

Interrelation of Religion, Culture, and Technology

Winarno

UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan

E-mail: Winarno@gmail.com

Abstract

The rapid development of science and technology (Science and Technology) has had an impact on the development of production, transportation and communication systems. There is hardly any area of life that has not been influenced by these advances. The problems in this article are: 1. How are Religion, Culture and Technology Interrelated ? 2. What are the implications of the interrelation of religion, culture and technology?. The aim of this research is: To analyze the interrelation of religion, culture and technology, to analyze the implications of the interrelation of religion, culture and technology. Meanwhile, the uses of this research are as follows: Theoretically, it can increase knowledge, especially the Interrelation of Religion, Culture and Technology. For anyone who needs it. Meanwhile, practically it can be a guide for teachers in increasing their insight into the Interrelation of Religion, Culture and Technology. This article uses qualitative descriptive research and field research. Data collection methods through observation and interviews. The data analysis technique for this research uses data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results are that the Interrelation of Religion, Culture and Technology or Science and Technology influences a person's perspective and attitude towards religion. The role of religion, culture and the function of technology is starting to strengthen because it is not uncommon for religion and culture to be very unable to anticipate advances in science and technology. Advances in science and technology can cause modern humans to be so optimistic and confident that they can explain all natural phenomena in detail, scientifically and rationally. Facts have proven that technology, which is the implication and application of science, has made a clear contribution and convenience to the progress and prosperity of modern human life.

Keywords: *Interrelation, Religion, Culture, Technology*

A. Introduction

The rapid development of science and technology (Science and Technology) has had an impact on the development of production, transportation and communication systems. There is hardly any area of life that has not been influenced by these advances. In plain view, the development of science and technology with all the products produced has an influence on lifestyle. This change in lifestyle is strikingly visible among young people.

The development of science and technology and changes in lifestyle among young people have an influence on young people's views and attitudes towards religion. Questions regarding the role and function of religion are starting to become stronger because it is not uncommon for religion to be very unable to anticipate advances in science and technology. Advances in science and technology can cause modern humans to be so optimistic and confident that they can explain all natural phenomena in detail, scientifically and rationally. Facts have proven that technology, which is the implication and application of science, has made a clear contribution and convenience to the progress and prosperity of modern human life. If science and technology can explain various life events convincingly, is religion still needed?

The development of science and technology is the clearest presentation of the will and power of humans as masters of the universe and their lives. The success of science and technology in solving various life problems makes humans aware of their own autonomy and abilities. Many modern people feel that they do not need divine intervention to solve the problems of life in this world. In fact, quite a few people openly deny the divine because they think that the divine is just a human imagination. This also happens in the academic world. Not a few students doubt the role of religion or even openly state that faith and religion are no longer needed. Humans who have secretly or openly abandoned God have embraced a new religion, namely belief in the latest technology that guarantees a brighter future. Even in developed countries like Europe, religion is no longer of interest to the majority of citizens. For believers, this phenomenon is certainly disturbing and a challenge to be accountable for their faith.

The development of science and technology is an ambivalent reality. On the one hand, science and technology helps humans to develop individual and collective life: transportation, multimedia-communication, improving educational facilities and quality, and so on. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that science and technology also has great potential for destroying life and the universe. The ferocity of nuclear weapons and bombs is a small part of the negative consequences of the development of science and technology that we can see with the naked eye. Apart from that, air and water pollution as well as the damage/destruction of the natural world (forests), which from year to year is truly increasingly terrifying, are the negative consequences of technological development and industrialization as well as human ambition to control (exploit) the universe.

