The Identity Threat and Coping among the Followers of the Indigenous Javanese Religion

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Abstract. The present study was aimed at exploring how the adherents of an indigenous Javanese religion, known as Javanism or Kejawen, maintain their identity in the hegemonic Muslim identity. This study employed a qualitative case study. The participants were the leader and key members of a Javanese religious group in Mojokerto District, East Java, Indonesia. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The study found that most participants experience threats to their identity. They are perceived as being targeted and stigmatized since they are practicing mythic rituals and believing in superstition. They reported that they are labeled as obsolete, outdated, and even idolatrous. To cope with the identity threats, participants employ both intrapsychic and interpersonal strategies. The results indicate that the followers of the indigenous Javanese religion can efficaciously maintain their positive identity in response to the negative stigma imposed by the surrounding Muslim people.

Keywords: coping strategies, identity threats, indigenous Javanese religion, Muslim people

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana penganut agama asli Jawa, yang dikenal dengan Javanisme atau Kejawen, mempertahankan identitasnya di tengah hegemoni identitas Muslim. Penelitian ini menggunakan studi kasus kualitatif. Partisipan yang terlibat dalam penelitian ini adalah pemimpin dan anggota inti dari kelompok penganut agama Jawa di Kabupaten Mojokerto, Jawa Timur, Indonesia. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan wawancara semiterstruktur dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Studi ini menemukan bahwa sebagian besar partisipan mengalami ancaman terhadap identitas mereka. Mereka menjadi sasaran stigma karena mempraktikkan ritual mistis dan percaya pada takhayul. Mereka dicap sebagai kuno, ketinggalan zaman, dan bahkan penyembah berhala. Untuk mengatasi ancaman atas status identitas, para partisipan menggunakan strategi pada level intrapsikis dan interpersonal. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemeluk agama asli Jawa dapat secara efektif mempertahankan identitas positifnya dalam menanggapi stigma negatif yang dibebankan oleh masyarakat Muslim di sekitarnya.

Kata kunci: agama Jawa, ancaman identitas, masyarakat Muslim, strategi koping

Introduction

Previous studies on Javanese indigenous belief, known as Javanism or Kejawen, generally used a Muslim frame and viewed this belief as one of the local Islamic variants in Indonesia (Mamahit, 2021; Nasir, 2019; Hilmy, 2018; Nashir & Jinan, 2018; Sulistiyono & Syato, 2016). Many Javanese people have been perceiving Islam as essentially foreign for centuries; thus, it has never been a part of their identity as Javanese (Koentjaraningrat, 1980; Stange, n. a). Studies that focus primarily on how the Javanese people who are practicing Javanese indigenous belief perceive themselves as a different and separated religious community from both Javanese Muslim society and Indonesian modern society, in general, have been rare until recently. This study was aimed at examining how the members of a Kejawen religious group reflect on their identity as a minority group amid the majority of Javanese people who are practicing Islam. This study also explores how they respond to the Muslim people's stereotypical labels and stigma toward them.

Based on the 2020 national census, Javanese people are the largest ethnic group in Indonesia with around 100 million or 40.1 percent of the total population (Leinbach et al., 2021). Most Javanese people who are inhabiting the central and eastern parts of Java Island identify themselves as Muslims; however, their religious beliefs and practices vary depending on the levels of syncretism they adhere to. Geertz (1973) stated that the religious tradition of Javanese people is a composite of Indian Hindu and Buddhism, Islam, and native indigenous animism and dynamism. He categorized Javanese society into three variants, namely Abangan (who believe in, and practice, the traditional Animistic-Hindu-Buddhist magical mystical beliefs), Santri (who faithfully adhere to the pure Islamic beliefs), and priyayi (the Javanese nobility who is closer to Abangan in terms of religious beliefs and practices). Of the three categories, it is the Abangan who are practicing the Javanese indigenous religion.

There are hundreds of indigenous religions in Indonesia. It is estimated that there are more than 400 ethnic-religious communities that cover between 750.000 and 12 million people throughout Indonesia (Marshall, 2018). Kejawen can be said as the largest indigenous belief in Indonesia since it is embraced by some Javanese people who are the most populous ethnic in Indonesia (Varagur, 2018). Even though the followers of Kejawen are quite large, the Kejawen communities are still marginalized in Indonesia today.

