Nightlife, Nihilism, and The Existential Crisis of Indonesian Urban Youth: An Islamic and Philosophical Analysis

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Abstract

The phenomenon of nightlife among urban youth in Indonesia has shown remarkable escalation in line with the rapid processes of urbanization, modernization, and cultural globalization. Nightlife is no longer merely perceived as a form of leisure or entertainment but has evolved into a medium of recreation, self-expression, identity construction, and social existence. The presence of nightclubs, music concerts, bars, and even digital activities such as nighttime live streaming has become an inseparable element of contemporary urban lifestyles. Nevertheless, behind its popularity, nightlife frequently reflects fundamental problems faced by younger generations, namely nihilism and the crisis of meaning. As described by Friedrich Nietzsche, nihilism signifies a condition in which individuals lose their moral foundations, experience spiritual emptiness, and perceive life as devoid of clear purpose. Within the Indonesian context, this phenomenon has been intensified by increasingly individualistic, fragmented, and pleasure-driven lifestyles, where nightlife often serves as an escape mechanism from social pressures and existential confusion. This article employs a qualitative approach through a literature-based study to examine nightlife within the framework of nihilistic philosophy and Islamic ethics. The analysis highlights three dimensions: (1) the connection between nightlife and hedonistic lifestyles as manifestations of nihilism, (2) the crisis of meaning in urban culture that generates both social alienation and spiritual estrangement, and (3) the proposed solutions offered by Islamic ethics and law, particularly through maqāṣid al-sharīʿah and Sufi spirituality, to restore moral awareness and meaningful life orientation. The findings suggest that nightlife represents a broader value shift in contemporary urban culture, carrying significant implications for the identity and spirituality of Muslim youth. Therefore, a critical and solution-oriented framework rooted in Islamic ethics is urgently needed to integrate recreational needs with spiritual direction, ensuring that Islamic values remain relevant amidst the challenges of modern urban life.

Keywords: *Nightlife, Nihilism, Crisis of Meaning, Islamic Ethics, Urban Culture*

Abstrak

Fenomena kehidupan malam (*nightlife*) di kalangan generasi muda urban di Indonesia semakin memperlihatkan eskalasi signifikan seiring dengan derasnya arus urbanisasi, modernisasi, serta penetrasi budaya global. Nightlife bukan lagi sekadar dipahami sebagai ruang hiburan, melainkan juga sebagai arena rekreasi, ekspresi diri, konstruksi identitas, dan aktualisasi eksistensi sosial. Kehadiran klub malam, konser musik, bar, hingga aktivitas digital seperti *live streaming* malam menjadi bagian integral dari gaya hidup kontemporer masyarakat kota besar. Namun, di balik popularitas tersebut, praktik nightlife kerap merefleksikan problem fundamental yang dihadapi generasi muda, yakni nihilisme dan krisis makna. Nihilisme, sebagaimana dikemukakan Friedrich Nietzsche, merupakan kondisi di mana individu kehilangan landasan nilai, mengalami kekosongan spiritual, dan menilai kehidupan tanpa tujuan yang jelas. Dalam konteks Indonesia, fenomena ini diperkuat oleh gaya hidup yang semakin individualistik, fragmentaris, dan berorientasi pada kesenangan sesaat, sehingga nightlife seringkali berfungsi sebagai sarana pelarian dari tekanan sosial maupun kebingungan eksistensial. Artikel ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka untuk menganalisis fenomena nightlife dalam kerangka filsafat nihilisme dan etika Islam. Analisis difokuskan pada tiga aspek utama: (1) keterkaitan antara nightlife dan gaya hidup hedonistik yang mencerminkan nihilisme, (2) krisis makna dalam budaya urban yang memunculkan alienasi sosial serta keterasingan spiritual, dan (3) tawaran solusi etika dan hukum Islam, khususnya melalui maqāṣid al-syarī'ah serta pendekatan tasawuf, untuk merevitalisasi kesadaran moral dan tujuan hidup. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nightlife merupakan cerminan dari pergeseran nilai dalam budaya urban kontemporer yang membawa implikasi serius terhadap identitas dan spiritualitas generasi muda Muslim. Karena itu, dibutuhkan pendekatan kritis dan solutif berbasis etika Islam yang mampu mengintegrasikan kebutuhan rekreasi dengan orientasi spiritual, sehingga nilai-nilai keislaman tetap relevan dalam menghadapi tantangan budaya urban modern.

Kata Kunci: *Nightlife, Nihilisme, Krisis Makna, Etika Islam, Budaya Urban*

Introduction

The expansion of nightlife as a cultural and social phenomenon has become increasingly prominent in Indonesia's urban landscape, particularly in metropolitan centers such as Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, and Surabaya. Nightlife, encompassing activities such as nightclubs, bars, musical concerts, all-night cafes, and contemporary forms of digital entertainment like late-night live streaming, has transformed into more than just a recreational outlet. For urban youth, these activities have become significant arenas for identity formation, self-expression, and the pursuit of social recognition. In this sense, nightlife serves as both a mirror and a product of modernization, which has reshaped social, cultural, and economic dynamics within Indonesian cities. It has created alternative spaces for young people to cultivate self-image, expand social networks, and satisfy psychological needs that are increasingly shaped by urban complexity and modern pressures.[1]

Despite its vibrancy, however, the rise of nightlife reveals deeper existential dilemmas that go beyond the surface of entertainment. At its core, nightlife reflects a profound crisis of meaning that resonates with the philosophical concept of nihilism. Friedrich Nietzsche, a central figure in the discourse on nihilism, articulated the condition as one in which individuals lose their foundational values, experience inner emptiness, and perceive life as lacking both purpose and direction. Within the Indonesian context, this notion finds resonance in the lifestyle patterns of urban youth, who often embody fragmented, individualistic orientations centered on

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[1] Annisa Prajabti, Xo Ho Dac Kien, and Muhammad Rasyid Ridho, "Hedonism in the Young Generation: The Challenge of Pancasila Moral Education," *Jurnal Panjar: Pengabdian Bidang Pembelajaran* 4, no. 2 (2022): 141–58, https://doi.org/10.15294/panjar.v4i2.55040.

momentary pleasures rather than enduring values. In this regard, nightlife becomes not only an escape from social expectations and the monotony of daily routines but also a symbolic refuge from existential anxiety. Thus, rather than being seen solely as a leisure practice, nightlife must be understood as a cultural symptom of the deeper structural issues that shape the value orientation and worldview of contemporary urban youth.

