

TRANSFORMATIVE SOCIAL SPIRITUALITY AMONG SANTRI GOBAL GABUL: AN IBN KHALDUNIAN STUDY OF HIDDEN CURRICULUM

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Abstract

This study explores the transformative construction of social spirituality within the Santri Gobal Gabul community, a community-based religious movement affiliated with *Pondok Pesantren Al-Muhammad* Cepu. Drawing upon Ibn Khaldun's Sociology of Education, it examines how the hidden curriculum of the *Pengajian Malam Ahad* (Saturday Night Recitation) functions as a form of non-formal education that transcends conventional pedagogical frameworks. The research focuses on three key dimensions: (1) reconstructing social spirituality through Ibn Khaldun's concept of *'ilm al-'umran al-insani* and the development of *al-malakah* (internalized moral competence); (2) identifying the mechanisms of the hidden curriculum that organically foster



tolerance, empathy, and interfaith inclusivity; and (3) formulating a character education model grounded in social spirituality within the pesantren tradition. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach with a phenomenological lens, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation, then validated through triangulation. The findings reveal that social spirituality is cultivated through *ashabiyah khairiyyah* (virtue-based social cohesion) emerging naturally within the hidden curriculum. Through moral exemplarity, reflective dialogue, and cross-cultural engagement, *Pengajian Malam Ahad* serves as a socio-spiritual laboratory (*al-'umran*) that transforms individual piety into collective social consciousness.

Keywords: Moral Exemplarity, Virtue-Based Social Cohesion, Socio-Spiritual Transformation, Hidden Curriculum Praxis, Community-Based Islamic Education.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi konstruksi transformatif spiritualitas sosial dalam komunitas Santri Global Gabul, sebuah gerakan keagamaan berbasis komunitas yang berafiliasi dengan Pondok Pesantren Al-Muhammad Cepu. Berpijak pada Sosiologi Pendidikan Ibn Khaldun, penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana hidden curriculum dalam Pengajian Malam Ahad berfungsi sebagai bentuk pendidikan nonformal yang melampaui kerangka pedagogis konvensional. Penelitian ini berfokus pada tiga dimensi utama, yaitu: (1) rekonstruksi spiritualitas sosial melalui konsep 'ilm al-'umrān al-insānī Ibn Khaldun serta pengembangan al-malakah sebagai kompetensi moral yang terinternalisasi; (2) identifikasi mekanisme hidden curriculum yang secara organik menumbuhkan nilai toleransi, empati, dan inklusivitas lintas iman; dan (3) perumusan model pendidikan karakter berbasis spiritualitas sosial dalam tradisi pesantren. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif berparadigma fenomenologis, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatoris, dan dokumentasi, yang selanjutnya divalidasi melalui teknik triangulasi. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa

spiritualitas sosial dibentuk melalui ashabiyah khairiyyah (kohesi sosial berbasis kebajikan) yang tumbuh secara alami dalam hidden curriculum. Melalui keteladanan moral, dialog reflektif, dan keterlibatan lintas budaya, Pengajian Malam Ahad berfungsi sebagai laboratorium sosio-spiritual (al-'umrān) yang mentransformasikan kesalehan individual menjadi kesadaran sosial kolektif.

Kata Kunci: *Keteladanan Moral, Kohesi Sosial Berbasis Kebajikan, Transformasi Sosio-Spiritual, Praktik Kurikulum Tersembunyi, Pendidikan Islam Berbasis Komunitas.*

INTRODUCTION

In the early morning of October 31, 2025, a tragic incident occurred at the Masjid Agung Sibolga, North Sumatra, when a young traveler named Arjuna (21) was beaten to death by a group of youths inside the mosque premises merely for asking permission to rest (Redaksi, 2025). This event tarnished the sacred meaning of a house of worship as a space of peace and piety (Darodjat & Wahyudhiana, 2017; Umam et al., 2025), and underscored how social conflicts and local power dynamics can permeate religious institutions that should ideally serve as moral and solidaristic foundations (Lestari, 2025).

