
Lifestyle Differences of Muhammadiyah and NU Adolescents in Semarang: A Social Interpretation toward SDGs

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Abstract

Objective: This study explores the social interpretation of lifestyle differences between Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) adolescents in Semarang City within the framework of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). **Theoretical framework:** The theoretical framework is grounded in social construction theory and religious sociology, examining how social and religious identities shape behavior. **Literature review:** The literature review emphasizes previous research on Islamic youth subcultures, lifestyle studies, and the role of religious institutions in shaping adolescent identity. **Methods:** This study employs a qualitative method using a phenomenological approach to deeply understand the lived experiences and perceptions of youth from both Muhammadiyah and NU backgrounds. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with members of both youth communities and participant observation. The study also includes an analysis of a recent conflict arising from differing views on worship practices. **Results:** The findings reveal two main points. First, ideological differences have led to disagreements in social interpretations of worship behavior. Second, lifestyle disparities emerge in clothing preferences and consumption patterns, reflecting deeper cultural and theological differences. These differences pose communication barriers between the two communities. However, the research also finds that mosque-based youth programs can serve as a communication bridge, promoting synergy and mutual understanding through structured, one-way interpretation communication models. **Implications:** The implications of this research highlight the need for inclusive religious education models and inter-community dialogue as tools to support SDG values such as tolerance, equality, and social harmony. **Novelty:** The novelty of the study lies in its contextual focus on youth identity formation within religious organizations and its integration of the SDGs perspective into the analysis of intra-religious diversity in urban Islamic settings.

Keywords: social interpretation, lifestyle, adolescents, muhammadiyah and nahdlatul ulama, sdgs.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a multicultural country with a diverse religious system. This is evidenced by the Pancasila Ideology of the five principles that uphold the value of diversity or pluralism [1]. Indonesia is a large and very religious nation in obeying religious teachings [2]. However, Indonesia is not a religious (non-theocratic) country. The state of Indonesia is based on Pancasila, which comes from the traditional values of the Indonesian people. Pancasila borrows the term from Abdullah An-Naim, the Golden Rule (Basic Principle), which has universal values across cultures, religions, and human rights. The Golden Rule, which is the foundation of ethics taught in every religion, is strong in overcoming violent behavior [3].

The majority of Indonesia's population is Muslim, although the Muslims who come to the cultural traders are of Hindu and Buddhist heritage, such as Borobudur and Prambanan Temples. The strong relationship between religion and culture makes religions in Indonesia, including Islam, tend to be syncretic [4]. Sociologically, syncretism does not always have a negative meaning [5]. Pesantren, a typical Indonesian educational institution, is a product of Javanese Islamic syncretism. The influence of Java in Islam is also seen in religious and architectural celebrations [6].

The city of Semarang is a multicultural city that is a space for the flourishing of various religious expressions, including those from two major Islamic organizations in Indonesia, namely Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). The two communities not only exist as religious institutions, but also form a base of youth communities that are active in mosques, schools, and social environments. The ideological diversity offered by each community shapes different religious ways and lifestyles among adolescents [7].

These differences in religious understanding, despite being on the same spectrum of Islam, often cause tensions that arise in the form of debates, even minor social conflicts between mosque youth [8]. This can be seen from the way of worship, the way of dressing, the style of communication, and the consumption practices that are the symbols of the identity of each group [9]. Disputes between societies often arise when these symbols conflict, not understood within the framework of diversity of interpretations [10].

Thus, it is necessary to have a deep understanding of how this adolescent lifestyle is a representation of religious meaning [11]. This research is important to examine how the two youth communities articulate their Islamic identity in daily life through a phenomenological approach [12]. By understanding the differences in religious lifestyles from large Muslim communities, it is possible to see the dynamics of the religious diversity of adolescents in the context of Indonesian Islamic pluralism [13]. Culture is a system of meaning, and religious lifestyle is a symbol of the belief system that is lived. Therefore, the small conflicts that arise are not only technical differences, but differences in the framework of meaning built by each group [14].

