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## Table Of Contents

<b>Journal Cover</b> .....	1
<b>Author[s] Statement</b> .....	3
<b>Editorial Team</b> .....	4
<b>Article information</b> .....	5
Check this article update (crossmark) .....	5
Check this article impact .....	5
Cite this article.....	5
<b>Title page</b> .....	6
Article Title .....	6
Author information .....	6
Abstract .....	6
<b>Article content</b> .....	7

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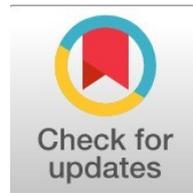
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## Ngenger Tradition as Informal Education in Muhammadiyah Cultural Adaptation

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### Abstract

**General Background:** Informal education has long played a central role in transmitting religious values and character formation within Islamic communities. **Specific Background:** In Javanese society, the *ngenger* tradition—living with and serving a foster family—functions as experiential learning through daily interaction and role modeling. **Knowledge Gap:** However, its role in connecting traditional Islamic environments with Muhammadiyah’s modernist orientation remains underexplored. **Aims:** This study examines how the *ngenger* tradition operates as a medium of informal education and cultural adaptation in the transformation of religious orientation from traditional or *abangan* Islam toward Muhammadiyah in Tempurejo (Ngawi) and Grogol (Ponorogo). **Results:** Using a qualitative historical approach and Cultural Adaptation theory, the findings show that participants internalized Muhammadiyah values through everyday practice and later reproduced them through community religious activities, educational initiatives, and institutional development in Grogol. **Novelty:** The study reveals that *ngenger* functions as a culturally embedded mechanism linking experiential learning with ideological transformation. **Implications:** These findings demonstrate that local traditions can facilitate the integration of modern Islamic organizational values within rural communities through adaptive and minimally conflictive cultural processes.

### Highlights:

- Experiential learning through residential service relationships facilitated gradual internalization of Muhammadiyah religious and organizational values.
- Returning participants transmitted newly acquired religious practices and social norms through community religious gatherings and educational initiatives.
- Local institutional development—including mosques and schools—emerged from the value reproduction processes carried by former participants.

**Keywords:** Ngenger, Informal Education, Cultural Adaptation, Muhammadiyah

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## Introduction

Long before formal educational institutions developed, education had been an organic part of human life. In the tradition of Islamic education, the learning process begins in domestic spaces such as the family and small communities. Informal education that occurs through daily interactions and the habituation of values becomes the initial foundation for shaping character, morality, and religious orientation of the people.[1] The Prophet did not establish educational institutions in the formal sense as we know them today. His homes in Mecca and Medina became the first centers of education, where the values of the Qur'an and Sunnah were instilled through example, dialogue, and daily life practices. His wives, children, and close companions were the first students in this school of life. Education within the family setting did not follow a fixed curriculum or class schedule; rather, it created a dynamic, flexible, and meaningful learning environment. It was here that the spiritual and moral foundation of the early Muslim community was formed—a foundation that is often overlooked in modern education systems.[2]

In Javanese culture, Islam cannot be separated from the lifeblood of the community; it has become an integral part of transmitting religious knowledge and shaping religious identity. A similar pattern developed in the local context of the Nusantara. The tradition of *nyantrik*, a term for those who live with and serve respected community figures or families, is a form of education based on service and character development. Non-formal education in Java began with the *ulama* who studied in the Middle East, initially given access as guardians of graves by local authorities, and gradually became an authoritative reference for Islam with the free village as its base.[3] Informal education developed along with the strengthening of Islam as a religion that is integrated with the social life of the community. The *Pesantren* tradition, as one of the prominent forms of non-formal education, not only teaches religious knowledge academically but also shapes the morals and personality of the students through life with the *kyai*. This indicates that Islamic education has never been entirely dependent on formal institutionalization.[4] Understanding *ngenger* as a concept of informal education opens up a more comprehensive view of the dynamics of Islamic education in Indonesia, especially in observing the coexistence between tradition and modernity. Various forms of study sessions at homes, prayer houses, or small mosques are accessible to the general public. These activities are generally voluntary, based on personal relationships between teachers and students, and use oral teaching methods such as *sorogan* (individual learning), *wetonan* (group study), and *halaqah*. [5]