The development of science and technology creates inner conflict in the lives of many young people. This inner conflict occurs especially among students whose religion is only inherited from family tradition and whose faith is not deeply rooted. There are also some students who cannot reconcile their scientific views with their religious beliefs, so they choose to become atheists and feel that they no

longer need religion. This second group attends religious education courses only to fulfill obligations/presence and for the sake of grades.¹

On the one hand, the author is aware of the responsibility to develop the morality of young people. On the other hand, the author also realizes that the development of the morality of young people today cannot be separated from the reality of the development of science and technology. It is young people who absorb the most results from developments in science and technology. They are also directly affected negatively by the use of science and technology products. Growing the morality of young people is important considering that young people are in control of the development of science and technology in the future. That is why it is necessary to study here the relationship between religion and science and technology, how this relationship should be viewed and how to develop the morality of young people in the context of the relationship between the two.

B. Methods

Research Design

The type of research used in this research is library research. This study will attempt to reveal new concepts by reading and recording information that is relevant to needs. Reading materials include books, journal texts, scientific magazines and research results related to the title of this scientific work.² Thus, the discussion in this journal is carried out based on a literature review of books relating to the Interrelation of Religion, Culture and Technology. The approach used in this research is a qualitative descriptive critical analysis approach. Bagdan and Taylor, as quoted by Moelong, define qualitative methodology as a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and their observable behavior.³ The definition of descriptive research is research that describes the traits or characteristics of certain individuals, circumstances, symptoms, or groups.⁴ This approach is used because the data collection in this research is qualitative in nature and this research does not intend to test hypotheses, in the sense of only describing and critically analyzing a problem studied by researchers, namely the interrelation of religion, culture and technology.

Primary data sources are the main sources. In this research the main source concerns the interrelation of religion, culture and technology. Secondary data sources are supporting data sources. The secondary data sources in this research

¹Riberu,J.,”Mencari Tulang Punggung Kemandirian pada Ajaran Iman”, *Prisma* 14 (1985).hlm. 75 -85..

² Suharsimi Arikunto, *Manajemen Penelitian*, (Jakarta : PT. Renika Cipta, 1993), hlm. 311.

³ Lexi J. Moelong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*, (Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosda Karya, 1989), hlm. 3.

⁴ Mudji Santoso, *Hakekat, Peranan, dan Jenis-jenis Penelitian Pada Pembangunan Lima Tahun Ke VI*, dalam Imron Arifin (ed), *Penelitian Kualitatif dalam Ilmu-ilmu Sosial dan Keagamaan*, (Malang: Kalimasahada, 1996), hlm. 13.

include; books or other writings about the interrelation of religion, culture and technology so that they can support primary data sources. The data collection technique uses documentation. Documentation is looking for data regarding things or variables in the form of transcript notes, books, agendas and so on.⁵ Data collection, both primary and secondary, in this research was carried out by reading, understanding, identifying, analyzing and comparing one source with another, contained in the data source. Once collected, they are classified according to their respective characteristics in certain chapters to facilitate data analysis.⁶

This method is used to collect data related to studies originating from documents such as books in libraries and books that are references for writing. In accordance with the type and nature of the data obtained from this research, the analytical technique used in this research is content analysis, which is a method used to obtain scientific knowledge by carrying out various analyzes of books from which conclusions can then be drawn. generalized into a theory, idea, or a new idea.⁷ This means that the qualitative textual data obtained is categorized by selecting similar data and then analyzing the data critically to obtain information. Content analysis is used in order to draw valid conclusions from other books related to this research. The steps are to select the text to be investigated, compile specific items, carry out research, and present conclusions.

C. Results and Discussion

Results

Understanding and Definition of Religion

Religion is defined as a teaching or a system that regulates the order of faith (belief) and worship of God Almighty as well as the rules relating to human interactions and humans and humans with their environment. ⁷ Meanwhile in Islam religion is closer to the term diin (dienul Islam). The sentence diin in Arabic contains three meanings, namely power, submission (QS 9: 29), recompense (QS 1: 4), and law/regulation (QS 12: 76)⁸. So, religion is a system of rules and teachings for worshipping God Almighty.