This tragedy reflects a paradoxical social phenomenon: on one hand, religious communities increasingly assert their religious identity; yet on the other, social spirituality, the ability to interpret religion as a force that nurtures empathy, solidarity, and mutual respect, appears to be deteriorating (Hadziq et al., 2024; Wijsen, 2021). The phenomenon indicates that religiosity does not always correspond with spiritual and moral maturity, implying the need for religious education to foster contextual social spirituality grounded in communal life.

Within Indonesia's context, pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) are among the most strategic institutions for cultivating community-based social spirituality. At Pondok Pesantren Al

Muhammad Cepu, Blora, these values flourish through Pengajian Malam Ahad (Saturday Night Recitation), a non-formal educational tradition that has become an unwritten part of the pesantren's curriculum. Through this activity, students not only deepen their religious knowledge but also build social awareness through shared practices, respect for scholarly authority, and inter-student solidarity. This process unfolds implicitly and gradually, not through explicit instruction but through the moral example of the kiai (religious leader), habitual practice, and social interaction that shape collective character. This mechanism represents the hidden curriculum, an implicit educational process that plays a pivotal role in constructing social spirituality ([Umagap et al., 2022](#)).

According to the mentor of the Santri Gobal Gabul community, the group emerged in 2006 when several alumni of Pondok Pesantren Al Muhammad Cepu requested regular al-Hikam study sessions. Over time, the community transformed into an inclusive social space embracing diverse participants, current students, alumni, *muhibbin* (seekers of knowledge), local residents, former street children seeking moral renewal, and even non-Muslim guests, all engaging without social or spiritual boundaries (observ. K.H. Abdul Halim Mujtaba, 10 Oktober 2025). This phenomenon demonstrates how social spirituality materializes through cross-identity relationships grounded in inclusive religious values and humanistic social praxis ([Habibi et al., 2025](#); [Taufiq & Suryo, 2024](#)).

However, despite the growing body of literature on Islamic education, there remains a significant theoretical and empirical gap. Most existing studies on pesantren predominantly focus on formal aspects, such as curriculum management ([Kusumawati & Nurfuadi, 2024](#)), instructional strategies ([Fitriyani et al., 2020](#)), or individual character education ([Aisyah et al., 2022](#); [Renawati, 2020](#)). Few have examined how the hidden curriculum functions as a mechanism for constructing social spirituality within a heterogeneous community. This study offers a distinct novelty by shifting the analytical lens from individual piety to collective

solidarity (*ashabiyah*) within the Santri Gobal Gabul community, a unique entity that blends formal santri with marginalized social groups. Furthermore, unlike previous research that relies on modern pedagogical theories, this study employs Ibn Khaldun's sociological framework to analyze how spiritual habitus is formed through social friction and communal interaction.

To address this gap, the present study utilizes Ibn Khaldun's Sociology of Education as its main analytical framework. Ibn Khaldun emphasizes the dialectical relationship between education and society in shaping civilization (*'ilm al-'umrān*) through interwoven social and spiritual processes (Purnomo, 2017). His concept of *ashabiyah* (social solidarity) is particularly relevant for explaining the construction of social spirituality within pesantren as an integration of moral, social, and religious dimensions (Kurniawan et al., 2023). Moreover, Ibn Khaldun's notion of *tadarruj* (gradual development in education) elucidates how the hidden curriculum fosters spiritual habitus through a process of gradual and contextual internalization (Apriliza, 2022).

Consequently, this study aims to: (1) identify the forms and mechanisms of the hidden curriculum within Pengajian Malam Ahad at Pondok Pesantren Al Muhammad Cepu; (2) analyze how the hidden curriculum constructs the social spirituality of the Santri Gobal Gabul community; and (3) explain the process of socio-spiritual transformation through Ibn Khaldun's Sociology of Education perspective. Theoretically, this research expands the relevance of Ibn Khaldun's thought in the context of contemporary Islamic education, offering a new approach that integrates spiritual, social, and pedagogical values within pesantren practice. Practically, it provides insights for developing Islamic education models that not only strengthen religious cognition but also cultivate social spirituality as the moral foundation of Indonesia's multicultural society.

