



***Tablighi Jamaat's* Communication Strategies in Overcoming Hate Speech: Impact and Implication Analysis**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the communication strategies implemented by Jamaat Tabligh in dealing with hate speech directed at their community. Using a qualitative approach and critical discourse analysis, this study examined how Jamaat Tabligh as a transnational da'wah movement develops communication mechanisms to address negative stereotypes, disinformation, and hate speech they face in the digital era. The results showed that Jamaat Tabligh applies several key communication strategies, including the application of the tabayyun (clarification), non-confrontational communication, a dialogical approach, and selective use of social media. The implications of these strategies are the form of communal resilience to hate speech, increased internal group cohesion, and the development of a positive image in the general public. This study contributes to a broader understanding of how religious groups can develop effective communication mechanisms to address discursive challenges in the contemporary information landscape.

Keywords: *Tablighi Jamaat, hate speech, communication strategies, preaching, social media, communal resilience*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the digital era characterized by rapid exchange of information, religious groups are often the target of hate speech, disinformation, and negative stereotypes. *Tablighi Jamaat*, as one of the largest transnational da'wah movements in the world, is not immune to these challenges. The movement, founded by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas in 1926 in India, has spread to various countries, including Indonesia, and often faces various forms of hate speech, both in public spaces and on social media (Metcalf, 2022).

This study attempts to identify and analyze communication strategies developed by *Tablighi Jamaat* in dealing with hate speech. Specifically, this study aims to identify the forms of hate speech faced by *Tablighi Jamaat*, analyze communication strategies developed to respond to hate speech, and evaluate the impact and implications of the strategies, both for the group and for the wider community.

This study is important considering the increasing social and religious polarization in Indonesia, as well as the increasing cases of hate speech directed at religious groups (Mietzner & Muhtadi, 2023). By understanding *Tablighi Jamaat's* communication strategies in dealing with hate speech, this study is expected to provide insight into how religious groups can build resilience to discursive challenges in contemporary society.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Tablighi Jamaat*: History and Characteristics

Tablighi Jamaat is a transnational da'wah movement founded by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas in 1926 in Mewat, India. The movement emphasizes the purification of faith and religious practice among Muslims, with a da'wah method known as *khuruj* or going out to preach for a certain period of time (Ali, 2021). Some of the main characteristics of *Tablighi Jamaat* identified in the literature include a focus on grassroots da'wah, an emphasis on individual change rather than structural change, and a rejection of formal political participation (Noor, 2022).

Previous studies on *Tablighi Jamaat* have mostly focused on theological aspects, ritualistic practices, and transnational dissemination patterns (Masud, 2020; Reetz, 2023). However, there is still a gap in research



on how *Tablighi Jamaat* builds communication strategies, especially in dealing with discursive challenges such as hate speech.

2.2 Hate Speech and Religious Groups

Hate speech against religious groups has become a global concern, especially with the increasing use of social media as a communication platform (Gagliardone et al., 2022). Brown (2023) defined hate speech as “communication that denigrates an individual or group based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or disability”. In the context of religious groups, hate speech often occurs in the form of negative stereotypes, the spread of misinformation about religious practices, and calls for discrimination or violence (Parekh, 2021).

Research by Ahmad & Rahman (2023) showed that minority religious groups or those with practices that differ from the mainstream are often the target of hate speech. In the Indonesian context, *Tablighi Jamaat* often faces hate speech related to stereotypes about their *khuruj* practices and their distinctive physical appearance, including wearing robes and growing beards (Hasani, 2022).

2.3 Communication Strategies in Dealing with Hate Speech

The literature on communication strategies in dealing with hate speech identifies several common approaches applied by targeted groups, including counter-speech (refuting with arguments), reclaiming derogatory terms, mobilizing support, and using legal channels (Benesch, 2021).

