

Articulating Progressive Islam In Indonesia: Daily Spiritual Practices Among Muhammadiyah Community Members In Bajeng

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Abstract: This article explores how the grassroots spiritual practices of Muhammadiyah communities in Bajeng, South Sulawesi, serve as mechanisms for articulating and sustaining the ideology of Progressive Islam (Progressive Islam). Employing an interpretive ethnographic approach, the study investigates four primary modes of spiritual engagement: local branch pengajian, tarjih-based study circles, institutional religious gatherings within Muhammadiyah schools, and inter-branch communal events. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation, and analyzed using theoretical frameworks from Talal Asad (discursive tradition), Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (social construction of reality), and Anthony Giddens (structuration theory). The findings reveal that these spiritual practices are deeply embedded in the everyday religious life of the community, functioning not only as sites of religious education but also as fields of ideological negotiation and identity formation. Local actors actively interpret and recontextualize Islamic teachings through rational discourse, symbolic rituals, and institutional norms. These grassroots efforts form a dynamic system that reproduces Muhammadiyah's core values—rationality, social ethics, and monotheism—within a context-sensitive framework. By illustrating how ideology is embodied and enacted through community-based spirituality, this study offers a grounded contribution to the understanding of religious reform movements in Indonesia and their capacity to adapt, evolve, and remain socially relevant in a pluralistic society.

Keywords: Progressive Islam; Muhammadiyah; grassroots spirituality; religious identity; discursive tradition; Indonesian Islam; ethnographic study

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the ideological sustainability and grassroots vitality of Islamic organizations in Indonesia have come under renewed scrutiny. Among these, Muhammadiyah, one of the largest and most influential modernist Islamic movements, has experienced both institutional growth and ideological challenges. Alongside its counterpart Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah has significantly shaped Indonesia's religious, educational, and sociopolitical landscape, upholding a moderate Islamic discourse that aligns with Pancasila, the country's foundational ideology (Menchik, 2019; Barton et al., 2021). Despite its contributions, recent demographic and ideological shifts raise concerns about its long-term relevance, particularly regarding spiritual engagement and cadre regeneration at the grassroots level.

Recent surveys reveal a concerning trend: the proportion of Indonesians identifying with Muhammadiyah has declined from 9.4% in 2005 to 5.7% in 2023, while NU's affiliation has surged over the same period (LSI, 2023). Scholars attribute this to a number of interconnected factors, including the appeal of alternative religious movements offering more emotionally resonant or mystically oriented experiences, and a perceived lack of spiritual nourishment within Muhammadiyah's existing structures (Kanafi et al., 2021; Yumitro et al., 2021). As the religious landscape of Indonesia becomes increasingly fragmented and dynamic, the organizational and ideological coherence of Muhammadiyah faces existential questions. In particular, the erosion of grassroots spiritual participation poses a threat to its foundational identity, which has historically been rooted in a rational, reformist, and socially engaged vision of Islam known as "Islam Berkemajuan" (Progressive Islam).

The core challenge confronting Muhammadiyah today lies in revitalizing grassroots spiritual engagement while maintaining the ideological tenets of Progressive Islam. Unlike NU, whose traditionalist framework often embraces local customs and emotional piety, Muhammadiyah's approach has been primarily intellectual and reformist. While this distinction has enabled Muhammadiyah to engage effectively with modernist and progressive discourses, it has

also rendered it vulnerable to disengagement among members seeking more affective religious experiences. The increasing allure of salafi-oriented and charismatic Islamic movements among the youth further underscores this vulnerability, especially as these groups leverage digital platforms and emotionally charged rhetoric to galvanize support (Ismail et al., 2024; Arifin et al., 2022).

Compounding this challenge are internal structural issues. Muhammadiyah's extensive bureaucratic framework, encompassing schools, hospitals, and other social services across thousands of branches, often results in communication gaps and inconsistencies in spiritual programming (Rachmawati et al., 2022). The lack of effective coordination between central leadership and grassroots units hampers the delivery of spiritually engaging programs, leading to uneven member participation and a disconnect between ideological messaging and lived experience (Setiawan et al., 2023). In this context, the spiritual dimension of Progressive Islam, meant to animate Muhammadiyah's rational and reformist orientation, risks being sidelined or diluted.