Education can generally be divided into three main categories: formal, non-formal, and informal. Informal education, in this case the family, is the oldest and primary educational institution in the development of a child's potential. As an informal educational institution, education within the family involves learning activities that are carried out independently and non-standardized, so there are no rigid rules regarding the structure and timing of learning. Since education is a continuous process in various situations and environments, whether within the family, school, or society, informal education occupies a fundamental position as the initial foundation before an individual enters more structured education, especially in the context of traditional Muslim communities in the Nusantara.[6] In the tradition of Islamic education, the nuclear family consisting of husband and wife or father and mother serves as the main foundation for achieving the educational goals of their children. The synergy between parents in guiding and educating their children holistically is the key to shaping their character, morals, and spirituality, which will serve as lifelong provisions.[7] In the context of extended families, educational development is also a priority that is no less important, where religious values and social norms are instilled continuously through interactions among family members. This aligns with the Islamic principle that emphasizes the family as the first school in an individual's life. Therefore, informal education within the family has a learning dynamic that is independent and flexible, not bound by rigid structures and schedules, making it a more natural and continuous process.[8]

*Pesantren*-based education has long been a center for informal Islamic teaching in the Nusantara. This tradition is rooted in the *perdikan* villages, which were villages exempt from taxes and forced labor during the colonial era, with the main task of maintaining religious institutions.[9] Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) center on the role of the *kiai* as a spiritual and intellectual leader, with yellow books (*kitab kuning*) as the main source of learning. This system emphasizes nurturing and moral education through familial relationships, where students (*santri*) learn and live together with the *kiai*'s family as a substitute for their own nuclear family. *Pesantren* serve as a vehicle for transmitting religious values, ethics, and local culture, taught orally and through the care provided by a *kiai* to the students. During the colonial period, there were efforts to institutionalize *pesantren* formally, although they were not entirely free from the pressures of a colonial education system that focused on producing administrative personnel and strengthening Dutch authority.[10] In this context, *pesantren* try to adapt by incorporating a more systematic curriculum without neglecting their traditional heritage.

Martin van Bruinessen explains that *pesantren* indeed play an important role as centers for the transmission of Islam and classical knowledge, but they are beginning to be displaced by formal education adopted from Western models. Formal education, which emerged as a response to the colonial ethical politics, also contributes to shifting the position of *pesantren*, which are non-formal and informal in nature.[11] As a result, the tradition of Islamic education based on *pesantrens*, which is flexible and family-oriented, faced pressure due to the modernization of education that brought Western values. In his study, Anang Masduki highlighted how the practice of *ngenger* transformed into a medium of ideological transformation that played an important role in the cadre development process of Muhammadiyah, particularly in the regions of Tempurejo, Ngawi, and Grogol, Ponorogo in the 1950s. This tradition, generally understood as a practice of devotion to figures considered to have social or spiritual authority, did not only take place within the *pesantren* environment. In the context of Muhammadiyah, *ngenger* became a learning medium that integratively combined cultural, social, and religious aspects.[12]

To read the relationship between Muhammadiyah, the *ngenger* tradition, and the traditional Islamic environment of NU in Grogol, this paper uses the theoretical framework of cultural adaptation. This theory views adaptation as a communication process that involves the transmission, reception, and internalization of values through continuous social interaction.[13]

Cultural adaptation is not understood as the elimination of old identity, but rather as a process of negotiating meaning that allows individuals and groups to adjust to a new environment without losing their cultural footing.[14] In this context, the practice of *ngenger* can be understood as a space of enculturation, namely the process of internalizing values that occurs through shared life experiences, role modeling, and interpersonal relationships. The socialization of Muhammadiyah values in Grogol does not occur in a confrontational or ideological manner, but rather through cultural adaptation that allows coexistence with the deeply rooted NU religious traditions. Thus, *ngenger* functions as a medium of informal education that bridges Muhammadiyah's institutional modernity with local religious culture in an adaptive and contextual way.[15]

How Muhammadiyah adopts and actualizes traditional Islamic values in the context of modern education One of the efforts is the integration of the *ngenger* tradition into Muhammadiyah's informal education methods. Through the *ngenger* tradition in Grogol Village and MI Nurul Huda during the 1980s–1990s as the locus of study because it concretely represents these dynamics. On one hand, MI Nurul Huda operates as a formal educational institution with an increasingly established curriculum and administrative structure. On the other hand, social relations between teachers, students, and families still allow informal educational practices based on personal closeness, role modeling, and domestic work to take place. This condition makes Grogol a relevant social space to examine how informal education intertwines with the modernization of Islamic education in everyday practice. This article then outlines the methodological framework and historical background used to reconstruct *ngenger* practices as a form of informal education. The explanation regarding the method and historical context is necessary to ensure that the analysis presented is not normative or ahistorical, but rather rooted in the concrete social experiences of the Muslim community in Grogol during the 1980s–1990s.