METHOD

This research constitutes field research employing a qualitative paradigm with a descriptive-phenomenological approach (Moleong, 2019). The study focuses on understanding how the construction of social spirituality is formed within the Santri Gobal Gabul community through religious activities embedded in the hidden curriculum of the Pengajian Malam Ahad at Pondok Pesantren Al-Muhammad Cepu. The objects of analysis include individuals, groups, and social practices that concretely represent lived experiences and interreligious-social interactions within the community (Bable, 2002; Creswell, 2020). The phenomenological approach was chosen to uncover the essential meanings embedded in the spiritual and social experiences of the students, alumni, and community members. Through this lens, the research seeks to understand how the values of spirituality and tolerance are not only conceptually understood but also empirically experienced in everyday life.

The research subjects comprised ten informants selected through purposive sampling to ensure data relevance and depth (Rahmat, 2022). These participants were categorized into two distinct groups based on specific inclusion criteria. The first group, Key Informants (six individuals), consisted of the Kyai, two community mentors, two senior santri, and one non-Muslim member. They were selected based on their active involvement in the Santri Gobal Gabul community for at least three years, direct participation in Pengajian Malam Ahad, and profound knowledge of the community's history. Conversely, the second group, Supporting Informants (four individuals), included the Village Head, a youth representative, and local residents, chosen to provide external perspectives based on their residency and regular social interactions with the students. To capture comprehensive data from these subjects, the study employed three simultaneous techniques: participatory observation through a live-in approach to observe hidden curriculum practices; semi-structured in-depth interviews

to explore internal socio-spiritual perspectives; and document analysis of the pesantren's archives (Arikunto, 2014; Miles & Huberman, 2002). The validity of the findings was rigorously ensured through source triangulation and methodological triangulation.

Furthermore, the data analysis procedure adhered to the systematic phenomenological steps adapted from Creswell (2020). The process commenced with Data Organization and Bracketing (epoché), where the researcher transcribed interviews and set aside personal biases to focus solely on the participants' perspectives. Subsequently, the researcher performed Horizontalization and Coding by identifying and assigning codes to significant statements regarding social spirituality. These codes were then processed through Thematic Reduction, where meaning units were clustered into core themes and analyzed using Ibn Khaldun's framework, specifically focusing on indicators of *ashabiyah* (social solidarity) and *tadarruj* (gradual habituation). The analysis continued with the construction of Structural and Textural Descriptions to articulate 'what' the participants experienced and 'how' the hidden curriculum influenced those experiences. Finally, the process culminated in an Essence Synthesis, presenting a holistic composite description of how social spirituality is constructed within the Santri Gobal Gabul community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Values of Social Spirituality in the Gobal Gabul Santri Community

The social spirituality cultivated within the Santri Gobal Gabul community reflects a grounded character, deeply rooted in the lived experiences of *santri kalong* (non-resident students) from diverse backgrounds. For the mentor, K.H. Abdul Halim Mujtaba, spirituality transcends ritual piety; it is an inner consciousness that nurtures compassion. He emphasizes that true spirituality is

measured not by frequency of worship, but by how pure and open one's heart becomes toward others (Interview, October 5, 2025). This perspective shifts spirituality from a dogmatic construct to a social energy fostering empathy and solidarity.

This spirituality manifests through consistent daily habits, voluntarily cleaning the pesantren, caring for sick peers, and warmly welcoming guests. These acts are not mere etiquette but expressions of *ta'dib* (moral formation) as described by Ibn Khaldun, where religious knowledge (*ta'lim*) is internalized through practice to nurture spiritual consciousness (Kahfi et al., 2022; Purnomo, 2017). Furthermore, the community emphasizes core values of sincerity (*ikhlas*), humility (*tawadhu'*), and compassion (*rahmah*). Since most members are santri kalong facing real-world challenges, their spirituality is realistic and flexible. This aligns with Ibn Khaldun's concept of *'ilm al-'umran al-insani*, viewing social life as the medium for moral character formation (Intan, 2019).

