PROFILES OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY STATUS OF FIRST-YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND ITS IMPLICATION TO GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING

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Abstract— **Adolescence is a period of identity search. The adolescents, during this period, will experience many changes related to their identities in various domains of life, including the religious domain. This study aimed to investigate the profiles of religious identity status of the late adolescence. A total of 300 first-year university students at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta participated in this study. Data were quantitatively collected by using Religious Identity Status Scale. The results showed that students' religious identity status was distributed in three categories: achievement (89%), searching moratorium (9%), and foreclosure (2%). Implications for guidance and counseling services in higher education were discussed to promote the development of religious identity of the late adolescence.**

Keywords : religious identity, late adolescence, guidance and counseling.

I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a transitional period from childhood to adulthood and often misinterpreted by people with an excessive self-exploration action and irresponsibility. This is indicated by many problems of adolescents' delinquency, such as smoking, drug abuse, free sex, pornography, fighting, and other types of delinquency broadcasted on television and printed-media every day.

The challenges faced by the adolescents are very complex. The first-year students who entered the late adolescence period are experiencing a transition from a school social environment that tends to be structured towards a wider social environment. This transition leads to many uncertainties and possibilities about the future.

Kroger's study on students in the late adolescence period indicated their fear of various responsibilities that must be faced in adulthood, a doubt about their ability to face the problems in life, and a hope to find a more meaningful life while being accompanied by fear. Furthermore, other research from Howard and Galambos showed that the transition from late adolescence to adulthood occurs in various aspects, such as confusion in work, education, college, rush work, and unemployment, changes in residence, romantic partners, and cultural differences from high school to a college student status.

Referring to the terminology of psychology, the condition of confusion that is often experienced by adolescent is called identity confusion. According to Erikson, identity versus identity confusion is a stage of development that will take place during the adolescence period. Marcia developed Erikson's identity concept and classified identity into four statuses: achievement, foreclosure, moratorium, and diffusion. These identity

statuses represent the way adolescents solve their identity crisis and the classification is based on the size of the youth exploration and commitment activities.

The identity status theory formulated by Maria was further elaborated by Crocetti, Rubini, Luyckx, & Meeus who developed the identity status from two-dimensional model (commitment and exploration) to three dimensions (commitment, in-depth exploration, and reconsideration of commitment). This three-dimensional model generates five rather than four identity statuses.

Achievement status is characterized by high levels of commitment and in-depth exploration, but low in reconsideration of commitment. Foreclosure status has a high level of commitment, but considerably low in in-depth exploration and reconsideration of commitment. In contrast, the moratorium status has a high reconsideration of commitment level, but low commitment and in-depth exploration. Diffusion status is characterized by a low level in all three aspects. The fifth status, searching moratorium, is the new status proposed by Crocetti et al. This status is characterized by a high level in all three aspects.

The researchers argued that adolescent identity status in a domain can be different from any other domain. It means that adolescents can have had achieved identity status in a domain, but diffused in other domains. There are at least eight identity status domains that had been commonly studied by recent scholars. According to Marcia, one of the strategies to choose a domain is by assessing the domain that is considered to be important in a certain period.

Religious is an ideological domain that is considered to be important in adolescence. An individual may be examining self-definitional attributes in domains, such as vocational choice, ideology, sexuality, family roles, and/or sex-role preference during this period. In addition, a thorough understanding of adolescents' religious experiences is important to be the substantial identity development that occurs during this period. Cohen-Malayev, Schachter, & Rich referred the terms of religious identity to the individual religious self-definition and significance of the religion in one's self-definition, whereas Grifftih & Griggs specifically defined religious identity status as a conceptual framework defined by exploration and commitment within the specific domain of religion .

Religious identity has been proved to be positively related to the psychological well-being parameters, self-esteem, positive affect, and meaningfulness. Those studies affirmed the importance of religious domain in

adolescent identity development. However, recent studies on religious identity status are still limited, particularly within the eastern context.

The aim of this study is to investigate the profiles of religious identity status of late adolescents in Indonesia. By mapping adolescent's religious identity status, the guidance and counseling practitioners can propose several appropriate interventions to foster the development of religious identity into the status of achievement.