As a result of the insistence on modernity and the spread of global religions, specifically Islam, many Javanese people perceive their cultural identity and spirituality are threatened and strive to resist to preserve the Javanese indigenous belief. Like other local cultures, the Javanese belief and worldview tend to be pressured as a result of intense interaction with modernity and global culture (Kaul, 2012; Sairin, 2004; Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Thus, the current Javanese worldview is deemed unsuitable for modern times which causes its younger generation to become alien to their own culture (Endraswara, 2003; Suseno, 2001). As a consequence, the Javanese ceremonies, rites, and beliefs are gradually marginalized.

The development of Islam and Christianity also put pressure on Javanese indigenous beliefs (Ricklefs, 2008). Many Indonesians who embraced Islam began to refer to Islamic lifestyles with Middle Eastern patterns, and Indonesian Christians changed to adopt Western lifestyles (Smith, 2020; Ekopriyono, 2012). One of the indicators of the pressures on the Javanese beliefs and the success of Islamization in Java which was characterized by Ricklefs (2012) as more orthodox since 1970 is the diminution of the Javanese spiritual essence of Slametan. Slametan has been seen as the core ritual of Javanese beliefs (Geertz, 1960). In Javanese tradition, Slametan is a shared ritual activity involving food offerings and many people who usually sit together and chant prayers asking for forgiveness, blessing, and protection from God, ancestors, holy spirits, or supernatural powers (Boogert, 2017). Slametan is usually conducted to commemorate the critical life cycles such as birth, marriage, death, and other important life moments for Javanese society (Nasir, 2020). Beatty

(1999) reported his study in East Java and concluded that the dominance of monotheistic modern Islam was responsible for the disappearance of the Javanese essence in Slametan. Boogert (2017) asserted the same point when he said that the Slametan ritual has lost its Javanese essence because its original praying and offerings are recently renewed in Islamic praying and interpretation.

Historically, the resistance to external influences that threatened Javanese indigenous belief has been starting since the Islamization of Java in the 14th century which was characterized by tension and conflict (Ricklefs, 2012; 2006). The tension became more intense in the 19th century when modern Islamic movements gained momentum in the struggle of repelling Dutch colonialism and building a new state of Indonesia (Ricklefs, 2006). The next phase of the pressure occurred in 1965 when the Indonesian Communist Party was disbanded and banned. Abangan Javanese people were suspected as members or sympathizers of the party. As a result, a large number of Kejawen adherents converted to the official religions to avoid such accusations (Lubis, 2019). Indonesia only acknowledged six official religions, namely Islam, Christianity (Protestantism and Catholicism), Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. The adherents of Javanese beliefs have no other alternative except to choose one of the six official religions to be listed on their citizenship identity cards. Even since the Independence of Indonesia until recently, the children of the Kejawen followers were forced to learn the official religious education in public schools because there was no Javanese indigenous religion education available (Lubis, 2019). As a part of the resistance to the domination of Islam, the adherents of Javanese beliefs accept Islam as the outward manifestation or the formal identity listed in Citizenship Card but they maintain the essential values and ideals of Javanese culture and practice Javanese rituals in daily life (Koentjaraningrat, 1980).

However, there was a significant turn in 2017 when Indonesia's Constitutional Court ruled that people of indigenous religions or "beliefs" have the right to have their religions listed on their national ID cards. The Indonesian Ulama

Council, which is Indonesia's top Muslim clerical body, objected to the court decision and suggested that indigenous religions are cultural belief systems and should be distinguished from the official religions (Harsono, 2020). To respond to the objection, the Indonesian Government issued a regulation that states that the ID cards for the followers of indigenous religions will be distinguished from the followers of the six official religions. However, these two citizenship categories remain problematic and, even, raise concerns about whether the policy will allow the followers of indigenous religions to have the same level of constitutional protection, or it only continues the marginalization of the indigenous religion adherents (Butt, 2020).