## Theoretical Review

### A. *Ngenger* Tradition in Tempurejo Village, Ngawi

One form of informal education that exists in Javanese society is the practice of *ngenger*. Conceptually, *ngenger* is the practice of living together and serving a certain family or figure, in which a learning process based on direct experience takes place. The *ngenger* tradition is also considered a form of social solidarity in Javanese culture, reflecting mutual help and communal cooperation among members of the community.[16] *Ngenger* is frequently found in literature, for example in the Arjunasrabahu Series Volume IV (Department of Education and Culture, 1984), which tells the story of Sumantri who chose *ngenger* for King Arjunasrabahu as a form of devotion as well as an effort to improve himself. In the introduction to his book I, Islam and Java, Irfan Afifi emphasizes that the tradition of *ngenger* cannot be understood merely as a form of unquestioning obedience, but rather as a princely path—a conscious process of devotion filled with role modeling and character formation.[17] He describes *ngenger* as a medium for shaping “future kings” in the Javanese leadership tradition, where individuals are thoroughly molded through closeness, direct observation, and the internalization of noble values. This view emphasizes that *ngenger* is an important part of the leadership transition process and experiential learning within the Javanese cultural heritage informally, which continues to closely intersect with Islamic values.

The *ngenger* tradition is studied as a social practice that has variations in meaning, function, and impact according to the local cultural context in different regions of Java. Conceptually, *ngenger* can be grouped into three main dimensions that reflect the diversity of values and orientations of this practice.

*First*, in the pesantren environment, *ngenger* is understood as a form of total devotion of a student to the kiai. This relationship is not solely governed by the institutional norms of the pesantren, but also by the emotional and spiritual closeness developed through obedience to the kiai's personal guidance. Students who practice *ngenger* generally come from limited economic backgrounds, and their motivation revolves around efforts to improve their living standards and acquire religious knowledge as a preparation to serve the community when returning to their hometowns. This process often involves spiritual practices such as *tirakat* and strengthening the inner connection with the kiai as a source of blessings.

*Secondly*, *ngenger* is seen as an effective informal educational strategy in building social mobility. This tradition opens up opportunities for individuals from marginalized groups to access social, cultural, and intellectual resources that were previously only available to the elite or aristocratic classes. In this context, *ngenger* becomes a means of social transformation that allows for a shift in social position through the internalization of values, knowledge, and work ethic.

*Third*, there is also a critical interpretation of *ngenger* that views this practice as a form of domestic subordination. In this sense, *ngenger* is perceived as equivalent to housemaid work, which risks normalizing exploitation of children from poor families. This criticism arises from concerns about the practice that makes *ngenger* a forced choice, especially when access to formal education is still limited for certain groups.

This practice is not designed as a formal education system, but it has a clear cultural pedagogical structure, where individuals learn through observation, imitation, and active involvement in daily life. In the context of Islamic education, *ngenger* intersects with values of patience, sincerity, discipline, as well as respect for moral and religious authority. The *ngenger* tradition is a hereditary practice in Javanese culture where children or adolescents stay in someone else's home with the aim of learning independent living, gaining experience, and helping with household tasks. This practice reflects the noble values of character education and social solidarity, while also receiving moral and spiritual guidance from the foster family. *Ngenger* becomes an informal education that shapes responsibility and provides opportunities for children from underprivileged families to improve their social and economic conditions.

*Ngenger* as a practice of informal education also demonstrates the existence of a pedagogical patronal relationship. The relationship between the *ngenger* and the *bendoro* not only functions as a work or service relationship, but also becomes a

medium for the transmission of values, life ethos, and practical knowledge. Through living together, the *ngenger* absorbs patterns of religiosity, etiquette, and life discipline that are not always taught verbally. This type of learning model aligns with the concept of Islamic education that emphasizes the importance of exemplars (*uswah hasanah*) as the most effective educational method. In a broader framework, the practice of *ngenger* can be understood as part of an informal Islamic education ecosystem that runs alongside non-formal education such as *pesantren* and study gatherings (*pengajian*). While *pesantren* emphasizes the systematic transmission of Islamic knowledge through classical texts, *ngenger* serves to complement aspects of character formation and religious habitus.

