

INTERNAL CONFLICT OF JAMA'AH TABLIGH (2015-2023): A CASE STUDY FROM PARONGPONG WEST BANDUNG

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Abstract

Jama'ah Tabligh (JT), a global Islamic revivalist movement, has undergone an unprecedented internal conflict that disrupted nearly a century of organizational harmony. A major leadership rift divided the movement into two factions: the Nizamuddin-based Maulana Saad (MS) group and the Pakistan-based Syuro Alami (SA) faction led by Sheikh Abdul Wahab. Over time, distinct characteristics have developed between the two factions, becoming particularly evident in Parongpong, West Bandung, although similar patterns appear elsewhere. While JT has often been studied as a peaceful, apolitical missionary movement, few scholarly works have systematically examined the causes and local consequences of its internal division. This study addresses that gap by analyzing the impact of the schism between the MS and SA factions, focusing on Parongpong as a microcosm of the global split. Employing a historical method that includes heuristic, critical, interpretive, and historiographical stages, the study draws upon oral sources collected between 2015 and 2023 through informal interviews with JT members in West Java—particularly in Parongpong and Bandung—as well as written materials such as the Buku Musyawarah Halakoh and publications from tablighi-jamaat.com. The findings reveal that the conflict stems from divergent

perspectives on leadership structures, spiritual allegiance (bai'at), missionary strategies, and theological interpretation. The SA group, often more digitally engaged and scholarly, contrasts with the orally oriented and tradition-centered MS followers. The conflict has deeply affected JT's internal social fabric and global outreach. In Parongpong, it manifests in disrupted religious routines and divided loyalties among members. The novelty of this study lies in linking a global religious schism to its localized sociological expressions, offering new insights into how spiritual authority is contested, negotiated, and redefined within transnational Islamic movements. These findings contribute to broader understandings of organizational dynamics and internal fragmentation in contemporary Islamic movements.

Jama'ah Tabligh (JT), sebuah gerakan kebangkitan Islam berskala global, telah mengalami konflik internal yang belum pernah terjadi sebelumnya dan mengguncang hampir satu abad tradisi keharmonisan organisasional. Perpecahan kepemimpinan yang signifikan membagi gerakan ini menjadi dua faksi: kelompok Nizamuddin yang dipimpin oleh Maulana Saad (MS) dan faksi Syuro Alami (SA) yang berbasis di Pakistan di bawah pimpinan Syaikh Abdul Wahab. Seiring waktu, kedua faksi ini menunjukkan perbedaan karakteristik yang mencolok, terutama di Parongpong, Bandung Barat, meskipun pola serupa juga tampak di wilayah lain. Meskipun JT selama ini banyak dikaji sebagai gerakan dakwah yang damai dan apolitis, hanya sedikit penelitian yang secara sistematis menelaah penyebab serta dampak lokal dari perpecahan internal tersebut. Penelitian ini mengisi kekosongan tersebut dengan menganalisis dampak perpecahan antara faksi MS dan SA, dengan fokus pada Parongpong sebagai cerminan mikro dari perpecahan global. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode sejarah yang mencakup tahapan heuristik, kritik, interpretasi, dan historiografi. Data diperoleh dari sumber lisan—yang dikumpulkan antara tahun 2015 hingga 2023 melalui wawancara informal dengan anggota JT di Jawa Barat, khususnya Parongpong dan Bandung—serta sumber tertulis seperti Buku Musyawarah Halakoh dan publikasi di tablighi-jamaat.com. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konflik ini berakar pada perbedaan pandangan mengenai struktur kepemimpinan, ikatan spiritual (bai'at), metode dakwah, dan interpretasi teologis. Faksi SA, yang cenderung lebih aktif secara digital dan akademis, berbeda dengan pengikut MS yang lebih berorientasi pada tradisi lisan dan konservatif. Konflik ini berdampak mendalam terhadap struktur sosial internal dan jangkauan global JT. Di Parongpong, perpecahan tampak melalui terganggunya rutinitas keagamaan dan terbelahnya loyalitas anggota. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada upayanya menghubungkan perpecahan keagamaan global dengan manifestasi sosiologis lokal, sehingga memberikan wawasan baru mengenai bagaimana otoritas spiritual diperdebatkan, dinegosiasi, dan didefinisikan ulang dalam gerakan Islam transnasional. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman yang lebih luas tentang dinamika organisasi dan fragmentasi internal dalam gerakan

Islam kontemporer.

Keywords: internal conflict, Jamaah Tabligh, Maulana Saad, Syuro Alami

Introduction

In the early 2000s, several notable events occurred involving religious mass organizations at the national, regional, and international levels in Indonesia. These events were particularly significant because, while these organizations promoted unity in accordance with the core principles of Islamic teachings, internal divisions emerged—despite such discord being explicitly discouraged both within their structures and by Islamic doctrine as a whole. These contradictions highlight the tension between ideal religious values and the complexities of organizational leadership and succession (Alvionita & Auliahadi, 2020).

The three mass organizations discussed are the Qodiriyah Naqsyabandiyah Order (TQN), the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), and the Tablighi Jamaah (hereinafter referred to as JT). TQN Suryalaya was struck by internal conflict following the death of its spiritual leader, Abah Anom (KH. Sohibul Wafa Tajul Arifin), in 2011 at the age of 96. This conflict was deeply regretted by many within the organization. The primary cause was Abah Anom's failure to clearly appoint a successor as *mursyid* (Putri et al., 2019), which created both uncertainty and competing hopes for leadership succession.

Amid this vacuum, Abah Aos (KH. M. Gaos Saeful Maslul) emerged, proclaiming himself as the new *mursyid*. This self-appointment posed a serious risk to the unity of the community. According to TQN tradition, the selection of a *mursyid* is neither determined through deliberation nor self-declared. It is a prerogative reserved exclusively for the *grand mursyid*, in this case, Abah Anom. Any appointment made outside of this authority is considered invalid and illegitimate. Most *talqin* representatives of TQN rejected the claim, including KH. Aang Zezen, one of the order's respected preachers. However, in practice, many followers accepted Abah Aos as their *mursyid*, which ignited significant internal conflict. According to oral accounts, the division was so intense that even marital relationships were disrupted, with some couples reportedly divorcing over differing allegiances. Eventually, two distinct factions emerged: TQN Suryalaya, based in Suryalaya and supported by prominent *talqin* representatives, and TQN Sirnarasa, led by Abah Aos, who was recognized by his followers as the legitimate successor to Abah Anom (Luthfi, 2017).