Crucially, this spirituality bears a strong egalitarian dimension. In the Pengajian Malam Ahad, diverse professionals, from village officials to parking attendants, sit together without hierarchy. K.H. Mujtaba notes that this practice humanizes others; when the heart is nurtured with sincerity, tolerance emerges naturally. In Ibn Khaldun's view, this reflects ashabiyah solidarity rooted in spiritual awareness (Ilham, 2016). Thus, the community exemplifies how spirituality functions as a cohesive force, fostering harmony amidst diversity by growing from reality, not rigid doctrine.

The Hidden Curriculum in the Pengajian Malam Ahad

The hidden curriculum in the Santri Gobal Gabul community operates through social interaction, the Kyai's exemplarity, and implicit daily practices. K.H. Abdul Halim Mujtaba does not teach tolerance theoretically but embodies it, stating, "*I invite them to experience, not just understand... so they learn*

that difference is a space for learning" (Interview, October 10, 2025). This experiential approach embeds values like respect and patience into the communal atmosphere.

This hidden curriculum functions through three dimensions. First, the Kyai's moral example serves as non-verbal education. Sugiyono, the village head of Penggoljagong, observed that the Kyai never differentiates between people, teaching santri to respect everyone implicitly (Interview, October 12, 2025). Second, egalitarian habits, such as communal meals and open discussions, frame tolerance as a moral consciousness rather than doctrine. Third, interfaith encounters serve as concrete learning arenas. Murodi (Eyes), a non-Muslim santri, attested to never feeling alienated, even participating in building pesantren facilities (Interview, October 12, 2025).

In Ibn Khaldun's framework, this mechanism represents *ta'dib*, cultivating social consciousness through lived ethical embodiment. By repetitively practicing inclusive engagement, santri transform knowledge into virtuous action (*al-'ilm al-nafi'*) (Syam et al., 2024), making the Pengajian Malam Ahad a sociological locus where Islamic values are actualized within an egalitarian structure.. Thus, the Pengajian Malam Ahad serves as a sociological locus of education where Islamic values are actualized within an egalitarian and compassionate social structure.

The Dynamics of Social Spirituality Transformation

The transformation within the community unfolds as a gradual shift from individual awareness to collective consciousness. Individually, members from rough backgrounds experience significant shifts. Sunarto (Kodok), formerly known as a thug, admitted that joining the sessions helped him understand the importance of acceptance and respect (Interview, October 19, 2025). This illustrates that spirituality arises from lived experiences touching the affective dimension, allowing individuals to regulate emotions and cultivate harmony.

Communally, the transformation marks a shift from exclusivism to dialogical openness. Eki Novita, the village head of Cepu, noted that religious differences, once sensitive, have become topics for shared reflection (Interview, October 20, 2025). Collective activities like interfaith charity have become mediums for *ashabiyah khairiyah*, solidarity grounded in virtue (Matin, 2025). Ultimately, this dynamic reveals a dialectical relationship where santri learn that worship extends beyond the prayer mat to treating others with empathy, manifesting *'ilm al-'umran al-insani*, the science governing harmony in civilized society (Azkia & Muslim, 2024; Handayani et al., 2025).

Synthesis of Findings and Theoretical Analysis

The findings indicate that social spirituality in the Santri Gobal Gabul community develops organically through a practical, non-formal educational process within the Pengajian Malam Ahad. Values of compassion and equality are internalized through social interaction and the Kyai's *uswah* (example), creating a transformative social arena.

From Ibn Khaldun's perspective, this reality integrates three concepts: *ta'lim* (contextualized knowledge transmission), *ta'dib* (moral habituation), and *ashabiyah* (spiritual solidarity) (Khaldun, 2011; Mujahidin & Mustofa, 2024). These dimensions produce a spirituality integrating *hablun minallah* (vertical) and *hablun minannas* (horizontal). Thematic analysis of these findings is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Thematic Analysis of Research Findings: "The Construction of Social Spirituality in the Santri Gobal Gabul Community"