At the level of academic discourse, the meaning of religion in the West is indeed problematic. For years the West has tried to create a definition of religion but still failed. So for sociologists and anthropologists, religion is not a set of ideas about divinity. So, religion for them is a social practice produced by culture. Religion is

⁵SuharsimiArikunto,*op., cit.*, hlm. 108.

⁶Winarno Surachmad, *Metode Penelitian Survey*, (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1993), hlm. 193.

⁷Sutrisno Hadi, *Metodologi Research*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1989), hlm. 47.

⁸ Arif Ma'ruf, *Aqidah Islam* (Jakarta: STID DI Al-Hikmah Jakarta, 2016), hlm. 14-15

not something that must be connected with the worship of God. They believe in God, but they do not consider God to play a role in world life.⁹

Karen Armstrong explained that religion or human belief in a Supreme God has been shared throughout human history even though at first it was still understood primitively. Some of these meanings can be concluded that religion is a system of beliefs, teachings and worship of God Almighty. Religion in general is a teaching that recognizes that humans live in the world because of the power of God. Religion has an empirical connection or relation to knowing the natural surroundings.

Understanding Culture

Culture is a way of life that is developed and shared by a group of people. Then passed on to the next generation. Culture is formed from several complex elements. Among them are customs, language, works of art, religious and political systems. Language is the same as culture, namely an inseparable part of humans. Therefore, many groups of people tend to think of this as something that is inherited genetically. A person can communicate with people of different cultures and adapt to the differences between them, proving that culture can be learned.¹⁰ Apart from that, culture is a comprehensive lifestyle. Culture has an abstract, complex and broad nature. Meanwhile, according to the KBBI (Big Indonesian Dictionary), culture is a thought, reason or custom.

Grammatically, the meaning of culture is derived from the word culture which tends to refer to the way humans think. There are several cultural aspects that determine communicative behavior. These socio-cultural elements are spread and cover many human social activities. According to Linton, culture is the totality of attitudes and patterns of behavior. And knowledge, describes a habit that is inherited and owned by a member of society or a certain group of members. Effat Al-Syarqawi defines culture from an Islamic religious perspective, Culture is a historical treasure of a group of people which is reflected in testimonies and various values which outline that a life must have spiritual meaning and purpose. According to William H. Haviland, culture is a set of rules and norms that are shared by a group of members or members of society. If done by these people, it will give rise to behavior that is considered worthy or acceptable by all in society.¹¹

Understanding Technology

Before knowing the meaning in more detail, of course you have to know its origins first. Etymologically, technology comes from Greek, namely from the word *techne* which means art, craft or skill; and *logos* which means knowledge or

⁹ Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, *Misykat: Refleksi Tentang Westernisasi, Liberalisasi dan Islam* (Jakarta: Insist, 2012), cet ke-1, hal. 20-21

¹⁰ <https://www.gramedia.com/literasi/budaya> diakses 4 Mei 2024.

¹¹ <https://www.gramedia.com/literasi/budaya> diakses 4 Mei 2024.

study. So, if taken literally, technology is the study or science of a particular art, craft or skill. However, the experts concluded again based on their respective views as follows:

- a) According to Berniker (1987), technology is knowledge and in it there are methods, arts and ways of working to build the world.
- b) Technology according to Seattler (2004) is systematic practical knowledge to increase the production of goods and services and is realized in productive, organizational or mechanical capabilities, based on research and/or scientific theory.
- c) Based on the opinion of Siemens and Tittenberger (2009), technology is a way of realizing thoughts by designing equipment (which makes life easier).