To address these structural and ideological challenges, scholars and practitioners have turned to Progressive Islam not merely as a doctrinal framework but as a transformative strategy. Progressive Islam emphasizes rationality, contextuality, and ethical engagement with modernity while upholding core Islamic values such as tawhid (divine unity), justice, and social welfare (Qodir et al., 2020; Syafi'i, 2023). It aims to bridge the gap between religious orthodoxy and contemporary societal needs, promoting a model of Islam that is both intellectually rigorous and socially responsive. As such, it serves as both a theological anchor and a mobilizing narrative for renewing Muhammadiyah's grassroots relevance.

Previous studies have highlighted the potential of Progressive Islam to function as a normative and mobilizing force. For instance, Kahfi (2020) and Arifianto (2021) argue that this ideology can reinvigorate community involvement by fostering inclusive, dialogical, and context-sensitive religious practices. These interpretations underscore the importance of aligning Muhammadiyah's intellectual heritage with evolving social dynamics, particularly through grassroots-level adaptations. However, while these contributions are valuable, they often remain at the level of theoretical prescription or organizational policy. Few have examined how Progressive Islam is actualized within everyday spiritual practices at the local level.

Existing literature addressing grassroots spiritual engagement within Muhammadiyah often focuses on institutional dynamics, educational reforms, or high-level ideological debates. For example, Qodir et al. (2020) examine the structural reforms in Muhammadiyah schools, while Nurjaman (2023) explores the organization's political positioning in the democratic era. However, there is limited scholarship on the micro-level practices through which members engage with and embody Progressive Islam in their daily religious life. Ethnographic accounts that delve into the lived experiences of Muhammadiyah members are rare and often overlook the nuanced interplay between ideology, ritual, and community identity.

This lack of micro-level analysis represents a significant research gap. As Geertz (1973) has argued, understanding religious practices requires a "thick description" that captures the meanings and motivations behind communal rituals. Building on this insight, recent ethnographic studies have begun to explore how grassroots religious practices not only reflect but actively shape ideological identities in pluralistic societies (Nisa & Andy, 2024; Yustisia et al., 2023). For Muhammadiyah, such practices may include local religious study circles (*pengajian*), community outreach events, and integrated spiritual forums that simultaneously serve as spaces of education, identity reinforcement, and ideological reproduction. These practices offer critical insight into how the abstract ideals of Progressive Islam are enacted, contested, and reinterpreted in everyday life.

This study aims to bridge the gap between normative conceptualizations of Progressive Islam and its grassroots manifestations by examining spiritual development practices within the Muhammadiyah communities of Bajeng, South Sulawesi. Specifically, the research seeks to (1) classify the typologies of spiritual development practices among Muhammadiyah members in Bajeng as articulations of Progressive Islam; (2) explore the social, symbolic, and ideological dimensions embedded in these practices; and (3) analyze how these spiritual engagements function as sites of articulation between transcendental Islamic values and the contextual needs of the community. Through an ethnographic methodology grounded in participant observation and in-depth interviews, the study provides a contextualized and grounded understanding of how spiritual praxis contributes to the ideological continuity and cultural resilience of Muhammadiyah.

The novelty of this research lies in its interpretive approach to grassroots spiritual practices as "discursive traditions" (Asad, 1986), wherein religious meanings are not passively inherited but actively negotiated through social interaction and ritual performance. This perspective reveals how spiritual engagement in Bajeng is not merely a set of devotional routines but a living tradition that reflects, reproduces, and at times redefines the ideological tenets of Progressive Islam. By examining these practices through the lenses of social construction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and structuration theory (Giddens, 1984), the study elucidates the dynamic interplay between individual agency, communal identity, and institutional structure. In doing so, it contributes to broader discussions on modernity, spirituality, and Islamic reform in Southeast Asia, offering both empirical insight and theoretical enrichment.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design with an interpretive ethnographic approach to examine how spiritual development practices in Muhammadiyah communities in Bajeng articulate the ideology of Progressive Islam. Ethnography, known for its capacity to provide in-depth and contextualized insights into the lived experiences of religious communities, was chosen as the most suitable methodological framework for capturing the symbolic meanings and ritualistic expressions of Islamic praxis (Lukman & Siga, 2024; Suswanta & Setiawan, 2024). Through this immersive approach, the study aims to uncover the ways in which Muhammadiyah adherents construct, enact, and reinterpret their ideological and spiritual commitments in a unique socio-cultural setting.

