

Social Cohesion of Residents and Jamaah Tabligh: An Analysis of Interaction and Acceptance of Religious Traditions in Maesan, Bondowoso

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ABSTRACT

The presence of Jamaah Tabligh often elicits diverse responses, ranging from acceptance to resistance, driven by differences in religious traditions and preaching methods. However, a distinct phenomenon of strong social cohesion exists in Penanggungan Village, Maesan, Bondowoso, where the group is openly welcomed by a community predominantly rooted in Nahdlatul Ulama traditions. This study analyzes how social cohesion is constructed through interaction patterns and the process of community acceptance toward Jamaah Tabligh's religious traditions within this rural setting. Utilizing a qualitative case study, data from participatory observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation were analyzed using the interactive model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings reveal that social cohesion manifests through harmonious interactions, including interpersonal communication, mosque-centric activities, *jawlah*, regular Islamic study sessions, and civic involvement. Community acceptance of these traditions evolves gradually, facilitated by continuous social interaction, the group's profound respect for local culture, adaptive communication, and exemplary daily conduct. Addressing a gap regarding the acceptance of transnational Islamic movements in rural areas with strong local traditions, this research highlights that social cohesion and acceptance are driven by interaction quality, cultural respect, and civic engagement rather than mere preaching content, ultimately fostering grassroots religious harmony.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The era of globalization has facilitated the escalation of transnational Islamic movements that have significantly overhauled the religious landscape in Indonesia [1]. The dynamics of cross-border mobility, advances in information technology, and massive religious discourse have allowed the da'wah movement to explain social

structures to the grassroots level [2]. In the review of the sociology of religion, religion is positioned not just as a system of spiritual rites, but as an essential instrument that constructs social relations, solidarity, collective identity, and the level of public acceptability to a religious entity [3].

One of the representations of transnational movements that has expanded

significantly in Indonesia is the Tabligh Jamaah [4]. This group carries a da'wah paradigm that is oriented towards spiritual purification, improvement of morality, and intensification of worship through the manifestation of khuruj fi sabilillah, *jawlah*, bayan, and deliberation. The characteristics of their da'wah that have a persuasive dimension, stay away from confrontation, and prioritize the example of praxis [5] enable the Tabligh Jamaah to knit close social cohesion with civilians, especially through the optimization of mosque space and interpersonal communication [6].

Despite prioritizing an adaptive approach, the integration of the Tabligh Jamaah in the midst of the local community often triggers friction. Divergences of religious traditions, symbolic attributes, and da'wah methodologies often trigger the birth of social stereotypes [7]. Musaffa and Abdurrahman underline that some circles construct the Jamaah Tabligh as an exclusive entity due to identity preferences that clash with public norms [8]. On the other hand, the research of Sembiring and Mukhlis proves that the intensity of social communication and the involvement of pilgrims in the routine of residents are crucial determinants in engineering social acceptance [9].

The anomaly of the friction tendency is empirically manifested in Penanggungan Village, Maesan District, Bondowoso Regency. The presence of the Tabligh Jamaah in this area was welcomed with high acceptance by the community who are culturally strongly affiliated with the Nahdlatul Ulama tradition. The da'wah agenda in the form of *jawlah*, taklim assembly, and mosque prosperity was responded to constructively by the local population. This reality indicates the realization of solid social cohesion, where differences in traditions can be merged in harmonious interactions.

The acceptance of the religious traditions of the Tabligh Jamaah in Penanggungan Village is not an instant entity, but the product of persistent and dialogical social interaction. The pilgrims proactively initiate friendships, participate in community agendas, and establish equal communication

with local authority figures. The centralization of mosques as a gathering point also catalyzed the assimilation of religious values. The intensity of the interaction that was built facilitated the understanding of local residents to receive the traditions of the Tabligh Jamaah in an inclusive manner.