Muhammadiyah figures in Tempurejo did not limit education to classrooms or formal madrasa systems. On the contrary, they opened their homes and social environments to young people from Grogol who wanted to live with Muhammadiyah figures to gain knowledge and life guidance. Unlike students in the structure of traditional *pesantren* who follow a structured study schedule, these young residents lived closely with the families of Muhammadiyah leaders, directly observing the daily life of their patrons, and indirectly absorbing religious values as well as the social ethos of Muhammadiyah. The Muhammadiyah figures who served as mentors in this practice were generally individuals who had reached a stable socio-economic position, such as being civil servants, and were known to possess considerable intellectual and spiritual capacity. They have become a representation of Muhammadiyah's educational success in formally producing cadres, while also shaping character through the practice of living together. In this patron-client relationship, *ngenger* serves as a means of transferring values and work ethic, as well as a medium for internalizing the principles of Progressive Islam, which form the ideological foundation of Muhammadiyah.

## B. Cultural Adaptation

The Cultural Adaptation theory explains the process of adjustment that individuals or groups undergo when entering a new cultural environment through ongoing social interactions. Cultural adaptation is not understood as an instant process, but rather as a gradual transformation involving cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes. In the context of communication, this process occurs through the mechanisms of encoding and decoding messages, where the values, norms, and ideology of the new environment are gradually understood, negotiated, and internalized by the newcomers.[18] Cultural adaptation occurs through the stress–adaptation–growth dynamic, which involves initial tension due to cultural differences, followed by adjustment, and culminating in the development of a more complex new identity.[19] This adaptation is influenced by the intensity of interaction, the openness of the receiving environment, and the individual's willingness to learn from everyday social experiences. Kim developed the stress–adaptation–growth model as an analytical framework to explain the mechanisms of cultural adaptation in intercultural communication. The model views adaptation as a cyclical process consisting of three main phases: stress, adaptation, and growth. These three phases are;

1. **Stress Phase** The stress phase is the initial stage of adaptation, characterized by the emergence of cultural and psychological tension due to differences in values, norms, and lifestyles between the original culture and the new culture. This tension can manifest as confusion, discomfort, alienation, and uncertainty in understanding the applicable social rules. The stress phase serves as the initial trigger for the adaptation process, as individuals are driven to adjust in order to function effectively in a new environment.
2. **Adaptation Phase** The adaptation phase is the adjustment stage, where individuals begin to develop strategies to cope with the cultural differences they experience. This adjustment occurs through communication, observation, social learning, and participation in daily activities in the new environment. At this stage, individuals start to understand social interaction patterns, dominant values, and prevailing cultural practices, although they have not fully internalized them.
3. **The Growth Phase** The growth phase is the cumulative result of a repeated process of stress and adaptation. At this stage, individuals experience growth in communication competence and cultural understanding, enabling them to function more effectively and flexibly in a new environment. This growth is marked by an increased capacity to manage cultural differences and the development of a more adaptive and complex identity.

This phase does not occur separately, but rather is interconnected and recurring along with the intensity of an individual's interaction with a new cultural environment. Cultural adaptation is also closely related to informal cultural learning, which is a learning process that is unstructured, not curriculum-based, but takes place through living together (*living-in culture*).[19]. This process is often more effective in shaping value orientation than formal education, because it involves experiential learning. The stress–adaptation–growth model works through a cyclical mechanism. Each encounter with cultural differences generates tension (stress), which then drives the individual to make adjustments (adaptation). This adjustment process leads to the growth of the individual's capacity (growth), which in turn enhances the individual's ability to cope with the next cultural tension. Thus, cultural adaptation is an ongoing process that gradually results in identity transformation through direct experience, role modeling, and emotional relationships.[20]

Within the framework of Cultural Adaptation theory, the *ngenger* tradition in Tempurejo can be understood as a process of cultural adaptation that occurs intensively and continuously. Children participating in *ngenger* experience a cultural and ideological transition, moving from an *abangan* or NU Islamic environment to a Muhammadiyah cultural environment.[21] This relocation places them in a situation of intercultural encounter that requires adjustment of values, norms, and daily life practices. Referring to the stress–adaptation–growth model, the initial phase of *ngenger* is marked by cultural tension (stress). *Ngenger* children must adapt to a more disciplined lifestyle, a high work ethic, and Muhammadiyah religious practices that are rational and minimally symbolic. These differences give rise to a process of negotiating meaning, both in religious and social aspects.