The ethnographic fieldwork was conducted between December 2023 and December 2024 in Bajeng Sub-District, Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi. The research was conducted in Bajeng sub-district, located in Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi. The selection of this location was informed by three critical considerations: organizational progressiveness, historical significance, and geographical hybridity. Bajeng hosts four active Muhammadiyah branches, an unusual density compared to the normative single-branch structure in most sub-districts, making it an exceptional case for studying grassroots dynamics. Historically, Bajeng represents the oldest Muhammadiyah presence in Gowa, suggesting a deep-rooted and evolving ideological engagement. Its semi-urban setting, situated at the intersection of rural and urban cultures, makes it an exemplary site for examining how Muhammadiyah adapts its spiritual praxis to shifting demographic and cultural landscapes.

The focus of this study centers on spiritual development practices as a site of ideological articulation, specifically how rituals, study forums, and religious gatherings function as mechanisms for embedding and sustaining the values of Progressive Islam. The unit of analysis comprises various forms of organized religious practices such as local study circles (*pengajian*), collective rituals, and community-based *da'wah* forums. These practices serve as the empirical grounds upon which ideological and symbolic meanings are negotiated and reproduced in everyday religious life.

The methodological foundation is rooted in interpretive ethnography, which privileges the native point of view and seeks to understand social reality through the meanings constructed by community members themselves. This approach aligns with Asad's (1986) concept of "discursive tradition," where religious expressions are seen as continuously evolving dialogues between normative values and socio-historical contingencies. Through participant observation and prolonged engagement, the study aims to trace how spiritual practices are not merely reflections of belief but are themselves formative acts that sustain ideological structures. Drawing from Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of social construction and Giddens' (1984) structuration theory, the research explores the interplay between agency and structure in the reproduction of religious identity.

Three categories of informants were included to ensure data richness and triangulation: key informants, main informants, and supporting informants. Key informants comprised Muhammadiyah elders and historical actors involved in the movement's early establishment in Bajeng. Main informants included branch leaders, administrators of Muhammadiyah charitable and educational institutions (AUM), preachers (*mubaligh*), and organizers of regular religious events. Supporting informants consisted of community members and local public figures who regularly engage with Muhammadiyah activities. Informants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling techniques, emphasizing their involvement, knowledge, and social influence concerning the phenomena under investigation. These strategies ensured that the sample was not only diverse but also

contextually relevant to the study's aims.

The data collection process employed three principal methods: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted in both structured and semi-structured formats, allowing for iterative engagements with informants. This approach enabled the researcher to gather reflective narratives and nuanced insights into spiritual practices and their ideological underpinnings. Repeated interactions helped build rapport and yielded richer data over time. Participant observation was carried out during a range of religious activities, including local pengajian sessions, cadre training meetings, informal gatherings, and ritual performances. This immersive strategy offered a first-hand view of the symbolic interactions, emotional tones, and behavioral patterns that characterize Muhammadiyah's spiritual life. Documentation analysis supplemented primary data collection by examining organizational records, event notes, sermon texts, photographs, and social media outputs. These materials served as cultural artifacts that captured the community's discursive and symbolic landscapes.

To ensure methodological robustness, data from these three sources were triangulated, enhancing the credibility and validity of the findings. Triangulation enabled the cross-verification of emerging themes and patterns, minimizing the potential biases associated with any single method. It also provided a holistic portrayal of the community's spiritual and ideological practices, capturing both formal structures and informal dynamics.

Data analysis followed the interactive and cyclical model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), encompassing four interconnected stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the data collection phase, interviews, observations, and documents were systematically gathered based on emergent themes. During data reduction, the researcher categorized and coded data under three broad thematic clusters: typologies of spiritual practice, ideological meanings, and socio-cultural dynamics. These themes were selected based on their alignment with the study's theoretical framework and research questions. The data display phase involved organizing findings into narrative summaries, direct quotations, and categorized tables to aid interpretation and comparison. Finally, in the conclusion drawing stage, empirical findings were analytically linked to the theoretical constructs of Berger's social construction, Giddens' structuration, and Asad's discursive tradition, allowing for a deeper understanding of how grassroots practices reinforce ideological identity.

