

The Impact of Scriptural Normativity on Tablighi Jama'ah Members' Interest in Science

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Abstract. The low level of scientific proficiency among community members is one of the main causes of underdevelopment. In a number of situations, a strong religious devotion does not always translate into an equally strong desire to learn more about science; rather, the relationship frequently seems inversely proportionate. Because of its long history and widespread local presence, the Tablighi Jama'ah, one of the most active Islamic missionary movements in Central Lampung, makes for an interesting research topic. The purpose of this study is to determine the elements influencing the Tablighi Jama'ah's views on science and to examine their wider ramifications. The study was carried out in Central Lampung Regency using a descriptive qualitative approach. The results show that a religiously grounded collective structure and hierarchy, faith-driven social discipline, a transcendental orientation, and an education system based on religious teachings all influence the group's social construction. Strong normative adherence to authoritative texts and people, a focus on simplicity, and opposition to both local and global cultural influences are characteristics of its cultural production. Because of this, the community offers little social support for scientific involvement, which lowers members' interest in science and presents scientific knowledge as an external field with no cultural significance within its value system.

Keywords: cultural and social construction, Jama'ah Tabligh, social science

1 Introduction

Because of its internal socio-cultural and epistemological traits, the Tablighi Jama'ah community in Central Lampung, like many other places, has significant obstacles in the development of scientific literacy. Da'wah practices like khuruj and halaqah are labor-intensive and time-consuming, but they also significantly lower participation in formal education and scientific learning [1]. Traditional religious knowledge is more valuable than academic knowledge [2], [3]. This supports a value structure that prioritizes practical piety above intellectual growth. The Tablighi Jama'ah adheres to a knowledge paradigm from an epistemological standpoint that is founded on textual authority, particularly hadith, companions' testimonies, and the practice of da'wah. Modern scientific approaches like observation, verification, and logical inquiry are not supported by this normative, non-dialectical model [4].

Scientific information is seldom recognized as a component of religious pursuits because it is frequently perceived as neurological "worldly knowledge" or even as a possible diversion from spiritual objectives [5], [6]. The lack of connection between the community and intellectual or academic groups exacerbates this state by limiting access to scientific discourse on a structural and cultural level. Therefore, without contextual tactics and epistemological reform coming from within the community, attempts for scientific transformation through integrative approaches that bridge religion and science become challenging to actualize [7]. This study aims to address the question of how the social and cultural construction of the Tablighi Jama'ah community in Central Lampung shapes its perspectives on science, using a micro-sociological approach that emphasizes internal community dynamics in interpreting and responding to scientific knowledge.

In particular, this study examines how the community's social and cultural structures impact science's epistemic position and provides a detailed description of them. The complex relationship between Islam and science reflects several historical, sociological, and epistemological factors [8]. In academic discourse, this interaction is commonly categorized into two primary paradigms: integrative and conflictual. On the one hand, many academics contend that Islam has consistently encouraged positive interactions with science. During the Golden Age of Islamic culture (8th–13th centuries), scientific disciplines developed thanks to the contributions of thinkers like Ibn Sina and Al-Farabi, who integrated revelation with reason and empirical observation [9]. This perspective is in line with the complementary paradigm, which holds that Islam and science are complimentary [10]. Conflicts could arise, though, because modern science is founded on positivism and secularism. According to many Muslims, contemporary scientific epistemology is reductionistic and disregards the spiritual and metaphysical dimensions of Islamic worldviews [11]. The underlying discrepancies in the objectives, methods, and sources of knowledge verification give rise to this epistemological dispute.

Islamic epistemology views revelation as an authoritative source that is not always open to empirical proof, in contrast to science, which depends on falsifiability and empiricism. Modern religious movements that take anti-intellectual or epistemically exclusive positions, such as those within the Tablighi Jama'ah that view science as a type of "worldly knowledge" inferior to religious sciences, exacerbate these tensions [12], [13]. On the other hand, through epistemological reconstruction that incorporates spiritual values into scientific frameworks, the Islamization of science movement, which was founded by intellectuals like Al-Attas and Al-Faruqi, aims to close this gap [14]. Originating in early 20th century India, the Tablighi Jama'ah is a global da'wah movement that emphasizes the formation of individual faith via ritualistic, affective, and non-political religious rituals [15]. Yumi customs, the da'wah movement (khuruj), and a modest lifestyle are highly valued by the organization's social base. It is egalitarian but logical.