The forces of urbanization have amplified this phenomenon. Rapid urban growth, with its provision of modern infrastructure and entertainment spaces, has redefined nightlife as a symbol of status, modernity, and progress. For some, these spaces provide opportunities to project identity and assert presence in the public domain. Yet, these same urban processes often engender alienation, loneliness, and psychological strain.[2] Zygmunt Bauman's notion of "liquid modernity" is particularly relevant here, as it describes how modern life produces fragile, transient, and superficial social bonds. Relationships in liquid modernity, much like the social interactions prevalent within nightlife culture, are marked by impermanence and vulnerability. In this light, nightlife can be interpreted as one manifestation of liquid modernity, revealing the fragility of social ties and the tenuousness of meaning-making processes among young people in urban environments.[3]

The crisis of meaning is further observable in the growing prevalence of mental health concerns among younger generations. Rising rates of anxiety, depression, and escapist behaviors, often mediated through nightlife participation, underscore the link between modern pressures and existential challenges.[4] Empirical studies highlight how the increasing mental health burden among youth reflects the profound impact of a rapidly changing socio-cultural environment.[5] Nightlife, while providing temporary relief, merely serves as a superficial coping mechanism that does not address the underlying existential void. This illustrates that the crisis of meaning is not confined to abstract philosophical discourse but manifests tangibly in the psychological and moral wellbeing of the younger population.[6]

From an Islamic perspective, the proliferation of nightlife cannot simply be dismissed as a natural feature of urban modernity. Instead, it is viewed as a manifestation of deeper spiritual disorientation requiring careful attention. Islam conceives of life as a purposeful trust, with its

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[2] Nelly Syahfitri Br Damanik and Nuriza Dora, "Impact of Hedonistic Lifestyle on Social Interaction among High School Students: A Case Study in Indonesia," *Ilomata International Journal of Social Science* 5, no. 3 (2024): 866–82, https://doi.org/10.61194/ijss.v5i3.1284.

[3] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

[4] Bonifasia Telaumbanua, Megawati Naibaho, and Evimawati Harefa, "Upaya Keluarga Dalam Mencegah Terjadinya Clubbing Culture," *Journal New Light* 2, no. 4 (2024): 116–25, https://doi.org/10.62200/newlight.v2i4.177; Akhmad Azmiardi, "Pengaruh Perilaku Merokok , Konsumsi Alkohol Dan Hiburan Malam," *Faletehan Health Journal* 7, no. 1 (2020): 30–36.

[5] Deftarani Deftarani, Faiq Dhiyaulhaq, and Rafli Nurochman, "Negative Impact of the Hedonism Lifestyle in the Student Environment," *Research and Innovation in Social Science Education Journal (RISSEJ)* 2, no. 1 (2024): 35–39, https://doi.org/10.30595/rissej.v2i1.136.

[6] Cahya Meidiana, Michelle Ashari, and Ahmad Irfan, "Ancaman Budaya Asing Terhadap Identitas Nasional Bangsa Indonesia," *Ganesha Civic Education Journal* 5, no. 1 (2023): 49–54, https://doi.org/10.23887/gancej.v5i1.4895.

ultimate aim being servitude to God, as articulated in the Qur'anic verse: *"I did not create jinn and humankind except to worship Me"* (Q.S. al-Dhāriyāt [51]: 56).[7] In this light, nightlife practices that often involve activities contradicting Islamic ethical principles such as alcohol consumption, casual sexual relations, and indulgent hedonism represent not only social and cultural challenges but also profound spiritual risks. From the standpoint of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah, meaningful life can only be achieved through the preservation of five essential objectives: faith (ḥifẓ al-dīn), life (ḥifẓ al-nafs), intellect (ḥifẓ al-'aql), lineage (ḥifẓ al-nasl), and property (ḥifẓ al-māl). Nightlife, when unchecked, threatens to compromise or even undermine these core objectives.

Consequently, the study of nightlife requires more than descriptive sociological or moralistic approaches. A deeper analysis is necessary, integrating the philosophical discourse of nihilism and the normative ethical framework of Islam. Philosophy provides critical insights into the root causes of existential disorientation, while Islamic ethics offers both a critique and a constructive pathway toward reorienting values. Together, these perspectives allow for a more holistic understanding of nightlife not merely as an entertainment culture but as an indicator of the broader existential challenges confronting youth in modern Indonesia.

On the basis of these considerations, this research is designed with three primary aims. First, it seeks to elucidate how nightlife functions as a manifestation of nihilism and the broader crisis of meaning experienced by urban youth. Second, it endeavors to analyze the issue from the perspective of Islamic ethics and law, with particular emphasis on the maqāṣid al-sharī'ah as both a diagnostic and prescriptive framework. Third, it aims to make an academic contribution to ongoing debates on the intersection between urban culture, existential dilemmas, and the enduring relevance of Islamic teachings in shaping ethical life in modern contexts. In doing so, this article aspires to enrich contemporary Islamic studies while also contributing to critical discourses surrounding youth, urban culture, and the search for meaning in twenty-first-century Indonesia.

Literature Review

The discourse surrounding nightlife, nihilism, and the crisis of meaning has long attracted scholarly attention across various disciplines, including sociology, philosophy, and Islamic studies. Contemporary research provides an essential foundation for a critical understanding of these interrelated phenomena. Four significant studies, while offering valuable insights, also demonstrate specific limitations that necessitate further exploration.

