



ISLAM AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION: THE ROLE OF LOCAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES IN GAMPONG DEAH GLUMPANG, BANDA ACEH

Fatimahsyam

Univesitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh, Indonesia

Email: fatimahsyam@ar-raniry.ac.id

Abstract

The traditional perspective that perceives disasters as acts of divine destiny underwent a critical transformation following the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami. This classical view, which rendered communities passive in the face of disaster risks, has been progressively replaced by a more proactive understanding. Religious scholars (ulama) have played a pivotal role in fostering this transformation, encouraging communities to adopt active, participatory, and organized approaches to disaster risk reduction (DRR). This qualitative field study, conducted in Gampong Deah Glumpang, Banda Aceh, investigates two primary aspects: the management approaches of DRR programs implemented in the village and their impact on enhancing the community's understanding and participation in building disaster resilience two decades after the tsunami. The findings reveal that local religious leaders significantly influenced the community's shift from perceiving disasters as unchangeable divine decrees to recognizing the importance of proactive mitigation efforts. Through religiously grounded narratives, these leaders mobilized the community to actively engage in DRR initiatives, including risk mapping, contingency planning, and environmental conservation, as facilitated by the Banda Aceh Disaster Management Agency (BPBD), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the Indonesian Red Cross (PMI). The integration of religious teachings with DRR frameworks proved effective in transforming perceptions, strengthening social cohesion, and fostering inclusivity, particularly for vulnerable groups.

Keywords: *Disaster, Destiny, Ulama, Disaster Risk Reduction, Resilience*

Abstrak

Pandangan tradisional yang memahami bencana sebagai takdir ilahi mengalami transformasi signifikan setelah gempa bumi dan tsunami Samudra Hindia tahun 2004. Perspektif klasik ini, yang cenderung membuat masyarakat pasif dalam menghadapi risiko bencana, secara bertahap digantikan oleh pemahaman yang lebih progresif. Ulama lokal memainkan peran penting dalam mendorong transformasi ini dengan mengedukasi masyarakat untuk mengadopsi pendekatan aktif, partisipatif, dan terorganisir dalam pengurangan risiko bencana (PRB). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan penelitian lapangan yang berlokasi di Gampong Deah Glumpang, Banda Aceh. Fokus penelitian adalah pada dua aspek utama: pendekatan pengelolaan program PRB di gampong tersebut dan dampaknya terhadap peningkatan pemahaman serta keterlibatan masyarakat dalam membangun ketangguhan bencana dua dekade setelah tsunami. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ulama lokal memiliki pengaruh besar dalam mengubah pandangan masyarakat dari menganggap bencana sebagai takdir yang tidak dapat diubah menjadi kesadaran akan pentingnya mitigasi yang proaktif. Melalui

narasi berbasis agama, ulama berhasil menggerakkan masyarakat untuk secara aktif terlibat dalam berbagai inisiatif PRB, seperti pemetaan risiko, perencanaan kontinjensi, dan konservasi lingkungan, yang difasilitasi oleh BPBD Kota Banda Aceh, IOM, dan PMI. Integrasi nilai-nilai agama dengan kerangka kerja PRB terbukti efektif dalam mengubah persepsi, memperkuat kohesi sosial, dan mendorong inklusivitas, khususnya bagi kelompok rentan.

Kata Kunci: *Bencana, Takdir, Ulama, Pengurangan Risiko Bencana, Ketangguhan*

A. Introduction

Banda Aceh is one of the regions highly vulnerable to both natural and non-natural disasters. The active Sumatra fault line (Semangko Fault) extends from Banda Aceh to Lampung (Semangko Bay) for approximately 1,900 kilometers (Lythgoe et al., 2022; Rafie et al., 2023). This fault line runs parallel to the subduction zone of the Eurasian and Indo-Australian tectonic plates, and its continuous movement makes Banda Aceh prone to earthquakes and tsunamis (Edward, 2015).