Tolerance is a way to have differences of opinion, attitude, and lifestyle without rejecting and opposing differences of opinion and respecting differences as part of social and cultural wealth [15]. However, this moderate attitude is also important in the face of the challenges of globalization and increased intercultural interaction, where openness to diverse views and lifestyles is essential to creating peace and social stability [16]. The difference in previous research was that it only discussed the differences in social interaction between the two mosque youth communities. For example, it was shown that the interaction was analyzed, and then problems were found in the interaction between the two large communities [17]. Lifestyle behavior, as studied in this study, is interpreted as differences in thinking and

ideology. Problems based on the indicators studied are indicators of worship behavior and lifestyle, based on the interpretation of the mosque youth community. Critically, this study examines the worship behavior and lifestyle of the mosque youth community [18].

Indonesia, a nation deeply rooted in religious pluralism, continues to witness the dynamic interplay between its major Islamic organizations—Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). This interplay is especially visible among adolescents who grow up under the ideological influence of these groups, shaping not only their religious practices but also their social behavior and lifestyle. In Semarang City, where multicultural and religious expressions flourish, the contrast between Muhammadiyah and NU youth becomes a critical case for understanding the broader implications of religious diversity in shaping social identity and intergroup relations [19].

This research is important as it addresses the growing concern over ideological polarization at the community level, particularly among youth, and how this divergence impacts everyday practices such as worship, dress codes, communication, and consumption patterns. By exploring how these lifestyles are socially constructed through the lens of Peter L. Berger's phenomenological theory (externalization, objectification, internalization), the study provides a deep sociological understanding of intra-Islamic diversity. What sets this study apart is its integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework, particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) into the analysis of religious lifestyle. This novel perspective underscores that fostering religious tolerance, inclusivity, and effective inter-community communication among youth is not merely a sociocultural endeavor but a global developmental imperative [20].

Unlike previous studies that have narrowly focused on the social interaction between mosque youth, this research goes further by interpreting lifestyle as a symbolic representation of religious meaning. It investigates how theological narratives are embodied in daily choices and how these interpretations potentially lead to friction or synergy between communities. The novelty of the study lies in proposing a synergy communication model through mosque-based youth forums to bridge ideological differences. This model offers a practical solution for nurturing coexistence and peace, core values embedded in the SDGs within the context of Indonesia's richly plural Islamic society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of social construction provides a theoretical lens to analyze how religious behaviors and lifestyles among youth are not naturally given but are shaped through processes of externalization, objectification, and internalization, as proposed by Peter L. Berger. Religion, in this view, is a powerful mechanism of legitimizing social reality through sacred meanings. In the context of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) youth in Semarang City, differences in religious interpretations—ranging from worship practices to clothing styles and food consumption are manifestations of socially constructed identities, deeply embedded in institutional and cultural settings.

Lifestyle, according to Pierre Bourdieu, is an expression of habitus and capital, particularly cultural and symbolic capital. It reflects not only personal choice but also structural influences such as community values, family traditions, and religious education. In Indonesia's urban Islamic settings, youth lifestyle often becomes a marker of organizational identity, which may lead to miscommunication or even social friction. Prior studies on Islamic youth have primarily explored interaction

patterns and organizational loyalty, but fewer have examined lifestyle as a representation of ideological and theological interpretation [20].

This study also aligns with the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in promoting Quality Education (Goal 4), Reduced Inequalities (Goal 10), and Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (Goal 16). By exploring the symbolic meaning behind differing lifestyles, the study offers insights into how education, social inclusion, and intergroup understanding can be strengthened in diverse religious settings. It suggests that inclusive and dialogical religious education may serve as a tool to bridge ideological gaps between youth communities. Ultimately, this literature foundation enables a nuanced understanding of how religion, culture, and youth identity intersect in contemporary Indonesia, while proposing culturally contextual strategies to foster harmony in alignment with the SDGs [21].