Zakaria, in his article *Dynamics of Nightlife in Malang City as an Impact of Urbanization*, highlights how the proliferation of nightlife in Malang is closely linked to processes of urbanization, education, tourism, and economic development. His research indicates that urban expansion generates new spaces for entertainment, ranging from pubs, cafes, discos, and karaoke venues to prostitution. These findings reveal a profound ambivalence: on one hand,

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[7] Erine Nur Maulidya, "Dampak Fenomena Clubbing Di Tinjau Dari Dimensi Agama Dan Masyarakat," *Dampak Fenomena Clubbing, Al-AdYaN* X, no. 2 (2015): 231–250.

nightlife contributes to the growth of the local economy and provides opportunities for social interaction; on the other, it simultaneously fosters detrimental consequences such as promiscuity, drug abuse, alcohol consumption, and criminality. Zakaria's work thus demonstrates the dualistic role of urbanization and modernization in shaping complex social dynamics within urban spaces.[8]

Expanding the discussion beyond the economic and spatial dimensions, Muhammad Soleh, in his study *Youth, Religion, and Pop Culture*, directs attention toward the intersection between youth culture and popular media. He argues that social media, music, and entertainment industries actively cultivate a hedonistic lifestyle and an orientation toward instant gratification among young people. This cultural shift tends to marginalize religious values in everyday life, undermining the centrality of spirituality within youth identity formation. Nonetheless, Soleh emphasizes that family, education, and social environment remain critical in maintaining religious presence amid the overwhelming tide of modernity. His findings underscore the persistent tension between religiosity and modernity: while some youth attempt to integrate religious values with popular culture, others are ensnared within patterns of excessive hedonism.[9]

A third study, *Students, Hedonism, Night Clubbing, and Lifestyle* by Diana, examines more specifically the involvement of university students in nightlife culture. The research underscores that nightclubs serve as arenas for student interaction, expressed through alcohol consumption, musical enjoyment, and liberal socialization. This lifestyle, according to Diana, not only undermines students' morality and spirituality but also exerts a tangible negative impact on academic achievement, which tends to decline in correlation with indulgence in nightlife activities. The study reveals that nightlife transcends its function as mere entertainment; it significantly shapes the moral, intellectual, and personal development of the younger generation, particularly within academic communities.[10]

In contrast to these three studies, an article entitled *The Role of Cultural Islamic Boarding Schools in Responding to Youth Hedonism* adopts an institutional and religious perspective. This research focuses on the role of pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) as cultural and educational institutions tasked with countering the challenges posed by popular culture and hedonistic lifestyles. The pesantren is depicted as both an educative and transformative entity that provides Islamic values as an alternative foundation for character formation among youth. In this sense, pesantren function as protective bastions of morality and spirituality, offering young people

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[8] Zakaria, "Dinamika Kehidupan Malam Kota Malang Sebagai Dampak Dari Urbanisasi," *Pangripta* 1, no. 1 (2018): 86–95, https://doi.org/10.58411/nb5wgj87.

[9] Muhammad Soleh Soleh, "Youth, Religion, and Pop Culture: Modernitas Dalam Gaya Hidup Hedonisme Remaja Dan Budaya Populer Versus Eksistensi Agama Jaman Now," *SEMAR : Jurnal Sosial Dan Pengabdian Masyarakat* 1, no. 02 (2023): 35–44, https://doi.org/10.59966/semar.v1i02.303.

[10] Diana Febi Anggraini, "MAHASISWA HEDONISME NIGHT CLUBBER AND LIFESTYLE (Terhadap Pola Perilaku Mahasiswa Pada Tempat Hiburan Night Club Di Kota Malang) NIGHT," *SOCIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial* 16, no. 2 (2019): 172–186.

religiously grounded spaces in which to construct identity amid the pervasive influence of nightlife and consumer-driven popular culture.[11]

While these four contributions illuminate distinct aspects of the phenomenon, they also exhibit notable limitations. Zakaria's work, while rich in socioeconomic analysis, neglects to engage with the philosophical dimensions of nihilism or the ethical framework of Islam. Soleh's analysis ends at the dichotomy between popular culture and religion without further situating these tensions within the broader context of existential crises. Diana's focus on student nightlife behavior usefully documents patterns of hedonism but fails to contextualize them through philosophical theories such as Nietzsche's critique of values, Heidegger's notion of existential *Geworfenheit* (thrownness), or Bauman's reflections on liquid modernity. The pesantren-centered study, meanwhile, provides valuable insights into institutional responses but does not directly address urban nightlife as the concrete locus of existential crisis.

This lacuna forms the starting point for the present research. By situating nightlife within the broader discourse of Western existential philosophy and Islamic ethical thought, the study aims to provide a more holistic and comprehensive framework. Nietzsche's concept of nihilism, Heidegger's existential analysis of human thrownness into the world, Sartre's articulation of freedom and responsibility, and Bauman's notion of liquid modernity all provide fertile ground for analyzing the loss of meaning in urban youth lifestyles. These philosophical perspectives, when integrated with classical and contemporary Islamic ethics particularly through the lens of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (objectives of Islamic law) and *taṣawwuf* (Islamic mysticism) create a multidimensional analytical approach.

The integration of these frameworks enables the study to move beyond descriptive or moralistic accounts of nightlife. Rather than merely cataloging social problems or condemning moral decline, the research seeks to uncover the existential roots of urban youth behaviors. In doing so, it reframes nightlife not simply as a social practice but as a manifestation of deeper crises of value, identity, and spiritual orientation. This theoretical integration also addresses the methodological gap in earlier studies, which tended to privilege either sociological description or normative religious critique without synthesizing them within a broader philosophical and spiritual paradigm.

Beyond critical analysis, this study also aspires to propose constructive solutions. The reconstitution of meaning in youth culture is envisioned through the strengthening of spirituality, ethical education, and practices of *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul). Furthermore, the development of a religiously infused yet inclusive urban culture is posited as a strategic response to the lure of nightlife. Rather than wholly rejecting modern entertainment spaces, the proposal suggests redirecting youth energy toward meaningful, creative, and transcendent activities aligned with Islamic ethical values. In this way, the study positions itself

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[11] Ade Zuki Damanik et al., "Peran Pondok Pesantren Kebudayaan Dalam Menjawab Fenomena Krisis Identitas Budaya," *ASPIRASI : Publikasi Hasil Pengabdian Dan Kegiatan Masyarakat* 2, no. 5 (2024): 110–24, https://doi.org/10.61132/aspirasi.v2i5.1029.

not merely as a critique of nightlife but as an effort to constructively engage with urban modernity by offering youth alternative cultural and spiritual horizons.