Indicators of personal piety and the level of da'wah engagement influence social hierarchy within the movement rather than formal educational attainment [16], [17]. The social and cultural formation of the Tablighi Jama'ah community is examined in this study using theories of social capital [18], [19] as well as Social Cognitive Theory

[20]. According to Social Cognitive Theory, learning takes place in social settings through modeling, imitation, and observation. It draws attention to the reciprocal determinism of an individual's characteristics, behavior, and surroundings. Both bonding (inward-looking, homogenous) and bridging (outward-looking, heterogeneous) perspectives are used to study social capital, which is described as networks, norms, and trust that promote coordination and cooperation [21]. Bourdieu's supplementary conceptualization defines social capital as a resource, either real or potential, that is integrated into enduring social networks. It functions as a tool for power dynamics and social reproduction and is intimately linked to economic and cultural capital.

Epistemology is the study of the nature, sources, limits, and logic of knowledge. Religious and scientific epistemologies are frequently at the center of transdisciplinary discussions because they offer distinct normative and methodological frameworks for learning and confirming knowledge. To pinpoint points of contention and examine opportunities for epistemic integration between religion and science in modern contexts, a comparative analysis of the two frameworks is required [22], [23]. Religious epistemology is predicated on the notion that the most important and reliable source of knowledge is divine revelation. When knowledge comes from reputable religious authority, spiritual experiences, or sacred texts, it is deemed legitimate. According to this epistemological paradigm, truth is a priori and transcendent, independent of empirical observation or systematic proof. For example, Plantinga [24] contends that faith in God is a logical "basic belief" that is unaffected by scientific data.

Scientific epistemology, on the other hand, is based on falsifiability, rationalism, and empiricism. Scientific truth is the result of methodical observation, experimentation, hypothesis testing, and replication. Knowledge is speculative, flexible, and based on independently verifiable evidence [25]. These fundamental disagreements have often led to conflict, especially in fields like cosmogenesis, evolutionary theory, and bioethics [26]. In response, scholars like as Nasr [27] and Barbour [28] have published several integrative frameworks that seek to integrate the two epistemologies without sacrificing their integrity. Their research shows that, while functioning within different epistemic and methodological domains, science and religion may constitute complementary but distinct routes to truth [29], [30].

2 Method

In order to investigate the social construction of the Tablighi Jama'ah community in Central Lampung Regency, this study uses a qualitative descriptive method. Purposive sampling was used to select religious leaders who were familiar with the movement and active members of the Tablighi Jama'ah as research informants. Mosques that act as hubs for Tablighi Jama'ah activities were the main focus of the study. Participatory observation during da'wah activities, in-depth interviews with key informants, focus group discussions (FGDs), document analysis, and a thorough assessment of the pertinent literature were all used to gather data. The researcher, armed with structured observation sheets and interview guides, served as the main study tool. Preliminary observations, methodical data collecting, and analytical techniques

were all included in the four-month fieldwork. Descriptive qualitative methods, such as data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, were used in data analysis. Through member verification with key informants and triangulation of sources and methodologies, the findings' reliability was guaranteed. The distinctiveness of the research region and the researcher's direct participation in community activities are acknowledged as limitations of this study that could affect objectivity. To reduce potential bias, however, thorough documentation and methodical reflexivity were used [31].