Social Construction

Understanding how social reality is shaped intersubjectively. Berger views that social reality is not objective or fixed, but rather is formed through a dialectical process between the individual and society that takes place continuously through three main stages: externalization, objectification, and internalization. In the externalization stage, individuals express themselves in the social world through actions, language, symbols, and institutions. This process is the creation of reality by social subjects. Then, in the objectification stage, the results of externalization become structures that appear objective outside the individual, such as norms, values, and institutions. This stage is important because it forms a social world that appears to stand on its own, regardless of its former state. Finally, through the process of internalization, individuals accept and internalize these social structures as part of their natural reality and use them to form identities and perspectives on the world [22].

This concept shows that society is a product of man, but society also forms a complex reciprocal relationship. In the context of religion, Berger. In *The Sacred Canopy*, he explains that religion is one of the most powerful mechanisms of objectification. It provides a framework of legitimacy that encapsulates social reality with transcendent meanings, thereby reinforcing social stability and collective identity [23].

Lifestyle

The concept of lifestyle is one of the important constructs in social and cultural sciences to understand the way individuals and groups form identities, behave, and interact with the social environment. In general, lifestyle is understood as an individual's pattern of habits, values, and choices that are reflected in daily activities, consumption, and symbolic preferences [24].

According to Pierre Bourdieu, lifestyle is an expression of a person's habitus and capital, especially cultural capital and economic capital. In this framework, lifestyle is not just an individual choice, but rather the result of a social structure transformed in everyday social practice. Lifestyle becomes a way to mark social class differences and show one's position in the social structure. For example, preferences for the type of food, the way of dressing, or participation in religious and community activities all reflect forms of discrimination that assert social and cultural identity [25].

Table 1. Muhammadiyah and NU Mosque Youth Informant in Semarang City

Nama	Community	Age
Haidar	Muhammadiyah	14 year
Izal	NU	14 year
Aqlul	Muhammadiyah	15 year
Kevin	NU	16 year

Meanwhile, in popular culture studies, it is emphasized that lifestyles in the modern and postmodern eras are influenced by consumerism and the symbolization of meaning. Here, the lifestyle not only reflects the social structure, but also becomes a field of creativity and the search for meaning by individuals. This opens up space for individual subjectivity and agency to design self-image according to the values they consider important [26].

METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out using a qualitative approach and a phenomenological design. According to Husserl, phenomenological researchers try to find out about essential things, invariant structures (essences), or the basic meaning of experience, and emphasize the intensity of consciousness. Experience consists of things that arise from outside and things that exist in everyone's consciousness based on memory and meaning. The criteria for selecting informants are based on the background of a large and well-known Muslim community. The informants in this study were four people who were referred, namely mosque teenagers, parents, and teachers [27].

This research is a field exploration stage carried out through interviews and observation techniques. This research was conducted in Bangetayu, Semarang City. The research data were collected using interviews, documentation, and direct observation in the field to obtain data on differences in worship behavior and lifestyle. The way of dressing and communicating between the two mosque youth communities was carried out with in-depth interviews and documentation. Data analysis in qualitative research includes drawing conclusions or verification. Analysis of differences in mosque adolescents to understand differences in religious behavior and lifestyle of adolescents, including how to dress and consumption behavior. Reduction and selection of data that is appropriate by summarizing, looking for themes and patterns to sharpen the data and be directed. Verify data review by using data triangulation, comparing, and examining data [28].