Main Theme	Subtheme	Empirical Quotation	Phenomenological Meaning	Relevance to Ibn Khaldun's Theory
Manifestation of Social and Spirituality	Humanistic	"For me, spirituality is not just about being diligent in worship..."	Spirituality is understood as a social	<i>Ta'dib</i> — the cultivation of moral

	inclusive spirituality	but about having a clean, open, and compassionate heart in viewing others." (Interview with KH Abdul Halim Mujtaba, Oct 5, 2025)	awareness connecting the divine and human dimensions.	civility through the integration of divine and social values in daily practice.
	Social piety through simple acts	"The santris' spirituality is reflected in small deeds like sweeping the yard without being told, or preparing meals for a sick friend..." (Interview with KH Abdul Halim Mujtaba, Oct 5, 2025)	Spirituality manifests in simple, empathetic actions that embody social responsibility.	<i>Ilm al-'umran al-insani</i> – social behavior as a reflection of spiritual maturity and moral civilization.
	Formation of sincerity and compassion	"The most important values I emphasize are sincerity, humility, and compassion... It's not enough to be good at reciting, you must also feel for others." (Interview with KH Abdul Halim Mujtaba, Oct 5, 2025)	Moral development through social experience builds inner awareness and an inclusive character.	<i>Ta'lim-ta'dib</i> – the integration of knowledge transmission and moral habituation through social interaction.
Hidden Curriculum in the Pengajian Malam Ahad	Kyai's exemplarity as a value source	"The Kyai doesn't just teach, he exemplifies... he never differentiates between anyone." (Interview with Sugiyono, Oct 12, 2025)	Exemplary conduct functions as a hidden but effective form of value-based education.	<i>Al-uswah al-hasana</i> within <i>ta'dib</i> – moral leadership as an instrument of social education.
	Learning through social experience	"I ask them to experience, not just understand... That's how they learn that differences are opportunities to learn." (Interview with Purnomo, Oct 12, 2025)	Tolerance and compassion are internalized through lived experiences rather than verbal doctrine.	<i>Tajribah al-ijtima'iyyah</i> – education as a social process forming empirical consciousness.

	Equality across religions and professions	"I'm non-Muslim, but fully accepted... I even helped build the ablution area without any distinction." (Interview with Murodi/Eyes, Oct 12, 2025)	The community fosters a cross-boundary learning space that nurtures universal social spirituality.	<i>Ashabiyah khairiyah</i> – social solidarity based on virtue rather than identity.
Dynamics of Moral Social Spirituality Transformation	identity transformation	"I used to be a harsh person... but after joining the study circle, I began to understand the importance of humility and respect." (Interview with Sunarto, Oct 19, 2025)	Moral transformation occurs through reflective and relational processes within the community.	<i>Tazkiyah al-nafs</i> – purification of the soul through social interaction and spiritual habituation.
	Growth of interfaith solidarity	"We cleaned the house of a non-Muslim neighbor affected by disaster... without any barriers." (Interview with Sugiyono, Oct 19, 2025)	Solidarity and humanity become tangible expressions of grounded social spirituality.	<i>'Umran al-insani</i> – human civilization is built upon empathy and social cooperation.
	Value-based social transformation	"In the past, differences were sensitive issues; now they've become a shared point of reflection." (Interview with Eki Novita, Oct 20, 2025)	Collective spirituality fosters an open and reflective social culture.	<i>Ta'mir al-ardh</i> – spiritual education as the foundation of a civilized society.
Synthesis of Social Spirituality as a Sociological Educational Model	Spirituality as social practice	"They don't only focus on recitation, but also join interfaith and social activities." (Interview with Eki Novita, Oct 20, 2025)	Spirituality-based education nurtures social ethics and collective responsibility.	<i>Ta'lim wa ta'dib al-ijtimaiyyah</i> – education integrating knowledge, morality, and social life.
	Kyai's exemplarity as a transformative core	"The key lies in the Kyai's example and the emotional closeness among community members." (Interview	The spiritual leader functions as a cultural transmitter	<i>Al-mu'allim al-murabbi</i> – the teacher as a builder

	with Eki Novita, Oct 20, 2025)	instilling shared values.	of moral civilization.
Social spirituality as a basis of cohesion	"Muslims and non-Muslims sit together, share coffee, without barriers." (Interview with Murodi, Oct 25, 2025)	Social cohesion emerges from internalized spirituality within communal togetherness.	<i>Ashabiyah</i> - social solidarity as the foundation of civilization in Ibn Khaldun's thought.