In sum, this research enriches the academic discourse on urbanization, popular culture, and hedonism by offering a conceptual framework that bridges sociological realities, existential philosophy, and Islamic ethics. It attempts to articulate a comprehensive understanding of how nightlife reflects broader crises of meaning while simultaneously presenting pathways for reorientation grounded in transcendental values. By synthesizing Western existential critique and Islamic spiritual ethics, the study aspires to contribute both theoretically and practically to contemporary debates on youth culture in urban Indonesia.

Research Method

This study adopts a qualitative research paradigm through the application of a library research method. The qualitative approach is deemed appropriate because the objective of this investigation is not to quantify empirical data but to analyze conceptual and philosophical dimensions of a cultural phenomenon. Specifically, the research addresses nightlife as a reflection of nihilism and the crisis of meaning among urban youth, with particular emphasis on examining these issues through the lens of Islamic ethics and the jurisprudential heritage of Islamic law. Such a focus necessitates a methodological framework that privileges interpretation, critical reflection, and theoretical synthesis rather than statistical measurement. Library research, as the primary method, involves the systematic collection, review, and critical assessment of a wide range of literature relevant to the research focus. This includes both classical Islamic texts such as works of jurisprudence, theology, and ethical discourse, and contemporary scholarly contributions in fields such as cultural studies, sociology, psychology, and Islamic thought. By engaging with both historical and modern sources, this study seeks to bridge traditional insights with contemporary challenges, thereby producing an integrated analytical framework that is both contextually grounded and philosophically robust.

The process of inquiry entails several key stages. First, relevant literature is identified and selected based on its thematic relevance, scholarly credibility, and contribution to the discourse on nihilism, existential meaning, and Islamic ethical perspectives. Second, the selected works are examined through critical content analysis, allowing for the extraction of key arguments, theoretical constructs, and interpretive insights. Third, the findings are compared across different sources, enabling the identification of convergences, divergences, and potential areas for synthesis. Finally, the insights derived are organized into a coherent framework that elucidates how Islamic ethics and Islamic legal thought can respond to and contextualize the phenomena of nightlife, nihilism, and the crisis of meaning within urban youth culture. This methodological design ensures that the study is both comprehensive and systematic. It does not merely juxtapose different sources but actively seeks to synthesize them into a meaningful whole. By situating contemporary urban youth issues within the broader intellectual tradition of Islamic scholarship, this research aims to demonstrate the continuing relevance of Islamic

ethical and legal thought in addressing modern existential challenges. Moreover, the use of both classical and contemporary literature strengthens the study's analytical depth, as it draws upon a rich intellectual heritage while remaining attentive to current socio-cultural realities.

Results and Discussion

Nightlife as a Reflection of Nihilism and the Crisis of Meaning Among Young Generations

The evolution of nightlife within Indonesia's metropolitan areas represents far more than an entertainment trend; it constitutes a multifaceted socio-cultural reality born of structural shifts and cultural transformations. Cities such as Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, and Surabaya illustrate how urban expansion, modernization, and globalization converge to create fertile ground for nocturnal practices that shape new lifestyles and value systems among young people. Urbanization, through its provision of physical infrastructure and commercial venues, has laid the foundation for vibrant nighttime economies. The proliferation of twenty-four-hour cafes, technologically sophisticated clubs, and multipurpose concert arenas illustrates how urban planning and capital investment create spaces that facilitate nocturnal leisure. Modernization amplifies these developments by transforming values and behaviors toward greater individualism and consumerism, while globalization imports cosmopolitan patterns of entertainment from world cities, which are then localized within Indonesian contexts. The confluence of these factors has elevated nightlife into a prominent cultural symbol and a marker of identity for urban youth.[12]

Psychosocial dynamics shed light on the motivations behind youth engagement in nightlife. Nocturnal environments provide temporary escapes from the pressures of daily life, serving as mechanisms of *eskapisme*. For students, young professionals, and others immersed in demanding routines, nightlife offers a release valve from academic burdens, occupational stress, and interpersonal challenges. At the same time, these spaces function as arenas of instant recognition and validation. Nightclubs, concerts, and cafés are not merely sites of leisure but stages for self-presentation, often amplified through social media platforms. The act of posting photographs or videos from nightlife activities signifies attempts to craft a desirable self-image and secure social affirmation. Yet the gratification produced is fleeting. The excitement and euphoria associated with nightlife dissipate quickly, leaving many young participants with heightened feelings of emptiness, anxiety, or even alienation. The transitory nature of such experiences underscores their inability to generate enduring meaning or fulfillment.

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[12] Bambang Sukma Wijaya, "Consuming Midnights Indonesian Youths' Stay-up-Late Lifestyle in Branded Places," *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies* 17, no. 1 (2021): 17–30, https://doi.org/10.18848/2327-008X/CGP/v17i01/17-30; Arfina Putri Prihantoro et al., "Perilaku Dan Kenakalan Pada Remaja Pergaulan Di Perguruan Tinggi," in *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Ilmu Ilmu Sosial (SNIIS)*, vol. 1, 2022, 39–48; Darnoto and Hesti Triyana Dewi, "Pergaulan Bebas Remaja Di Era Milenial Menurut Perspektif Pendidikan Agama Islam," *Jurnal Tarbawi* 17, no. 1 (2020): 45–60.