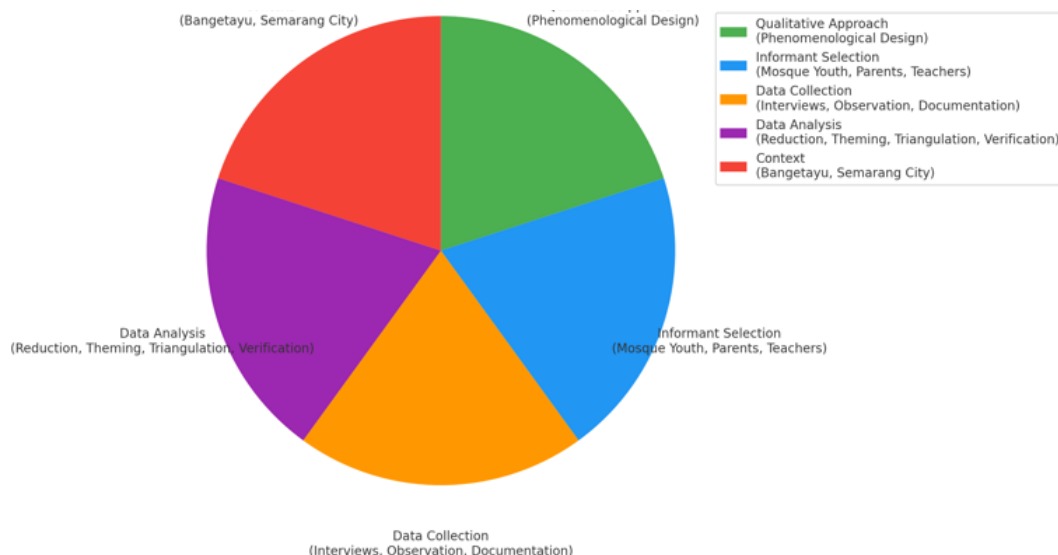


Figure 1. Research Methodology Framework

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Differences in Social Interpretation of Worship Behavior of Muhammadiyah and NU Youth

Differences of views are bound to occur in every organization because interacting is a natural thing. According to the phenomenological theory initiated by Peter L Berger, there are three important elements to see the youth of Muhammadiyah and NU in interpreting the differences in social, behavioral, and lifestyle interpretations. The three important elements are externalization, objectivity, and internalization, each of which explains why there can be differences in social interpretations between the two organizations, namely Islam [29].

The elemental process begins with the externalization of the recognition process, which is better known as the interpretation approach to things that are considered right and wrong, and begins to be applied in daily life behavior. The second objective element process is where individuals in the mosque youth community begin to understand and behave according to the teachings of each institutionalized community. In the process of the third element, the individual in the group begins to internalize and become part of the group, which is institutionalized into something true according to the organization [30].

Construction of the interpretation of things that are considered right and wrong through daily life behaviors. Findings that are in line with previous findings by externalization are a factor in shaping the mindset of the mosque community regarding the problem of weaknesses in the aspects of religiosity of the community, objectivity, namely the understanding carried out by the young mosque community towards the community in the form of thinking about all forms or activities. Internalization is where the two youth communities of the Muhammadiyah mosque and NU interpret social interaction according to mutually agreed-upon norms [31].

This statement is in line with previous findings that behavior is motivated by clashes between Muslim organizations in carrying out religious life due to differences in carrying out religious activities. Differences in construction resulted in differences in interpretation, although this was due to the correct understanding according to each religious organization. In this way, social behaviors built through three elements can be constructed according to the interpretation of each organization. However, there is a

difference between the Muhammadiyah and NU organizations through the process of social interpretation, by the truth of each individual and the actual values of the teachings taught by the organization [32].

Differences in social interpretation behavior occur in worship behavior; This is related to the problem of Muhammadiyah Youth. In interpreting through the process of learning Fiqh, they study with teachers or ustadz with a Muhammadiyah background. Ever since entering elementary school, parents have directed them to go to Muhammadiyah Elementary School, with Muhammadiyah youth living in the environment and education of Muhammadiyah [33]. An informant stated that going to SD Muhammadiyah and studying with ustadz from Muhammadiyah, so that the knowledge of Fiqh obtained from the Science of Fiqh is understood and believed as the truth by Muhammadiyah, as stated as follows:

"I got it from Pondok MBS (Pondok Pesantren) Jogja. Previously, I went to school and TPQ. In addition, I also got it from my parents and Fiqh teachers. I also studied at a school based at NU. However, when I entered elementary and junior high school, I entered high school at Pondok Muhammadiyah (Interview with Haidar, September 2, 2024).

Differences in interpretation in carrying out worship behavior and lifestyle also occur in findings that are in line with previous findings, which stated that differences in religious organizations with the meaning or interpretation of worship result in problems in the form of views between religious organizations [34]. This difference occurs in worship behavior related to the use of Bismillah hard and gently.