The disaster threats in Banda Aceh necessitate community self-reliance in disaster preparedness through community-based disaster risk reduction (CBDRR), which involves raising public awareness in an active, participatory, and organized manner. Gampong Deah Glumpang, one of the villages in Banda Aceh, faces a particularly high risk of earthquakes and tsunamis due to its proximity—only 100 meters—to the shoreline. During the 2004 tsunami, this village suffered catastrophic consequences, with 90% of its population (approximately 2,600 individuals) losing their lives, complete destruction of buildings, loss of livelihoods, and damage to infrastructure, including homes, places of worship, and public facilities. The tsunami also brought environmental devastation, including contamination of water sources and soil salinization, and caused social-political upheaval, such as the loss of family members, collapse of village governance, conflicts over aid distribution, and prolonged displacement lasting over two years (Destana, 2016). The scale of human and material losses was exacerbated by the limited capacity of Gampong Deah Glumpang's community to respond to such disasters. Before the event, the community lacked knowledge of tsunami warning signs, evacuation routes, and escape facilities, such as designated buildings or clear directional signage to safety zones. (Destana, 2016)

Following the 2004 earthquake and tsunami, several governmental and non-governmental organizations intervened in Gampong Deah Glumpang, providing not only emergency assistance but also implementing disaster risk reduction programs, including the development of disaster-resilient villages. For instance, the establishment of Disaster-Resilient Villages (DESTANA) has been institutionalized under the National Disaster Management Agency's (BNPB) Regulation No. 1 of 2012. Despite various interventions, these programs have not yielded significant results, as their strategies failed to address the root causes of community perspectives. Many residents of Gampong Deah Glumpang

still perceived disasters as unalterable acts of divine will, necessitating only acceptance and submission to Allah's decree (Interview with the Village Secretary (Sekdes) of Gampong Deah Glumpang on September 12, 2024).

Based on this background, the researcher sought to investigate the management approaches of disaster risk reduction programs in Gampong Deah Glumpang and their impact on enhancing community understanding of disaster resilience, twenty years after the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami. The study aims to determine whether there has been a change in the community's views and attitudes toward disasters following the interventions of local religious scholars in fostering a more progressive understanding of disasters.

B. Method

This study adopts a qualitative field research approach, focusing on exploring the socio-religious dynamics of disaster risk reduction in Gampong Deah Glumpang, Banda Aceh. Qualitative research emphasizes the narrative description of phenomena and relies on data obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of community perceptions and actions without reducing them to numerical data or hypotheses, in accordance with the qualitative research principles (Bogdan & Taylor, 1993; Creswell, 2016; Sugiyono, 2019).

The selection of informants was conducted through purposive sampling, which allows for the deliberate selection of individuals or groups based on their knowledge, experience, and relevance to the research objectives. Informants included community members directly affected by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, religious scholars (ulama) known for their influence on community attitudes, local disaster facilitators, and program implementers from governmental and non-governmental organizations actively involved in disaster risk reduction in the village.

Data collection involved a triangulation method, combining semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and analysis of documents related to disaster management programs. Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, such as representatives from the Banda Aceh City Disaster Management Agency (BPBD), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the Indonesian Red Cross (PMI), to obtain a holistic view of the implemented programs. Observations were carried out to document community engagement in disaster risk reduction activities, while secondary data, including village disaster risk management plans and institutional reports, were analyzed to corroborate findings. The data were then thematically analyzed to identify patterns, perspectives, and key factors influencing the community's understanding and participation in disaster mitigation.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Disaster Concepts in Islamic Perspectives

Studies on Islam and disasters, as well as the theology of disasters, have been widely conducted by scholars in disaster-related fields. These studies employ various

approaches, including socio-religious frameworks, to understand the interaction between religious beliefs and disaster risk management. Research at institutional and community levels has particularly focused on the smallest administrative units, such as villages, to explore the practical application of Islamic perspectives on disasters.