Empirical research supports this interpretation. A study on nightlife in Makassar demonstrates that nocturnal leisure is not reducible to economic or recreational dimensions.[13] According to Tadie, nightlife spaces embody cultural and political implications by reshaping moral codes and social relations. They redefine conceptions of freedom, the body, and interaction, thereby influencing the ethical foundations of urban society. In this sense, nightlife can be viewed as a symbolic arena where the negotiation of identity and values occurs. The nightlife scene thus participates in producing new cultural configurations that extend beyond individual enjoyment to broader questions of social organization and morality.[14]

Philosophically, the relationship between nightlife and nihilism is particularly significant. Nietzsche's proclamation of the "death of God" encapsulates the erosion of traditional moral and spiritual foundations that had previously anchored human existence. In the absence of transcendent reference points, individuals confront a void wherein meaning must be constructed or substituted. Nietzsche warned of a nihilistic condition in which life is increasingly directed toward temporary pleasures and superficial satisfactions rather than deeper existential purposes. Within this framework, nightlife can be interpreted as a lived expression of nihilism. Its emphasis on consumption, instantaneous gratification, and ephemeral ecstasy mirrors the substitution of lasting meaning with fleeting enjoyment. The orientation toward the immediate displaces the pursuit of enduring significance, thereby exacerbating the vulnerability of young people to crises of value and existential disorientation.[15]

Sociological perspectives complement this philosophical interpretation. Zygmunt Bauman's notion of *liquid modernity* aptly describes the fluidity, fragility, and instability of social bonds in the contemporary era. In contrast to the solid and enduring relationships characteristic of earlier social formations, modern interactions tend to be shallow, transient, and easily dissolved. The rise of digital technologies further accelerates this process by fostering connections that are rapid but superficial.[16] Within the context of nightlife, this liquidity is readily observable. Crowded clubs and bustling concerts may create the illusion of intimacy and social cohesion, yet the relationships formed in these spaces often lack depth and permanence. Rather than mitigating loneliness, such interactions frequently exacerbate feelings of isolation, as participants realize the superficiality of their connections. Bauman's concept of liquidity helps explain why young individuals immersed in nightlife activities, despite appearing socially engaged, may continue to wrestle with profound emptiness and alienation.

The psychological dimension introduces another layer of complexity. Studies in public health and adolescent behavior in Indonesia indicate rising levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among young people. Pressures related to academic performance, economic challenges, and social expectations drive many toward maladaptive coping mechanisms.

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[13] Dyan Paramitha Darmayanti, M Iqbal Arifin, and Husain Husain, "Clubbing: Lifestyle Para Remaja Di Kota Makassar," *Phinisi Integration Review* 5, no. 3 (2022): 887–892, https://doi.org/10.26858/pir.v5i3.39378.

[14] Tadié dan Permanadeli (2015)

[15] Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (New York: Random House, 1967).

[16] Bauman (2000)

Participation in nightlife often intersects with these patterns, functioning simultaneously as a means of escapism and as a risk environment. Alcohol consumption, recreational drug use, and risky sexual behavior are frequently associated with nocturnal leisure. Contemporary health research underscores that nightlife is not merely a cultural phenomenon but also a public health concern, as it intersects directly with youth mental health and well-being. In this regard, nightlife reveals itself as a site where existential crises and unhealthy coping strategies manifest in concrete and sometimes harmful ways.[17]

When the structural, psychosocial, philosophical, sociological, and psychological dimensions are considered together, nightlife emerges as a remarkably intricate phenomenon. It embodies the interplay of urban expansion, global cultural flows, and shifting lifestyles, while simultaneously reflecting deeper crises of value and meaning. What may appear on the surface as mere entertainment is, in fact, a dense cultural symbol. It signifies the search for identity, the struggle with existential uncertainty, and the limitations of modernity in answering the most profound human questions.

Thus, nightlife in Indonesia's major cities can be seen as both a symptom and a symbol. It is symptomatic of the vulnerabilities of contemporary youth caught between structural transformations and personal struggles while symbolizing the fragility of meaning in an age characterized by nihilism and liquid modernity. Ultimately, the nightlife phenomenon reveals not only the ways young people navigate urban modernity but also the insufficiency of consumerist culture in providing authentic or lasting answers to the perennial quest for purpose and fulfillment.

Philosophical Analysis of Nihilism and the Transformation of Values

The phenomenon of nihilism that increasingly shapes the lives of urban youth, particularly within the sphere of nightlife, cannot be separated from the profound transformation of values that characterizes the modern era. Friedrich Nietzsche remains one of the most influential philosophers in articulating the nature of nihilism. Through his monumental idea of the *death of God*, Nietzsche described the collapse of traditional value systems that for centuries had underpinned morality, spirituality, and human purpose. His statement, *"Gott ist tot! Gott bleibt tot! Und wir haben ihn getötet"* ("God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed Him"), articulated in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (*The Gay Science*), was never intended as a strictly theological claim. Rather, it functioned as a philosophical metaphor, signaling the erosion of absolute moral authority.[18] As a consequence, modern humanity finds itself abandoned in a void of meaning and beset by existential crisis, a situation strikingly relevant for understanding the erosion of purpose among contemporary urban youth.

In the Indonesian context, nihilism manifests through fragmented and fluid lifestyles among the younger generation. Identity is no longer conceived as a stable essence but is instead

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[17] Desy Indra Yani et al., "Perceptions of Mental Health Challenges and Needs of Indonesian Adolescents: A Descriptive Qualitative Study," *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing* 34, no. 1 (2025): 1–12, https://doi.org/10.1111/inm.13505.

[18] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Wal (New York: Vintage, 1974).

shaped by shifting social constructions that follow the tides of global cultural trends. Such fragmentation accelerates the emergence of consumerism and individualism, wherein life's purpose is reduced to the accumulation of hedonistic experiences. Nightlife culture embodied in nightclubs, music concerts, and bars becomes one of the primary arenas for this pursuit. These spaces often function as stages for the search for identity, albeit in superficial forms marked by curated self-presentation and digital performance. Identity is displayed through musical preferences, fashion choices, and consumption patterns, transforming nightlife into a fragile platform of performativity.[19]

The existentialist tradition, particularly through the works of Martin Heidegger[20] and Jean-Paul Sartre[21], deepens this analysis of the crisis of meaning. Heidegger, in *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*), introduced the concept of *Geworfenheit* (thrownness), describing the human condition as one of being "thrown" into the world without choice. His assertion, *"Das Dasein ist in die Welt geworfen"* ("Human existence is always thrown into the world"), emphasizes that individuals must confront reality with all its uncertainty and limitations. From this perspective, nightlife can be interpreted as a form of escapism, a strategy to cover existential anxiety rooted in this thrownness. Urban youth, therefore, do not seek entertainment merely for recreation, but also to avoid confronting fundamental existential questions that demand responsibility and the pursuit of authentic meaning.