This research is focused on dissecting the pattern of social interaction and analyzing the stages of accepting the religious traditions of the Tabligh Jamaah in constructing the social cohesion of residents in Penanggungan Village, Maesan District, Bondowoso Regency. The theoretical significance of this study is projected to enrich the discourse of the sociology of religion and contemporary Islamic studies. In the praxis dimension, this research is designed to formulate an empirical basis related to the nurturing of communal harmony in a community landscape that has a plurality of religious traditions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 First Literature

The study of the social interaction patterns of the Tabligh Jamaah is a crucial foundation in analyzing the construction of community cohesion. Sembiring and Mukhlis explain that *the jawlah method* functions not only as an instrument for the dissemination of dogma, but also as a medium of intensive interpersonal communication in the public social space (Sembiring & Mukhlis, 2021: 65). A proactive dialogical approach is a determining variable in building emotional closeness between pilgrims and local residents. This literature is relevant to dissect how the routine of interaction and persuasive communication of the Tabligh Jamaah facilitates the formation of solid social bonds in Penanggungan Village.

2.2 Second Literature

Studies related to the negotiation of religious identity occupy a central position in unravelling the process of acceptance of a new tradition. Musaffa and Abdurrahman explore the dynamics of the symbolic identity of the Tabligh Jamaah when dealing with the prevalence of the community's cultural traditions (Musaffa & Abdurrahman, 2023: 50). The findings of the research show that the exclusivity of religious attributes has the potential to trigger social friction in the early phase of encounters. This literature contributes as an analytical foothold to examine the stages of the evolution of Maesan residents' acceptance of the presence of religious practices of the Tabligh Jamaah in the midst of the dominance of local religious identity.

2.3 *Third Literature*

The exploration of the adaptive capacity of transnational Islamic movements provides a macro perspective on the success of social integration. Hamdi et al. highlights the transformation of the Jamaah Tabligh movement in responding to sociological dynamics in a landscape steeped in local traditions (Hamdi et al., 2022: 98). The flexibility of the Tabligh Jamaah in moving away from theological polarization and prioritizing the example of praxis has proven to smooth their communal integration. This study is essential to map how religious harmony is engineered between transnational entities and village communities that are strongly affiliated with local religious traditions.

3. METHODS

This research applies a qualitative approach designed by a case study to dissect the dynamics of interaction and the process of acceptance of the religious traditions of the Tabligh Jamaah that construct social cohesion in rural landscapes [10]. The selection of Penanggungan Village, Maesan District, Bondowoso Regency as the research locus is based on an empirical representation of the realization of harmonious coexistence between the Tabligh Jamaah entity and the demographics of residents who are strongly affiliated with the Nahdlatul Ulama tradition. The determination of informants is operationalized through purposive sampling techniques, including active members of the Tabligh Jamaah, local religious authority figures, community leaders, and civilians who directly intersect with the group's agenda.

Field data mining was carried out through participatory observation instruments, in-depth interviews, and documentation review [11]. The observation was focused on mapping the manifestations of religious praxis of the Tabligh Jamaah, including *jawlah*, taklim assembly, and mosque prosperity. In-depth interviews were used to extract subjective narratives related to social interaction patterns and stages of cultural acceptance of citizens, while documentation acted as complementary data.

The data analysis stage adopts the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive model framework which summarizes the process of data condensation, data presentation (data display), and conclusion drawing and verification [12]. To ensure the level of validity and credibility of the findings, the validity test of the data is actualized through the mechanism of source triangulation and triangulation techniques, accompanied by increasing the diligence of observation and cross-confirmation (member check) of the results of interview and observation extraction.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.1 Manifestations of Social Interaction in Constructing Citizen Cohesion

Field findings in Penanggungan Village, Maesan District, Bondowoso Regency indicate that the social relationship between the Tabligh Jamaah entity and the local population is intensively and harmoniously established. This communal social cohesion is empirically manifested through a series of religious and societal agendas that facilitate direct inter-group interaction in public spaces. The main instrument in engineering this sociological closeness rests on interpersonal communication which is manifested through *the jawlah method*. In its operational implementation, Jamaah members proactively initiate communal gatherings to residents' residences to distribute religious messages as well as knit communal solidarity bonds. The persuasive, polite, and non-violent approach applied consistently succeeded in reducing psychological resistance, enabling residents to respond to the presence of worshippers in an accommodating and inclusive manner.

