KIAI AND ADHERENTS RELATIONS IN THE CONTEMPORARY COMMODIFICATION

Moh. Ali Aziz
Da’wa and Communication Faculty, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia
malzis@yahoo.com

Abstract: Kiai is an agent of change for the Islamic community in the land of Java, Indonesia. The status of kiai is pinned as a form of respect for his charismatic leadership for his adherents. The relation between the kiai and his adherents in the context of contemporary Islamic preaching (da’wa) can be studied through social exchange theory. This theory is relevant to da’wa activities involving the relationship between preachers and da’wa partners. Preachers involve attributes and statuses that are well packaged, so that da’wa partners get satisfaction. da’wa partners sacrifice times, properties, and energies to participate in da’wa activities. When modernization breaks through da’wa activities, preachers need an intermediary called a commodification agent of religion. Finally, da’wa activity is determined by the commodification agent, not the kiai as a preacher. The exchange of kiai with adherents involves the commodification of religious agents in two ways; attribute and status. Status is in the form of the role of kiai, which includes knowledge, example, and dedication. All exchange materials are processed by the commodification agent through media means; institutions, teaching assemblies, and houses of worship. Commodification agents can take the forms of committees, management of institutions, media managers, event organizers, or kiai assistants. The exchange of kiai produced a message of preaching, whether in the form of sound, images, or both sound and images.

Keywords: Kiai, adherents, commodification, contemporary da’wa.


Kata Kunci: Kiai, jamaah, komodifikasi, dakwah kontemporer.
A. Introduction

The kiai is an agent of change for the Javanese Islamic community. The status of the kiai is pinned as a form of respect for his charismatic leadership. The kiai’s leadership is not only played in his religious field, but he is also played outside the religious field. The position of the kiai is more than just a religious figure, although he overcomes everything with a religious approach. The great role of the kiai demands deep respect for his congregation. The participation of these pilgrims is militant. Therefore, the pattern of the relationship between the kiai and his congregation is paternalistic.

The militancy of participation in charismatic leadership is a high form of willingness. The objectives and expectations of the adherents are materially difficult to find, so the relation of the kiai and his congregation is always biased in the sociological approach. Likewise, the aims and objectives of the kiai on the relation can be materially explored, although the results tend to be biased. The basis of the relationship between the kiai and the congregation is karelaan. This is difficult to analyze sociologically. This relation experiences a shift in values from immaterial to matter. As a result, willingness changes and becomes an exchange. In Sociology, exchange theory is included in the paradigm of social behavior. The paradigm that departs from this psychological approach views the environment as human behavior as well as the target of change in human behavior. In other words, a reciprocal relationship exists between the agent and the structure. In some cases, the kiai’s behavior is influenced by the structure of the pilgrims. However, the behavior of pilgrims can also be influenced by the structure of a kiai. This paper will analyze the relationship between the kiai and his congregation in the context of contemporary da’wa. This relationship is built through a partnership relationship with mutual expectations. For this reason, exchange theory is considered relevant as its theoretical basis. Before this analysis is put forward, the description of exchange theory needs to be discussed first.

B. Exchange of Relations between the Kiai and the Adherents

The expression of exchange is commonly used in economics, namely the exchange of goods or services with goods or services (barter). Money is also called a medium of exchange, because it replaces the barter system. In Psychology, exchange is used to analyze individual behavior. He assumed that the motive for behavior was determined by the expected acquisition. In management science, exchange theory is developed in x and y theory. According to this theory, motivation to work in organizations is influenced by rewards and punishments. Theories in scientific management flow are tested through rabbit behavior. These animals are threatened with small sticks and stimulated with carrot food, so the theory is described by the terms stick and carrot.

The social exchange theory was developed by John Thibault and Harlod Kelley (1959), George Homans (1961), Richard Emerson (1962), and Peter Blau (1964). Thibault and Kelley are psychologists who look at relationships between individuals. According to this theory, each individual moves to establish relationships with other individuals. In this relationship, each individual exchanges sacrifices in the form of cost with the hope of obtaining profits or results. The results of this relationship are seen as reward (punishment) or punishment (punishment), so that this type of relationship is stated by each individual. This statement is used to compare or search for relationships with others. Thibault and Kelley also conclude the social exchange model which is expressed as a transformation of motivation, namely "for a dyadic relationship to be viable it must provide rewards and/or economies in costs which compare favorably with those in other competing relationships or activities available to the two individuals" (In order for the dyadic relationship to work, it must provide rewards and/or economics at a favorable cost compared to those in other competing relationships or activities available to two individuals.

The theory of social exchange is used to look at the transfer of an individual's relationship to another individual or the affiliation of a group. An individual can form a relationship as long as he receives satisfaction from that relationship. When he feels that something is unsatisfactory, the individual can transfer his relationship to another individual or group. Of course, this satisfaction is
measured through the experience gained from the individual himself or the experience of others received by the individual. This theory can be described as follows.