While there are some Kejawen communities under different names, they are united in the same Javanese spirituality values (Suseno, 2001). The Javanese main value is the belief that human existence is unavoidably linked to the supernatural; therefore, magical thinking will direct their behaviors in daily life (Mulder, 1970). Kejawen is the belief about the existence of mythical objects such as spirits in animist beliefs and dynamism (Mulder, 1970). Its main characteristics are syncretic since it receives inputs from foreign religions including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. The teachings of Kejawen emphasize the attitude towards others and nature and view human life as closely connected to the cosmos of the universe. At the social level, the main ethics of Kejawen are maintaining the balance and harmonization of society.

The Paguyuban Budoyo (a pseudonym) is one of the Kejawen communities that supports its members to preserve the Javanese culture and practice Javanese indigenous beliefs. The group center is situated in a village in Mojokerto district, East Java. The group is well known for its traditional Javanese arts including wayang (a shadow puppet show), ludruk (a theatrical genre of East Javanese performance presented by comedians on a stage), karawitan (Javanese music using the traditional instruments such as gamelan and kendang), and macopat (Javanese song lyrics). The Paguyuban Budoyo has loyal members who participated in the

Javanese rituals and cultural activities. Its leader is considered to have a mystical power that can cure people of mental illness and serves people who come to ask for spiritual help to solve their daily life problems. The Paguyuban Budoyo group identity which is based on the Javanese cultural and spiritual values makes its members adopt a Javanese religious identity that is different from the wider Javanese society around them which generally adopts an Islamic identity. In this case, embracing Javanese cultural beliefs and rituals amid the dominant modern Islamic society has made the Paguyuban Budoyo members become a minority group both as a spiritual community and a social group.

Based on this issue, the present study aimed to reveal how the members of Paguyuban Budoyo perceived their identity as the Kejawen adherents who are practicing Javanese indigenous rituals amid the majority of modern Muslim society; and what strategies they used to alleviate the threats to their identity.

Theoretical Framework

This study used Social Identity Theory to understand how the members of a Javanese religious minority group perceive their identity as the result of their interactions with the majority of Muslim people. Based on the perspective of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Brown, 2020), individuals who belong to minority groups will develop a distinctive group social identity. Social identity is a part of the self that represents individuals as members of certain social groups that distinguishes them from other groups. Individuals gain social identity by adopting attributes that are shared with others based on gender, ethnicity, race, culture, and other group categories (Hogg, 2016). Based on the theoretical perspective, it can be assumed that Paguyuban Budoyo members, as a minority group, will have a distinctive identity that can be evaluated both positively and negatively by the dominant Muslim people.

Because of its distinct Javanese spirituality and rituals, the Paguyuban Budoyo is more likely to receive negative evaluations from the wider Muslim society (Harsono, 2020, Varagur, 2018). The negative evaluations will eventually

lead the Paguyuban Budoyo members to experience threats to their Javanese religious identity. Social identity threats occur when certain groups are viewed and evaluated negatively by larger groups because of their stereotypical characteristics (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012; Major & O'Brien, 2005). As the threats are aversive, it is assumed that the members of the Paguyuban Budoyo group will strive to seek strategies to cope with the threats. Breakwell (1986: 78) defines a coping strategy as "any activity, in thought and deed, which has as its goal the removal or modification of a threat to identity". The coping strategies can operate on the levels of intrapsychic, interpersonal, and inter-group depending on the nature of the threats. Breakwell (2010) also noted that the coping strategies employed by individuals to deal with identity threats are only meaningful when they are related to social beliefs and cultural expectations.

Method

The present study used a qualitative approach with a case study method. The focus of the study was to explore how the members of the Paguyuban Budoyo group experience the threats to their identity as adherents of Javanese beliefs, and the strategies they use to maintain their Javanese religious identity positively. According to Yin (2014), a case study is an appropriate method to understand the unique characteristics of a particular group such as the Paguyuban Budoyo. The Paguyuban Budoyo group has been operating for more than a decade before it was officially registered in 2004 as a social and cultural foundation. It is located in Trowulan, Mojokerto Regency, East Java.

Data were collected using observation and semi-structured interviews. The second researcher made some visits to the Paguyuban Budoyo community center for making a good rapport with potential participants. She also participated in several cultural and ritual activities organized by the Paguyuban Budoyo community namely the 1st Suro (the new year of the Javanese calendar) celebration and ruwatan (a set of mystical rituals to banish bad things from a person's life).