Within the framework of the sociology of religion, empirical encounters that take place repeatedly have direct implications for the escalation of communal solidarity, trust resilience, and structural integration at the grassroots level [13]. The da'wah orientation of the Tabligh Jamaah which is very non-confrontational articulates the maturity of social interaction in the plural space. This group consciously sets aside theological dialectics that have the potential to fuel polarization, and instead shifts the focus precisely to the call for spiritual morality. This adaptive methodology effectively eliminates the perception of cultural threats from local communities. The analysis of this phenomenon is in line with the conclusion of Syahputra and Kurniawati who affirm that the ability to communicate between people in a polite manner is an absolute prerequisite in building the harmony of the Tabligh Jamaah movement in the public sphere [14]. The success of da'wah penetration rests entirely on the integrity of delivery and ethical politeness, not just the transmission of orthodoxy of teachings in a one-way and rigid manner.

An epistemological review using the scalpel of social action theory Max Weber

situates the activities of *the jawlah* of the Tabligh Jamaah as a representation of the action of value rationality (*wertracionales handeln*). The orientation of the da'wah movement is not aimed at accumulating material privileges, territorial dominance, or local political affiliations, but rather a purely reconstruction of theological motives to escalate the degree of worship and obedience of the people [15]. These individual spiritual actions mutate into social facts when responded to affirmatively by citizen entities. This reality proves that the rationality of the value of immigrant groups can be integrated in harmony with the public rationality of Penanggungan Village, creating a common ground that strengthens the harmony of the communal order without reducing their original identity.

Outside of the *jawlah agenda*, the concentration of interaction is realized in an organized manner at routine taklim assemblies and assimilation of citizens. The sacred space of the mosque functions double as a medium of social encounter that bridges inter-group dialogue without the barrier of exclusivism. The involvement of the prachis of the Jamaah in the preservation of the tradition of mutual cooperation, community service, and active participation in village communal events further engineered affective closeness. This empirical involvement represents a substantial transformation of the vision of da'wah from a mere transfer of textual dogma to comprehensive participation in caring for the order of the citizenry. This fact resonates with the postulates of Nurlaila and Liata who project that public acceptability is directly triggered by the ability of pilgrims to assimilate into the social anatomy of society [16]. The centrality of the mosque as an open, inclusive locus successfully strips away the residue of communal suspicion and exposes the authenticity of the movement in a transparent manner. This openness provides direct access for citizens to conduct moral validation of the routine activities of the Tabligh Jamaah, eliminating the prejudices that are often inherent in transnational movements.

4.2 Dynamics of Citizens' Acceptance of the Religious Traditions of the Tabligh Congregation

The process of citizens' acceptance of the religious practices of the Tabligh Jamaah evolved through the stages of persistent and continuous social interaction. In the initial phase of communal intercourse, some people had manifested a cautious attitude of minor sentiments as an excess of divergence in symbolic attributes, dress styles, and the prevalence of religious rituals—especially related to the khuruj fi sabilillah cycle which required members to leave their families for a certain duration. The space for daily interaction then operates as an instrument of rectification or direct correction of the cognitive biases of the residents. The shift in communal response towards positive acceptance occurs when the community is confronted directly with the egalitarian and caring morals of the congregation.

The people of Penanggungan Village have strong sociological roots in the tradition of Nahdlatul Ulama which maintains specific communal rituals such as tahlilan, yasinan, and grave pilgrimage. Instead of making a theological critique of purification (tabdi' or bid'ahan) that often triggers communal friction as practiced by several other variants of the puritan movement, the Tabligh Congregation in Maesan took the path of extreme moderation. They focused the discourse on the universality of worship, the prosperity of mosques through congregational prayers, and moral improvement. This attitude of tawaqquf (restraint) from the polemic of khilafiyah (differences in the procedures of religious branches) is the crucial key to reducing cultural resistance. Locals feel their cultural identity and traditional heritage are fully valued, while worshippers remain free to articulate their spiritual vision. The ability of pilgrims to accommodate and respect local wisdom without disrupting the old order is an essential determinant in triggering the acceleration of socio-cultural acceptance.