Over time, through daily interactions with the Muhammadiyah family in Tempurejo, the 'ngenger' children enter the adaptation phase. This adaptation occurs through informal education, such as involvement in domestic activities, habituation to worship, family religious study sessions, and non-doctrinaire religious discussions. In this process, Muhammadiyah values are implicitly conveyed through role models and shared life experiences. The next stage is growth, which involves the formation of a new identity orientation. The 'ngenger' children do not merely imitate the behavior of their foster families but begin to internalize Muhammadiyah values as part of their self-awareness. Their Islamic identity undergoes a transformation from being traditionally or syncretically oriented toward progressive Islam. This transformation does not completely erase their original identity but results in a more adaptive cultural synthesis.

## Method

The historical method is a specific guide concerning materials, criticism, interpretation, and the presentation of history. This research method uses a historical approach to study the ngenger tradition as a form of informal education related to formal education in Muhammadiyah. This study focuses on social and cultural processes in the past that shape the interaction between the ngenger tradition and the Muhammadiyah education system. The heuristic stage in historical research is the process of collecting and identifying relevant data sources to obtain a complete picture of the events being studied. Therefore, data were collected from various sources, such as written documents, organizational archives, scientific literature, and interviews with informants who understand the ngenger tradition and Muhammadiyah education. Furthermore, the data were critically analyzed to ensure their authenticity and credibility, and interpreted to understand the role of ngenger as informal education that complements formal education in shaping the character and values of Muhammadiyah cadres. The research results are presented in the form of historical narratives that depict the synergistic relationship between formal and informal education in Muhammadiyah. This qualitative-historical approach aims to understand how the traditional values of ngenger can be integrated into modern Muhammadiyah education.

## Results and Discussion

### A. Muhammadiyah and Ngenger Adaptation as Informal Education in Grogol, Ponorogo

In addition to economic factors and limited access to education, local political dynamics also complicated the social conditions of the Grogol community in Ponorogo from the 1960s to the early 1980s. One issue considered critical by local religious leaders was that the youth of Grogol occupied a strategic position in the dynamics of cultural adaptation taking place through the tradition of ngenger. During the 1960s to early 1980s, Grogol youth generally came from farming families with limited economic means and restricted access to formal education. In the socio-religious landscape, they grew up in a traditional Islamic environment characterized by NU and abangan, with religious practices that were communal, ritualistic, and strongly tied to local traditions. Folk arts served as a medium for ideological penetration, so a number of artists and cultural communities at the village level began to be exposed to leftist political discourse. Traditional art, which originally served as a form of cultural expression and social solidarity, has gradually been politicized and turned into a means of ideological provocation.[5]

The situation has raised serious concerns among the kyai and religious leaders of Grogol. They view that the weak foundation of religious education and the low critical thinking ability of the community could make the younger generation vulnerable to the influence of ideologies that contradict Islamic values. In this context, ngenger is not merely seen as an economic or social learning strategy, but also as a preventive measure to protect the younger generation from ideological penetration considered harmful to the village's social and religious order.<sup>2</sup> Based on this consideration, several kyai encouraged parents to allow their children to participate in ngenger in Tempurrejo, Ngawi. Tempurrejo is perceived as a region that is more economically established, has a more advanced educational environment, and is relatively stable socially and religiously.[22]

During the same period in Tempurejo Village, Ngawi developed into a center of educational activity that promoted modern education, structured and integrated through formal educational institutions. For communities from outside the area, Tempurejo offered an alternative form of learning that combined the orderliness of educational organizations with the traditional culture of local Islamic education. It then became a reference for those seeking knowledge amid the social dynamics of the time. This dynamic brought together traditional ways of life with the need for modern knowledge through the practice of ngenger.[23] The youth from Grogol Village, Ponorogo, came to Tempurejo to gain access to education by settling and serving local families. The meeting between tradition and the need for modern education materialized through the practice of ngenger. The youth from Grogol Village, Ponorogo, came to Tempurejo. Grogol youth who underwent ngenger occupied a distinctive category compared to the other two learning patterns, namely nglaju and mondok. Unlike the nglaju pattern, which allows learners to remain under the cultural control of their home families, and the mondok pattern, which takes place within the institutional environment of pesantren with a relatively clear pedagogical structure, the ngenger pattern places Grogol youth fully within the living space of others.[24]