As illustrated in Table 1, the community embodies the *ta'lim-ta'dib-'umran* process. Based on these findings, a conceptual model of social spirituality transformation is proposed, as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Core Components of the Conceptual Model

Component	Conceptual Description	Supporting Data/Theoretical Sources
Foundation of Individual Spirituality	Refers to the formation of inner awareness rooted in sincerity, simplicity, and closeness to God.	Interview with KH Abdul Halim Mujtaba (2025); <i>Ta'dib al-nafs</i> – Ibn Khaldun
Hidden Curriculum of the Pengajian Malam Ahad	The process of internalizing spiritual values through social experience, the <i>kyai</i> 's exemplarity, and habitual practice without formal instruction.	Interviews with Murodi (Eyes) (2025) and Sugiyono (2025); concept of <i>al-uswah al-hasannah</i>
Socio-Communitarian Interaction	A space where spirituality is tested and actualized through interfaith, intercultural, and interprofessional relationships.	Interview with Murodi (Eyes) (2025); <i>'Umran al-insani</i> – Ibn Khaldun

Transformation of Social Spirituality	The shift from ritual piety to social piety; shaping compassionate, inclusive, and tolerant character.	Ibnu Khaldun (2011); Habibi, et.al (2025); <i>Ta'dib wa ta'lim al-ijtimaiyyah</i>
Social Cohesion and Civilization (<i>Ashabiyah Khairiyyah</i>)	The ultimate outcome: interfaith solidarity and social ethics that strengthen community cohesion.	Ibn Khaldun (<i>Muqaddimah</i>); concept of <i>ashabiyah khairiyyah</i>

Conceptual Model Analysis

Table 2 outlines the structural transformation of social spirituality. First, the foundation lies in individual spirituality (*ta'dib al-nafs*), rooted in sincerity and humility (Partono et al., 2025). Second, the hidden curriculum functions as the bridge, where the Kyai's example (*al-uswah al-hasanah*) facilitates the natural internalization of values. Third, socio-communitarian interaction serves as the testing ground where spirituality is actualized through interfaith and cross-professional dialogue ('*umran al-insani*). Fourth, the transformation culminates in a shift from ritual to social piety, evidenced by increased empathy and humanitarian engagement. Finally, this process yields *ashabiyah khairiyyah* -social cohesion based not on identity, but on a shared moral commitment to humanity (Habibi et al., 2025). This model affirms a pesantren-based paradigm where spirituality acts as a social force for civilizational development.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the construction of social spirituality within the Santri Gobal Gabul community emerges through a transformative synthesis of religious experience, social practice, and moral exemplarity. The Pengajian Malam Ahad (Saturday Night Religious Gathering) functions not merely as a ritual space, but as a living education arena -a setting where the

dynamics of the hidden curriculum, manifested through the kyai's (religious leader's) example, inter-member interaction, and shared social experience, gradually internalize the values of sincerity, empathy, and tolerance. Through continuous social encounters and deep spiritual reflection, spirituality evolves from individual piety into collective awareness that nurtures *ashabiyah khairiyyah* a moral solidarity transcending religious, cultural, and social boundaries.

From the perspective of Ibn Khaldun's sociology of education, these findings affirm that the concepts of *ta'dib* (moral formation) and *'ilm al-'umran al-insani* (the science of human civilization) can serve as an integrative paradigm for contemporary Islamic education. Spirituality cultivated through social interaction and guided by moral leadership becomes a civilizational force that restores social cohesion and ethical harmony. The experience of the Santri Gobal Gabul community demonstrates that an inclusive religious foundation can transform social fragmentation into cultural solidarity through grounded spiritual practices.

Theoretically, this research enriches the discourse on hidden curriculum and religious pedagogy by positioning spirituality as a social construction rather than merely an inner individual state. Practically, the findings offer a community-based educational model capable of integrating spiritual consciousness, social empathy, and civic engagement as elements of transformational learning. Future studies are encouraged to conduct comparative analyses of similar communities to broaden understanding of how locally rooted religious practices contribute to social resilience and interfaith harmony at a wider societal level.

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