In a rural sociological landscape bound by a system of high communality and

cultural homogeneity, communication ethics occupies a central hierarchy in the construction of social relations. The village public has a keen sensitivity to imperative narratives that have the potential to delegitimize the authority of local wisdom of elders. The compromising attitude and prudence of the Tabligh Jamaah in practicing manners transformed organically into social capital which stimulated the birth of social trust between entities. Comprehensive appreciation of traditional authority figures acts as an absolute cultural negotiation to avoid the turbulence of horizontal conflict. This high level of adaptability does not in any way dismantle the orthodoxy of the fundamental identity of the Tabligh Jamaah, but rather acts to align the rhythm of the encounter, making public acceptance the formulation of the output of sociological negotiations. Relations between groups are not colored by the tendency of identity hegemony, but rather facilitate the exchange of meaning that is equal.

This multidimensional analytical exploration links the foundation of citizen acceptance with a theological representation of the value of ta'aruf as conceptualized in the holy text of QS. Al-Hujurat verse 13. The essence of ta'aruf goes beyond the superficial recognition phase at the limits of physical attributes; It demands a holistic empathic understanding and existential recognition between human entities in the midst of the reality of plurality [17]. The social cohesion between the members of the Tabligh Congregation and the pure residents of Penanggungan village is a praxis representation of this philosophical value of inclusivity, realized consistently through continuous dialogue and social engagement that is free from pragmatic motives. The practice of religion is projected not to be just a theocentric vertical ritual, but operated as an instrument of gluing the horizontal order between communities.

This observational study in Penanggungan Village formulates an alternative analytical discourse that dismantles the dominant assumptions regarding the probability of a clash of

civilizations between the expansion of transnational Islamic movements and the local wisdom order of the archipelago [18]. Transnational entities are empirically proven to have a solid capacity for grassroots integration when practicing cultural accommodation schemes and consistently embodying religious politeness in the practical lives of villagers. The fact of the field record confirms that the fusion of tradition and the construction of religious cohesion in rural demographic strata rests entirely on the fusion of assimilation of communal citizenship. Within the framework of this study, the existence of ritual divergence and differences in the landscape of religious preferences are actually activated as an educational negotiation space that stimulates dynamic social integration without negating the fundamental autonomy of the Tabligh Jamaah entity and the residents of Penanggungan village.

5. CONCLUSION

The empirical findings of this research confirm that social cohesion between the Tabligh Jamaah and the residents of Penanggungan Village is solidly constructed through a dialectic of persistent social interaction and an accommodating cultural negotiation process. Answering the research objectives, social interaction operates as an essential sociological instrument in breaking down the barriers of communal exclusivism and building social trust at the grassroots level. Through the approach of interpersonal communication in the *jawlah method*, the optimization of mosque space as an equilibrium of inclusive encounters, and proactive assimilation in various local civic traditions, the Tabligh Jamaah has succeeded in formulating a non-confrontational da'wah architecture. This stage of public acceptance of transnational entities gradually evolved

from the phase of caution to the phase of affirmative cultural acceptance. This sociological transition was directly triggered by the consistency of the egalitarian attitude of the congregation and their firm commitment not to delegitimize local religious practices that are firmly rooted in the traditional patterns of Nahdlatul Ulama. Tabligh congregations are able to synergize the rationality orientation of their spiritual values with the landscape of local wisdom without reducing the orthodoxy of their original identity. This integration reality proves that the divergence of religious rituals does not trigger communal segregation when managed through adaptation flexibility, respect for traditional values, and the assertion of inclusivity of ta'aruf values.

As a praxis implication of this field discourse, it is recommended for the driving elements of da'wah and cross-border religious organizations to replicate this adaptive approach model as a prototype of the da'wah methodology that prioritizes cultural intelligence and the suspension of theological polemics with a khilafiyah dimension in the midst of traditional societies. For public policy makers and authorities to foster religious harmony, the reality of sociological fusion in Maesan presents a strategic reference for formulating conflict resolution policies that rely on strengthening the natural cultural interaction of rural residents. In order to expand the analytical dimension of the science of sociology of religion, the researcher proposes an exploration of further research that targets transnational movement entities in multicultural urban areas. The expansion of the locus is essential to test the resilience of the Islamic movement's theory of cultural adaptability in responding to the complications of demographic heterogeneity and potential sociological friction in urban ecosystems.

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