For instance, Fatimahsyam. et al (2019) examined the dichotomy between classical and contemporary interpretations of disasters within Islamic theology. Classical interpretations often connect disasters to the moral and spiritual state of a community, asserting that disasters occur as a result of human transgressions and are seen as divine punishment or tests of faith. This perspective is rooted in an anthropocentric view, emphasizing the absolute sovereignty of God (Iqbal & Majeed, 2013). Disasters are perceived as consequences of human actions, aligning with Quranic verses such as Ash-Shura (42:30):

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَيَعْفُو عَنْ كَثِيرٍ ۝

“And whatever strikes you of disaster – it is for what your hands have earned; but He pardons much.”

Similarly, disasters are described as trials in the Quran (Hidayatullah, 2009), as in Al-Mulk (67:2):

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَفُورُ ۝

“[He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed – and He is the Exalted in Might, the Forgiving.”

Classical interpretations also view disasters as the result of human disobedience to divine laws, as illustrated in Al-A'raf (7:100):

أَوَلَمْ يَهْدِ لِلَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِ آهْلِهَا أَنْ لَوْ نَشَاءُ أَصَبْنَهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَنُظِّعَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ

“Has it not become clear to those who inherited the earth after its previous people that if We willed, We could afflict them for their sins? But We seal over their hearts so they do not hear.”

In addition to these traditional interpretations, contemporary Islamic scholars have offered new readings of Quranic verses, aligning them with modern disaster risk reduction (DRR) principles (Al-Hilālī & Khān, 2018). For example, Ar-Rum (30:41) emphasizes the consequences of human environmental mismanagement:

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

“Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by [reason of] what the hands of people have earned so He may let them taste part of [the consequence of] what they have done that perhaps they will return [to righteousness].”

According to these interpretations, disasters serve as both a warning and an opportunity for reflection, urging humanity to adopt more sustainable and ethical practices in managing the environment.

Post-2004, a more progressive understanding of disasters has emerged within Islamic communities, moving beyond the notion of passive acceptance of divine will. This modern perspective emphasizes that disasters are not only acts of God but also mechanisms governed by natural laws established by Allah. For instance, the movement of tectonic plates is seen as part of the divine order, reflecting obedience to God's command. This understanding allows for a broader interpretation of disasters, incorporating scientific and religious insights to promote proactive disaster mitigation efforts.

The integration of religious perspectives with DRR frameworks has shown potential for minimizing misconceptions about disasters. Ghafory-Ashtiany (2009) highlights the significance of linking Islamic teachings with DRR efforts to foster a more holistic understanding of disaster management. This approach encourages communities to view disasters not merely as divine punishments but as challenges that require active human intervention through preparedness, mitigation, and resilience-building initiatives.

Moreover, progressive Islamic perspectives emphasize that disaster risk reduction is a form of religious duty (Yusmaliana et al., 2022; Zahara et al., 2022). Efforts to strengthen community capacity in disaster management are considered acts of worship, reflecting human responsibility to safeguard life, property, and the environment as entrusted by God. This perspective has been effectively implemented through community-based DRR programs, integrating religious teachings with practical disaster preparedness measures. In Gampong Deah Glumpang, these theological shifts have significantly influenced the community's understanding of disasters. By incorporating religious frameworks into disaster education, local religious leaders (ulama) have played a pivotal role in altering perceptions, fostering community participation, and promoting sustainable disaster management practices. This approach has laid the foundation for a more resilient and proactive society.

2. Approaches to Disaster Management Programs in Gampong Deah Glumpang

a. Profile of Gampong Deah Glumpang

Gampong Deah Glumpang is part of the Meuraxa sub-district in Banda Aceh and is geographically situated at 95°17'28.78" longitude and 5°33'35.32" latitude. Topographically, the village lies in a lowland area approximately five meters above sea level. Its boundaries include a river to the west, Gampong Deah Baro to the east, Gampong Lambung to the south, and the sea to the north. Covering an area of approximately 41 hectares, the land comprises residential zones, coastal areas, and fishponds.

Demographically, the village experienced significant growth from a population of 546 in 2011 to 1,213 in 2015, reflecting a 12.09% increase over four years. The population density rose from 1.33 individuals per square kilometer in 2011 to 2.96 in 2015. Residents of Gampong Deah Glumpang are primarily engaged in livelihoods such as aquaculture, construction work, trade, public service, and private employment. Other key economic

activities include fishing, fish feed production, boat repair, and the operation of ice block factories to support local fisheries.

