allah SWT and kill the Prophets for no reason. This is because they are lawless and transgress. "

The verse above shows the socio-religious attitude of the Chinese Muslim community that its existence seeks to establish a harmonious relationship between humans and their God, as well as with other humans.

This commitment, then, manifested in the practice of Islamic education. To knit the diversity of the Indonesian nation's diversity, Chinese Muslims do the simplest and most fundamental things, which is being selective in choosing Islamic teachers. Collaboration with several parties shows that Chinese Muslims are very appreciative toward mass organizations that have been promoting tolerance, democracy and responsiveness to the idea of multiculturalism, as consistently carried out by NU, MUI and Muhammadiyah. In this case, Hariyono Ong (Ong Khim Shui; Chief [takmir] of Cheng Hoo Mosque) said:

“For this reason, we choose lecturers whose religious views are not rigid, flexible, can give a joke. We got them from MUI, NU and Muhammadiyah, with the consideration that they were the largest Islamic organizations, as well as their views on tolerance and high multiculturalism.”

The teaching of Islamic education centred on the Cheng Hoo Mosque is related to faith (*aqeedah*), the knowledge of the Quran, hadith and morality with the main priority to which is associated with the daily lives of Chinese Muslims.

Cheng Ho Mosque is still consistent with carrying out religious activities and Islamic education for the internal Chinese community, converts and the general public in Surabaya. The lecture is routinely carried out by inviting religious leaders and academics whose schedules have been set by the mosque ta' mir. The primary purpose of Islamic education for Chinese Muslims is not to let Islamic teachings contain divisive potential. The foremost anxiety is that

Chinese Muslims' mind will be complicated, especially for the converts.

1. Chinese Muslim Instruments in the Development of Social Competence

Social competence is an abstract value. The concept of this value can then be translated into a medium that can realize it in a more concrete form for further expression in the public sphere. Thus required instruments that can bridge these values to become active. The social competency development instruments used by Chinese Muslims in the praxis of multicultural Islamic education include instructional aspects, cultural aspects and social aspects.

Instructional aspects

Social competence is a value that should be primarily manifested as moral knowledge. Based on this foundation, social values then materialize through positive social behaviors. This concept implies an understanding that the information conveyed by Chinese Muslims must support the development of social values.

In the educational process, the appropriate values stem from cognitive knowledge, are subsequently internalized into an awareness and life attitude (affective domain), and eventually transform into expressions, actions, thought patterns, and indicators of social behavior in social interactions (psychomotor domain).

As an example of actualizing the principle of peace, the Haji Muhammad Cheng Hoo Mosque Foundation

enforces norms for preachers who impart Islamic teachings to the Chinese Muslim community. Lecturers are strictly prohibited from incorporating any material, including lecture content, sermons, and discussions on various aspects of Islamic insights, that may allude to sensitive topics related to ethnicity, religion, race, and tradition (Wahyudi, 2020b).

Transmission of Islamic teachings through teaching is formulated so that study material that is of interest and enjoyed by Muslim Chinese converts so as not to let sacred Islamic teachings be delivered with provocative languages that have the potential to divide. This instructional instrument in developing social competence affirms a concept that Chinese Muslims translate Islamic education in the broad sense as a social engineering tool.

The essence of education within the Chinese Muslim society lies not solely in the cultivation of knowledge but also encompasses the cultural and media legacies, contributing to the establishment of cohesive social conditions (Al-Qurtuby, 2009). Examined from a sociological perspective, the praxis of Islamic education within the Chinese Muslim community serves as a mechanism for social preservation, academic enrichment, and the cultivation of moral, ethical, and aesthetic values.

Cultural aspects

This cultural assimilation carried out by Chinese Muslims is a social phenomenon that has the potential to negate all political problems and social differentiation based on ethnicity for Chinese in Indonesia, because

they will assimilate with local communities that are predominantly Muslim (Muzakki, 2010). Consequently, Chinese Muslims have the potential to develop to be more present in socializing more openly to the majority group.

This socio-cultural strategy is vital because the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia have a dark history. For this reason, to develop social attitudes, this community carried out a cultural approach by conducting cultural hybridization as a security guarantee following the strengthening of the anti-Chinese movement in Indonesian society at that time.

The expression of Chinese Muslim culture that is still nuanced in the bamboo curtain country reflects that they also carry out cultural conservation to preserve the noble values of their people. This attitude then has implications for other abilities, namely cultural competence. This ethnic Muslim is classified as very fluent in socializing with other communities without leaving his cultural identity. Not only the design of the mosque building, fashion style still has a strong Chineseness character.