The statement illustrates that the process of externalization in Muhammadiyah youth is obtained by learning from teachers or ustadz with a Muhammadiyah background. By itself, the science of Fiqh that is used as a reference is what is used by Muhammadiyah. In the process of internalization, Muhammadiyah youth admitted that the science of Fiqh taught through the Muhammadiyah community is the science of Fiqh that has been used as a reference in daily life [35].

In the use of references, what Muhammadiyah decided was based on the decision of the Tarjih Council. Therefore, be confident and firm in your views. In contrast to the informant, whose mother is from the NU family and her father is from the Muhammadiyah family. According to him, in gaining knowledge, according to his experience, he not only learns from teachers or *kiai* with a NU background but also from teachers or *kiai* with a Muhammadiyah background. According to him, knowledge about Fiqh does not have to be obtained from a particular group of teachers or scholars (*kiai*); it can also be obtained from other groups. According to him, so far, they have not only learned or learned from NU *kiai* but also from Muhammadiyah *kiai*, as listed as follows:

"My mother, because of the big family of the NU mother, the big family of the father of Muhammadiyah. Abandoned by my father at the age of 5 (Tahlil Maulidan, etc.) The pluralism between the friction between Muhammadiyah and NU organizations is not very strong. In Pekalongan, there are multiple figures such as Habib Lutfi. (Courtesy of Ben Affleck on Friday morning). Every Friday night in Habib, there is a group of NU children (Arodoh Mosque). Acquire Fiqh knowledge from madrassas and parents. Sources of Fiqh: various sources, but one source was when I was in elementary school. The first time I gained knowledge of Fiqh was when Muhammadiyah had a NU background. After that, I studied at Muhammadiyah" (Interview with Izal, September 3, 2024)

As mentioned, what the informant experiences shows that the role of family or parents is very influential in directing and educating their children in choosing teachers or scholars (*Kiai*). When the family comes from NU and Muhammadiyah, it is not necessary to go to NU or Muhammadiyah schools. Schools in the NU or Muhammadiyah circle are the same. The following process enters the externalization stage after NU adolescents

acquire Fiqh knowledge from teachers or kyai with a NU background. The understanding and attitude towards Fiqh knowledge obtained in the process of internalization, believe that the knowledge of Fiqh conveyed by teachers and scholars (*kyai*) is accurate and used as a guideline in daily life, especially in worship. Teachers and scholars (*kyai*) have deep knowledge and understanding of Fiqh with various references, so that what is taught is indeed the truth that must be believed and practiced in daily life, as stated [36].

The Difference in The Lifestyle of Muhammadiyah and NU Teenagers

The difference in the lifestyle of Muhammadiyah and NU teenagers. The differences in the lifestyle of Muhammadiyah and NU adolescents in worship behavior are related to the way of dressing, or the difference in clothing in worship and consumption behavior in daily life. Muhammadiyah youth get the right idea about dressing for the environment in Muhammadiyah. The lifestyle in the environment and what education is taught by teachers or ustadz is an example in worship, and there is no prohibition on wearing certain clothes as long as they cover the aura that is understood and believed to be the truth by Muhammadiyah, as conveyed by Aqlul:

"I know that in Muhammadiyah, you are allowed to wear sarongs, pants, robes, and peci. I prefer cocoa shirts and pants because they are easy to wear, and the ulama wear them, and then I wear them, even though Muhammadiyah is synonymous with wearing pants, but that's what outsiders think" (Interview with Aqlul, September 2, 2024).

The findings are in line with the problem of distinguishing identity from the way of dressing and thinking behaviors because they have different meanings from the healthy and correct values of each Muslim youth community [37]. The statement illustrates that the process of externalization in Muhammadiyah youth is obtained by learning from teachers or ustadz with a Muhammadiyah background; Naturally, the lifestyle of science used as a reference is used as a reference by Muhammadiyah. In the process of internalization, Muhammadiyah youth admitted that the lifestyle of how to dress was taught through Muhammadiyah, starting from how to dress to the ustad; Therefore, they feel confident and steady in sight.