Ethical considerations played a central role in the research design and execution. Given the sensitivity of religious belief systems and community dynamics, the study was conducted with utmost respect for participants' cultural and spiritual values. Informed consent was obtained from all informants, ensuring that they were fully aware of the study's objectives, procedures, and intended uses of the data (Mapedzahama & Dune, 2017; Canavera et al., 2024). Participants' anonymity and confidentiality were safeguarded, and care was taken to avoid any form of exploitation or misrepresentation. Moreover, the researcher practiced continuous reflexivity, acknowledging how personal identity, background, and positionality might influence the research process (Crawford et al., 2019; Williams, 2016). Building trust and fostering reciprocal relationships with community members were essential strategies for mitigating power imbalances and enhancing the authenticity of the data collected.

Participant observation proved particularly effective in capturing the relational and performative dimensions of spiritual practice. Immersion in the daily religious and social life of the community allowed the researcher to observe not only overt rituals but also subtle cues and informal interactions that shape religious identity (Hair et al., 2022). This method revealed how rituals function as both expressions of faith and vehicles of ideological transmission, fostering communal solidarity and spiritual renewal. It also uncovered the ways in which grassroots spiritual practices adapt to local socio-cultural conditions, balancing doctrinal fidelity with contextual flexibility (Hazim & Fihayati, 2022). Informal conversations, body language, and unspoken norms observed during participant observation enriched the analysis by revealing the tacit dimensions of religious engagement often overlooked in interviews alone.

In sum, this methodological approach—grounded in interpretive ethnography, informed by rigorous data triangulation, and framed by relevant theoretical perspectives—enabled a nuanced exploration of the discursive and practical dimensions of Progressive Islam at the grassroots level. It facilitated a contextualized understanding of how Muhammadiyah adherents in Bajeng enact, embody, and negotiate their religious and ideological commitments through spiritual practices that are both reflective and transformative.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Spirituality as the Soul of the Muhammadiyah Movement: Paradigms and Foundational Beliefs

Within the practical theology of Muhammadiyah, spirituality (*ruhiyah*) holds a central position as the foundational element of holistic, rational, and liberatory religious life. Rather than serving merely as a supplement to the ideological framework of doctrinal purification and social reform, in the context of Progressive Islam, spirituality acts as a cohesive force that integrates reason, faith, and action. This triadic integration forms a dynamic religious consciousness that drives both personal devotion and social activism.

This emphasis emerged strongly during an interview with Firdaus Naba, Vice Chair of PDM Gowa, who noted: "An organization may be structurally sound, but without *pengajian*, it is like a body without a soul. It is merely a skeleton and will collapse without a spirit." This statement reveals more than metaphorical insight; it articulates an ideological affirmation that spiritual development is an intrinsic structure of the Muhammadiyah movement.

Field observations reveal that this belief permeates the collective consciousness of the community. Routine organizational activities, regardless of their scale, are imbued with spiritual dimensions: from beginning sessions with Qur'anic recitation to celebrating Islamic holidays in spiritually reflective ways. Spirituality in Progressive Islam is not viewed as a private or internal pursuit alone, but rather as a shared praxis system. It is through these communal practices that normative Muhammadiyah values such as monotheism (*tauhid*), ritual purification, rational religiosity, and social ethics are cultivated continuously. As Geertz (1973) describes in his notion of "ritual of meaning-making," these practices allow members to articulate their religious identity, reinforce social cohesion, and align personal belief with organizational mission.

Thus, spirituality in Muhammadiyah Bajeng is not ornamental but constitutes a mechanism of ideological sustainability. It bridges transcendental values with socio-political realities, forming the foundation for a range of spiritual practices that are contextually grounded and distinctive.

3.2 Typologies of Spiritual Praxis: Four Articulatory Channels of Progressive Islam

Field data revealed that the spiritual practices of Muhammadiyah members in Bajeng are concentrated within four structured and contextually meaningful channels, each representing a distinctive mode of articulating Progressive Islam.

Pengajian Cabang dan Ranting (Branch and Sub-Branch Gatherings) emerged as the most foundational and adaptable form of spiritual engagement. These forums, held regularly by local Muhammadiyah branches, are sustained even in the absence of physical infrastructure. As noted by the Chair of PCM Maccini Baji, "The most active element is *pengajian*. Even when a branch has no mosque, they will rent a house or use a front yard for the sake of holding it. This is where the soul of the movement resides."