In the context of religious groups, some specific strategies that have been identified in previous research include: 1) Increasing media literacy among members (Ibrahim, 2022); 2) Development of counter-narratives that promote tolerance (Khan & Ahmed, 2023); 3) Use of digital platforms to disseminate accurate information about beliefs and practices (Nisa, 2021); and 4) Dialogical approach with groups outside the community (Saeed, 2022).

However, there is still a gap in understanding how these strategies are applied in the specific context of *Tablighi Jamaat*, especially considering the characteristics of their communication which tends to be traditional and low-profile.

3. METHODS

This study used a qualitative approach with the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) method to examine the communication strategies of *Tablighi Jamaat* in dealing with hate speech. Data were collected through:

1. In-depth interviews: Conducted with 13 *Tablighi Jamaat* respondents in five sub-districts in Aceh Besar Regency, including *Amir* (leaders) members and community leaders. The interviews focused on their experiences dealing with hate speech and the communication strategies they implemented.
2. Document analysis: Includes bulletins, pamphlets, and *Tablighi Jamaat* preaching materials that discuss responses to criticism and hate speech.
3. Participatory observation: Researchers participated in *Tablighi Jamaat* activities, including *ijtima* (large meetings), *ta'lim* (religious studies), and *jaulah* (door-to-door visits) to observe how *Tablighi Jamaat* members discussed and responded to hate speech.
4. Social media analysis: Researchers analyzed posts on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube containing hate speech against *Tablighi Jamaat*, as well as responses from *Tablighi Jamaat* members to these posts.

Data were analyzed using Fairclough's (2023) critical discourse analysis framework, which allows researchers to examine texts (the content of hate speech and responses to it), discursive practices (how discourse is produced and consumed), and social practices (the broader socio-political context). Data triangulation was conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings.



4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Forms of Hate Speech against *Tablighi Jamaat*

Analysis of social media posts and interviews with *Tablighi Jamaat* members identified several common forms of hate speech encountered:

a. Stereotypes and Negative Labeling

Tablighi Jamaat members often face harmful stereotypes and negative labeling in public discourse. They are frequently branded as “radicals” or “fundamentalists,” which oversimplifies and misrepresents their religious motivations and practices. Additionally, there are superficial judgments about their cleanliness and physical appearance, which further reinforce misguided perceptions.

b. Disinformation about Teachings and Practices

The group is also subject to misinformation and disinformation about its teachings and practices. Claims that members abandon their families due to the practice of *khuruj*—a temporary religious journey—are often exaggerated or distorted. There are also unfounded allegations linking *Tablighi Jamaat* to extremist organizations, despite the group’s apolitical and non-violent stance. Their theological teachings are frequently misrepresented, with some narratives mischaracterizing their rituals and worship in misleading ways.

c. Speech that Encourages Discrimination

Harmful speech often encourages discrimination against *Tablighi Jamaat* members. In some cases, there are calls to reject their presence in local mosques and to boycott businesses operated by members of the group. This social ostracism extends to pressuring community leaders to exclude them from communal activities, reinforcing a sense of isolation and marginalization.

d. Threats and Intimidation

In more severe cases, members face threats and intimidation, particularly during public preaching or outreach activities. Physical threats have been reported, and online harassment is a growing concern. Members active on social media often face intimidation, and some have even experienced doxxing, the malicious disclosure of personal information, which puts their safety and privacy at serious risk.

This finding is in line with Rahman’s (2023) study which shows that religious groups with different appearances and practices from the mainstream are often the target of stereotype-based hate speech and disinformation.

4.2 *Tablighi Jamaat*’s Communication Strategies in Dealing with Hate Speech

Based on data analysis, this study identified four main communication strategies implemented by *Tablighi Jamaat* in dealing with hate speech:

a. Application of the *Tabayyun* (Clarification) Principle

Tablighi Jamaat emphasizes the importance of *tabayyun* or clarification as the first response to hate speech. This strategy includes verifying the source of information before responding, emphasis on conveying accurate information about their teachings and practices, the use of arguments from religious sources to explain often misunderstood practices.