Sartre, in *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme* (*Existentialism is a Humanism*), famously articulated the principle that *"L'existence précède l'essence"* ("Existence precedes essence"), underscoring the responsibility of human beings to construct meaning for themselves. However, this radical freedom often fails to be exercised authentically. Instead of creating profound and lasting meanings, urban youth frequently become ensnared in superficial consumerist routines. Nightlife, then, emerges as a manifestation of illusory freedom: a freedom that does not generate authenticity but instead reproduces patterns of hedonism and consumption. In this way, nihilism and existentialism intersect within urban cultural practices: the loss of meaning drives escapism, while escapism intensifies the crisis of meaning.

Adding a sociological dimension, Zygmunt Bauman's theory of *liquid modernity* offers a critical framework for interpreting these dynamics. Bauman asserts that *"Social forms and institutions can no longer keep their shape for long, because they decompose and melt faster than the time it takes to cast them".* [22] This statement reflects the transient and unstable character of modern social structures. Nightlife serves as a vivid manifestation of this liquidity: social relationships formed in clubs, bars, or concerts tend to be temporary, shallow, and fragile. The apparent

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[19] Prajabti, Kien, and Ridho, "Hedonism in the Young Generation: The Challenge of Pancasila Moral Education"; Damanik and Dora, "Impact of Hedonistic Lifestyle on Social Interaction among High School Students: A Case Study in Indonesia"; Deftarani, Dhiyaulhaq, and Nurochman, "Negative Impact of the Hedonism Lifestyle in the Student Environment."

[20] Heidegger (1962)

[21] Sartre (2007)

[22] Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*.

density of interaction within such spaces rarely produces authentic emotional closeness. Instead, it often intensifies loneliness and existential alienation. Thus, nightlife does not merely function as entertainment but also reflects the fractures inherent within modern social formations.

The implications of these value transformations extend beyond philosophy into the realm of psychosocial reality. Empirical evidence across multiple studies indicates a rising prevalence of mood disorders such as depression and anxiety, alongside increased tendencies toward addictive behavior among youth immersed in nightlife and digital culture. Comprehensive meta-analyses, as well as locally focused research within Indonesia, demonstrate a clear correlation between high levels of engagement with consumerist lifestyles and deteriorating mental health outcomes. Urban youth trapped in patterns of hedonism and consumerism often exhibit weakened collective responsibility, declining social solidarity, and deepening alienation. This supports the thesis that nihilism is not merely an abstract philosophical issue but a tangible social problem with profound implications for mental health and societal sustainability.

Against this backdrop, classical Islamic philosophy offers an alternative framework that directly challenges nihilistic tendencies by affirming the transcendental orientation of human existence. Al-Ghazālī[23] in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, wrote: «أَلْغَايَةُ مِنَ الْإِنْسَانِ أَنْ يَعْرِفَ اللهَ وَيَعْبُدَهُ» ("The ultimate purpose of human existence is to know God and worship Him").[24] Within this paradigm, meaning is never absent but is anchored in the spiritual relationship between humanity and the Divine. Ibn Sīnā[25] in *al-Najāt*, emphasized that human perfection is attained through knowledge and purification of the soul: «كَمَالُ الْإِنْسَانِ بِتَحْصِيلِ الْعِلْمِ وَتَهْذِيبِ النَّفْس» ("Human perfection lies in the acquisition of knowledge and the refinement of the soul").[26] Al-Fārābī[27] in *al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah*, reminded us that «الْإِنْسَانُ مَدَنِيٌّ بِالطَّبْعِ» ("Human beings are, by nature, social creatures"), underscoring that superficial relationships in nightlife stand in stark contrast to the ideal vision of a virtuous society oriented toward the common good.[28] Similarly, Ibn Miskawayh[29] in *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, asserted that «السَّعَادَةُ فِي تَهْذِيبِ النَّفْس وَمُلَازَمَةِ الْفَضِيلَةِ» ("True happiness lies in the purification of the soul and adherence to virtue").[30]

From this perspective, Islamic thought emphasizes that authentic happiness and meaning do not reside in material pleasures or symbolic consumption but in the cultivation of spiritual, intellectual, and moral dimensions of human life. This framework offers a powerful

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[23] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn* (Kairo: Dār al-Kutub, n.d.).

[24] Sulaiman, "Konsep Tawakal Menurut Imam Ghazali Dalam Kitab Ihyā 'Ulūm Al-Dīn," *Ameena Journal* 1, no. 1 (2023): 44–55.

[25] Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Najāt* (Tehran: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1985).

[26] Nurul Khair, "Memotret Kesempurnaan Insan Menurut Filsafat Jiwa Ibn Sīnā," *Kanz Philosophia: A Journal for Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism* 6, no. 2 (2020): 165–192, https://doi.org/10.20871/kpjipm.v6i2.95.

[27] Al-Fārābī, *Al-Madīnah Al-Fāḍilah* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1995).

[28] Nur Alisa, Siradjuddin, and Misbahuddin, "Konsep Negara Dan Masyarakat Ideal Menurut Al-Farabi Dalam Sudut Pandang Ekonomi," *Syarikat: Jurnal Rumpun Ekonomi Syariah* 6, no. 2 (2023): 493–506, https://doi.org/10.25299/syarikat.2023.vol6(2).13338.

[29] Ibn Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb Al-Akhlāq* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub, 1966).

[30] Fitriani Nurhayati et al., "Relevansi Pemikiran Khas Filsafat Ibn Miskawaih Dalam Menjawab Tantangan Zaman," *DIRASAH* 8, no. 2 (2025): 798–807.

alternative to modern nihilism: rather than becoming entrapped within existential emptiness, human beings are directed toward the pursuit of transcendental meaning rooted in divine connection, moral virtue, and socially meaningful life.