From the definitions above, it can be concluded that technology is a set of systems or methods using science to produce something (product or equipment)..¹²

Discussion

Interrelation of Religion, Culture and technology

There are two main discussions on Religion, Culture and technology, the first is the interrelation of technology and culture. It is very interesting to note that recently many cultural products have developed rapidly due to the increasingly massive flow of technology. For example, the dynamics of "K-Pop" culture are increasingly mushrooming among the younger generation. This cannot be denied because K-Pop as a cultural product is easily and easily accessed by the younger generation throughout the world due to the support of advanced technology. There is concern that due to the ease with which 'foreign culture' enters Indonesia, Indonesia's 'native culture' has begun to be forgotten, and many of the younger generation do not even know the culture of their own people. These problems are very important to study theoretically and practically.¹³

With regard to this problem, to clearly explain the relationship between these two entities, it is deemed relevant to borrow Cultural Norm Theory from Melvin De Fleur as a theoretical basis for narrating the reality of the interrelation of technology and culture. Cultural Norm Theory, based on Melvin De Fleur's concept, practically describes that technology influences culture in three aspects: technology strengthens culture, technology changes culture, and technology creates culture. Here are some real-life examples of this:

- a. Technology Strengthens Culture.

The first possibility is that by conveying and presenting cultural products through technology (more specifically through mass media and cyberspace) it will support and strengthen the cultural identity of a nation, including in Indonesia. For

¹²<https://www.dicoding.com/blog/apa-itu-teknologi-simak-pengertian-dan-manfaatnya-berikut>, diakses 4 Mei 2024.

¹³<https://mataair.co/interelasi-teknologi-budaya-dan-agama>. Diakses 4 Mei 2024.

example, the decreasing number of culture-based broadcast programs on television will also have an impact on reducing public knowledge of the culture and local wisdom of the Indonesian nation.

b. Technology Changes Culture.

The second possibility is that with easy access to cultural products from abroad entering Indonesia, it will gradually displace and replace Indonesian culture. The current young generation, whose entire life depends on technology, will unconsciously follow several cultures that are continuously presented. The most obvious reality in this context is the proliferation of K-Pop culture among young Indonesians. Once again, this happens because of the intersection between technology and culture.

c. Technology Creates Culture.

The third possibility is that by presenting cultural products in each technological line, this could create its own culture which is new and goes against the existing culture. The new culture constructed by this technology is called by John Fiske in Cultural and Communication Studies "Pop Culture" with three main characteristics referring to Jan Van Dick, namely: Digital Network, Timeless Time and Space of Flows.¹⁴

These are three possibilities that can arise due to the problematic intersection between technology and culture. It is hoped that with the discovery of these three possibilities there will be efforts to deal with a culture that is destructive and erases the identity of the Indonesian nation.¹⁵ Next, the second is the interrelation of technology and religion. Albert Borgmann (in Philip Brey) believed that the promises of modern technology had been formulated since the beginning of the Renaissance by important figures, such as Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes. This formulation states that technology will lead humanity to freedom from the shackles of slavery and the hardships of life. Technology is a source of hope for humans in providing freedom, autonomy and happiness. These promises have been repeated throughout modern times.

Quoting Brogman's explanation of "the promises of technology in modern times", Philip Brey in *New Media and The Quality of Quality* states that there are three implications of the connection between technology and religion, namely: (1) technology serves religion; (2) technology dominates religion; (3) technology allies religion. The three implications put forward by Brey are used as a theoretical basis for analyzing the current technological and religious problems. The first implication is that when technology serves religion, technology becomes a tool for carrying out religious activities. The most obvious thing is, for example, in transportation technology. Air transportation as a technological product helps Muslims from all over the world to perform the Hajj pilgrimage to the Holy Land

¹⁴ John Fiske, *Cultural and Communication Studies*, (USA: Sage Publishing, 1990), hlm. 10

¹⁵ Jan Van Dick, *Network Society*, (London: Sage Publishing, 2003), hlm. 20.

of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. Before airplane technology existed, Hajj pilgrims used other modes of transportation which took longer to get to their destination of worship. Then the second implication is that when technology dominates religion, technology monopolizes it and even tends to commercialize religious activities. The phenomenon of commercialization of religious entities in the mass media as a form of technology is called by Idi Subandi Ibrahim the term "Commodification of Religion in the Media". A clear example of the commodification of religion in the media in Indonesia is the large number of Islamic da'wah programs broadcast on television, but these programs are not oriented towards Islamic values and religious messages (value oriented) but are only oriented towards profit and ratings (profit oriented).