Observations have been conducted during the visits and participation, and field notes have been made to record the data.

Based on the results of observation, some participants were selected to be interviewed. The main criteria for the selection were the main roles they played in the Paguyuban Budoyo community and their participation in the Paguyuban Budoyo cultural activities and rituals. Five participants were selected and recruited for the interviews namely, in pseudonyms, Wijoyo (61 years old, the leader), Setyo (43 years old, a son of Wijoyo), Iwan (39 years old, Wijoyo's assistant), Sri (43 years old, the female member), and Fajar (49 years, the male member). The participants' ages ranged from 39 to 61 years.

Selected participants were interviewed at the Paguyuban Budoyo community center which lasted about 2-3 hours for each participant. The interviews were guided by the interview guidance that covers questions about how they see themselves as followers of Javanese beliefs, the stigma they experience, and the strategies they employ to cope with the stigma to maintain their positive identity. Before the interviews, all participants have been given a brief description of the study and the confidentiality of their data. All participants have given consent to participate in this study. Interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia; however, many Javanese language terms were used by participants in reporting their accounts in all transcripts. Regarding these language issues, the first and second authors were carefully checking the meaning and the Indonesian translation of the Javanese words used by participants. Both authors are Javanese and speak both Javanese and Indonesian languages.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. A thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Thematic analysis is a method for analyzing and reporting patterns or themes by organizing and categorizing the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). We use a data-driven approach in the process of data analysis to gain a better understanding of participants' real-life experiences.

Since this study focuses more on how the participants' perceptions of themselves and others concerning their minority identity as the Javanese religion followers, only recorded semi-structured interview data were used in the analysis stage. Data collected from observation, which represent more of the physical and social events related to the Javanese religious community, were only used as the references for the description of the background and profile of the Paguyupan Budoyo and its members.

To enhance the qualitative analysis validity, the first and second authors worked on the analysis separately. At the initial stage, the second author began to transcribe verbatim the recorded data and initiated the coding of data and identifying initial themes by reading and re-reading all transcriptions. Once this stage was completed, the first author independently examined the transcriptions, codes, and initial themes. In the next stage, the first author began to collate and refine the codes by returning to the original transcripts to check whether the themes had already reflected the general finding across the research participants. This procedure has been taken to provide an audit to assess the coherence of the themes and the rigor of the data analysis (Yardley, 2000). In addition, to guarantee the transparency of the analysis, the authors quote the extract of the original data in the result display so that the researchers' interpretation is grounded in the participants' accounts (Elliot et al., 1999).

Result

The findings of this study are categorized into two main themes, namely the threats to Javanese religious identity, and the strategies to cope with the identity threats.

Threats to Javanese Religious Identity

Most participants perceived that the Javanese beliefs are generally under the pressure of modernity. One participant (Fajar, 49 years) stated that: "While we are

here, the Javanese beliefs seem to be stuck. People rarely like the teachings of Kejawen." Setyo (43 years) also asserted that: "Javanese culture is now rarely taught in schools." Most participants perceived that Javanese people are recently no longer attracted to Javanese beliefs or Kejawen because its teachings are perceived as outdated and illogical. Setyo (43 years) said, "Now Kejawen is inferior to today's modern era, so giving young people an understanding (of Javanese values) is difficult." As a result, Kejawen adherents have difficulty introducing Javanese cultural and spiritual values to the Javanese people themselves. As reported by the Paguyuban Budoyo leader: "Today, Javanese people generally tend to follow the attitude of outsiders who are considered more advanced and modern. They lost the wisdom of Javanese attitude." (Wijoyo, 61 years)