In contrast to the informant, whose mother is from the NU family and her father is from the Muhammadiyah family. According to him, in terms of lifestyle, NU tends to wear sarongs and cocoa shirts. However, it is not an obligation because of the community's assumptions. Wearing a sarong because mosque scholars (*kyai*) or imams always wear a sarong when praying. According to him, so far, they have not only seen or heard from NU scholars (*kyai*) but also seen the congregation in the mosque, as mentioned as follows:

"I wear cocoa peci clothes and sarongs at the NU kyai mosque, and the congregation wears sarongs. It is not mandatory to wear sarongs, but when praying in the mosque, I am always reprimanded if I wear pants. Why don't I wear sarongs?" (Interview with Izal, September 3, 2024).

Informants, as mentioned above, show that the role of the environment and family is very influential in directing the way a person or ulama (*kyai*) dresses. The next process enters the externalization stage after NU teenagers get a perspective of dressing through ulama (*kyai*) and congregations in mosques identical to sarongs to the way of dressing obtained in the internalization process; They believe that the way of dressing exemplified by their congregation and scholars (*kyai*) is something that is believed to be accurate and used as a guideline in daily life, especially in worship. They state that their scholars (*kyai*) have knowledge and understanding of how to dress in various references, so that what is taught is indeed the truth that must be believed and practiced in daily life, as stated [38].

In the consumption behavior of the Muhammadiyah and NU communities, there are differences in procedures. However, this difference leads to conflict because of differences in interpretation in understanding consumption behavior, as stated by Haidar:

"The Muhammadiyah community does not have a meal event with the intention of receiving blessings from the dead. It is better to give alms directly to those in need or consume healthy food" (Interview with Haidar, September 2, 2024).

In contrast to the NU community, which performs consumption procedures with eating events, commonly called feasts, as stated by Izal:

"If in our village, after tahlil, there must be a blessing or nasi ambeng. This has become a tradition, not just about being full, but barokah from prayer together" (Interview with Izal, September 3, 2024).

The trigger for this conflict is motivated by the interpretation of the lifestyle behavior between communities, as stated by Aqlul:

"I don't participate in slametan or eat from tahlilan because, according to our study, it is not taught by the Prophet. Food is fine, but don't be wrapped up in mystical beliefs. We should eat together after prayer or discussion, not from an event full of syubhat" (Interview with Aqlul, September 2, 2024).

The difference in interpretation that leads to the debate on the behavior of consumption procedures between the two Muhammadiyah and NU communities, as expressed by the NU community, as stated by Kevin:

"Muhammadiyah children now like to be strange. In the past, when I was a child, I was blessed as well. Now he says bid'ah, he says eating from the feast of the dead is haram. Well, we intend to give alms, not ask for barokah from the corpse." (Interview with Kevin, September 3, 2024).

The opinion of the NU community was refuted and explained by Aqlul:

"Eating is not only full but also healthy. The tradition of feasting is often a waste of food and is not hygienic. We invite friends to replace it with direct alms or eat with orphans" (Interview with Aqlul, September 2, 2024).

In contrast to the NU community, which denied what was said by the Muhammadiyah community, as stated by Kevin:

"The problem of eating is a problem because you intend to respect tradition. If you continue to say bid'ah every day, then society will be divided. The important thing is that the intentions are good, not about the form of food" (Interview with Kevin, September 3, 2024).

The difference in understanding the consumption procedure led to a debate between the two communities of Muhammadiyah and NU. This problem was motivated by differences in the interpretation of understanding through externalization, objectification, and internalization [39]. The difference in consumption procedures between NU and Muhammadiyah is not just about appetite, but is the result of a social construction rooted in the process of externalizing values, cultural objectification, and internalizing beliefs. Berger's theory shows that social reality is not neutral, but rather is shaped through historical, cultural, and religious processes that are then considered truth by each community [40].