PKS also experienced a split; however, the nature of this division differed

significantly from that of TQN. While the TQN conflict was rooted in mystical and spiritual leadership, the PKS division was more political and rational in nature. The split began when several PKS leaders—most notably Anis Matta and Fakhri Hamzah—were perceived to have acted independently of the party's collective direction. They were accused of speaking and making decisions in their own name while still representing the party. These actions were deemed violations of party rules (Fatmawati & Sholikin, 2020).

After receiving procedural warnings, both individuals were ultimately expelled from PKS. This was seen as a regrettable development, given that they were among the party's most intellectually prominent cadres and held influential positions in both the party structure and national parliament. Following their expulsion, the group went on to form a new political party known as the Glora Party. This central-level conflict had notable ripple effects at the regional level, where several PKS figures also defected to Glora (Wahyuni & Ayu, 2022).

The third organization, Jamaah Tabligh (JT), represents an international religious movement, in contrast to the regionally based TQN and PKS. JT is headquartered in New Delhi, India, specifically at the Banglawali Mosque in Nizamuddin. This mosque serves as the central hub for JT's global *da'wah* activities, which have now spread to over 200 countries worldwide (Mamun, 2019). The movement was founded in 1921 by Maulana Ismail and was later led by his son, Maulana Muhammad Ilyas. In 1926, the *da'wah* mission began in earnest, initially targeting the Mewat tribe, which was considered underexposed to Islamic teachings. From this humble beginning, JT's influence expanded across India. Under the leadership of Maulana Muhammad Yusuf al-Kandahlawi (1917–1965), the movement spread to the Middle East and beyond. It continued to grow under Sheikh Inamul Hasan (1918–1996), who led the organization until his death. Notably, prior to his passing, Sheikh Inamul visited Indonesia and gave a lecture in Ancol, Jakarta, further solidifying JT's international reach and influence (Al-Kandahlawi, 2001).

This organization was initially very solid and seemingly immune to division. This foundational belief was upheld by JT activists and members, grounded in both the movement's history and its core doctrine of *Ushul Dakwah*. This unity became a source of pride not only for JT members but also for the broader Muslim community. However, this ideal was shattered in 2017, when JT experienced a major schism, dividing into two factions: *Syuro Alami* (SA) and *Maulana Sa'ad* (MS).

Syuro Alami is a group that prioritizes collective decision-making through the traditional *syuro* (consultative) council. In contrast, *Maulana Sa'ad* introduced an *emirate* system of leadership. In essence, one group upholds a consultative leadership model, while the other follows a centralized emirate structure (Interview, Ust. Hikan Suni, 2018). This division was deeply regrettable to both sides, yet reconciliation efforts failed to yield any meaningful results. Each group proceeded along its own path, and the split extended from the central leadership down to the *mahalla* (local) level.

The outcome was tragic. The ideological rift escalated into physical confrontations and public demonstrations in JT centers across India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh (Bustamam-Ahmad, 2004). Eventually, both factions appeared to recognize the gravity of the division. By 2019, tensions had begun to ease—at least in the realm of social media. Yet, the prevailing sentiment was no longer one of reconciliation. Instead of striving for unity, their unofficial motto became “not cooperation, but working separately” (Interview, Indra Husen, 2023), signaling that a full reunification of the congregation was unlikely.

Over time, noticeable differences in characteristics developed between the two factions. Initially, both had worked hand-in-hand in preaching efforts, especially in Parongpong. But after 2017, they functioned independently. These distinctions became particularly evident in Parongpong, though similar patterns emerged in other regions. The distinction between *Syuro Alami* (SA) and *Maulana Sa'ad* (MS) in Parongpong—and more broadly across Indonesia—is observable in several key dimensions. In terms of numerical strength, the MS faction holds clear dominance. This is largely due to the influence of H. Cecep Firdaus, one of Indonesia's most prominent JT figures and a staunch supporter of the MS group. Consequently, MS has gained widespread traction throughout the country. For instance, among the approximately 150 *karkun* (JT members) in Parongpong, only about six are affiliated with the SA faction, illustrating the significant numerical gap between the two (Putra et al., 2020).

The generational divide also marks a clear difference. SA tends to be composed of *awalun*—senior or long-time JT members. In Parongpong, figures like H. Didin and Bah Iming represent this veteran core. In contrast, MS is dominated by newer and younger members, such as Dadan and Indera, reflecting a demographic shift toward a fresher, more dynamic base.

Religious background further distinguishes the two. SA is predominantly led by religious scholars and preachers, including individuals like Ust. Hikam and Ust. Didin in Parongpong, and prominent scholars in the Bandung

markaz such as Maulana Harun, Maulana Baban Taufik, and Maulana Nanang. On the other hand, the MS faction reflects a more balanced composition, combining religious figures with lay participants from various walks of life (Putra et al., 2020).

In terms of role and orientation, SA is often seen as the “head”—focused on thought, conceptualization, and theological grounding—whereas MS is described as the “foot,” emphasizing movement, outreach, and physical engagement in missionary work. Many MS members include former street figures or thugs who have since repented and embraced JT. This dynamic once created a harmonious synergy between thinkers and doers. However, after the schism (*ikhtilaf*), this balance was disrupted. As a result, the SA *markaz* in Antapani became noticeably quieter, particularly during routine activities and *ijtima* nights, while the MS *markaz* in Cingised Arcamanik grew significantly in size and vibrancy (Putra et al., 2020).

Finally, in terms of educational background, SA leaders often possess high levels of religious and formal academic education. Many are alumni of esteemed Islamic institutions in India and Pakistan, such as Deoband and Karachi, and others are secular intellectuals like Dr. Azwar Manap and Dr. Iqbal from the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB). Meanwhile, the MS faction draws its members from a broader range of educational backgrounds, mostly comprising alumni of domestic institutions, resulting in a more diverse yet less uniformly elite composition (Putra et al., 2020).