They enter into the value system, work ethic, and social relationship patterns of the family where they live. Here, a functional role exchange occurs: as boarding individuals, they provide labor assistance in managing domestic or agricultural resources, while the host family facilitates all their learning needs and school expenses as a form of social responsibility. Muhammadiyah offers a different perspective on cultural adaptation, because boarding takes place within a modernist habitus characterized by rationality, discipline, and organization. Bendoro represents the Muhammadiyah life ethic. The life habits of bendoro are emulated by the boarding youth.[25] The combination of Muhammadiyah education and the Ngenger Tradition in Tempurejo is created from a blend of formal school curricula and the informal character education of Ngenger

youth within the household environment. Within the framework of Cultural Adaptation, this situation represents the stress phase, which is the psychological and cultural pressure that arises due to misalignment between old value orientations and the new environment. However, in Ngenger practice, this phase is not allowed to develop into resistance, because Ngenger youth continuously engage in personal and repeated social interactions. Through domestic work, religious habits, and interpersonal relationships, they are both compelled and guided to find ways to function effectively in the new environment. This adjustment process marks the adaptation phase, where Grogol youth begin to develop cultural competence through life experiences.[16]

Adaptation occurs through observing the actions of role models and the social consequences of each behavior. At this stage, the values and norms of the new environment begin to be understood as modern ways of living. The accumulation of these adaptive experiences results in a growth phase, which is the development of new capacities in the young people from Ngenger to manage cultural differences. This growth is evident in their ability to integrate the experiences of Tempurrejo with their original Grogol identity. Upon returning to their home village, the young people from Ngenger do not fully replicate the lifestyle of Tempurrejo, but rather interpret it according to the local context. In this way, they function as agents of adaptation, bringing gradual change through informal educational practices and everyday social relationships.[26] The success of internalizing values in this environment is greatly influenced by the collective integrity of community leaders and homeowners. Rather than emphasizing claims of organizational superiority, they demonstrate dedication through concrete actions that transcend material interests. The willingness of Tempurrejo leaders to allocate personal resources for the public good serves as tangible evidence for young people of how a belief can be realized in systematic and measured social service. Pedagogically, interactions in Tempurrejo are egalitarian and prioritize a dialogical approach over one-way indoctrination. Instructors provide space for each individual to develop independently through various student organization activities. The transformation in students' perspectives occurs organically through direct observation of the discipline, honesty, and professional work ethic practiced by their mentors in daily life.

The experience in Tempurrejo ultimately laid the foundation for its participants when they returned to their hometown in Grogol. They brought home their diplomas, as well as a model of cultural adaptation capable of synergizing systematic thinking with a cultural approach that respects local traditions. Their success in building places of worship and educational institutions in later years was the result of their ability to bridge modern values with the social context of the local community, creating harmonious societal change. After returning to Grogol, the process of cultural adaptation did not stop but continued into the stages of cultural reproduction and institutionalization. Former NGENGER practitioners act as adaptation agents who transfer Muhammadiyah values to their original social environment through informal education, family religious gatherings, youth development, and educational initiatives. In this context, cultural adaptation is two-way. On one hand, Muhammadiyah values are applied in Grogol; on the other hand, these values are adjusted to the local context to be socially accepted. This persuasive and cultural approach explains why the ideological transformation in Grogol occurs gradually and with minimal conflict.

After completing their ngenger period in Ngawi, the participants returned to Grogol carrying a set of values, mindsets, and social practices that had been internalized during their time living with a Muhammadiyah family. The cultural adaptation process that had taken place during the ngenger phase then entered the stage of cultural reproduction in their home environment. In Grogol, these Muhammadiyah values were not immediately implemented in the form of formal organizational structures, but rather applied through community-based informal education. The ngenger alumni began by fostering rational and understanding-oriented religious habits, such as family religious study sessions, practicing worship according to tarjih guidelines, and engaging in dialogical Islamic discussions. This pattern reflects their experience during ngenger, where the learning process occurred without indoctrination. The Islamic modernity values and religious purification they internalized during their ngenger in Tempurrejo. In the material realm, through the development of physical infrastructure as a medium for legitimizing a new identity. After seeing and experiencing life as a 'ngenger' practitioner.