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 The Historical Development of the *Tablighi Jama'ah* in Central Lampung

In 1980, the *Tablighi Jama'ah* started to grow in Central Lampung, Lampung Province, Indonesia, in the Nurul Iman Mosque, Dusun 4, Kampung Varia Agung, Seputih Mataram District, under the leadership of individuals like Shodiq and Muhayat (dead), who was the village chief at the time. By 1984, the movement had spread to the Miftahul Jannah Mosque in Area 6, Banjar Agung Village, which is situated in the Seputih Mataram District. Under Samsuri's direction, this mosque eventually developed into a significant hub for halaqah. Zainal from Padang Ratu and Hi. Mustofa from Metro were among the *Tablighi Jama'ah* members who suffered intimidation and unlawful detention during the Talang Sari incident in 1986. Under the leadership of Kyai Mas'udin, the movement spread to Bekri, Central Lampung, and Bandar Jaya in 1994 under the leadership of Hamzah and Abizar Rustam. The movement's main headquarters at the time was the Nurul Iman Mosque in East Bandar Jaya. Data on the growth of non-formal education in the Central Lampung *Tablighi Jama'ah* community, especially through its organized halaqah networks, are shown in the following section:

Table 1. Islamic Boarding School Program at *Jama'ah Tabligh*

Islamic Boarding School	Location	Program
Darul Mukhlisin SB 9	Way Seputih	Tahfidz dan Diniyah
Sirojul Umam/Darul Muttaqin	Seputih Banyak	Tahfidz dan Diniyah
Darul Muttaqin	Bekri	Tahfidz dan Diniyah
Sirojul Mukhlisin	Bumi Ratu Nuban	Tahfidz dan Diniyah
Ummahatul Mukminin	Bumi Ratu Nuban	Tahfidz dan Diniyah
Darul Mukhlisin 3	Bangun Rejo	Tahfidz dan Diniyah
Darul Mukhlisin KM	Gunung Sugih	Tahfidz dan Diniyah
Darul Mukhlisin Baitul Hamdi	Trimurjo	Tahfidz dan Diniyah
Albayan Alfattah	Way Pengubuhan	Tahfidz, Diniyah, Salafiyah
Al Kautsar	Bandar Mataram	Tahfidz, Diniyah, Salafiyah
Zainul Qirom	Terbanggi Besar	Tahfidz dan Diniyah
Maslahul Ummah Putri	Terbanggi Besar	Tahfidz dan Diniyah
Anwarul Qur'an	Terbanggi Besar	Tahfidz dan Diniyah
Bani Musa	Terbanggi Besar	Tahfidz dan Diniyah
Maslahul Ummah Putra	Terbanggi Besar	Tahfidz dan Diniyah

Darul Muttaqin	Terbanggi Besar	Tahfidz, Diniyah, Salafiyah
Darul Mukhlisin PA-N	Terbanggi Besar	Tahfidz, Diniyah, Salafiyah
Darul Mukhlisin 2	Terbanggi Besar	Tahfidz dan Diniyah

Numerous interconnected socio-religious and cultural elements influence the Tabligh Jama'ah community's social formation in Central Lampung. First, the community represents a social system that is both highly cohesive and equitable. Despite being egalitarian in theory, elder members who have been involved in da'wah operations for a long time are largely credited with moral authority and religious expertise. Social relationships are structured and group cohesion is fostered by ukhuwah and customary group rituals like khuruj and ijtimah. Second, a social discipline with a religious foundation is exemplified by community. The reading of Fadha'il al-A'mal, door-to-door da'wah, and ceremonial rites arrange daily life.

It is believed that this style of religious participation may undermine religion since it fosters a social environment that lessens interaction with the wider community. As a result, the group is less receptive to outside sources of information. Third, a strong transcendental orientation is maintained by the group. Worldly matters are seen as transient and of minor value, while spiritual and eschatological realities are positioned as the main emphasis of life. This perspective downplays the importance of interacting with current scientific advancements, which are frequently seen as incidental to the quest for spiritual perfection. Fourth, the hierarchy and collective organization of the community are clearly defined in terms of religion. While academic credentials are not extremely essential, involvement in ijtimah, majlis taklim, and khuruj are factors that shape an individual's prestige.