The impact of this *ikhtilaf* included a noticeable decline in the activities of both congregations, particularly within the SA group. SA, for instance, struggled to independently organize monthly *nisab* even when collaborating with the Cibodas group. On the other hand, MS, which had previously been able to conduct monthly *nisab* in up to four groups, has now reduced its capacity to just two.

However, something remarkable occurred following the 2017 split. The MS faction began to send out a significant number of missionary groups. One notable example was the Parongpong congregation’s *khuruj* to Eastern Europe, led by Amir Mang Dadan Daryana. Similar mobilizations took place in other parts of Bandung. Rather than weakening the movement, the internal pressure seemed to ignite renewed zeal within the MS faction. A similar spirit was also seen in the SA group. Despite his poor health, Ust. Didin of Parongpong managed to travel to Europe for *da’wah* activities.

Thus, behind the conflict, there emerged an element of *fastabiqul khairat*—a

competitive striving in goodness. Nevertheless, this internal division also led to a decline in good deeds (*amal*), both communal (*ijtima'i*) and individual (*infiradi*). This trend was observed not only in Parongpong, Bandung, and other parts of Indonesia, but also globally (Interview with Bangladesh Congregation, 2024). For instance, there was a marked decrease in the performance of the five *maqomi* deeds.

Despite the extensive documentation of internal conflicts within major religious and political organizations in Indonesia—such as the Qodiriyah Naqsyabandiyah Order (TQN) and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS)—existing studies have paid limited attention to the post-2017 schism within Jamaah Tabligh (JT), particularly its localized impact in specific communities such as Parongpong (Putri et al., 2019; Wahyuni & Ayu, 2022). While prior research has emphasized leadership crises, ideological divides, and institutional fragmentation in broader organizational contexts (Alvionita & Auliahadi, 2020; Fatmawati & Sholikin, 2020; Luthfi, 2017), there remains a significant gap in examining how doctrinal splits manifest in everyday religious practices, demographic shifts, and operational dynamics at the grassroots level. Moreover, most scholarly discussions on JT have focused on its global structure and missionary strategy (Mamun, 2019; Al-Khandahlawi, 2001), rather than the internal contestations and socio-religious reconfigurations triggered by the conflict between Syuro Alami (SA) and Maulana Sa'ad (MS) (Putra et al., 2020). This study offers a novel contribution by providing an in-depth, empirical case analysis of the JT schism in Parongpong, capturing not only the structural and ideological divergences but also the lived consequences—ranging from community fragmentation to renewed missionary zeal (*fastabiqul khairat*) (Interview with Bangladesh Congregation, 2024; Interview, Indra Husen, 2023). By situating the conflict within the broader context of Indonesia's religious pluralism and Islamic organizational behavior, this research bridges a crucial gap between macro-level institutional narratives and micro-level community realities.

Method

This study employs the historical method, comprising four stages: heuristic, criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The heuristic stage, or source collection phase, draws on three types of sources—oral, written, and electronic. These diverse sources provide a comprehensive foundation for analyzing the trajectory and internal dynamics of Jamaah Tabligh over time.

Oral sources were gathered between 2015 and 2023 through interviews

and informal conversations with Jamaah Tabligh (JT) members during various events. These interactions often occurred spontaneously and informally, with informants sometimes unaware they were being interviewed, as the author is known to be a JT member. This approach allowed for open and unfiltered information exchange, free from social barriers or guardedness.

The timeframe from 2015 was selected because it marks the public emergence of JT's internal conflict, though indications of division had already appeared as early as 2010. Most oral accounts were obtained from both local and international JT members, with a geographical focus on JT centers in West Java, especially Bandung and Parongpong. Data were collected during recurring events such as weekly *halakoh*, monthly and quarterly meetings, *markaz* nights, and gatherings such as *jur masthuroh*.

The primary written sources include *Buku Musyawarah Halakoh*, a planning and activity record maintained at the local halakoh level. It documents JT Parongpong's daily, weekly, monthly, and annual plans and activities, as well as those at the Bandung *markaz*. The book includes detailed listings of *takaza*—obligatory missionary agendas such as going out in the path of Allah for 3 days, 40 days, 4 months, or even a year. The 4-month missions often include international travel to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and non-Muslim majority countries. It also records *nushroh* (support) tasks for both domestic and international outreach efforts.

Another significant written source is the tablighi-jamaat.com publication, available in both English and Indonesian. It includes contributions from figures such as Maulana Andi Abdurrahman, a close aide of Maulana Ibrahim Dewla of Gujarat, India. Maulana Andi, an Indonesian from Cirebon's Pesantren Arrayan, was influential in shaping SA (Syuro Alami) perspectives. The distribution of this text among Indonesian JT members—particularly in Bandung—played a pivotal role in delineating the SA faction from MS (Maulana Saad) supporters. SA members, typically more academically and digitally literate, actively utilized social media to disseminate information, in contrast to MS members who largely relied on oral transmission.

Finding and Discussion

This section presents and interprets the findings of the study on the internal conflict within the Jamaat Tabligh community in Parongpong, West Bandung. The research aims to uncover the socio-religious dynamics, historical developments, and leadership tensions that have shaped the trajectory of this

Islamic movement within a pluralistic setting. By analyzing both the structural and cultural factors influencing the group's internal division, the discussion provides a contextual understanding of how religious organizations negotiate identity, authority, and community cohesion in a region marked by both Islamic predominance and religious diversity.

History of the Parongpong Jamaat Tabligh

Parongpong is a sub-district town formed as an administrative division of the larger Cisarua Sub-district, which itself was formerly part of Cimahi and Lembang. Historically, the livelihood of the people in Parongpong centered on rice farming, similar to many areas in West Java. Religiously and culturally, Parongpong is a heterogeneous region. While Islam remains the majority religion, the town also has a significant Adventist population, making it the second-largest religious group in the area. The presence of the Indonesian Adventist University (UNAI), with around 2,000 adherents—excluding students from across Indonesia, especially from Medan, Manado, and Java—further underscores the region's religious diversity (Hakim et al., 2024).