The negative views toward the followers of the Javanese beliefs are increasingly reinforced by the stereotypes that appear on national television shows. The other participant (Sri, 46 years) asserted this by saying that 'the stories on TV, in a way, discredit it (the teachings of Kejawen).' This negative stereotype is mainly directed at the Javanese rituals such as using objects or offerings. As stated by Wijoyo: "It is said about offerings. Fanatics say that this is idolatrous, feeding demons, ghosts. There's onion, garlic, pepper, hazelnut. People don't understand that the offering is to give thanks to God." (Wijoyo, 61 years). The other participant also reported that some Muslim authorities in the surrounding area prevent them to burn incense at the tombs. Some even suggest eliminating the 1st Suro (Javanese New Year) festival. Iwan stated: "We are not allowed to burn incense in the grave, we are not allowed to do that. Then, the Suro celebration is asked to be discarded even though it belongs to Javanese people." (Iwan, 39 years). The other participant also asserts that the public tends to view Javanese rituals negatively. Sri stated that: "Incense is a means, for me and my friends, to connect with God. People outside misunderstand this. They are prejudiced that the incense is related to lost spirits, for summoning Satan." (Sri, 46 years)

Moreover, other Kejawen spiritual activities were also perceived by participants as inviting negative public views. Fajar (49 years) reported, "What is seen as negative by people is our rituals. We hold rituals to our ancestors." Therefore, adhering to the teachings of Kejawen makes the participants feel different. Sri (46 years) reported that her neighbors saw her differently when they knew she joined the Paguyuban Budoyo. She said, "At the first time, I felt that I was considered strange by other people." Sri experienced the feeling because she no longer attended services such as praying or other rituals in the mosque like her Muslim neighbors. Becoming a follower of Javanese beliefs also makes participants considered strange because they believe in superstition. As Iwan said:

> Once, there was a neighbor whose child cried all night and asked me (how to handle the crying baby). Because there is a Javanese story about it, I suggested she take her baby out to the middle of her house's terrace or courtyard. But the other neighbors were automatically busy gossiping because the baby is brought at night in the middle of the terrace. (They said) in addition to making noise, the baby can also catch a cold. (Iwan, 39 years)

Coping with the Identity threats

The negative views of the surrounding Muslim people towards the Paguyuban Budoyo members because of their Javanese beliefs cause negative experiences for the participants. To maintain their positive identity, they employ several strategies that operate at the intrapsychic and interpersonal levels.

Intrapsychic strategies

The intrapsychic strategies used by the participants of this study to deal with the negative views of surrounding society operate at the intrapsychic level, namely regulating their cognitive and emotional aspects. Most participants choose to ignore Muslim society's negative views. Iwan (39 years) reported his response: "I think we just need to do what should be done. Later people will understand and know for themselves what is right and wrong (about us)." Sri (46 years) also stated: "Let it go.

Later how I live now will be understandable for those people." The same response was shown by Wijoyo (61 years) by stating "If people criticize us, just listen. People talk about us negatively, let's just listen. Get yelled at by people, let's just accept it."

The other strategy adopted by the participants to respond to the negative labels is being confident with what they believe as Kejawen followers. Iwan (39 years) said, "We want to show that this (Javanese belief) is true. This is the cultural heritage of our ancestors." Fajar (49 years) also expressed confidence in Javanese beliefs: "People say that what I'm doing now is wrong, but I'm sure that what I'm doing is right. That is the belief of Javanese people who are truly Javanese." Iwan also stated that being consistent in Kejawen beliefs is the right strategy: "We need to remain consistent in the Kejawen beliefs. So, even though some people who do not understand the Kejawen view us negatively, we should not be bothered. We insist on maintaining the basis of Kejawen's beliefs" (Iwan, 39 years). The same point was emphasized by Wijoyo (61 years): "I am ready to be criticized. I always wait. Without criticism, I will not be able to improve. So, if I am reproached, I will not be angry."

The other intrapsychic strategy adopted by the participants in making positive social comparisons namely focuses on the more positive aspects of their group as a Javanese religious community compared to those of the surrounding Muslim people. One of the positive aspects of the Paguyuban Budoyo community suggested by Wijoyo (61 years) is the togetherness and kinship: "Our togetherness will enable us to do kindness to God's creatures and to live in harmony." Another positive aspect of being Kejawen is a sense of calm and security. As Iwan (39 years) reported, "So, after embracing Kejawen, I felt more calm and secure." The positive emotional experience reported by participants occurs because the essence of Javanese beliefs they perceive is for gaining inner strength. Fajar (49 years) said that "Kejawen itself is more inclined to spiritual matters, inner strength." The participants' confidence that Javanese beliefs are the treasure of their ancestors also

contributes to the participants' optimism. Iwan (39 years) asserted that: "It is inherited from our ancestors. This is the Javanese culture. It must not be lost and must be maintained."