Although hierarchy promotes internal unity, there is less incentive to seek scientific knowledge since it is not viewed as being as important to achieving spirituality. Fifth, the community's educational system is mostly religious. Studying the Qur'an, Hadith, and fiqh is valued more highly at local madrasas and pesantrens than current scientific understanding or structured education. Reliance on regional religious knowledge systems is further reinforced by the rural areas of Central Lampung's lack of access to scientific institutions and higher education. Sixth, there are still few gender roles in the community. Women's opportunities to pursue advanced scientific education or engage in professions needing greater social mobilization are limited because they are often given domestic and fundamental religious tasks. The community's cultural creation is supported by a number of fundamental values.

First, the Tabligh Jama'ah exhibits a certain kind of selective anti-modernism. Many members are dubious of modernity's goods, such as public education, modern technology, and medicine, unless they directly support religious goals, even though they do not expressly reject it. Second, many members' financial backgrounds are lower middle class and rural, and their lack of formal education makes them resistant to outside intellectual influences. This contemplative approach is fostered by regular religious ceremonies. Third, normative adherence to authoritative texts and individuals is upheld by the community. Important scholars like Maulana Ilyas and Maulana Yusuf, who have substantial epistemic authority, evaluate scientific claims based on their conformance to religious precepts rather than methodological rigor. Fourth, how society perceives science and technology is influenced by ideas of anti-materialism and simplicity.

The ZUHD ethic promotes skepticism about scientific discoveries that are thought to foster secularism or consumerism. Only when science aids da'wah efforts—for example, by facilitating coordination through communication technologies—is it used selectively. Fifth, sacred writings serve as the foundation for the epistemic framework. Truth is evaluated based on how well it conforms to the Qur'an and Hadith rather than being backed by actual data. While ideas from science that are seen to be compatible—such as Islamic medicine—are carefully integrated, ideas that run counter to religious narratives are usually ignored. Within a religious framework, science is largely presented as a way to comprehend the "signs of God" (ayat kauniyyah); for instance, astronomy is used to calculate prayer times rather than to explore the cosmos. Sixth, the group shows opposition to both domestic and international cultural influences. The focus on a transnational religious identity promotes distrust of international scientific discourses and detachment from regional cultural manifestations. This includes mistrust of things like vaccinations, which are sometimes interpreted as a kind of "epistemic imperialism." This reinforces a desire for alternatives defined by religion, such as prayer or prophetic medicine.

3.2 How science is seen

In general, the Tablighi community believes that science is a worldly discipline that lacks the essential worship value of religious science. This movement's primary goal is to enhance faith and pious deeds based on the traditions of the Prophet and the Companions. As a result, knowledge that does not directly serve the da'wah mission is viewed as less spiritually meaningful [32], [33]. The Tablighi Jama'ah established a scientific paradigm based on direct spiritual experience and the authority of religious texts. Knowledge derived from hadith, da'wah experience, or the Prophet's companions' practices is regarded as legitimate. His epistemological paradigms are typically normative, scriptural, and non-critical; they lack motivation for rationalistic approaches or integration with science. In the context of religious life, modern science is not prioritized but is not outright ignored [34]. According to the Tablighi Jama'ah's epistemological framework, the Qur'an, hadith, and firsthand da'wah experience are the sources of truth. Therefore, community projects and educational programs do not stress modern science and other empirical, critical, and rationalistic issues. While it does not openly oppose science, religious devotion does not support it either [35], [36]. Because of this, adherents of the Tablighi Jama'ah often come to believe that science is merely a technical solution to life's problems rather than a spiritual tool or a component of God's creation. This highlights the gap between their religious cultures and contemporary scientific practices. In Indonesia, particularly in Central Lampung Regency, the Tablighi Jama'ah community is a transnational Islamic movement with unique social and religious customs.