The application of ngenger values is evident in the attention given to education as the main charitable endeavor. The awareness of the importance of education that they acquired during ngenger has driven the emergence of local educational initiatives in Grogol and its surroundings. The establishment of five mosques, nine prayer rooms, as well as formal educational institutions such as MTs Muhammadiyah 10 and three Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal kindergartens has created new public spaces that function as arenas for the reproduction of values, discipline, and modern educational orientation for the next generation. The presence of non-affiliated Muhammadiyah educational institutions, such as MI Nurul Huda, does not necessarily eliminate this practice; rather, they run alongside and complement each other. Children who formally attend schools in Muhammadiyah institutions still undergo informal education through ngenger, even though the religious practices follow the NU traditions present in the community. The subsequent transformation seeps into the most fundamental aspects of religious life, particularly in ritual practices and community management. One visible manifestation is the shift in the location of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha prayers, from mosque spaces to open village fields. This change has made Islamic outreach points more open, collective, and public, in line with the spirit of reform characteristic of the Muhammadiyah movement. Through such public rituals, the social space of the village is redefined as an arena for da'wah and a more open expression of religious identity.

The cultural adaptation of Ngenger alumni is also evident in the modernization of the management of religious and educational organizations. The 'organizational order' culture they brought from their experience interacting with Muhammadiyah structures in Tempurrejo Ngawi encouraged changes in the management of mosques and schools. Management patterns that were previously familial and informal began to shift toward a system of administration that is more transparent, planned, and based on clear role distribution. These changes show how cultural adaptation also influences the logic of managing social institutions at the village level. The success of this adaptation has also shaped the unique geographical and social dynamics of Grogol Village. The emergence of the southern area of the village, particularly

around Gunung Selatan as the new center of Muhammadiyah educational and religious activities, marks a shift in the social orbit of the community. This spatial division creates a relatively balanced cultural configuration between the Northern region, which remains strong with Nahdlatul Ulama traditions, and the Southern region, which represents the spirit of modernist Islamic reform. Thus, the cultural adaptation of the alumni of ngenger does not result in open conflict but rather forms space and identity differentiation that coexist. In the social realm, the values of egalitarianism and professionalism are realized through equal relationships among community members. Alumni engaged in ngenger do not position themselves as religious elites but as community movers working collectively. They are actively involved in community activities, children's education, and youth development, so that Muhammadiyah values are accepted as social solutions.

## Conclusion

The ngenger tradition has become both a tradition and a medium through which individual initiatives of Muhammadiyah figures manifest by becoming bendoro, who live with and provide access for young people to serve. The bendoro is a party with higher economic, social, or intellectual status compared to the conditions of the original family, while those who become ngenger come from families with limited economic means or lower social status. This tradition generally involves kinship or family relationships, but in practice, it can also include others who are not related by blood. Ideologically, the implementation of ngenger results in Grogol marks a shift from abangan or traditional Islam toward progressive Islam in the Muhammadiyah style. However, this shift occurs gradually and peacefully, supported by a cultural approach that respects local traditions. Thus, former ngenger practitioners function as agents of cultural adaptation, bridging Muhammadiyah values with the social context of Grogol. Through this practice, ngenger is not merely a paternalistic Javanese cultural heritage but also transforms into an informal educational system that enables social mobility and self-transformation. Living experiences with Muhammadiyah patrons provide space for ngenger practitioners to learn through role modeling, practical work, and meaningful social interactions. Therefore, the ngenger tradition in the Muhammadiyah context can be understood as a form of experiential learning that helps shape the character of the organization's cadres in a contextual and transformative manner.

Within this framework, 'ngenger' does not conflict with Muhammadiyah ideology, because the practice does not function as a transmission of organizational identity, but rather as a mechanism for value education and character development. At the local level, Muhammadiyah appears more as a pragmatic and contextual educational institution, accepting the existence of informal traditions as long as they do not contradict the basic principles of Islamic teachings. This shows that Muhammadiyah modernism in practice is flexible and adaptive. Thus, the 'ngenger' tradition serves as a space for primary cultural adaptation, while Grogol becomes a space for actualizing that adaptation. The Theory of Cultural Adaptation helps explain that the cadre development within Muhammadiyah is not an instant ideological conversion process, but rather the result of life experiences, intercultural communication, and continuous informal education.

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