These gatherings act as vital indicators of organizational vitality, providing spaces where doctrinal teachings (particularly *tarjih* interpretations) are internalized, social bonds are fostered, and grassroots *dakwah* flourishes. Consistent attendance is considered a sign of ideological loyalty, forming what leaders describe as a "cultural cadre core." As highlighted in the literature, these types of forums significantly contribute to community consolidation, strengthening both social cohesion and the ideological alignment of members (Mujamil & Fatimah, 2023; Zakaria, 2024).

Pengajian Tarjih (Tarjih-Oriented Study Circles) are strategic forums for fostering rational and textually grounded Islamic understanding. Delivered by figures such as Firdaus Naba and Ustaz Rizal, these sessions delve into jurisprudential topics not just through textual references, but via historical and contextual reasoning. As Firdaus emphasized, "We must understand why we don't perform *qunut*, why we reject *tahlilan*, and why we use *hisab*."

These forums reflect the methodological commitment of Muhammadiyah to rational-legal discourse (*tarjih*), positioning it as both a spiritual practice and a framework for critical thinking. Literature affirms that *tarjih* facilitates religious literacy and encourages members to engage actively and critically with their faith, supporting adaptability in complex social contexts (Khoirudin & Aulassyahied, 2023; Arifin et al., 2024). Through communal reasoning and collective reflection, members reinforce doctrinal loyalty while maintaining openness to contextual reinterpretation.

Pengajian Amal Usaha Muhammadiyah (AUM-Based Religious Gatherings) serve a dual function: ideological institutionalization and character building. In schools such as MI Muhammadiyah Tanabangka and TK Aisiyah, *pengajian* sessions are mandatory for all staff, including state-appointed teachers. Hasra, Chair of Aisiyah Gowa,

stated, "We require all teachers to attend, even ASN, because we're not just after diplomas—we're building the personality of Progressive Islam from the ground up."

Here, spirituality is embedded into the institutional ethos. Teachers are envisioned as spiritual role models and ideological agents, tasked with shaping future generations. Such structured engagement not only transmits doctrinal values but builds a professional culture grounded in religious ethics. Literature confirms the transformative impact of obligatory spiritual practices on institutional culture, particularly when educators internalize and model organizational values (Sofanudin et al., 2021; Sadiyah, 2022).

Pengajian Terpadu dan Hari Bermuhammadiyah (Integrated Gatherings and Muhammadiyah Day) represent large-scale, emotionally resonant forums of collective spiritual reinforcement. These events unite members from multiple branches in shared spiritual reflection. According to the Chair of PCM Limbung, "Muhammadiyah Day is our soul recharge. Everyone gathers, reminds one another, and feels that Muhammadiyah is our home."

These gatherings generate affective solidarity and reaffirm collective identity. Participants experience a sense of unity through symbolic rituals, nostalgic narratives, and communal interactions. They function as both spiritual rejuvenation and ideological consolidation, exemplifying what literature terms "emotional bonding" in religious movements (Kessi et al., 2022; Suhartanto et al., 2019).

3.3 Spirituality as a Mechanism of Ideological Reproduction and Social Cohesion

The final key finding highlights how spiritual practices in Muhammadiyah Bajeng serve as strategic mechanisms for ideological reproduction and community cohesion. Rather than being isolated devotional acts, these practices constitute a complex system of meaning-making and social organization.

At the branch and sub-branch level, spiritual routines act as informal yet powerful tools of cadre formation. Regular participation is interpreted as evidence of ideological commitment. Leaders frequently observed that members who consistently attend pengajian are more resilient in upholding Muhammadiyah values and less susceptible to external ideological influences. As such, these forums become non-formal educational platforms, instilling doctrinal clarity and community discipline through repetition and shared experience (Zakaria, 2024; Kucinskas & Stewart, 2022).

Within AUM institutions, spirituality plays a pivotal role in ideological regulation. Teachers and staff are not mere service providers, but agents of value transmission. Their spiritual engagement is tightly linked to their pedagogical responsibilities, ensuring that educational practices align with organizational mission. This integration produces institutions that are not only academically competent but also morally and ideologically coherent (Jinan et al., 2024; Ibda et al., 2023).