The group, which has its roots in the early 20th-century Islamic reform movement in India, places a strong emphasis on non-confrontational da'wah, individual piety, and a straightforward lifestyle focused on the afterlife [37]. The sociocultural framework that these ideals create has a significant impact on the community's worldview, particularly in relation to contemporary scientific knowledge. The social and cultural construction of the Tablighi Jama'ah in Central Lampung creates a distinct epistemological perspective that influences the way science is perceived and valued. First, its faith-centric epistemology only acknowledges revelation-based knowledge from the

Qur'an and Hadith as being inherently accurate; scientific knowledge with obvious "worship value" is usually seen as less important or even deceptive. Second, religious pragmatists are not interested in theoretical research or systematic scientific exploration; instead, they value science mainly for its immediate practical applications, such as in the domains of transportation or medical. Third, there is still considerable doubt about formal education because some members believe that schools and colleges are not adequately focused on bolstering faith, which restricts involvement in scientific advancement to people who have been exposed to outside environments. Fourth, science is often accepted for its practical applications, such as organic farming or community welfare, rather than as an authoritative source of truth. It is not positioned as an epistemological foundation. Fifth, members usually use technology carefully, avoiding anything deemed liberal or ideologically objectionable, even when they use it for religiously permissible purposes (such as social media for da'wah). Sixth, the group's educational choices frequently lead to conflicts with formal education because families may place a higher value on religious institutions than on public education, which lowers the younger generation's science literacy.

3.3 Educational Features and *Tabligh Jama'ah* Epistemology

The *Tablighi Jama'ah* primarily uses oral, experiential, non-formal teaching methods that emphasize spiritual development over academic proficiency. Ta'lim, khuruj, and reading Fadha'il A'mal are among of the fundamental rites that are mostly used to spread religious beliefs [38]. The development of morality and the fortification of religion are given precedence over the acquisition of theoretical or analytical information in this educational approach. Following a textual-normative epistemological perspective, the movement values revelation and prophetic traditions more than methodological skepticism or empirical research [39], [40]. Instead of experimentation or critical thinking, knowledge is confirmed by hadith, accounts of the Companions, and da'wah experiences [41], [42]. Such an epistemological framework restricts the incorporation of contemporary science into the community's educational initiatives and encourages an affirmative, ahistorical worldview that is hostile to reinterpreting religious scriptures.

As a result, the movement is still mainly excluded from the current Islamic intellectual discourse, which aims to reconcile revelation with logical, scientific investigation. According to this epistemological paradigm, modern science is usually viewed as worldly knowledge with minimal spiritual significance. Forms of knowledge that do not immediately support da'wah are deemed less relevant because the movement places a high priority on developing faith and carrying out good deeds [43], [44]. The *Tablighi Jama'ah* does not view scientific research as an essential part of religious life or spiritual growth, even if it does not expressly reject science. Scientific knowledge is mainly acknowledged as a technological instrument for simplifying everyday activities, rather than as a window through which to perceive divine creation. This view strengthens the epistemic gap between the *Tablighi Jama'ah*'s religious culture and scientific tradition, which prevents its members from engaging with contemporary science and from developing critical or analytical scientific reasoning.

3.4 Possible Contributing Elements

The Tabligh Jama'ah community contains a number of possible elements that could aid in the advancement of science, despite their reputation for emphasizing mysticism and non-formal da'wah. First, Jama'ah's extensive international social network can be utilized as social capital to raise awareness of the value of science and education, particularly among the younger generation. Second, practicing da'wah with a strong commitment to self-discipline, mobility, and personal piety indicates a strong work ethic and motivation—qualities that are essential in scientific undertakings if they can be applied or aligned with the objectives of research and teaching [45]. Third, as seen by the existence of Muslims with professional backgrounds, especially in urban areas, Jama'ah is not wholly anti-worldly. This offers the chance to develop an integrated narrative between Islamic principles and modern science in the context of da'wah and education [46]. Accordingly, if a contextual and cultural approach is used, the combination of the scientific method with the spiritual values of the Jama'ah as a form of *tafaqquh fi al-kawn* (deepening of God's creation) has the potential to create a middle path for the development of an Islamic epistemology that is inclusive of science [47], [48].