Culturally, the dominant form of Islam in Parongpong has been syncretic, blending Islamic beliefs with local customs. Traditional practices such as death rituals, offerings, and marriage ceremonies reflect this fusion. For instance, as recently as the 1980s, some fasting practices ended at *dzuhur* rather than sunset (Interview with Ust. Ade Saepudin, 2023). Sociologically, Parongpong has a stratified structure where civil servants, from village to sub-district heads, hold the highest social status, followed by wealthy individuals. Religious leaders who are also affluent or culturally influential come next, while farmers, ranchers, and traders form the base of the social hierarchy (Hakim, 2014). Interestingly, the people of Parongpong are not strongly affiliated with formal religious organizations. Though many follow Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) traditions, their engagement is more cultural than institutional. This non-affiliation extends to other groups such as Persis and Muhammadiyah, reflecting the community's broader preference for cultural expressions of faith over formal religious membership.

The entry of Jamaah Tabligh (JT) into Parongpong reflects this complex religious landscape. JT did not arrive uniformly across the area but entered gradually, depending on local contexts. In Cihideung, JT's presence was first recorded in 1985 (Hakim et al., 2024), coinciding with its establishment in Bandung (Hakim, 2014). Two years later, in 1987, JT reached Kampung

Barunagri (Lembang), and by 2000, it was active in Karyawangi, Parongpong. Interestingly, JT's expansion into each area did not occur through neighboring villages but from more distant regions—for example, Barunagri's JT presence originated from Cimahi, not nearby Cihideung, and JT in Karyawangi came from Majalengka. Local JT units often served as support or witnesses, known as *anshar* in JT terminology, rather than as originators of outreach. Notable *anshar* figures included Wahyudin Kacang, Asa, Nanang Ikan Hias, and Husen Warsa. This pattern of propagation reflects JT's broader approach, which relies on the principles of *hijrah*, *nushrah*, *intiqali*, and *maqomi*—methods emphasizing spiritual migration, support, mobility, and local grounding (Hakim, 2014).

Parongpong is a sub-district town formed as part of the administrative reorganization of the larger Cisarua Sub-district, which itself was previously part of the Cimahi and Lembang regions. Historically, the residents of Parongpong were primarily rice farmers, a pattern typical of many rural areas in West Java. Religiously and culturally, Parongpong is highly heterogeneous. While Islam is the majority religion, the town also has a significant Christian Adventist population, making it the second-largest religious group in the area. This diversity is further evidenced by the presence of the Indonesian Adventist University (UNAI), which accommodates approximately 2,000 adherents—excluding students who come from various parts of Indonesia, especially Medan, Manado, and Java (Hakim et al., 2024).

Culturally, the practice of Islam in Parongpong has long been syncretic, integrating Islamic teachings with local customs and traditional rites. Rituals surrounding death, offerings, and marriage ceremonies often reflect this fusion of belief systems. Notably, even in the 1980s, certain fasting practices ended at *dzuhur* rather than sunset (Interview with Ust. Ade Saepudin, 2023). From a sociological perspective, the community displays a stratified structure: civil servants—from village heads to sub-district officials—occupy the highest social tier, followed by the wealthy. Religious leaders with social or cultural influence form the next respected group, while farmers, ranchers, and small-scale traders constitute the base of the social hierarchy (Hakim, 2014). Despite this stratification, the population is generally not formally affiliated with religious organizations. While most residents adhere to Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) traditions, they do so culturally rather than institutionally. The same applies to groups like Persis and Muhammadiyah, which have only limited organizational presence in the area. The overall tendency in Parongpong is to embrace religious expression culturally without formally joining structured

religious bodies.

The arrival of Jamaah Tabligh (JT) in Parongpong mirrors this complex and loosely institutionalized religious environment. JT's expansion did not occur simultaneously across the region but rather evolved gradually depending on local circumstances. The earliest documented JT presence in Cihideung dates back to 1985 (Hakim et al., 2024), coinciding with its broader expansion in Bandung (Hakim, 2014). In 1987, JT began operating in Kampung Barunagri (Lembang), and by 2000, it had reached Karyawangi, Parongpong. Intriguingly, JT did not always spread from the nearest geographic point. For instance, the JT movement in Barunagri originated from Cimahi rather than the nearby Cihideung, while JT's establishment in Karyawangi came via Majalengka. Local JT groups from adjacent villages typically served in support roles—functioning as *anshar* (helpers) rather than primary initiators. Notable *anshar* from this early period include figures such as Wahyudin Kacang, Asa, Nanang Ikan Hias, and Husen Warsa.

This pattern illustrates JT's distinctive operational model, rooted in the principles of *hijrah* (spiritual migration), *nushrah* (support), *intiqali* (mobility), and *maqomi* (local permanence). These concepts not only frame JT's method of da'wah propagation but also reflect its adaptation to local socio-religious contexts—particularly in culturally diverse environments like Parongpong. Understanding this approach provides valuable insight into how JT balances doctrinal consistency with contextual flexibility in different cultural and geographic settings.

In the next stage of development, specifically in early February 2017, a significant *ikhtilaf* (dispute) emerged within Jamaah Tabligh (JT). This conflict began during a deliberation held in Cikampek, where the central issue discussed was the appointment of Maulana Sa'ad as *Hadhratji* (spiritual leader). Unexpectedly, the appointment was met with strong opposition from the majority of Indonesia's Tablighi *syuro* (consultative council). Among the most vocal opponents was KH. Lutfi Banjari. This opposing faction would later come to be known as *Syuro Alami* (SA), although detractors pejoratively referred to it as "Shia Alami." In contrast, Maulana Sa'ad's supporters were commonly referred to as MS (Maulana Sa'ad) or the Maulana Sa'ad faction (Husni et al., 2023).

Originating in Jakarta, the conflict quickly spread to provinces, districts, and eventually to the local *mahalla* (village) level—affecting all regions, including the Parongpong *halakoh*, which is the central focus of this study. In Parongpong,

two JT factions emerged: one aligned with Syuro Alami (SA), and the other with MS, sometimes referred to using M. Kholik's term "Nizamuddin" (Kholik, 2019).