Interpersonal strategies

The participants of this study also reported that they are making efforts to present their positive personal characteristics in a social relationship so that people can accept their existence. They show kindness to most people whatever the perception they have about the Paguyuban Budoyo group. Fajar (49 years) stated that: "We present ourselves to the surrounding people with our behaviors. We interact with them with politeness and noble character." Regarding people who reject the Javanese beliefs adhered by the Paguyuban Budoyo members, participants make them understand by approaching them personally. Wijoyo (61 years) expressed this stand: "Be nice. We approach them, no matter what. We give them understanding with courtesy to find the meeting point we want." These strategies are considered effective and they can be accepted by surrounding people, as reported by Sri (46 years): "Until recently, I have many friends, so I can socialize with people from the outside community. Even though I proclaimed that I am Kejawen."

In addition to maintaining positive attitudes and behaviors, the participants also used cultural performances as a medium to introduce their Javanese values. According to the participants, although the public tends to view Javanese rituals negatively, some of them still favor Javanese traditional arts and performances. The Paguyuban Budoyo group regularly participates in the Javanese cultural festivals in collaboration with the city government to celebrate the new year of the Javanese calendar (1st Suro). Common Javanese arts and rituals such as wayang, ludruk, and mass ruwatan are included in the festival. Some participants of this study claimed that the Paguyuban Budoyo has been playing an important role in cultural festivals. Iwan (39 years) said, "Paguyuban Budoyo is a pioneer of Kejawen, rituals, and

activities in the cultural festival in Mojokerto." Furthermore, the Paguyuban Budoyo group invites people from any background to learn Javanese arts such as karawitan and macopat in their community center without charge. The karawitan group owned by the Paguyuban Budoyo is well known enough that it is regularly invited by many people in the surrounding villages to celebrate important activities such as wedding celebrations.

In addition to cultural performances and musical art, the Paguyuban Budoyo group also serves traditional healing based on Javanese spirituality to the public primarily for mental illness and daily life problems. The Paguyuban Budoyo supports all people from various backgrounds of beliefs. Fajar (49 years) stated that "Many people are asking for help, even though the person is a Muslim, a Christian, or a Buddhist." To date, the Paguyuban Budoyo has accommodated and treated dozens of people with mental illness at no charge. Under the participants' recognition, the treatments they did were not charged a fee because they want to help others for the sake of following the teachings of Javanese beliefs.

Discussion

The study reveals that the representation of Javanese rituals in public opinion circulated among Muslim people in Indonesia is perceived by participants of this study as discrediting the Javanese beliefs. This eventually increase the Muslim's negative perception of the adherents of Kejawen. The participants reported that they experience some negative evaluations from surrounding Muslim society because of their Javanese religious identity. All participants perceived that the wisdom of Javanese teachings and rituals is underestimated by the majority of Muslims who hold orthodox Islam. Javanese beliefs and rituals they are practicing are seen as illogical and obsolete. The participants were also accused of having mythical beliefs and superstitions because of conducting spiritual offerings and using incense in their rituals. While the participants insist that the offering and incense is a symbol of delivering gratitude to God and honoring ancestors, most

Muslim people surrounding them consider the rituals to be associated with spirits such as Satan or demons. The rituals which become the core of Javanese religious identity such as making offerings, burning incense, and ruwatan are seen as idolatrous and the acts of polytheism by Muslims so that the rituals tend to be degraded and rejected.