The village's primary resource, fishponds, remains underutilized due to debris from the 2004 tsunami. The socioeconomic development of Gampong Deah Glumpang is heavily influenced by its proximity to the city of Banda Aceh, contributing to a blend of rural and urban cultural dynamics. Despite this, strong social ties persist within the community, as evidenced by mutual support during events such as funerals, weddings, and other communal activities.

As a lowland area adjacent to the coastline, Gampong Deah Glumpang is highly vulnerable to tsunamis and earthquakes. The devastation of the 2004 tsunami led to the loss of nearly 90% of its local population, complete destruction of infrastructure, and significant environmental damage. The tsunami also disrupted village governance and caused prolonged displacement. While reconstruction and disaster preparedness programs have been introduced since then, the village still grapples with limited resources and a lack of sustained community engagement in disaster risk reduction initiatives.

b. Disaster Management Programs in Gampong Deah Glumpang

The Banda Aceh City Disaster Management Agency (BPBD), in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Indonesian Red Cross (PMI), has implemented a series of disaster management programs in Gampong Deah Glumpang. This village was selected as one of the pilot sites for the Disaster-Resilient Village (DESTANA) program, initiated by the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB).

The development of Gampong Deah Glumpang as a disaster-resilient village followed a structured three-year process from 2014 to 2016. During the first year, the program focused on the formation and training of community volunteers and the preparation of eight key disaster management documents. These included the Disaster Management Plan (Rencana Penanggulangan Bencana), Contingency Plan (Rencana Kontinjensi), Operational Plan, Evacuation Route Map, Early Warning System, Capacity Building Plans, Risk Maps, and the establishment of a Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) forum. At this stage, the documents were primarily drafted. In the second year, the program concentrated on further development and formalization of these documents. By the third year, the focus shifted to implementing the plans, which involved community simulations and drills. These exercises aimed to prepare residents for emergency situations and enhance their disaster response capabilities (Interview with the Banda Aceh City Disaster Management Agency (BPBD), September 20, 2024).

Despite these efforts, the program did not produce significant outcomes in strengthening community resilience. A key challenge was the limited involvement of the local community in various stages of the program, including planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Community members often participated only to fulfill formal obligations and showed little sustained interest or engagement. Consequently, activities

such as risk mapping, evacuation planning, and contingency planning did not lead to long-term retention of knowledge or skills .

Another critical issue was the insufficient integration of religious leaders, such as local ulama or tengku, into the program's strategy. Instead, facilitators were primarily tasked with community outreach, which proved inadequate for addressing the deeply ingrained belief that disasters are predestined and beyond human control. Many residents perceived participation in disaster management activities as unnecessary and time-consuming, reinforcing their view that disasters should be accepted as acts of God without active human intervention. Additionally, funding limitations hindered the sustainability of the program. The DESTANA initiative was designed as a project-based intervention, with funding allocated for only one to two years. As a result, the program lacked continuity and failed to institutionalize disaster resilience practices within the community (Interview with the Village Secretary (Sekdes) of Gampong Deah Glumpang, September 25, 2024). These shortcomings underline the importance of integrating cultural and religious approaches into disaster management strategies. By leveraging the influence of religious leaders, future programs could better address community perspectives and foster a more proactive approach to disaster risk reduction.

3. The Impact of Enhanced Community Understanding on Building Disaster Resilience

Gampong Deah Glumpang remains highly vulnerable to tsunami disasters due to its proximity to the coastline, located just 50–100 meters from the shore. The demographic composition of the village has significantly changed following the 2004 tsunami, as 90% of the original population perished during the disaster. This shift has influenced the community's depth of understanding and preparedness for future tsunami threats. In the immediate aftermath of earthquakes, residents often failed to seek higher ground due to a lack of awareness about tsunami risks and a prevailing belief that disasters were solely acts of God, preordained and unavoidable. From 2014 to 2016, the Disaster-Resilient Village (DESTANA) program was reintroduced in the village by the Banda Aceh City Disaster Management Agency (BPBD) in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). While the initial implementation saw limited community involvement, a notable shift occurred when the program incorporated local religious leaders (tengku) in its approach.