II.   METHOD

The research subjects were 300 first-year university students at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (UNY). The range of their age was 19-20 years (M = 18.69, SD = .69). The status of religious identity was measured by using Religious Identity Status Scale (RISS) constructed according to Five Identity Status Model proposed by Crocetti et al. This scale consisted of three aspects, including commitment (Co = 23 items), in-depth exploration (IE = 11 items), and reconsideration of commitment (RC = 5 items). Scale's reliability was indicated by Cronbach Alpha coefficient .770. The favorable items were responded by using a Likert scale from strongly disagree (value 1) to strongly approve (value 4), and vice versa for the unfavorable items.

The data analysis consisted of two stages. First, the researchers applied descriptive statistical analysis to find out the total score of the research subjects in each aspects or subscales. Furthermore, the total score of each subject was classified as high or low based on the criteria presented in table 1.

Table 1.
Categorization of Participant's Scores

Subscale	Level	Score
Commitment (Co)	High	57.5-92
	Low	23-57
In-depth Exploration (IE)	High	30.5-44
	Low	11-30
Reconsideration of Commitment (RC)	High	12.5-20
	Low	5-12

Based on the classification of the total score, the research subject will be classified again into one of five religious identity statuses (achievement, searching moratorium, moratorium, foreclosure, or diffusion) by referring to the criteria in table 2 below.

Table 2.
Religious Identity Status Classification

Status	Level of Scores
Achievement	High Co, high IE, low RC
Searching Moratorium	High Co, high IE, high RC
Moratorium	Low Co, high IE, high RC
Foreclosure	High Co, low IE, low RC
Diffusion	Low Co, low IE, low RC

III.   FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistical analysis of the Religious Identity Scale showed that the religious identity status of the students was distributed in three categories: achievement (89%), searching moratorium (9%), and foreclosure (2%). Each status described its specific psychosocial problems.
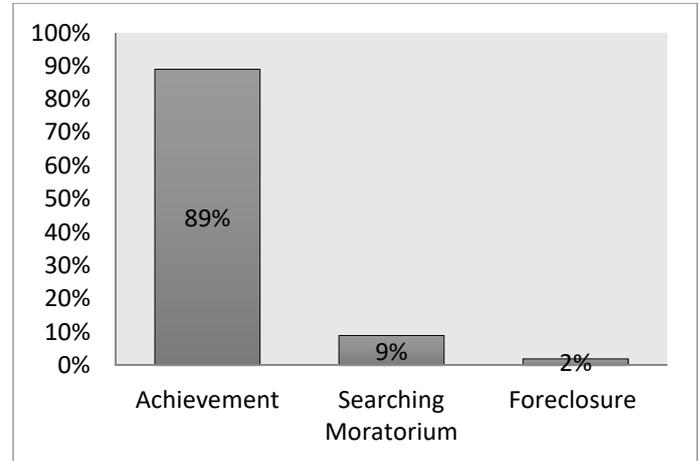

Figure 1. The Religious Identity Status Profiles of First-Year University Students

Guidance and Counseling Services is one of the services provided at the university to facilitate students to achieve the optimal development. It can generally be found at the Guidance and Counseling Services-Technical Implementation Unit (UPT-LBK).

Regarding the development of religious identity status, the Guidance and Counseling service providers (counselors) at the university are trying to facilitate students to achieve the status of achievement, since it was the healthiest status for individual. Guidance and Counseling services can be delivered in the form of preventive/developmental or curative services. Preventive service will be given to the students who are in achievement status, while curative service will be delivered to the students in searching moratorium and foreclosure status.

Adolescents in the religious identity status of achievement indicate lower psychosocial problems than other statuses. However, the existence of adolescents in the status of achievement may change to be the characteristic of identity formation during adolescence, and early adulthood is not permanent for later life periods. According to Marcia, many adolescents who have developed a positive identity follow the Moratorium-Achievement-Moratorium-Achievement (MAMA) cycle and it will continue throughout life. Marcia also argued that the identity status that was first formed by adolescents is not the final identity status for them.

Adolescents who experience the MAMA cycle will enter the moratorium status before finally attaining the status of achievement again. During the moratorium status, adolescent will experience an identity crisis which is defined as a period in which adolescents are required to choose from various alternative choices. As a result,

adolescents in the moratorium status will tend to experience identity instability.