Thus, a philosophical analysis of nihilism and the transformation of values reveals that nightlife culture is not merely a form of entertainment, but a profound symptom of the crisis of meaning within urban society. The shift from transcendental orientation toward materialism and hedonism has generated far-reaching consequences on individual, social, and psychological levels. Integrating insights from Western philosophy (Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, Bauman) with those of classical Islamic philosophy (al-Ghazālī, Ibn Sīnā, al-Fārābī, Ibn Miskawayh) highlights a critical dialectic between modern nihilism and Islamic spirituality. While Western philosophy often portrays the crisis of meaning as an inevitable byproduct of modernity, Islamic philosophy provides a constructive pathway out of the crisis through a reconstruction of values grounded in spirituality, ethics, and community.

Consequently, addressing this phenomenon requires an interdisciplinary approach that is not only descriptive but also normatively transformative. It is insufficient to merely analyze the symptoms of nihilism; there is a need for an integrative response that reorients youth culture toward more authentic, meaningful, and transcendental pursuits. By engaging critically with both Western and Islamic philosophical traditions, this study underscores the possibility of guiding future generations toward lives that transcend superficial consumerism and embody deeper forms of moral, intellectual, and spiritual fulfillment.

Islamic Ethical Perspectives on Nightlife and the Existential Crisis

The phenomenon of nightlife in major Indonesian cities today reveals dimensions far more complex than a mere form of entertainment or recreation. Nightlife characterized by the proliferation of cafes, clubs, bars, and various other leisure venues does not merely reflect the dynamics of urban economies. Rather, it also functions as a mirror of the existential problems faced by younger generations. Within the currents of modernity and urbanization, many young people experience crises of meaning, alienation, and increasingly fragmented searches for identity. Accordingly, nightlife cannot be separated from deeper philosophical and spiritual issues, namely the existential crisis and the pervasive tendencies of nihilism.[31]

In Western philosophy, this phenomenon has been accorded significant attention. Friedrich Nietzsche, for example, situates nihilism as a logical consequence of the so-called "death of God" (*Gott ist tot*). This declaration is not merely a theological claim but rather a symbol of the collapse of absolute moral foundations that had long structured human life. Once these foundations eroded, humanity descended into a condition of meaninglessness, disorientation, and the substitution of enduring life-orientations with instant gratification. In

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[31] Panji Setiawan, Hartutiningsih, and Zulkifli Abdullah, "Dampak Perilaku Clubbing Terhadap Keterlambatan Penyelesaian Studi Mahasiswa," *EJournal Pembangunan Sosial* 2023, no. 2 (2023): 94–108; Bonifasia Telaumbanua, Megawati Naibaho, and Evimawati Harefa, "Upaya Keluarga Dalam Mencegah Terjadinya Clubbing Culture."

practical terms, nightlife with its central focus on ephemeral euphoria may be interpreted as a concrete manifestation of this nihilistic condition.

The analysis of Zygmunt Bauman further enriches this discourse through his concept of *liquid modernity*. Bauman describes liquid modernity as a context marked by weakened social bonds, fragile commitments, and increasingly superficial relationships. This condition is visibly embodied in urban nightlife, where social interactions occur amidst bustling crowds yet lack depth or permanence. Young people may outwardly appear to enjoy camaraderie within nightclubs or parties, but in reality, they are highly susceptible to existential loneliness. Bauman identifies this as the paradox of the liquid society: the more social connections are formed, the shallower the quality of those relationships becomes.

Islam, however, provides a different and more comprehensive analytical framework. Instead of perceiving nightlife solely as an implication of nihilism, Islam situates the discussion within the paradigm of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, the fundamental objectives of Islamic law that guide all human activity. The *maqāṣid* emphasize safeguarding five essential dimensions of human life: religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-ʿaql*), progeny (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and wealth (*ḥifẓ al-māl*).[32] Practices associated with nightlife frequently conflict with these principles. Excessive alcohol consumption, substance abuse, promiscuity, violence, and financial waste not only jeopardize physical and psychological well-being but also undermine the value structures that *sharīʿah* seeks to preserve. Thus, within an Islamic framework, nightlife is not simply recreational, it constitutes an ethical challenge that erodes the foundations of meaningful existence.

Islam's view of human life is profoundly transcendental. Life is not merely a biological reality or a psychological experience; rather, it is a trust (*amānah*) endowed with a clear purpose. The Qur'an explicitly emphasizes this orientation: *"And I did not create jinn and mankind except to worship Me"* (Qur'an 51:56). This verse underlines that the true meaning of life is not found in the pursuit of temporary pleasures but in the cultivation of a transcendental relationship with God. Consequently, nihilism from an Islamic perspective does not emerge because "God is dead," but rather because human beings have distanced themselves from the Living God, the ultimate source of meaning.

Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah further elucidates this view, asserting that the human heart contains an emptiness that can only be filled by the remembrance (*dhikr*) of God. This corresponds with the Qur'anic affirmation: *"Those who believe and whose hearts find tranquility in the remembrance of Allah. Truly, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find tranquility"* (Qur'an 13:28).[33] If this void is not filled with spiritual values, it will be replaced with transient pleasures including nightlife entertainment which ultimately intensify feelings of alienation. This condition parallels the "existential void" described in modern philosophy, but in Islamic thought, it is interpreted as the result of severed spiritual connections with the Creator.

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[32] Abu Ishaq Al-Shatibi, *Al-Muwāfaqāt Fī Uṣūl Al-SharīʿAh* (Beirut: Dar al Kitab Al-ʾIlmiyyah, 1997).

[33] Aryadi Erwansah, "10 Nasihat Imam Ibnul Qayyim Al-Jauziyyah," kuncikebaikan.com, 2018, https://kuncikebaikan.com/10-nasihat-imam-ibnul-qayyim-al-jauziyyah/#:~:text= لاَ تَزُولُ قَدَمَا عَبْدِ يَوْمَ, مِنْ أَيْنَ اكْتَسَبَهُ &text=Pada hati yang kosong cintanya,walaupun tak terucapkan oleh lisan. وَفِيمَا أَنْفَقَهُ ...