Initially, the broader *jamaah* (community) was confused by the split. Most members were unaware of the deeper issues at play, especially since political and leadership matters are traditionally taboo topics within JT discourse. Many assumed the conflict was a baseless rumor that would be easily resolved. Up until that point, leadership issues had rarely surfaced publicly within JT, especially among the senior *masyaikh* in India and Pakistan. However, in the weeks following the Cikampek deliberation, the seriousness of the division became clear: JT had officially split into two factions—SA and MS, the latter centered in Nizamuddin (Kholik, 2019).

Several attempts at reconciliation were made by JT leaders from both Indonesia and various regions. Some even traveled to Nizamuddin to meet Maulana Sa'ad directly. Nevertheless, these efforts proved unsuccessful. While Maulana Sa'ad never explicitly declared himself *amir* (leader), he distanced himself from the SA faction. The official declaration of leadership (*hadhratji*) came instead from the Mewat community, who were among Maulana Sa'ad's strongest supporters (Hakim, 2014).

In Parongpong, there are two separate leadership structures within Jamaah Tabligh. The Syuro Alami (SA) faction is led by H. Didin, a senior figure in JT. However, their numbers are very small—no more than six individuals—including H. Didin, Asa, Iming, Ust. Hikam, H. Cevi, and Bah Roni. On the other hand, the Maulana Sa'ad (MS) faction is composed of newer members, primarily younger individuals who are dynamic and committed, often described as full of sacrifice. This group is led by Mang Dadan and Indera and is supported by approximately 100 JT members.

The atmosphere during the height of the division became increasingly tense, with each side unable to avoid mutual accusations. SA accused MS of being a false faction, while MS responded with similar accusations, claiming that SA had strayed from the teachings and leadership of Nizamuddin (Maulana Sa'ad). However, the conflict remained largely latent and verbal, never escalating into physical confrontations.

The tension continued through the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over these two years, verbal disputes surfaced frequently, particularly through social media platforms such as WhatsApp groups. Interestingly, as the pandemic reached its peak at the end of 2019, the intensity of the conflict began to

decline. The prevailing attitude became one of “work separately” (Interview, Indera, 2019), signalling a move away from any expectation of cooperation with the SA faction.

Ironically, it was the COVID-19 pandemic that brought about a pause in hostilities. Many within JT interpreted the pandemic as a divine rebuke—a *warning from Allah to the da’wah community*. The situation was seen as deeply challenging, to the point that some believed only Imam Mahdi would be able to reunite the divided *jamaah*. Despite the pain of the division, JT members came to believe that there must be divine wisdom behind these events—an unfolding of Allah’s will (Interview, Mang Dadan, 2020).

Conflicts of *infirodi* (between individuals) and *Ijtima’i* (group-based conflict)

The root of *infirodi* conflict within the Jamaah Tabligh (JT) community often lies in issues related to *mu’amalah* (financial transactions) and *mu’asyarah* (social interactions). In the Tablighi context, *mu’amalah* refers to dealings such as debts and commercial transactions, while *mu’asyarah* encompasses ethical and interpersonal conduct—especially in how one treats superiors, peers, and those of lower social or generational status. Among these, *mu’amalah* stands out as the most frequent source of interpersonal conflict. A well-known saying among *karkun* (JT members) captures this sentiment: “*It takes special faith to conduct mu’amalah with fellow karkun.*” In fact, some advised against engaging in business or lending relationships with other *karkun*, because such dealings often end in emotional strain and damaged relationships (Hakim et al., 2024).

There are at least two major causes behind the frequent breakdowns in financial interactions. First, many *karkun* come from socially marginalized backgrounds. They enter JT as a way to repent and rebuild their lives. These individuals are often still in the process of spiritual and moral transformation, and may struggle to resist worldly temptations. Their religious knowledge—particularly regarding *halal*, *haram*, *makruh*, and *sunnah*—is sometimes minimal, leading to poor decision-making in financial matters.

Second, many *karkun* are not financially established. They may be small-scale traders, informal workers, or entrepreneurs with unstable incomes. These economic uncertainties often result in an inability to repay debts or honor financial commitments. The consequence of these failed transactions is emotional distress and distrust among *karkun*, which ultimately hinders

the effectiveness of da'wah activities and weakens group cohesion. This contradiction is particularly damaging because it clashes with the idealism frequently expressed in JT teachings—through the *muzakarah* of the six principles (*sifat-sifat*) and *ushul da'wah* emphasized during sermons (*bayan*). While the community preaches a prophetic model of ethics, the reality often falls short, leading to disappointment and fractured relationships.

A core ethical teaching often repeated is: “*Don't look at the faults of others. Our example is the Prophet and his companions.*” However, in practice, this maxim is difficult to uphold. It is frequently directed at others rather than internalized for personal reflection. These conflicts are not limited to laypersons but also involve respected religious figures and senior members. While such incidents can occur in any community, JT members face heightened scrutiny because they are publicly known for preaching piety. Outsiders often expect Tablighi members to embody the ideals they preach—both in speech and in appearance. Therefore, even minor missteps can severely damage the movement's credibility, and it often takes a long time to repair public trust.

The collective conflict (*ijtima'i*) within Jamaah Tabligh (JT) is deeply rooted in theological and organizational principles. This discord stems from deviations in the core doctrinal foundations upheld by the movement, particularly the *six characteristics of the companions* and the *principles of da'wah*. These teachings are considered by JT to be derived directly from the Qur'an, the Hadith, and the practices of the Prophet's companions (*salafus shalih*). Though simple in articulation, these doctrines encapsulate the essence of Islamic teachings and serve as JT's defining religious identity. Therefore, any perceived departure from these principles is seen not merely as administrative disagreement but as a theological deviation. For this reason, the Syuro Alami (SA) faction often refers to the Maulana Saad (MS) group as a “*firqah sa'diyyah*” (Saadist sect), signaling their belief that the latter represents a breakaway sectarian path (Interview, Ust. Hikam, 2017).