George Caspar Homans developed the theory of exchange in the paradigm of social behavior. Homans made six prepositions. **First**, a successful proposition, that is, individual behavior is determined by repetition of past experience. The more often an individual receives a gift for a particular action, the individual will repeat the action. Likewise, the individual will avoid an action that is at risk of punishment as is his past experience. The more often the punishment received, the stronger the individual to abandon the action. The experience can come from the individual himself or the experience of others observed by the individual.

**Second**, the proposition of stimulus, i.e. the individual will act in accordance with previous similar actions. The more similar the reward an individual has for his actions, the stronger the individual is to take the same action. Likewise, individuals will avoid actions that risk similar penalties in the past. The more similar an individual's suffering is, the stronger the individual is not to repeat it. As such, current and future individual actions are influenced by past actions.

**Third**, reposition the value of an action, i.e. the impression of a gift or punishment obtained by an individual. This impression is subjective which is felt differently by each individual. The higher the individual's assessment of the prize he received in the past, the stronger the individual is to repeat his actions in the future. The stronger the impression of suffering due to punishment received by the individual, the stronger the individual is to avoid it. Gifts are actions with positive values, while punishment is actions with negative values. Prizes can be in the form of materials such as money or immaterial such as advice or help.

**Fourth**, deprivation-boredom prepositions, that is, individuals who are tired of gifts received. The result is that individuals are less impressed by the same prize, so individuals are reluctant to take action. The reluctance is also influenced by the small profit if an action is carried out. Benefits are a number of gifts that are reduced in cost. In this case, the cost of behavior is a lost gift, because the planned action is not done. Therefore, Homans formulated the proposition: "the greater the benefits a person receives as a result of his actions, the more likely he is to carry out those actions".\(^{518}\)

**Fifth**, excessive propositions, namely extraordinary experiences in the past will further influence the certainty of future actions. This experience gives the most profound impression. Individuals are almost certain to repeat their behavior which is influenced by gifts that exceed their expectations. On the contrary, the individual will avoid an action as hard as he can, because past penalties exceed his estimated limit. An individual's anger will arise when he is reminded of his extreme suffering. This fairness limit measure is calculated according to other people's experiences.

---

Sixth, the proposition of rationality, namely the opportunity to realize the prize or avoidance of punishment becomes an individual consideration. The greater the chances, the greater the chances for action. The easier the achievement of a prize, the greater the implementation of an action.

The Homans study above is still at the micro level. Peter M. Blau continues at the macro level. Blau envisions four successive steps, namely exchanges or transactions between individuals which increase to the differentiation of status and power. Furthermore, it leads to the legitimacy and organization that spreads the seeds of opposition and change.519 These steps show Blau's attention to the drive of individuals to join social groups, namely the desire to obtain social rewards.520

People are attracted to a group when they feel that their relationship gives them more appreciation. He also wants to be accepted. For that, he must give awards to other group members, so that he is impressed by his participation.521 The desired goal can be in the form of extrinsic rewards, such as money, goods, or services, or intrinsic, such as love, honor, or beauty.

Because the contribution of individuals in the group is different, then differences in status begin to develop. Those who can give more rewards to the group will most likely be chosen as leaders. Thus, group members will be differentiated.522 Differentiation in leaders and followers creates the need for integration, because of the possibility of conflict for usurping positions. To safeguard this, most group members must withdraw from competition in order to develop bonds of mutual friendship.

As stratification develops increasingly complex, the ties of association will be enshrined through power relations rather than through social exchange.523 An exchange relationship can be balanced if there is bargaining power and unbalanced if there is coercion with negative sanctions. Individuals who need the services of others must provide the following alternatives: (a) he can provide mutual exchange, (b) he can submit to others who provide assistance, (c) he can force someone to provide services, (d) he can survive and live on without getting anything.524 These four dependencies place the provider in the position of power.

In complex organizations, obedience to power is important. A legitimate and obeyed order of authority is called authority. The leader exercises his power based on the authority he has. The group voluntarily accepts power as a binder to group members. A leader chooses between authority and social acceptance. If he prioritizes authority, then he will create uncomfortable feelings for the lower layers. If he prioritizes acceptance, then he will be largely governed by the lower layers.

Authority is based on shared norms that outline behavior in a collectivity. These norms force individuals to obey the rules of those in power. Social norms replace indirect exchange for direct exchange. A community member who obeys community norms will receive recognition from the community. Even though groups have similar values and norms, specific norms can experience conflicts, because they conflict with the goals of other sub-groups. This conflict will lead to opposition, because there are two values of collectivity that are contradictory and cannot be resolved by social exchange.