The inclusion of tengku marked a turning point in community engagement. These religious leaders played a crucial role in reshaping perceptions by contextualizing disasters within Islamic teachings. They emphasized that while disasters may be seen as divine will, humans have an obligation to make efforts (*ikhtiar*) to prevent or mitigate their impacts. The tengku actively participated in disaster preparedness activities, even offering their homes as venues for the community to draft contingency plans, conduct simulations, and create disaster risk maps (Interview with the Village Secretary (Sekdes) of Gampong Deah Glumpang, September 25, 2024).

This religiously framed approach significantly increased community interest and participation. Residents began to view disaster preparedness as a shared responsibility and a form of religious duty. The *tengku* highlighted that disaster management efforts are acts of worship, aimed at safeguarding lives and ensuring the well-being of the community. By appealing to religious values, they successfully mobilized a diverse cross-section of the population to actively engage in disaster risk reduction initiatives. Key activities in the village included the participatory development of disaster risk maps, which provided residents with a deeper understanding of the village's vulnerabilities. This hands-on process not only raised awareness but also empowered the community to identify practical solutions. For instance, villagers were trained to prepare emergency kits containing essential documents and valuables for quick evacuation. Simulated evacuation drills further enhanced their readiness, fostering confidence in their ability to respond during emergencies.

Beyond immediate disaster response, the program also promoted long-term resilience through environmental conservation measures, such as planting mangroves and constructing coastal barriers. These initiatives were supported by the integration of disaster risk reduction strategies into the village's mid-term development plans (RPJM). Additionally, a village-level Disaster Risk Reduction Forum was established to facilitate knowledge-sharing and sustain community engagement. The program's success extended beyond technical preparedness. Social cohesion was strengthened as community members formed support networks and developed a heightened sensitivity toward vulnerable groups, such as individuals with disabilities. Although efforts to address the needs of these groups are still in their early stages, the program has laid a foundation for more inclusive disaster management practices (Interview with the Facilitator of the Disaster-Resilient Village Program in Gampong Deah Glumpang, September 26, 2024).

D. Conclusion

The understanding of disasters within the framework of Islamic theology has undergone a significant evolution. Classical interpretations, which view disasters as divine punishment, trials, or consequences of human transgressions, have traditionally shaped the perception of many communities. These views often reinforced passive acceptance of disasters as acts of God. However, the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami catalyzed a shift toward a more progressive understanding, integrating disaster risk reduction (DRR) principles into religious frameworks.

This study highlights that the involvement of local religious leaders (*tengku*) in Gampong Deah Glumpang was instrumental in changing the community's perception of disasters. By emphasizing that disasters, while predestined, also require proactive human efforts (*ikhtiar*) to mitigate their impacts, these leaders successfully mobilized the community to engage actively in disaster preparedness and risk reduction initiatives. Their approach not only aligned with Islamic teachings but also addressed deeply ingrained cultural beliefs, fostering a sense of collective responsibility and resilience.

The programs implemented in Gampong Deah Glumpang demonstrated the effectiveness of integrating religious and cultural contexts into DRR strategies. Community participation in activities such as risk mapping, evacuation planning, and environmental conservation reflected a shift from passive to proactive disaster management. Moreover, these efforts strengthened social cohesion and highlighted the importance of inclusivity, particularly for vulnerable groups.

Despite these achievements, the study also identifies challenges, including the initial lack of community engagement and the limited sustainability of externally driven programs. Addressing these issues requires continued efforts to institutionalize disaster preparedness practices at the village level, ensuring long-term resilience. The findings of this research underscore the potential of religiously grounded approaches to enhance disaster risk reduction. By bridging scientific knowledge with religious and cultural values, such strategies can transform perceptions and behaviors, ultimately building more resilient and self-reliant communities. This approach serves as a model for disaster-prone regions, particularly those with strong religious influences, offering a pathway to harmonize faith with proactive disaster management practices.

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