This conflict has also become mondial—global in scale and profound in qualitative impact. It began with the schism at Nizamuddin, the international headquarters of JT in India, and has since cascaded into nearly every country and regional JT center. In Indonesia, this divide extends from the national level to provincial, district, and even village (*mahalla*) levels. In Bandung, for instance, there are now two parallel JT headquarters, each with separate management. The SA group retains the original Antapani center, covering approximately 4 hectares, while the MS group has established a new and more

expansive center in Cingised, spanning 9 hectares. At the *halakoh* level, senior members tend to align with SA, while younger and more active members—often seen as movement-driven and deeply committed—gravitate toward MS. This polarization is also evident at the grassroots *mahalla* level, where individuals and entire congregations have chosen to realign their mosque affiliations. In the writer's own community, respected members such as H. Cepi and Ust. Hikam, who once prayed at the same mosque, have since moved to the Bah Narta Mosque. This realignment underscores the depth of the division—not over theological innovation or heresy, but over internal leadership disputes and da'wah methodology.

A third dimension of the *ijtima'i* conflict is its resulting fragmentation and redefinition of communal identity. Globally, JT is now divided between the SA and Nizamuddin (MS) factions, a reality that has permeated even the smallest local congregations. In Parongpong, for instance, some *karkun* identify with Syuro Alami, while others align with Nizamuddin (Kholik, 2019). Although SA is a numerical minority worldwide (tablighi-jamaat.com), in the specific context of Indonesia and Malaysia, the MS faction dominates—particularly at the grassroots level. While only a handful of national syuro members (such as H. Cecep Firdaus) support SA, the widespread appeal and long-standing influence of H. Cecep, especially as a pioneer figure in Indonesian JT history, have solidified MS's dominance across the archipelago. His legacy as a *mujahid* and *victim* (i.e., one who sacrifices in the path of Allah) since JT's inception in Indonesia continues to shape member loyalty and institutional control.

Thus, the *ijtima'i* conflict within JT represents not just a split in leadership or theology, but a fundamental reorganization of religious authority, communal cohesion, and operational structures at every level—from global to local. This fragmentation poses significant challenges to unity, sustainability, and the continuity of da'wah practices in an increasingly polarized religious landscape. If left unaddressed, such division risks eroding the moral credibility and collective strength that once defined Jamaah Tabligh's identity as a unified global movement.

At the provincial level, divisions also emerged. On the SA (Syuro Alami) side were several senior clerics and non-clerics, including Maulana Harun, Maulana Baban, Maulana Nanang, Maulana Abas, Abdullah Awang, Ajat, Muad, Munawar, and others. These individuals were once influential figures in West Java and Bandung. However, following the *ikhtilaf*, many were abandoned by the majority of the congregation. In contrast, the Nizamuddin

(MS) faction was supported primarily by laypersons such as Bah Otto, Labid, Wandiki, KH. Ruhiyat, and other lesser-known names. Despite their lower profiles, they gained substantial influence within the JT community, especially in Bandung and surrounding regions.

Fourth, physical conflict. Known for its peaceful *da'wah*, JT surprised many when physical tension began to manifest—primarily on social media but also at the Nizamuddin headquarters in India. Between 2017 and 2019, a physical altercation occurred, reportedly escalating to bloodshed, though without fatalities. Notably, there were two alleged assassination attempts on Maulana Saad while he was leading prayers. He reportedly offered no resistance. These events were scarcely covered by SA sources. Furthermore, a young man who attempted to harm Maulana Saad was allegedly beaten severely. According to SA accounts, other incidents included the expulsion and intimidation of Maulana Ibrahim and Maulana Yakub from the Nizamuddin headquarters—an indication of how deeply the conflict had escalated.

Fifth, theological conflict. In Islamic history, political leadership disputes have often evolved into theological divisions (Nasution, 2020). The emergence of major sects such as the Khawarij, Shia, Murji'ah, Jabariyyah, and Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah all originated from leadership struggles. This underscores how deeply intertwined politics and theology are in Islam, with implications that affect not just governance but *aqidah* (faith), *takfir* (declaring someone an unbeliever), and eschatological beliefs about salvation, sin, and the hereafter.

This dynamic is clearly visible in today's JT conflict. The movement now has two leadership centers: SA, representing the World Syuro Council led by senior *karkun* Bay Wahab from Pakistan; and MS, referring to Maulana Saad, now based in the Banglawali Mosque in India—JT's original international headquarters. SA, initially operating from Bengalore in South India, later moved de facto and de jure to Raiwind, Pakistan. These two groups not only compete for legitimacy but also question each other's *shar'i* authority. While not always explicitly issuing *takfir*, each faction has delegitimized the other and called for a return to what it considers the correct path. In one report from the Bangladeshi *karkun*, it was even alleged that food was poisoned during a *tasykil* (mobilization) program attended by Maulana Saad in Bangladesh (Interview, Oki, 2024).

Conflict Factors

The internal leadership tensions within *Jamaah Tabligh* can be traced back to the pivotal 1965 deliberation following the death of Maulana Yusuf, which appointed Maulana Inamul Hasan as the third amir. This decision ignited deep-seated discontent, particularly among the Mewat community—an early and influential tribal group in the movement—who strongly favored Maulana Harun, the third-generation descendant of the founder, Maulana Ilyas. Their opposition was driven by a combination of historical authority, sacred lineage, and theological belief that only descendants of Maulana Ilyas were spiritually and genealogically entitled to lead the movement. They believed in a mystical tradition that Maulana Ilyas's lineage would produce thirteen generations of pious *da'is*, with Maulana Harun embodying this prophecy. Despite their pressure, the decision remained unchanged, and tensions only subsided after Maulana Harun publicly endorsed the *shura*'s decision through a *bayan*, urging unity and obedience. His gesture temporarily reconciled the divide, though the underlying factional sentiment—rooted in sacred genealogy and spiritual symbolism—persisted as a latent fault line in the movement's leadership structure (Hakim, 2023; *tablighi-jamaat.com*).

Although the conflict eventually subsided—largely due to Maulana Harun's conciliatory *bayan* affirming the *shura*'s outcome—the foundational tension remained latent within the movement. These narratives and justifications were later revived and widely disseminated through materials such as the *Tablighi-Jamaat.com* site. Promoted primarily by the SA faction, this content was shared among JT members in Bandung and possibly across Indonesia and beyond, reaching even the grassroots (*mahalla*) level. In Parongpong, for example, figures like Ust. Didin played a key role in distributing the book and advocating its message verbally. While only a minority of the local congregation—such as Asa, Bah Iming, Ust. Hikam, Enjang, and Cevi—accepted its claims, the materials nevertheless shaped the ideological backdrop of the emerging SA-MS divide.