As explained by an amir in Montasik District:

“We do not rush to respond to hate speech. We always verify the source, context, and content first. Then we prepare a response based on the Quran, hadith, and books of authoritative scholars.”

This strategy is in line with Khan’s (2022) findings which show that a clarification-based approach can help reduce the negative impact of disinformation on religious groups.

b. Non-confrontational Communication

Tablighi Jamaat applies a non-confrontational communication approach characterized by avoidance of public debate that could increase tensions, emphasis on morals (ethics) in responding to criticism and hate speech, and the use of gentle language and avoid counterattacks.



This approach is reflected in the statement of a member in Montasik District:

“We are taught not to repay evil with evil. When someone attacks us on social media, we choose not to engage in long debates. Instead, we focus on increasing our own good deeds and worship.”

This non-confrontational strategy is consistent with the principles of *Tabligh Jamaah’s da’wah* which emphasizes *hikmah* (wisdom) and *mau’izhah hasanah* (good advice) as explained by Ali (2021).

c. Dialogic Approach

Despite their tendency to avoid confrontation, *Tablighi Jamaat* is not entirely passive in dealing with hate speech. They employ a dialogical approach that includes holding an open forum to answer questions and criticism, inviting non-*Tablighi Jamaat* public figures and religious leaders to their activities, collaborating with mainstream religious organizations in social activities.

An *amir* in Sukamakmur District explained:

“We hold regular open forums where anyone can come and ask questions about our practices. We also actively invite scholars from various backgrounds to our events. This helps reduce misunderstandings and stereotypes.”

This dialogical approach is in line with Saeed’s (2022) findings which show that active engagement with the wider community can help reduce prejudice and hate speech against minority religious groups.

d. Selective Use of Social Media

Although *Tablighi Jamaat* is traditionally known to not rely too much on modern technology in its *da’wah*, this study found selective use of social media as a strategy to address hate speech:

1. Formation of a media team that manages official accounts to disseminate accurate information
2. Member training in responsible use of social media
3. Documentation of positive activities and uploading them to online platforms

As expressed by a member in Peukan Bada sub-district:

“We realize that many misconceptions about Tablighi Jamaat come from social media. Therefore, we have started a special team tasked with providing accurate information about our activities and teachings on digital platforms. However, we remain selective and careful.”

This strategy reflects an adaptation to contemporary communication realities, but remains within the boundaries of their traditional *da’wah* principles. This is in line with Nisa’s (2021) findings on how traditional religious groups adapt to the digital media landscape.

4.3 Impact and Implications of Communication Strategies

This study identified several impacts and implications of the communication strategies implemented by *Tablighi Jamaat* in dealing with hate speech. *Tablighi Jamaat’s* communication strategies have contributed to the formation of communal resilience against hate speech, which is characterized by the ability of members to remain calm and not be provoked by hate speech, the development of internal support mechanisms for targeted members, and strengthening group identity in the face of external pressures.

This is reflected in the statement of a member in Kuta Malacca:

“The teachings of patience and not repaying evil with evil make us stronger in the face of hate speech. We strengthen each other and remind each other that this is a test of faith.”

This finding is in line with the concept of “communal resilience” developed by Husain (2023), which suggests that a non-confrontational approach can increase the internal cohesion and psychological resilience of groups targeted by hate speech.

4.4 Changes in Public Perception

Tablighi Jamaat’s communication strategies have also had an impact on changing public perception, although this process is slow. The strategies include increasing public understanding of the teachings and practices of *Tablighi Jamaat*, reducing negative stereotypes in local communities where *Tablighi Jamaat* is active, forming alliances with mainstream religious groups.



A non-*Tablighi Jamaat* community leader interviewed in this study stated:

“I used to have a lot of prejudices about Tablighi Jamaat. But after attending their open forum and seeing firsthand the social activities they do, my views changed. They are very open to dialogue.”