Technology making an alliance with religion is the third implication, and this seems to be the most worrying, it is stated that technology can make an alliance (separate) between humans and religion. Through various technological advances that make human life easier, over time humans tend to be made careless of social and religious life. In fact, not infrequently, humans are very dependent on technology. Humans today will be very anxious if they are kept away from technological access, but this becomes normal when humans are far from God. This is the success of technology in alliance with religion through its various products which can lull and pamper humans while living in the world. In the context of Islamic teachings, the Qur'an (6:32) very clearly describes this phenomenon with the expression, "And life in the world is nothing but mere joking."

Those are the three implications that technology has on religion. After knowing these three implications, the existence of technology should be optimized as a tool or medium to facilitate religious activities. Don't let humans be careless of God with the various conveniences of life facilitated by technology.

Religious, cultural and technological implications

Cultural and religious dynamics influenced by technology create a social construction called Cyber culture. Christian Fuchs defines cyber culture as a dialectical system, where cultural actions and structures become online.¹⁶ According to Fakhruroji, cyber culture can be understood as daily life activities that arise in and through (technological media) the internet or other digital media, so that there is the opportunity to create imaginative space, but has an impact on human existence physically. Practically, cyberculture can be defined as the implementation of a number of cultural activities (such as studying, transacting, shopping, watching films, listening to music, looking for references, and even religious practices) which are carried out online via internet technology.¹⁷

¹⁶ Christian Fuchs, *Internet and Society: Social Theory in The Information Age*, (London: Roultege, 2008), 300.

¹⁷ Moch. Fakhruroji, *Dakwah di Era Media Baru: Teori dan Aktivisme Dakwah di Internet*, (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2017), hlm. 96.

The younger generation who use internet technology media in various activities in their lives has made them part of the cyberculture which is quite massive in the current millennial era. This digital media can technically make information easier to manipulate, is networked, concise, can be abbreviated, and is not partial.¹⁸ Digital media too, can realistically change human life from a social society to a digital society. This entity of change also has an impact on the younger generation, the majority of whom use digital media (such as smartphones, netbooks, iPads) in their daily lives.

The younger generation is transforming from a social society, into a digital society. This transformation is caused by the increasingly massive use of digital media among the younger generation, not only for their college needs, but also to fulfill their daily needs, including religious matters. Based on this reality, it can be said that the younger generation who use digital media technology is a representation of digital society. When analyzed from a sociological perspective, the formation of a digital society is empirical evidence of social change due to technological advances. Technological progress, in the context of social dynamics, is a social change that is progressive on the one hand, but regressive on the other.

This social dynamic also has an impact on digital society, represented by the young generation who are active and productive using digital technology media. The use of this technology, on the one hand, makes it easier for the younger generation to access various sciences, including Islamic religious sciences, but on the other hand it opens up the possibility that they will become reluctant to attend scientific studies or Islamic studies in real life, because of access to scientific information. Religion can be accessed anytime and anywhere, without having to come directly to the science assembly.

Da'wah activities through digital media can reach a wider public, because nowadays almost all human life cannot be separated from digital media, especially smartphones. Many Islamic features and applications are available on the smartphone platform. This religious application is then widely used by today's society, including the younger generation as a representation of digital society. The younger generation who use religious applications (Islamic Smartphone Platforms) get a lot of information and knowledge about the Islamic religion without having to learn directly from a religious teacher or go to an Islamic study council. If they need something related to Islamic religious knowledge, they just need to access the religious application.