Structurally, integrated forums such as Hari Bermuhammadiyah function as symbolic rituals that glue together disparate elements of the organization. These emotionally charged gatherings convey the Muhammadiyah narrative not only through speeches, but through shared experiences and visual symbolism. They create what Anderson (2006) termed an "imagined community," wherein members perceive themselves as part of a larger, ideologically unified entity.

In summary, spiritual development practices in Muhammadiyah Bajeng transcend personal religiosity. They represent an integrated socio-ideological system that ensures continuity of values, organizational stability, and grassroots vitality. In the framework of Progressive Islam, these practices demonstrate that spirituality is not external to modernity but a dynamic force driving reflective and progressive social transformation.

DISCUSSION

4.1 Spirituality as Discursive Tradition: Grassroots Articulation of Progressive Islam

Talal Asad's (1986) concept of the discursive tradition allows a critical lens through which religious practices can be interpreted not as repetitive rituals but as dynamic spaces of value articulation in specific socio-historical contexts. Religion, in this view, is neither a static inheritance nor a universally fixed doctrine; rather, it evolves through interpretive engagement, institutional practices, and historical negotiation. The spiritual practices observed in Muhammadiyah Bajeng—particularly through pengajian at the branch and tarjih levels—demonstrate such a tradition in action. These gatherings do not merely transmit religious doctrine; they constitute performative spaces where beliefs are actively negotiated, contextualized, and embodied.

The example of Firdaus Naba insisting on rational understanding for ritual differences (e.g., no qunut, use of hisab)

reveals how Islamic teachings are embedded in processes of meaning-making rather than mere transmission of dogma. This aligns with Asad's assertion that discursive traditions are shaped through language, power, and history. In Bajeng, pengajian acts as a discursive field where values such as rationality, monotheism, and social ethics—core elements of Progressive Islam—are cultivated through interactive discourse. These are not top-down doctrines but emergent constructions shaped by community interactions and historical consciousness.

Even within the realm of educational institutions (AUM), these discursive processes persist. The regular engagement of teachers and staff in pengajian is not only a vehicle for compliance but a space where professional identity as educators intersects with spiritual responsibility. Here, ideological authority is negotiated within institutional frameworks, resonating with Asad's insight that religious life is shaped by the interplay between authoritative practices and interpretive agency.

4.2 Spirituality as Social Reality: Identity Construction within the Community

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's (1966) theory of social construction of reality posits that social life is formed through the dialectical process of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. These processes are clearly observable in the spiritual development practices of Muhammadiyah Bajeng. Routine pengajian attendance is a form of externalization where members participate in creating a religious-social structure. As participation becomes institutionalized and normalized, the gatherings transform into an objective social reality—a defining marker of Muhammadiyah identity. Statements such as "good members attend pengajian" reflect this internalization.

The cultural embedding of spiritual routines within Muhammadiyah's institutional life—such as AUM staff feeling a sense of obligation not only due to institutional demands but also internalized identity—is illustrative of how norms transition from external prescriptions to internal convictions. These interactions transform ideology into an embodied social practice. Hari Bermuhammadiyah exemplifies the objectivation process, serving as a ritualized moment where ideological symbols (songs, dress codes, and narratives) consolidate the movement's communal ethos. It constructs a shared reality where the organization is not only an institutional body but a spiritual home.

As Bergerian theory emphasizes, this transformation of ideology into reality relies heavily on repetition, symbolic affirmation, and communal narratives. The findings from Bajeng affirm that spiritual practices within Muhammadiyah are not residual traditions but integral systems of identity formation that contribute to sustained collective consciousness. This mechanism aligns with current scholarship on Islamic movements that views ritual as a vehicle for solidifying group identity and moral order (Abidin et al., 2024).

4.3 Spirituality as Structuration: The Dialectic between Agency and Structure

Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration (1984) provides a powerful framework for interpreting how structure and agency co-constitute each other within religious life. In Muhammadiyah Bajeng, spiritual practices are not imposed by external religious authorities but are dialectically constituted through members' actions.

The process of signification is observed in tarjih pengajian sessions, where rational explanations of religious practice offer members a coherent framework of meaning. These frameworks shape the cognitive maps of participants, enabling them to align their faith with reasoned conviction. The language and logic of "why we do not perform tahlilan" or "why hisab is preferable" create cognitive schemas that function as both interpretive tools and ideological boundaries (Khoirudin & Aulassyahied, 2023).