In responding to such crises, Islam offers two transformative pathways. The first is the strengthening of practical spirituality through the traditions of Sufism. By undertaking *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul), engaging in *dhikr*, and practicing *riyāḍah rūḥiyyah* (spiritual exercises), young people can rediscover a lost existential orientation. This form of practical spirituality not only offers inner peace but also provides a medium for internalizing life's meaning rooted in divine orientation. The second solution lies in socio-cultural interventions. Contextual ethical education, the cultivation of alternative communities, and balanced public policies that reconcile recreational needs with the protection of values are essential strategies to prevent youth from being engulfed in nihilism. Contemporary scholarship on *maqāṣid* emphasizes that effective solutions must integrate value formation with the provision of meaningful social spaces.

Hence, Islam's approach to nightlife is neither repressive nor prohibitive but adaptive and solution-oriented. Rather than eliminating public spaces, Islam seeks to reconstruct life's meaning by integrating spiritual values into the urban environment. This perspective inspires the development of inclusive, creative, and meaningful urban religious cultures. Concrete examples include educational music festivals, community night spaces emphasizing religious creativity, and art initiatives grounded in spirituality. These models demonstrate how urban culture can be redirected toward healthier and more meaningful expressions. This vision resonates with al-Fārābī's conceptualization of the *al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah* (The Virtuous City). He emphasizes that the ideal society is one in which citizens cooperate to achieve true happiness. In the Islamic worldview, happiness is not synonymous with material pleasure but rather with connectedness to God, social harmony, and purposeful living. Islam, therefore, offers a vision of urban societies that are not only modern and productive but also religiously anchored and transcendental in orientation.

This analysis reveals that the existential crisis of young people entangled in nightlife is not solely a philosophical problem as discussed by Nietzsche or Bauman but also an ethical and spiritual dilemma. The erosion of orientation toward *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* renders young generations vulnerable to nihilistic emptiness. Islam provides a comprehensive framework that does not merely prohibit behaviors but guides individuals out of the crisis through spiritual empowerment, ethical education, the building of religious communities, and the integration of transcendental values into urban culture. From this paradigm, youth are not instructed to reject entertainment altogether but rather to seek the authentic meaning behind their existence.

This paradigm underscores that Islam is not merely a rigid legal system but a flexible and solution-oriented system of meaning. While Western philosophy frequently interprets nightlife as a symbol of nihilism, Islam addresses it through the *maqāṣid* approach, which emphasizes the reconstruction of life's meaning. The solutions offered are not confined to prohibitions but extend to creative strategies for cultivating healthier and more transcendental

social spaces. In this sense, Islam serves as both a moral foundation and a creative inspiration in shaping a meaningful urban culture.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that the phenomenon of nightlife in major Indonesian cities is not merely an entertainment activity but a complex representation of the interaction between structural, psychosocial, philosophical, and spiritual factors. Processes of urbanization, modernization, and globalization have reinforced infrastructures and consumptive lifestyles, positioning nightlife as an integral component of urban cultural identity. From a psychosocial perspective, nightlife functions as an escapist space for young people to temporarily distance themselves from routine pressures; however, this escape is transient and often intensifies feelings of emptiness and existential alienation.

Within the framework of Western philosophy, this phenomenon may be interpreted as a manifestation of Nietzschean nihilism, in which the collapse of transcendental values traps individuals in the pursuit of instantaneous pleasure. Heidegger and Sartre further elaborate on this condition by explaining that young people frequently fail to confront existential "thrownness" and authentic freedom, instead diverting their anxieties toward superficial routines of entertainment. Complementing this, Bauman's concept of *liquid modernity* elucidates the fragility of social bonds in nightlife culture, where fluid and superficial relationships exacerbate the alienation experienced by the younger generation. The implications of these dynamics are evident in the rise of mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, and addictive behaviors.

Islam, however, provides an ethical and solution-oriented framework through the principles of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*. The five higher objectives of the law—*ḥifẓ al-dīn* (protection of religion), *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (protection of life), *ḥifẓ al-'aql* (protection of intellect), *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (protection of lineage), and *ḥifẓ al-māl* (protection of wealth)—serve as normative instruments to evaluate practices within nightlife culture that may endanger faith, life, reason, lineage, and property. From an Islamic standpoint, the existential crisis of youth is not the result of God's absence, as Nietzsche suggests, but arises from humanity's estrangement from God as the ultimate source of meaning. Classical Muslim thinkers such as al-Ghazālī, Ibn Sīnā, al-Fārābī, and Ibn Miskawayh emphasize that the purpose of human life lies in devotion, the perfection of intellect, moral virtue, and meaningful social connectedness.

In response, Islam offers two principal pathways. First, strengthening practical spirituality through *tasawuf*, *dhikr*, and *tazkiyat al-nafs* to fill the inner void. Second, initiating socio-cultural interventions such as contextual ethical education, the formation of religious communities, and the cultivation of an inclusive, creative, and transcendental urban culture. Within this paradigm, nightlife is not simply condemned but reconstructed into an alternative space that is healthier and more meaningful. Thus, nightlife reflects the crisis of values and meaning experienced by urban youth entangled in the currents of liquid modernity. While Western philosophy provides sharp descriptive tools to diagnose nihilism and alienation, Islam offers a normative and transformative framework grounded in spirituality, morality,

and the objectives of the Sharī'ah. The integration of these perspectives enables a more holistic understanding and facilitates the formulation of constructive strategies to guide younger generations out of existential crises toward a more authentic, meaningful, and transcendental urban life.

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تَنُولُ قَدَمَا عَبْدٍ يَوْمَ،مِنْ أَيْنَ اكْتَسَبَهُ وَفِيمَا أَنْفَقَهُ…&text=Pada hati yang kosong cintanya,walaupun tak terucapkan oleh lisan.

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