Based on the results of research that has been carried out, it was found that the religious thinking of the younger generation of users of religious applications on smartphones regarding myths, doctrines and texts, has a distinctive style of religious thinking, namely: first, scientific religious thinking. The general characteristics of this style of scientific religious thinking can be seen from the

¹⁸ Gane and Beer, *New Media: The Key Concept*, (New York: Berg, 2008), 7

teenage informants' views on myths in religious beliefs. Teenagers who use religious applications on their smartphones have the view that myths are no longer mysterious, just believed, and cannot be reached by common sense, but nowadays existing myths can be studied and studied using a science-based scientific approach and science. Teenage users of religious applications on smartphones are very rational and logical in viewing myths.

Second, is literate religious thinking. Literacy in this context is an attitude that highly respects and prioritizes literature that can be accounted for. The basic characteristic of this style of religious thought is the dynamic culture of literacy in terms of religious thought and life. This style of thinking is clearly visible in the ritual aspects of religious worship. The younger generation of smartphone religious application users avoids religious doctrines and dogmas whose legal basis and arguments are unclear. They rely on references to the legal arguments for ritual worship on the primary legal source literature in Islam, namely the Al-Qur'an and As-Sunnah. If there is no legal argument in the Al-Qur'an and hadith literature that requires or orders ritual worship, then teenagers who use smartphone religious applications tend to abandon these ritual services. The younger generation, in practice, is very literary and referential in carrying out ritual worship.

Third, contextual religious thinking. Continuous with the scientific and literate style of religious thinking, the younger generation of smartphone religious application users has a contextual style of religious thinking. Even though they place sacred texts (sacred writing), in this case the Koran as something very sacred in all forms and conditions, they are very open in terms of its interpretation (contextual). The main characteristics of this contextual mode of thinking are very clearly visible in the aspects of interpretation and meaning of sacred texts in religion. Practically, this contextual mode of thinking is to adapt the meaning of the interpretation of the Al-Qur'an and As-Sunnah to current conditions. These teenagers tend to prefer interpretations of the Qur'an and hadith that use a scientific approach in accordance with the current context without ignoring the mu'tabarah interpretations of previous scholars.¹⁹

Closing the description and several findings related to the phenomena, dynamics and problems of religion, culture and technology, there are several important conclusions, that today's cultural products and religious activities are largely determined by technological developments. Apart from that, technology plays an important role in the flow of cultural and religious dynamics, and access to religious information through technology will also shape a person's religious thinking style.

D. Conclusions

The interrelation of religion, culture and technology. To clearly explain the interconnectedness of these entities, it is deemed relevant to borrow Cultural

¹⁹ <https://mataair.co/interelasi-teknologi-budaya-dan-agama>. Diakses 4 Mei 2024.

Norm Theory from Melvin De Fleur as a theoretical basis for narrating the reality of the interrelation of technology and culture. Cultural Norm Theory, based on Melvin De Fleur's concept, practically describes that technology influences culture in three aspects: technology strengthens culture, technology changes culture, and technology creates culture.

Interrelation of technology and religion. Albert Borgmann (in Philip Brey) believes that the promises of modern technology have been formulated since the beginning of the Renaissance by important figures, such as Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes. This formulation states that technology will lead humanity to freedom from the shackles of slavery and the hardships of life. Technology is a source of hope for humans in providing freedom, autonomy and happiness. These promises have been repeated throughout modern times.

Implications of the interrelation of Religion, culture and technology have findings related to the phenomena, dynamics and problems of Religion, Culture and technology, so there are several important conclusions, that today's cultural products and religious activities are largely determined by technological developments. Apart from that, technology plays an important role in the flow of cultural and religious dynamics, and access to religious information through technology will also shape a person's religious thinking style.

Acknowledgments

We hope that this article can broaden our knowledge and scientific treasures in this fast-paced era like today. Hopefully this description will be an alternative in selecting technology, preserving culture, and practicing religion more effectively and efficiently in accordance with the guidance of Islamic teachings.

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