This finding confirms the idea that the Javanese people who are practicing Javanese beliefs perceive themselves as different from Muslim people (Koentjaraningrat, 1980; Stange, n.a). This finding also seems to contradict the study conducted by Sulistiyono and Syato (2016) which concludes that the typology of Islam and Javanese culture is not contradictory but dialectical since Kejawen practices are by Islamic mysticism. Indeed, the core value of Javanese beliefs is the search for spiritual purification and the ultimate experience of unity of human beings and God as that of Islamic mysticism (Koentjaraningrat, 1980). However, in the perspective of the participants of this study, even though Kejawen and Islam may have the same essence and purpose of using religious rituals as a way to communicate with God, Islam and Kejawen are different and cannot be united since they conduct different, even contradictory, rituals in practicing religion. Additionally, the perception of being different from Muslim society among the study participants represents more how they respond to the negative evaluation from their surrounding Muslim people towards them. In this case, Islamic beliefs as held by most Muslim surrounding the participants are seen as a threat to the existence of Javanese beliefs.

The negative responses towards the adherents of Kejawen inflicted by dominant Muslim society occur because of the obvious difference in values and rituals between Kejawen and Islam. Javanese beliefs and rituals are perceived negatively by dominant modern Muslim society, and this eventually makes its adherents receive negative stereotypes. Based on Social Identity Theory, negative views from the dominant outgroup towards them can lead to unpleasant experiences and will reduce self-esteem (Brown, 2020). The threats to social identity

such as negative stereotypes or prejudice towards social groups will devalue the group's status that may negatively impact its members' well-being (Vang et al., 2019). Participants of this study who received negative evaluations from the wider society because of their Javanese religious identity reported unpleasant emotional states. Thus, participants are aware of the threats to their Javanese religious identity status. The awareness of the threats leads participants to use some strategies to cope with the threats to maintain their positive social identity. According to Social Identity Theory, every individual tends to seek a positive identity to maintain self-esteem and other positive emotions (Brown, 2020).

This study found that participants employ two main strategies to cope with identity threats. The first strategy operates within the intrapersonal level, namely ignoring the threats, strengthening the beliefs and group membership, and being open to outsiders' curiosity and criticism. Another strategy operates at the interpersonal level, namely boosting positive personal characteristics when interacting with surrounding people, promoting Javanese positive values through cultural festivals, and providing traditional healing as well as social and spiritual services for people in need based on Javanese beliefs.

The participants use the intrapersonal strategy primarily to respond to negative labels and stigma from the wider society by managing their emotions and thoughts to prevent the negative impacts of the social stigma on their well-being (Major & O'Brien, 2005). This strategy enables them to ignore the stigma and insist that the negative attitude of people towards them is caused by the people's misunderstanding of Javanese rituals. The psychological strategy of denying the accusation from the dominant outgroup members by re-evaluating their negative responses as caused by their misunderstanding can be categorized as passive or emotional problem coping (Little, 2018). This strategy is useful primarily for members of a minority group to maintain their well-being by avoiding overt conflict with the dominant outgroup.

Additionally, the participants of this study seem to gain personal well-being by holding to the collective identity as a group. This represents the effectiveness of the Paguyuban Budoyo group in instilling a collective identity in its members. Simon (2004) states that by emphasizing the collective identity, individuals will gain social support and solidarity from the ingroup's members. Concerning the negative labels or stigma experienced by the religious minority groups, Mark et al. (2019) reported that the wider society's misunderstanding and ignorance sometimes make them feel offended or disappointed. However, as predicted by Ellemers et al. (2002), the feeling of offense and disappointment does not lead to anger or contempt because they are aware of their weak group compared to the dominant outsiders. In the context of religious minority groups, to cope with the negative psychological impacts, the members tend to rely more on the social bonding and belonging of the religious communities. One of the reasons behind this tendency is, that, unlike secular groups, the religious group provides its members with shared worldviews, mutual care and support, and closeness in status (Kortt et al., 2015). Thus, it can be said that as one of the religious identities, the Paguyuban Budoyo Javanese spiritual group offers a sense of stability and solid ground for its members which becomes important when their sense of security has been undermined by dominant modern Muslim society (Kinnvall, 2004). Individuals who are highly identified themselves with a religious group will share not only common beliefs but also group membership that is central to their self-concepts; thus, have a strong bond with other ingroup members (Cameron, 2004; Ysseldyk et al., 2010).