Impact of Internal Conflict

The internal conflict within *Jamaah Tabligh* has had a profound impact on the effectiveness of *da'wah*, both in terms of quality and quantity. Sociologically, this conflict manifests in three significant areas, with the most observable being the degradation of *da'wah* across all levels—from the central leadership to regional hubs and even local villages (*mahalla*). Below is a detailed

explanation of this key consequence:

Degradation of Da'wah

The first and most critical impact of the internal conflict is the noticeable decline in da'wah activities. This decline is evident both in quality—as seen in the reduced effectiveness and consistency of preaching—and in quantity, referring to the diminished number of active congregants and organized missionary efforts. Activities that once symbolized vibrancy in the movement, such as *makomi* (local) and *intiqoli* (mobile) mosque engagements, have significantly declined or ceased altogether.

In places like Parongpong—and elsewhere—the number and strength of mosque-centered programs have dropped sharply. The most dynamic period for the local congregation occurred between 2015 and 2020, particularly in the Cihideung *mahalla*. Ironically, this thriving period was not led by scholars or seasoned *ustadz*, but by young men from *abangan* (nominal Muslim) backgrounds, including a village secretary who became a central figure. Many involved were ordinary individuals—some unemployed or with personal challenges—yet they managed to energize the community remarkably.

Several indicators highlight this peak in *da'wah* activity. First, the *mahalla* had a strong base of around 50 active *karkun*, only two of whom held religious titles. Second, the frequency of missionary outings increased significantly, with multiple groups regularly going out for 3-day, 40-day, and even 4-month *khuruj*. Remarkably, the Cihideung *mahalla* even sent delegations to distant countries, including Turkey, Serbia, and surrounding European nations.

This period of *da'wah* success reached its height during the COVID-19 pandemic (2019–2020), when external obstacles were most severe. Despite widespread restrictions and resistance from mosque administrators, some JT members remained committed. For example, one group led by Mang Dadan from Parongpong continued their mission for four months across Bandung, including areas around Dago, at a time when most congregations had ceased activity due to health concerns.

These examples reflect the previous strength and resilience of the movement. However, the internal schism between SA and MS factions has since led to a significant erosion in both the enthusiasm and organizational cohesion required to sustain such momentum. Today, *da'wah* efforts are fractured and uneven—an outcome directly tied to the unresolved ideological and leadership disputes within Jamaah Tabligh.

Meanwhile, between 2022 and 2024, the momentum of *da'wah* activities

began to noticeably decline. In Parongpong, the number of congregational outings diminished drastically. The 3-day *khuruj* was reduced to only one or two small groups, and the 40-day congregation could no longer be organized independently—instead, it had to merge with other *halakohs*. The 4-month missionary trips, once a mark of vigor, were down to just two participants, who had to join external groups due to the lack of a local cohort. However, in terms of individual quality, one dedicated member from Parongpong has remained abroad on a year-long mission, with a planned return in June 2024.

This trend reflects a broader national pattern. During a provincial *takaza* meeting in Kebonjeruk, Jakarta, neither East Java nor Central Java sent representatives. This absence was particularly striking given that East Java is home to the influential Temboro *markaz*, and Central Java has historically been a stronghold of veteran *karkun* and seasoned movement leaders. The absence of participation from these regions underscores the waning influence and fragmentation of the once-cohesive *Jamaah Tabligh* network.

In contrast, West Java—particularly Bandung—remains relatively strong in both quality and quantity of *da’wah* activities. During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Bandung emerged as a national center of activity, continuing operations both domestically and abroad. News of this resilience even reached the global headquarters in Nizamuddin. Ironically, while smaller Indonesian regions remained active, the Nizamuddin *markaz* itself was closed during the pandemic and only officially reopened in 2024.

This broader slowdown and selective vitality reveal the lasting consequences of the internal conflict—especially the schism between the Nizamuddin and Reiwind factions. The fragmentation not only disrupted leadership and institutional alignment but also weakened the grassroots foundation of JT’s missionary engine across multiple regions.

Emergence of Two Sects

The internal conflict led to the formation of two distinct factions within *Jamaah Tabligh*—Syuro Alami (SA) and Maulana Saad (MS). These labels were agreed upon by both camps. The SA group, short for *Syuro Alami*, consists of members aligned with the traditional consultative council (*syuro*) originally established by Maulana Inamul Hasan in 1993 and formally ratified in 1995. This *syuro* was restructured in 2015 by Bay Wahab, comprising 13 members—two of whom were Bay Wahab himself and Maulana Saad. Disagreements arose when Maulana Saad refused to accept the legitimacy of the newly formed

syuro, leading to a split. The SA group eventually established its headquarters in Raiwind, Pakistan (often spelled “Reywind” locally), while Maulana Saad’s group retained the historical center in Nizamuddin, New Delhi, India.

Structurally, the Reywind group (SA) operates as an oligarchy, with no single *amir* (leader). Leadership is shared and rotates among *syuro* members, who are collectively responsible for overseeing different regions and countries. In contrast, the Nizamuddin faction (MS) follows a centralized model under the leadership of a single *amir*, Maulana Saad. Supporting him are expert *syuro* members who also take on regional responsibilities.

In Parongpong, the similarities and differences between the two schools of thought within *Jamaah Tabligh*—Raiwind (SA) and Nizamuddin (MS)—are not immediately apparent. This is largely because the Raiwind group constitutes a small minority, and their activities remain relatively low-profile. Despite their limited numbers, they tend to separate themselves from the majority in prayer and other religious activities, creating a subtle but persistent divide—what might be termed a form of “ghosting.” As a result, the broader community remains largely unaware of the existence of these two distinct ideological streams within JT, even as of June 2024, when this research was conducted.

Based on the observation result, the Nizamuddin school introduces a number of new rules that are challenging for its followers to implement. One example is the requirement that each *halakoh* must have a cleric who completes a full reading of *Hayatus Sahabah* once a year. In practice, this is difficult to achieve during monthly gatherings, especially when few *halakoh* have such clerics readily available. Issues of distance and honorarium further complicate this expectation.