Thus, this conflict will not be resolved by standardizing the practice of eating, but rather requires recognition and dialogue between differently formed social realities. An approach that emphasizes intersubjective understanding and moderation is the key to building harmony in differences. In the behavior of communities that have different interpretations, it is found that the process of modeling interaction between two Muslim communities is a form of synergy between two different communities. Like the scheme 1

below, which analyzes the differences between the two Muhammadiyah and NU communities in Synergy [41].

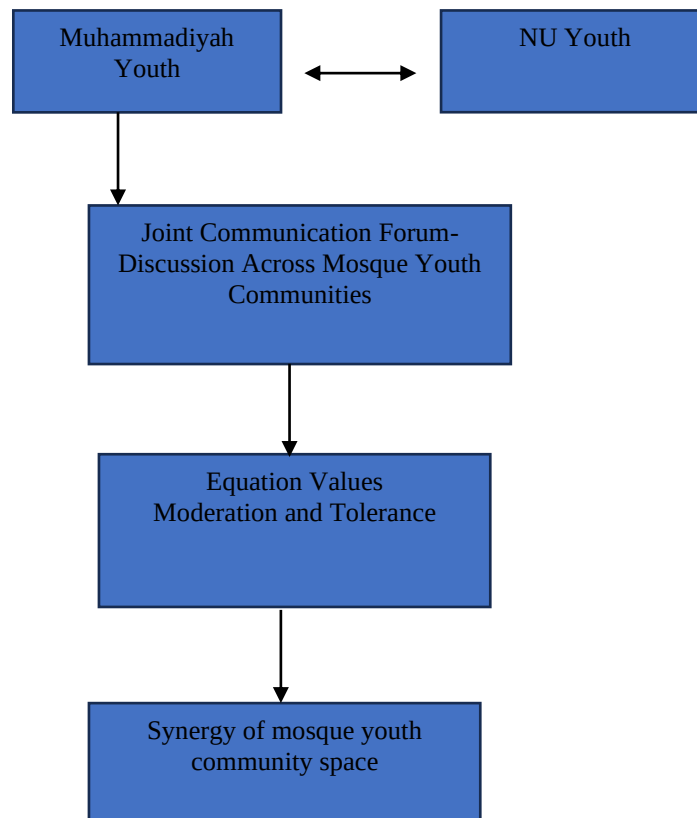


Figure 2. Model of Communication, Moderation, and Synergy among Muhammadiyah and NU Youth

The communication forum is a means of dealing with the differences in interpretation between the two mosque youth communities in interpreting the meaning of worship and lifestyle. The differences are motivated by the understanding of each community. By forming a discussion forum across the mosque youth community as a bridge in building the values of equality, moderation, and tolerance, namely synergy in understanding interpretation. The synergy of community space for mosque youth is a form of strength in dealing with differences in community understanding between mosque youth.

In-Depth Analysis

This study provides a significant contribution to understanding how intra-religious diversity shapes adolescent identity and social interaction within the Indonesian context, particularly in Semarang City. By focusing on Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) youth, the research highlights how differences in worship behavior, dress codes, and consumption practices are not merely superficial variations but are deeply embedded in theological interpretations and cultural frameworks. These differences often result in communication barriers and occasional conflicts, yet they also present opportunities for fostering dialogue and building synergy across communities.

Using a phenomenological approach, the study explores lived experiences and subjective perceptions, allowing the voices of adolescents themselves to emerge. The findings underscore Peter L. Berger's social construction theory, showing how externalization, objectification, and internalization shape religious identity. For

Muhammadiyah youth, fiqh learning from Muhammadiyah teachers and institutions reinforces an internalized identity that is strongly aligned with organizational values. Conversely, NU youth, influenced by kiai and family traditions, embody a lifestyle where sarongs, feasts, and communal rituals symbolize religious devotion. These external symbols, while different, are manifestations of socially constructed realities rooted in collective memory and interpretation.

The analysis also reveals how family background plays a pivotal role in shaping adolescent identity. Mixed-family contexts, where one parent comes from Muhammadiyah and the other from NU, produce hybrid experiences that allow adolescents to draw from both traditions. Such hybridity demonstrates that rigid organizational boundaries can be softened through familial influence, highlighting the potential for intergroup integration. This dimension adds novelty to the study by showing how personal biographies intersect with institutional affiliations to form complex identities.