The dynamics of social life always come from the strength of the challenger. If power is exercised fairly and moderately, then the individual will feel comfortable in taking refuge under the influence of the leader. However, if power is not exercised fairly and moderately, then opposition that challenges dominant power will emerge. Seedlings of conflict development begin to grow.

519 Ibid., 369.
523 Margaret M. Poloma, *Sosiologi Kontemporer*, 83.
C. Relation of Kiai and Adherents: from Personification to Commodification

Social exchange involves two or more parties. Each party hopes to gain profits or reduce losses. In this connection, the kiai becomes an authority party, so he has the opportunity to do hegemony. Religious authority which is considered sacred makes the kiai a charismatic figure. Max Weber describes charismatic figures as "resting on devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of normative patterns revealed or ordained by him". Weber's description above shows that charismatic figures have three elements. First, extraordinary devotion to religion or everything that is sacred. Second, personality is exemplified by many people, so that the title of hero is pinned. Third, the recognition and appointment of charisma comes from many people. In Islamic language, charismatic figures have three missions, ijtihad, jihad, and mujahadah. The concept of ijtihad shows that the kiai has a deep knowledge of the sources of Islamic teachings. He has the authority to interpret the holy text of al-Qu'an and Hadith. Jihad is the spirit of struggle shown by the kiai in establishing Islam. This struggle is carried out unconditionally, even the kiai sacrifices energy, mind, time, family, property, and life. Mujahadah is the closeness of the kiai's relationship with Allah and the Messenger of Allah. This is marked by ritual worship conducted sincerely. Perseverance in ritual worship has an impact on social worship that spreads peace among humankind.

The greatness of the charismatic kiai influences everything related to him. Respect is not only directed at the figure of the kiai, but also his family members, even the objects he wears. The kiai attribute which is an inanimate object is considered a living creature. The rings, robes, turban, prayer beads, sticks, glasses, books, pens, vehicles, houses, sermon texts, and all the objects that the kiai have attracted many people to have them. By borrowing the term majaz, these objects become personifications, namely the shadow of inanimate objects as living things. The added value in objects belonging to the kiai can increase the selling price.

Other ownership that is used as a personification is the work of the kiai, in the form of ideas, struggles and dedication. The work of the kiai's thoughts is in the form of books, recorded lectures, aphorisms, song lyrics, and even works of art. The work of the kiai's struggle is in the form of residential buildings, houses of worship, Islamic boarding schools, religious social organizations, and various business fields. Meanwhile, the work of the kiai's devotion is not in the form of material objects, but rather the effects of works of thought and struggle. All of the kiai's ownership is the capital of social exchange. In the framework of service, all ownership is issued to hope for God's pleasure. The kiai does not expect rewards from God's creatures, because this is considered a disgrace.

A direct meeting between charismatic kiai and worshipers is connected by a person or group called an agent. Accommodation, study schedule, location arrangement, pilgrim mobilization, to the recording and broadcasting are carried out by the agent. The kiai himself is sometimes represented by a manager who is in contact with the event organizer (EO). This party acts as an agent. Most agent tasks are marketing. This agent began his task with the promotion of the kiai. He introduced the figure of the kiai to worshipers. The data about the kiai is managed in such a way that pilgrims are interested in the figure. From this side, the commodification of the kiai emerged. Therefore, the kiai does not carry out commodification, but rather he is made a commodification, precisely the commodification of religion.

Commodification comes from the word commodity, which is goods or services that can be used as business objects. Goods or services that are the object of business are called commodities. An item or service has not been declared a commodity before it is offered to consumers. This offer means the granting of value for an item or service. Initially, these goods or services have no value. The value depends on the agreement between supply and demand. It can be of high value if the demand is greater than the supply. The value of the commodity follows the market price. Thus,

commodification is an effort to market goods or services that depart from the production process to consumption. In short sentences, commodification is "the process of changing use values into exchange rates".526

Religion used as a commodity is produced according to market tastes. Religious products can be in the form of supplies for religious activities or religious guidance services. In a production system, inputs, processes, and outputs apply to religious products. The inputs are in the form of raw material capital (raw-input) and equipment used for production (instrument input). The process was through techniques, methods, to strategies. The output of religious products also uses yield targets, time and capital. In short, the commodification of religion is inseparable from business management, both the exploration of management components and the effectiveness and efficiency of management functions. The entire managerial management is carried out by the kiai's agent. Thus, the commodification of religion is the commercialization of religion or changing faith and symbols into commodities that can be traded for profit.