The importance of cultural aspects as instruments for developing social attitudes through this symbol is the adoption of the symbolic interaction theory. In this perspective, it can be seen that Chinese Muslims succeeded in conceptualizing themselves (self) and their interactions with society. This symbolic-cultural strategy plays a crucial role in interacting with the broader community (Hoyle, 1972).

Through communication conveyed in nonverbal languages such as symbols, signs, and behavior, Chinese

Muslims have cultivated social attitudes aligned with values of tolerance, openness, and cross-primordial moderation. An illustrative example is the Cheng Hoo Mosque, laden with philosophical nuances and rich in meaning, embodying a fusion of three significant traditions (Chinese, Arabic, and Javanese), thereby expressing an appreciation for cultural diversity.

Social Aspects

In this aspect, the development of social competence encompasses two categories: the dimensions of growth through social norms (norms) and social actions (social rules). The norms prevalent in the Chinese Muslim community embody a system of values that has become their collective belief. Functioning as a mutual agreement (*mu'ahadah*), these norms in Surabaya's Muslim Chinese community become cognitive reasoning, serving as social control to align behaviors with the community's worldview.

Consequently, it is logical for these norms to be later adopted as a way of life and a perspective for socializing in a pluralistic society. Serving as a guide and influencing human actions during social interactions, these norms contribute to realizing a harmonious coexistence. The manifestation of values in the form of norms plays a constructive role as an instrument for developing Chinese Muslim social competence, regulating individual actions in the public sphere.

A crucial norm within the Chinese community is expressed through the Cheng Hoo Mosque's slogan,

proclaiming its standing above and for all groups. This norm is considered a form of value as it is tangible, observable, adhered to, and carries social consequences.

This reality serves as a significant indicator that social values translated into norms have been successfully embodied in social behavior, contributing to social integration in a multicultural society.

Additionally, the social competencies developed through mosque inscriptions present an intriguing aspect. The motto “Zuo You Ming” emphasizes multidimensional abilities, including piety and faith (*Geng Jing Wei Zhen Zhu Geng Jin Shou Jin Jie*), mutual respect (*Hu Xiang Zun Zhong*), effective communication (*Duo Du Tong Gou*), unity development (*Fa Yang Tuan Jie Jing Shen*), forgiveness (*Duo Yuan Liang Bie Ren*), and openness to diverse opinions (*Duo Jie Na, Bie Ren De Yin Jian*) (Documentation at Cheng Hoo Mosque).

Categorized, the values embedded in the aforementioned motto encompass invitations to enhance religious attitudes and the cultivation of vibrant social attitudes, including socio-cultural values, national values, and work ethic values.

2. Social Competence Development through Islamic Education

Azra (2006) by quoting Seyyed Naquib Allatas’s opinion, explained that the definition of Islamic education could be known through three terms, education (*tarbiyah*), moral (*ta’dib*) and teaching (*ta’lim*). These three terms, mean that Islamic education concerns human relations

- as individuals and with the society and environment about God which are interrelated.

In another aspect, Islamic education is also oriented towards forming positive social personalities. Through Islamic values, humans gain an understanding of how they should interact with others.

For this reason, Islamic education must be present as an instrument to develop positive and harmonious relations in the multiculturalism of society. Moreover, the community has an unbalanced cultural composition; for example, there are ethnic minorities in it. So for the ethnic minorities, it is essential to develop social competences to be able to adjust to the social norms in the community.

Social competence can ultimately be concluded as an integrative, comprehensive and holistic skill about abilities that will produce positive responses in the community (Waters & Sroufe, 1983).

Chinese Muslims, as a minority in a cultural and demographic condition of Surabaya, have made various approaches to make Islamic education an instrument to develop social competences. Some of the social skills that were successfully developed by the Chinese Muslim include:

Inclusive (tasamuh)

The tolerant attitude (*tasamuh*) is shown by Chinese Muslims through their expertise to interact with various religions and cultures of society, especially in their internal ethnicity, which is predominantly non-Muslim. Even more explicitly, this form of tolerance is engraved

in a motto (Zuo You Ming) of the Haji Muhammad Cheng Hoo Foundation which is right in front of the southern mosque facing north. The fragment of the principle of tolerance embodied in the inscription deals with the recommendation to respect each other (*Hu Xiang Zun Zhong*) and respect differences in opinion (*Duo Jie Na, Bie Ren De Yin Jian*).



Picture 1: the motto of Cheng Hoo mosque

The aforementioned motto appears to encapsulate the philosophy of the Chinese Muslim community's social attitude, which has been translated into their patient and accommodating social interactions. An illustration of this is evident in the city's openness, welcoming non-Muslim visitors to enter the Cheng Hoo Mosque and participate in the concurrent Islamic studies they organize, as conveyed by Hariyono Ong, the Ta'mir of the Cheng Hoo Mosque, to the researcher (Stamatov & Sariyska, 2015).