This finding is consistent with Hamid’s (2022) research which shows that effective communication strategies can change public perceptions of religious groups that are often misunderstood.

4.5 Adaptation without Compromise Principles

Interestingly, the study found that *Tablighi Jamaat* was able to adapt to contemporary communication challenges without compromising their core principles by using of digital media while maintaining the emphasis on face-to-face preaching, engaging with the wider community without changing core ritualistic practices, responding to criticism without compromising theological teaching

A senior *amir* explained:

“We still adhere to the six principles (traits) taught by our founder. However, we also understand that the way we convey messages must be adjusted to the conditions of the times. Social media is today's reality, so we use it wisely.” (Informant 5)

These findings broaden the understanding of how traditional religious groups can adapt to contemporary communication challenges without losing their core identity, as discussed in Ahmad’s (2023) study.

4.6 Ongoing Challenges

Although *Tablighi Jamaat*’s communication strategies have shown some effectiveness, the study also identified several ongoing challenges, such as generation gap in response to hate speech (younger members tend to be more responsive), limited resources to manage digital communications comprehensively, and variations in approaches between *Tablighi Jamaat* communities in various regions

As acknowledged by an *amir* in Darul Iman District:

“We are still in the learning process. There are internal differences of opinion about how much we should engage with social media and how to respond to online criticism. Our younger generation is more active on digital platforms, while the older generation is more focused on the traditional approach.”

This challenge shows that *Tablighi Jamaat*’s communication strategies in dealing with hate speech is still in the process of evolution and adaptation.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study revealed that *Tablighi Jamaat* has developed complex and diverse communication strategies in dealing with hate speech, which include the application of the principle of *tabayyun*, non-confrontational communication, dialogical approaches, and selective use of social media. These strategies have contributed to the formation of communal resilience, changing public perceptions, and adapting to contemporary communication challenges without compromising core principles.

The findings of this study suggested that the *Tablighi Jamaat*’s communication approach to dealing with hate speech reflects their *da’wah* philosophy that emphasizes wisdom, patience, and self-improvement rather than direct confrontation. This approach, while different from the more aggressive counter-speech strategies often advocated in the literature, has proven effective in the specific context of the *Tablighi Jamaat*.

This study also revealed that *Tablighi Jamaat* is undergoing a process of adaptation to the realities of digital communication without sacrificing their traditional principles, which demonstrates the ability of religious groups to develop contextual responses to contemporary discursive challenges.

Based on the research findings, several recommendations can be put forward to help *Tablighi Jamaat* navigate and respond to hate speech more effectively. First, the group would benefit from developing more systematic communication guidelines for members, especially in responding to public criticism and misinformation. Addressing internal communication issues is also crucial, ensuring consistent and unified messaging. In addition, expanding media literacy training—particularly for senior members—can empower them to engage more effectively with digital platforms and counter online hate with clarity and composure.



Other religious organizations can learn from *Tablighi Jamaat's* non-confrontational and dialogue-based approach in handling public scrutiny and hate speech. By adopting similar strategies, they can foster more peaceful interactions and build resilience within their communities. It is also recommended that these groups blend traditional methods of communication with a selective and thoughtful adaptation to digital media, ensuring their values are preserved while still reaching broader audiences.

Policy makers are encouraged to involve religious groups, including *Tablighi Jamaat*, in the formulation of counter-hate speech strategies. Their grassroots experiences and community insights are valuable in shaping effective and inclusive policies. Supporting interfaith and intergroup dialogue initiatives is also essential to break down harmful stereotypes and reduce prejudice. Furthermore, the development of media literacy programs should be sensitive to the cultural and religious values of various communities, allowing for greater acceptance and impact.

Future research should explore comparative studies on how different religious groups communicate in the face of hate speech. It would also be valuable to examine the long-term effects of non-confrontational strategies in reducing the spread and impact of hate speech. Additionally, researchers should investigate the role of younger generations within traditional religious movements in shaping more adaptive and effective communication strategies, especially in today's digital era.

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