From an SDGs perspective, the study has important implications. Goal 4 (Quality Education) is addressed by emphasizing the need for inclusive religious education models that accommodate plural interpretations of Islam. Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities) is advanced by highlighting that tolerance across Islamic organizations reduces social polarization among youth. Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) is particularly relevant, as the creation of mosque-based communication forums offers practical mechanisms for conflict resolution, dialogue, and the cultivation of moderation. These forums are not just symbolic spaces but serve as institutionalized platforms for building harmony, reflecting the global developmental agenda in a localized context.

The novelty of the research lies in connecting youth lifestyle differences with broader developmental goals, demonstrating that everyday practices—whether in worship, clothing, or consumption—carry global significance when situated within the SDGs framework. Rather than viewing differences as sources of division, the study reinterprets them as resources for fostering mutual understanding. Ultimately, this research proposes a synergy communication model that not only bridges Muhammadiyah–NU differences but also contributes to Indonesia’s vision of pluralism, moderation, and sustainable peace.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that differences in social tafsir of worship behavior and lifestyle among Muhammadiyah and NU adolescents in Semarang City represent both challenges and opportunities in building intergroup harmony. The phenomenological approach reveals that these differences, rooted in divergent *ijtihad* traditions, are socially constructed through processes of externalization, objectification, and internalization. As a result, worship practices—such as the recitation of *bismillah* or interpretations of *fiqh*—are understood differently but are generally accepted as normal variations of Islamic devotion. In this sense, religious differences in worship rarely trigger significant tension because they are interpreted as legitimate expressions of plural Islamic thought. However, lifestyle differences—particularly in modes of dress, communication, and consumption—emerge as more visible and potentially divisive markers of identity. Clothing practices, for example, often generate stigma between groups, with Muhammadiyah youth tending toward modern attire such as pants and shirts, while NU youth emphasize sarongs and traditional garments. Similarly, divergent consumption practices—whether rejecting *slametan* as un-Islamic or embracing it as a symbol of communal blessing—expose deeper theological and cultural contrasts. These distinctions, while meaningful within each community, can become sources of misunderstanding and conflict when interpreted as mutually exclusive truths. The findings emphasize the critical importance of structured inter-community forums to mitigate these tensions. Mosque-based youth discussion spaces, framed around the principles of moderation,

tolerance, and dialogue, provide effective mechanisms for promoting synergy. Such forums encourage adolescents to recognize differences not as threats but as opportunities for learning and cooperation. Within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), these efforts directly contribute to Goal 4 (Quality Education) by fostering inclusive religious literacy, Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by reducing intra-Islamic polarization, and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by strengthening local mechanisms for conflict resolution and coexistence. The novelty of this study lies in situating the everyday practices of Islamic youth within a global developmental agenda, illustrating how local religious diversity, when managed constructively, supports broader objectives of peace and social sustainability. In conclusion, the lifestyle and worship differences between Muhammadiyah and NU youth should not be viewed solely as divisions but as reflections of Indonesia's plural Islamic heritage. When approached through dialogue, inclusivity, and SDGs-oriented education, these differences can be transformed into valuable resources for nurturing mutual respect, social harmony, and sustainable peace.

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Author Contribution

All authors contributed significantly to this study. Saka Mahardika Oktav Nugraha prepared the initial manuscript, defined the research location, selected informants, and developed the synergy communication scheme. Juhadi conducted field observations and interviews. Hamdan Tri Atmaja ensured qualitative analysis. Nugraha Trisnu Brata and Hanip Hidayatulloh revised, edited, and finalized the writing. All authors approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest. This research, Lifestyle Differences of Muhammadiyah and NU Adolescents in Semarang: A Social Interpretation toward SDGs, was fully supported by the Department of Social Science Education, Semarang State University, Indonesia, and the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO University), Russia, as part of collaborative academic development.

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