Another example is the UMM (Usul Method of Mission) program, which is perceived as mentally burdensome. The intensity of its frequency—often multiple times in a single day—and its requirement to be performed during both *intiqali* (traveling missions) and *maqomi* (local missions) have made it difficult for many members to implement consistently. Consequently, the growing complexity of expectations under the Nizamuddin model may unintentionally limit active participation among grassroots followers.

Status Change

Another significant impact of the internal conflict within *Jamaah Tabligh* is the shift in social status dynamics among its members. In the JT tradition, social status is earned primarily through personal sacrifice—of time, wealth,

and self—for the cause of da’wah. The more a person sacrifices, the more highly they are regarded within the community. While knowledge is respected, it is secondary to sacrificial commitment. Thus, in practice, recognition and status are more commonly attained through sustained da’wah efforts than through religious scholarship alone, as it is rare for someone to be both a highly knowledgeable scholar and an expert in sacrifice (*fida*).

The internal schism has disrupted this long-standing structure, leading to a reconfiguration of who is considered elite within the movement. Individuals and groups previously not viewed as central figures have risen in prominence, while others who once held influential positions have seen their status diminish. This change can be observed both globally and locally, particularly in Bandung and Parongpong.

At the global level, Maulana Saad, who initially held the position of *amir* only *de facto*, has now been widely recognized as the *amir de jure*. In contrast, key senior figures such as Maulana Ibrahim, Maulana Ahmad Laat, and Maulana Yakub—who once occupied special positions within the Nizamuddin markaz—have been sidelined due to their opposition to Maulana Saad. Meanwhile, new elites have emerged in the Nizamuddin camp, including Maulana Samin, Maulana Hasan (the son of Maulana Saad), and Sheikh Wasiful Islam from Bangladesh, many of whom have been appointed to the Syuro Council. Conversely, those who formerly held elite positions in Nizamuddin but aligned with the Syuro Alami faction have experienced a decline in influence, now repositioned under the SA group, which has shifted its central headquarters to Raiwind, Pakistan.

In Parongpong, significant leadership dynamics unfolded following the internal *ikhtilaf*. Initially, H. Didin served as the *de facto* leader of JT Parongpong. However, after the split, he lost much of his following. His position was replaced by a new wave of elites, most notably Mang Dadan, who had previously completed a one-year *khuruj* and was recognized as an *expert in sacrifice*. Alongside him was Mang Indera, also known for his dedication to movement (*harakah*) and spiritual perseverance (*mujahadah*). Another emerging figure was Mang Erin, a philanthropist and committed *mujahid*. These individuals rose to prominence as the new elite in the wake of the conflict.

At the *mahalla* level, the transition was less dramatic, with no open verbal conflict. Ust. Hikam, previously regarded as a *hafidz* and a learned religious scholar (*alim*), relocated to Cibodas. Within the local *mahalla*, post-conflict figures included H. Cevi for the SA group, and the author himself for the

Nizamuddin faction. Personally, I felt no significant change. Being considered a “figure” in JT does not confer material benefits, as the entire framework of JT revolves around the ethos of self-sacrifice.

Within JT, there exists a nuanced social hierarchy composed of several informal classes: *zumindar* (sacrifice experts), *alim* (religious scholars), *aghniya* (the wealthy), and the general class. The *zumindar*—those who consistently sacrifice wealth and self—occupy the highest social rank, regardless of their social or economic background. Often, this class includes individuals who are not financially affluent but are distinguished by their unwavering commitment to *da'wah*. Wealthy individuals (*aghniya*) gain status only if they actively sacrifice. Scholars and professionals form the middle class, which can ascend to elite status if accompanied by active sacrifice; otherwise, they remain part of the ordinary class.

In JT, social recognition is not determined by lineage or wealth but by sustained sacrifice. Even someone from a scholarly or affluent family will not be regarded as elite unless they actively participate in preaching activities and fulfill *takaza* responsibilities beyond the basic *nisab*. As Martono (2012) emphasizes, the sacrifice of self and wealth is the fundamental criterion for determining one's standing in JT. This meritocratic culture has long shaped the internal social fabric of *Jamaah Tabligh*.

Conclusion

The internal conflict within *Jamaah Tabligh* is deeply regretted by its members and leadership. The dispute has become so complex that a resolution seems increasingly unlikely. Numerous mediation efforts and attempts at reconciliation have been initiated by *Jamaah Tabligh* leaders around the world, yet all have reached an impasse. As a result, *Jamaah Tabligh* has effectively split into two distinct schools of thought: the Nizamuddin faction and the *Syuro Alami* faction (centered in Raiwind, Pakistan).

Several factors have contributed to this division, including disputes over leadership structure (emir), the practice of *bai'at* (spiritual allegiance), the use of the *Muntakhab Ahadith* book, differing methodologies in preaching (*Usul Masturat Mewatiyah* or UMM), and violent incidents at the Nizamuddin headquarters. According to the *Syuro Alami* group, many of these issues stem from the personality and leadership style of Maulana Saad, who has also faced public criticism from Deoband scholars.

The consequences of this conflict have been far-reaching. It has led to

a decline in preaching activities, the establishment of two separate ideological and operational paths within Jamaah Tabligh (SA and Nizamuddin), and a shift in the organization's internal social structure—particularly among its elite members. This fragmentation not only challenges the unity of the movement but also redefines the future direction and identity of Jamaah Tabligh on both local and global scales.

Based on the above conclusion, the practical implications of this study are significant for scholars, religious practitioners, and policymakers concerned with religious movements and organizational dynamics. The fragmentation of Jamaah Tabligh into the SA and Nizamuddin factions not only reconfigures internal leadership and da'wah strategies but also introduces new variables for understanding identity, authority, and religious authority negotiation within Islamic revivalist movements. For future studies, this finding opens up several research pathways: comparative ethnographies between SA and MS congregations across regions; sociological analysis of post-conflict religious leadership models; and the role of transnational influence in local Islamic practices. Additionally, the observable shift in social class and elite engagement within JT provides fertile ground for examining how religious movements adapt to internal crises while navigating external pressures in a globalized religious landscape.

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