The commodification of religion was born, because of the consumption of religious symbols. The consumption of this religious symbol contains five supporting factors. First, the consumption of religious symbols creates objects from religion that can be sold and consumed through social processes. It is also spread with social networks that exist in the community. A simple example is the sale of religious books. Second, the consumption of religious symbols creates a defense of religion in the social community. Activities or rituals that are usually done are given objectification. After that, he got a defense like a product. Third, the consumption of religious symbols creates religious performances/shows. Fourth, the consumption of religious symbols is used as a land for profit seeking and the search for psychological tranquility. Fifth, the consumption of religious symbols serves as a rational service developer. This is influenced by modernization theories such as McDonalization. Religious practices or activities must be created as rational as possible, so that they can be accepted by urban communities.527

The commodification of religion uses religion as a product or business strategy. Religious products that are used as business commodities come from religious teachings that require business activities. Business activities are regulated by religion as relationships between human beings in meeting their individual needs. Religious teachings about business can be in the form of an ethos that inspires religious adherents to run a business. In Khusniati's study, Tablighi Jamaat had a high ethos. In fact, all this time they have been impressed as a group that pays little attention to worldly affairs. They are able to use religious teachings as motivators.528 Another manifestation is ethics that contains moral values, so that business activities are directed towards goodness. In addition to ethos and ethics, religious teachings also take the form of business strategies. This can be illustrated through several business decisions by proponents of religious teachings. In Islam, not a few traditions contain the practice of the Prophet in business, such as traditions about the prohibition of hoarding essential goods, traditions that prohibit goods without looking at market prices, or traditions about models for agricultural products. This practice was carried out directly by the Messenger of Allah and by the Companions with the approval of the Prophet.

On the other hand, a blend of religion and business will produce two ethical values. Business can be oriented to good morals if it is accompanied by religion. In this case, the determinant variable is religion. The assumption is that the higher the religious value practiced in business, the higher the level of business success. Thus this is termed the statement: good ethics, good business. When

the values of honesty as religious teachings are practiced in business, then trust appears in consumers. Finally, business honesty can turn consumers into buyers, even customers or business partners. Likewise, religious values will live dynamically when they are driven through business. In this case, the determinant variable is business. Religious teachings about philanthropy such as zakat, alms, infaq, and endowments require assets obtained through business activities. Therefore, the assumption is that the higher the level of business success, the greater the practice of religious teachings. This assumption can be stated with the sentence: good business, good ethics.\textsuperscript{529}

The commodification of religion is related to the theory of social exchange, because the commodification of religion is an act of exchange between religious commodities with expected satisfaction. Motive is one of the elements of exchange theory. Other elements are units of analysis, benefits or benefits, and social endorsement.\textsuperscript{530}

When social exchange is directed towards economic or business exchange, then it can be patterned redistribution or reciprocity. Redistribution is "the movement of goods or services from parties who are politically at the bottom position to those who are at the top position as holders of economic and political authority".\textsuperscript{531} Redistribution requires an asymmetrical relationship. If the relationship is symmetrical, the reciprocal exchange is called reciprocity. In carrying out the commodification of religion, religious leaders can make economic exchanges with worshipers who are under their guidance or with others who are not part of their congregation.

At present, propaganda activities are inseparable from the commodification of religion. Clerics or religious leaders are brought together with worshipers through program committees, administrators of da’wa and education institutions, or media managers. Congregational culture comes to the kiai or religious leaders for periodic recitation without intermediary agents which is difficult to find. Therefore, the level of satisfaction of pilgrims is more determined by the commodification of agents than kiai or religious leaders. This can be described in the following groove.

![Figure 2. Systemic Da’wa Flow](image)

In the perspective of social exchange theory, the plot picture above includes a form of generalized exchange, because the exchange of the kiai with worshipers involves the commodification agent of religion. Things that are exchanged are attributes and status. Attributes include objects attached to the kiai. Status is a form of the role of the kiai which includes science, example, and devotion. All exchange material is processed by the commodification agent using media, institutions, assemblies of taklim, and houses of worship. Commodification agents can be in the form of a committee, agency management, media manager, Event Organizer, or kiai assistant. The exchange of the kiai produced a message of preaching, whether in the form of sound, images, or both. In addition, the figure of the kiai also gives the impression of preaching, such as admiration, respect, or longing. Finally, the effects of the exchange flow to the congregation, which is between satisfied and dissatisfied. Pilgrims who are satisfied with this exchange will follow the mission of the kiai again. Meanwhile, pilgrims who are not satisfied will leave da’wa and look for other alternatives. This process of preaching is referred to as systematic preaching.

D. Closing

The theory of social exchange is relevant to da’wa activities that involve the relationship between preachers and missionary partners. In delivering the message of da’wa, preachers involve attributes and status that are packaged properly, so that missionary partners get satisfaction. Preaching partners also sacrifice time, property, and energy to come to preaching activities. When modernization breaks through propaganda activities, preachers also need intermediaries called agents of the commodification of religion. Finally, da’wa activity is determined by the commodification agent, not the kiai as a preacher.

Bibliography