The other strategy used by participants to prevent the Paguyuban Budoyo Javanese religious identity from being tainted by negative public perceptions is to present the members' positive personal characteristics. As members of a Kejawen group, participants try to behave positively and be open-minded to most people even though they have negative views towards the Paguyuban Budoyo group. The participants claim to be willing to accept anyone who has an interest in the teachings of Kejawen. The purpose of this stand is to attract the sympathy of

outsiders toward the Paguyuban Budoyo Kejawen group. For instance, Wijoyo (61 yr) said that, if needed, an approach should be taken towards people who do not like the followers of Javanese beliefs. The aim is to find common ground between them that later can make Javanese beliefs adherents be accepted by surrounding Muslim society. This method is part of an active coping strategy, which is changing the situation to solve the problem. Active coping is the process of taking action by removing stressors or eliminating the effects caused by the stressors (Caroll, 2013).

As one of the Kejawen groups, the Paguyuban Budoyo has received some criticism from the Muslim people. The Paguyuban Budoyo is accused of doing idolatrous rituals. In line with the Javanese values, the Paguyuban Budoyo members respond to the criticism with the acceptance and the intention to make a dialogue to find the common ground. Ekopriyono (2012) explained that the Javanese culture's characteristics always put forward the harmony of social relations and avoiding conflicts. The negative perceptions of the Muslim people are perceived by participants of this study as caused by misunderstandings the people have about the Kejawen rituals. To deal with this situation, the strategy used by the followers of Kejawen is to promote Kejawen values through cultural performances. This strategy is called the social change strategy which is taken by doing social actions to change the negative views of other groups to be more positive towards the ingroup (Simon, 2004). Iwan (39 yr) said that Paguyuban Budoyo has been recognized by society as a pioneer of cultural performance in Mojokerto city. The Javanese cultural performances are regularly held to celebrate the Javanese new year (the 1st Suro). The Javanese cultural festivals are seen as effective media to preserve the Javanese values and spirituality among the Javanese people.

Another social change strategy used by the Paguyuban Budoyo members is giving services to people in need primarily in the cases of mental health problems. Using the Javanese spiritual approach, the leader of the group treats and cures the clients at no cost. The Paguyuban Budoyo community also invites young people to learn Javanese music and songs from them free of charge. This prosocial action

strategy is intended to increase the positive social perception of surrounding Muslim people towards the Paguyuban Budoyo group and its members as the adherents of Javanese beliefs. Previous studies showed that helping people from outgroup is an appropriate strategy for the stigmatized or threatened group to restore their positive identity because it can provide the meaning of the ingroup's existence, and promote the positive impression of larger society towards the ingroup's members (Jonas et al., 2002; van Leeuwen & Tauber, 2009; 2012; van Leeuwen, 2007). The Paguyuban Budoyo members seem to be aware of the effectiveness of the humanitarian approach in promoting the positive status of the group and its Javanese values to the dominant Muslim society.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the findings that the participants of this study, the followers of the indigenous Javanese religion, are experiencing stigma such as being perceived as irrational, obsolete, and even idolatrous people because they believe in superstition and myths and conduct animistic rituals. As the stigma causes threats to their identity as Javanese religion adherents, participants seek to employ some strategies to maintain their positive identity. The coping strategies cover intrapersonal and interpersonal levels. While intrapersonal strategies involve cognitive appraisal and emotion regulation to overcome the stressors and their impacts, interpersonal strategies operate at the level of social relations. The interpersonal strategy is characterized by the active strategies to cope with stigma by increasing positive relationships with others and promoting positive values of Javanese cultural beliefs in the public arena through cultural festivals and traditional healing.

Suggestion

It can be suggested from this study that the adherents of Javanism may still experience the negative stigma imposed by the mainstream Muslim society even though their religious identity has been restored by the decree of the Indonesian

constitutional court in 2017. Authorities should not only accommodate their indigenous religious identity to be listed on the national ID cards by the mandate of the constitutional court, but also provide social and psychological support to help them maintain their well-being.

Further research is suggested to explore the topic of indigenous Javanese religious identity based on the mystical sects they adhere to, considering Javanism has many spiritual groups that are unique from one another. A quantitative study on a large sample with the topic of perception of identity threats among adherents of Javanism also can be conducted to understand the similarities of their experiences as adherents of the religion of Java.

Authors' contributions

MS and NZP designed the study and analyzed data, NZP performed data collection, and MS wrote the paper. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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