Domination in this context is not coercive but discursive and institutional. Leadership roles—from branch heads to educators—embody symbolic authority that reinforces ideological direction. The obligation for AUM staff, including government-appointed teachers, to attend pengajian is a case of normative influence underpinned by hegemonic persuasion rather than force. It aligns with Giddens' notion of power as capacity enacted within rules and resources, reinforcing ideological continuity.

Legitimation is constructed through norms such as the expectation to attend spiritual forums, where non-participation may be construed as deviance, and participation as ideological commitment. These norms are internalized not through punishment but through habitual reinforcement, peer affirmation, and symbolic rituals. The frequent organization of community-wide events like Hari Bermuhammadiyah ensures that these norms are periodically reactivated and reaffirmed.

Therefore, the spiritual practices in Bajeng are not merely religious obligations; they are structuration sites where individuals and institutions co-create and reproduce the ideological fabric of Progressive Islam. This mutually

reinforcing dynamic underscores Giddens' insight that social systems are continually reconstructed through the recursive actions of knowledgeable agents.

4.4 Synthesis: Spirituality as the Medium for Ideological Articulation in Progressive Islam

Integrating these theoretical perspectives reveals a multifaceted understanding of spirituality as an ideological infrastructure in Muhammadiyah Bajeng. From Asad's discursive tradition, it becomes evident that spiritual practices are spaces of meaning negotiation and contextual interpretation. From Berger and Luckmann, we see how these practices are embedded within a system of social construction that produces and reinforces identity. From Giddens, it becomes clear how these routines are dialectically structured and structure-making, shaping both individual agency and collective frameworks.

As a discursive tradition, spiritual development functions as a medium for transmitting Progressive Islam values in lived, contextual forms. Practices such as pengajian allow doctrinal ideals to be reinterpreted and re-embodied in response to local realities, aligning with studies that underscore the importance of localized reinterpretation in sustaining progressive Islamic identities (Isdiana et al., 2024).

As a social reality, these practices create meaning systems internalized by members. They establish routine spaces of interaction that consolidate moral communities, validate belief systems, and cultivate communal solidarity. This aligns with contemporary scholarship that emphasizes the affective and symbolic dimensions of ritual in reinforcing collective identity (Fischer & Xygalatas, 2014).

As a structuration process, spirituality serves as both a product and producer of ideological order. The agents—teachers, preachers, branch leaders—interact with institutional norms and symbolic systems to create spaces where faith is continuously redefined and reinforced. This corresponds with findings that emphasize how religious institutions maintain ideological coherence through adaptive yet structurally embedded practices (Steiner et al., 2021).

In this synthesized view, spirituality is no longer a peripheral or ornamental component of Muhammadiyah life in Bajeng. It is a core mechanism through which ideological reproduction, social cohesion, and cultural adaptability converge. This mode of articulation ensures that Progressive Islam is not confined to elite discourses or policy frameworks but is rooted in the everyday practices and lived experiences of ordinary members. The spiritual routines, forums, and institutional rituals observed in Bajeng exemplify how progressive Islamic movements can embed their ideals in practical, affective, and sustainable ways that resonate with the aspirations and realities of local communities.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the spiritual development practices of Muhammadiyah communities in Bajeng are not merely ritual observances, but powerful mechanisms of ideological articulation and social reproduction. Through four key channels—branch-based pengajian, tarjih-oriented forums, institutional religious sessions (AUM), and integrated communal events—Progressive Islam is enacted as a lived and discursive tradition. These practices foster critical theological engagement, collective identity formation, and organizational resilience, while simultaneously translating abstract ideological constructs into everyday communal experiences.

The application of Asad's discursive tradition, Berger and Luckmann's social construction theory, and Giddens' structuration framework offers a robust interpretive lens to understand the layered nature of spiritual praxis. These findings illuminate how Muhammadiyah sustains ideological continuity and grassroots vitality by embedding its progressive Islamic values in both symbolic and structural forms of religious life.

By bridging elite ideological narratives with grassroots religious action, this study contributes to the broader discourse on Islamic movements in Southeast Asia, emphasizing the interplay between spirituality, community, and modernity. Future research could further explore comparative dynamics across different Muhammadiyah regions, or examine how digital platforms are reshaping spiritual expression and ideological dissemination within contemporary Islamic activism.

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