Griffith & Griggs explained the psychological dynamics of individuals who are in the religious identity status of moratorium. The pressure to become conformists began to collapse during the moratorium status. This happened when individuals began to test themselves and to doubt who they were and what they truly believed. Honest self-reflection accompanied by a sincere spiritual quest will give courage to the individual to acknowledge and to move from mere self-service or conformist religiosity. Those spiritual seekers are in the process of reformulating and internalizing their spiritual beliefs. Those times are periods of uncertainty, filled with doubt and existential anxiety.

The required Guidance and Counseling services for adolescents in the religious identity status of achievement are preventive services, which aim to prevent them from the condition of prolonged identity instability due to the MAMA cycle experience. A type of preventive Guidance and Counseling service is the cross-class guidance. Prayitno & Amti defined guidance as a service provided by an expert (counselor) for one or a group of people (counselees) which aims to facilitate the individual's ability to help him by himself. On the other hand, the Regulation of Minister of Education and Culture Number 111/2014 about Guidance and Counseling at Primary and Secondary Schools explained cross-class guidance as a preventative activity which aims to provide experiences, insights, and understanding that are needed by students, both in the personal, social, learning, and career fields.

Regarding the intervention for students in the status of achievement, a counselor can organize cross-class guidance by presenting the students who had experienced and succeed from the MAMA cycle. This kind of service is intended to inform the students about the various turbulences that must be faced while facing the MAMA cycle and the steps that must be taken to get out of the cycle and to attain the religious identity status of achievement again.

Adolescent in the searching moratorium status differ only in reconsideration of commitment aspects than adolescent in the status of achievement. The searching moratorium status is characterized by a high level of reconsideration of commitment and conversely for the status of achievement. This high level of reconsideration of commitment indicates a lower sense of satisfaction for the current commitments. On the other hand, adolescents in the status of searching moratorium will continue to make an in-depth exploration process. This condition may eventually lead to the condition of identity instability. Therefore, the required Guidance and Counseling services for adolescent in the status of searching moratorium are the individual or group counseling services based on a person-centered approach.

The person-centered approach views psychological problems as a result of the gap between ideal-self and real-self. The role of a counselor is, therefore, intended to help the adolescents (counselees) to minimize or even eliminate the gap. Regarding the development of religious identity status, a counselor can help the counselee to identify the picture of his ideal-self as well as the real-self from his current religious condition. Counselors may use the empathic confrontation as one of the person-centered techniques to help students who are in the status of searching moratorium. Empathic confrontation, which is also known as challenge technique, can be implemented to assist counselee to analyze the gap and contradiction between the counselee's own words and behaviors. This contradiction can theoretically create dissonance and eventually motivate the counselee to end the dissonance condition. The use of effective confrontation has also been proven to help the counselee to change their behaviors to be more congruent, live healthier, and have a more effectively functioned life-style.

The religious identity status of foreclosure is characterized by a high level of commitment and low in-depth exploration and reconsideration of commitment. Griffith and Griggs explain that individuals who are in the religious identity status of foreclosure tend to experience spiritual conformity, which is defined as the adoption of religious beliefs and behaviors to be accepted by others. At this stage of spiritual formation, motivation is still external and self-service. Obediance to the religious belief tends to be superficial and fragmented due to the lack of careful criticism and evaluation. The status of foreclosure is adopted without any criticism through religious teaching, social learning, and participation in rituals.

The required intervention model for adolescent in the status of foreclosure is a counseling service which aims to increase the adolescents' self-confidence. Also, their efforts to explore their current commitments will end up with guilty and anxiety to the forelosed adolescents. By increasing self-confidence, the foreclosed adolescents are expected to be able to express their needs to explore their current religious commitment without any feelings of guilt or anxiety. Hopefully, they will be able to achieve the status of achievement in the future.

There are several techniques to increase adolescents' self-commitment, including the assertive training. According to Bishop, assertiveness will develop self-confidence and self-ability in assessing, giving opinions, and respecting others. Some research also show that assertive training can be applied to increase student confidence. The basic assumption of assertive training technique is that everyone has the right to express their feelings, opinions, what is devoted and the attitudes to do many things without any hesitation to not hurt the others. Assertive training is a social-skill exercise given to an anxiety-plagued individual that is unable to defend his rights, become too weak, letting others undermine him, unable to properly express his temper and quickly become offended.

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