3.5 Factors Precluding Scientific Progress

Interconnected social, cultural, and epistemological constraints limit the Tabligh Jama'ah community's ability to attain scientific literacy. First, the movement's focus on da'wah activities, particularly *khuruj fi sabilillah*, decreases members' engagement with formal education, including science, since time and energy are primarily allocated to non-academic religious obligations [49], [50]. Second, the sharp contrast between religious and secular knowledge limits science's place in society's religious life and reinforces the notion that science is secular and not spiritually significant. Third, an epistemology grounded in literary authority and experiential da'wah limits scientific thought, which relies on methodological skepticism, empirical verification, and critical reasoning. Because of this, the community's knowledge is still normative, affirmative, and based on conventional narratives. Fourth, science is isolated from the Islamic values upheld by the community due to the lack of curriculum integration between religious education and scientific knowledge in both internal learning environments and congregational networks [51].

3.6 Possible Contributing Elements

The Tabligh Jama'ah group has some inherent potential to improve scientific literacy, despite its strong emphasis on mysticism and informal da'wah. First, its vast international networks offer significant social capital that can be used to encourage scientific involvement and educational understanding, especially among younger members. Second, the high degrees of discipline, mobility, and personal piety that are essential to the community's da'wah activities demonstrate its strong work ethic and inherent motivational traits. These qualities are advantageous in scientific activities when linked to educational goals [52]. Third, the presence of individuals with academic or professional credentials, particularly in urban environments, suggests that the community is not entirely cut off from the outside world. In the context of community education and da'wah, this creates opportunity to create integrative frameworks that balance Islamic principles with contemporary scientific perspectives [53]. A balanced

and inclusive Islamic epistemology that accepts contemporary science without undermining religious commitments could be created by integrating the spiritual ethos of the Jama'ah with scientific inquiry conceptualized as *tafaqquh fi al-kawn* (deep reflection on God's creation) if it is approached contextually and culturally [54], [55].

4 Conclusion

A unique dynamic in the link between religion and science is shown in the social and cultural creation of the Tabligh Jama'ah in Central Lampung Regency. Closed social structures, a collective culture based on conservative spiritualism, and an epistemology based on revelation are used to interpret scientific knowledge. According to this viewpoint, the primary obstacle to scientific progress is not a lack of aptitude or exposure, but rather a value system that places science under religious knowledge. As a result, science is evaluated more for its religious value than for its methodological or epistemological qualities. Within this sociocultural context, text-based epistemology, restricted educational paths, and hierarchical religious authority hinder the advancement of science. In addition to initiatives to provide access to inclusive education without undermining community identity, addressing these issues calls for dialogical strategies that harmonize scientific inquiry with Islamic principles. These elements play a part in the movement's significant distance from contemporary Islamic thought, particularly from paradigms that place a high value on knowledge integration.

According to Social Cognitive Theory, reciprocal interactions between behavioral, environmental, and personal factors impact people's views toward science. In the case of the *Tabligh Jama'ah*, dominant social norms that are strongly focused on spirituality, *amal da'wah*, and afterlife-centered goals serve as potent environmental stimuli that affect members' attitudes and actions regarding secular disciplines like science. Both a lack of societal motivation for scientific participation and significant role modeling from prominent persons who prioritize spiritual traditions contribute to persistently low scientific interest. According to social capital theory, the Tabligh Jama'ah upholds a tight-knit network with high internal cohesion and collective norms. Conversely, the most common form of social capital is bonding capital. It fosters intragroup solidarity while offering restricted bridging options to the greater scientific or academic community. In this arrangement, access to scientific discourse is limited by epistemological constraints as well as societal dynamics that place a higher priority on religious authority and *da'wah* experience as primary sources of legitimacy. As a result, science remains culturally distinct from the community's beliefs. These social norms, which are constantly produced and maintained through social interaction and organizational structures, offer a theoretical basis for understanding the community's apathy or ambivalence toward research. To properly describe the processes of scientific adoption among traditional religious groups such as the Tabligh Jama'ah, a cross-theoretical approach incorporating sociological and psychological factors is required.

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