This accommodative stance is further demonstrated when the community invites non-Muslim ethnic Chinese individuals to serve as honorary advisors or coaches for the Haji Muhammad Cheng Hoo Foundation, as detailed in the preceding discussion. The community's profound tolerance and accommodating ambiance are reflected in the architectural design of the Cheng Hoo Mosque, incorporating elements from three significant traditions: Chinese, Arabic, and Javanese. This strategic approach convincingly indicates that Chinese Muslims are highly tolerant, embracing cultural differences, diverse social backgrounds, and various religious affiliations (Huda, 2019).

Moreover, in imparting tolerant attitudes within the Chinese Muslim community, intentional efforts have been made to establish collaborations with Islamic organizations in Indonesia known for their tolerant stance, specifically NU and Muhammadiyah. This tolerance is evident in their assertion of cultural identity, where, despite being followers of Islam, they do not present themselves as exclusively "Arabic" but embrace

their Chinese cultural heritage. This is exemplified through their clothing choices, often donning the kopyah and koko attire typical of Chinese Muslims, and maintaining an open attitude towards Chinese traditions. Notably, they continue to celebrate Chinese New Year, Cap Go Meh, Barongsai and Liong dances, and other cultural practices, considering them as opportunities to strengthen community bonds (Gregg et al., 2017).

Selective

One of the restricted activities within the Cheng Hoo Mosque complex, aligning with the organizational policy of PITI, pertains to issues associated with practical politics. Despite the Cheng Hoo Mosque being open to individuals of all religions, ethnicities, and social strata, engaging in political activities or discussions, even those related to politics, is deemed impermissible (Banks, 1995).

The community's vigor is exemplified in instances where a sermon touched upon the dynamics of political developments. Due to the potential to instill hesitation, particularly among Muslim converts, regarding the values of Islamic peace, such sermons are blacklisted, and the individuals delivering them are not invited to impart Islamic teachings within this community.

This selective attitude is not only influenced by the potential to offend various parties but also grounded in the commitment of the Chinese Muslim community, through its PITI, to remain uninvolved and unaffiliated with any political movement. It serves as a pure symbol of da'wah and social movements, intended to resist co-

optation by primordial politics that tend to foster social division (Cohen, 2006).

Hence, it is more comprehensible that lecturers, sermon speakers, and those involved in shaping the faith of converts to Chinese Muslims are carefully selected from Islamic organizations sharing a common vision of da'wah and social movements, namely NU and Muhammadiyah. These organizations are preferred over those with political content in their da'wah movements, as political Islamic organizations tend to preach Islam by de-legitimizing political developments in Indonesia on one hand, while concurrently delivering Islam through non-persuasive rhetoric.

Intensification of Social Roles:

Another notable aspect of social competence exhibited by Chinese Muslims is their active and substantial contribution to the community. Their ability to socialize through intensified social roles ensures quick recognition of the Chinese Muslim community. Collaborating with numerous parties through the Cheng Hoo Mosque Foundation and the PITI organization, Chinese Muslims actively engage in social activities to assist individuals in overcoming life's challenges, including health, education, basic needs, and economic support (Muhid, 2020).

Intentionally presenting Islamic preaching through concrete social activities in the community, the Chinese Muslim community manifests their concern for fellow human beings. This approach to da'wah aligns with the

statements of Liem Fuk San, emphasizing that Chinese Muslims seek to greet not only through oral da'wah but also through positive actions and wealth-related da'wah.

C. Conclusion

In this study, the findings reveal the intricate dynamics of social competence within the Chinese Muslim minority community in Surabaya. The expression and articulation of the Chinese Muslim identity in a diverse societal framework highlight how this minority group effectively interacts within its environment. The research findings indicate that Islamic education serves as the primary foundation for preserving, developing academic experiences, and shaping moral, ethical, and aesthetic values within the community. This social competence manifests in various forms, including open-mindedness, tolerance, and cross-primordial moderation.

The commitment to uphold social norms, particularly in the realm of practical politics, signifies the group's efforts to maintain a focus on da'wah and social movements while steering clear of primordial politics that could potentially fracture social relations.

The contribution of this research involves a deeper understanding of how the Chinese Muslim community in Surabaya manages both its religious and cultural identity concurrently, creating an inclusive environment and contributing unique elements within the broader social framework. Suggestions for future research encompass further exploration of Islamic education strategies, the role of religious organizations in fostering tolerance, and the broader impact of social interactions around the Cheng Hoo

Mosque. Subsequent studies could delve into a more profound understanding of how social values are integrated into the daily lives of community members and explore the potential positive contributions to strengthening social harmony in a multicultural society.

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