



## Socio-Religious Movement: MPTT-I in the Spread of Tasawuf Tauhid in South Aceh

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### A B S T R A C T

This study aims to explain the resource mobilization strategies used by the Indonesian Tauhid Tasawuf Study Council (MPTT-I) in spreading Sufism teachings in South Aceh and its ability to survive amidst resistance from mainstream religious authorities. The study employed a descriptive qualitative method, collecting data through in-depth interviews, observations of da'wah activities, and documentation studies. Data analysis was conducted through interactive data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing techniques, and validity was strengthened by triangulation of sources and methods. The results indicate that the successful development of MPTT-I is supported by the utilization of material resources such as da'wah facilities and voluntary support from the congregation, as well as human resources through cadre structures and charismatic leadership. Furthermore, symbolic capital and social networks, including the use of digital media, play a significant role in strengthening the movement's legitimacy and expanding its support base. MPTT-I is also responsive to criticism and competition from religious authorities at the local level. In conclusion, MPTT-I is able to combine traditional da'wah practices with modern organizational strategies, thus maintaining its existence and development within the socio-religious dynamics of South Aceh. These findings emphasize the importance of resource mobilization for the sustainability of socio-religious movements in Indonesia.

### INTRODUCTION

This study examines the contemporary Sufism movement of the Indonesian Tauhid Tasawuf Study Council (MPTT-I) in spreading Sufism teachings in South Aceh as an important socio-religious phenomenon. This religious movement exists not only as a spiritual practice but also has an influence on shaping the religious patterns of society at the grassroots level (Hutabarat, 2023). As a Sufism-based religious movement, MPTT-I offers a religious approach that emphasizes the spiritual dimension, moral development, and the transcendental relationship between humans and God, which has a unique appeal for the Muslim community in Aceh (Badaruddin & Mahyuddin, 2021; Murahim et al., 2024; Syahida, 2021).

Aceh is a region that implements Islamic law in its socio-political order (Muchsini & Armi, 2024). However, the implementation of sharia in society continues to demonstrate the diversity of religious practices, including the strong Sufism tradition in Aceh's Islamic history. Historically, major Sufi orders such as the Syattariyah and Naqsyabandiyah have contributed significantly to the internalization of Sufi values in society (Abdullah, 2011; Azra, 2013). The presence of the MPTT-I (Indonesian Islamic Movement for the Study of Islam) is part of this contemporary religious dynamic, where Sufi spirituality is brought to life through collective da'wah methods that are readily accepted by the grassroots. Based on initial interviews and local media publications, MPTT-I activities, such as religious study groups, regular dhikr (remembrance gatherings), and science assemblies, continue to grow and attract enthusiasm from the people of South Aceh, both among youth and local figures (Fahmi & Kesuma, 2021). Thus, MPTT-I plays a role in strengthening community-based religious social structures.

The growth of this movement is inseparable from resistance from mainstream scholars such as Tastaifi, some traditional Islamic boarding schools, and Salafi groups. The criticisms generally concern the epistemological approach to understanding hadith and concerns about the social influence this movement has exerted (Damanhuri, 2021; Mawardi et al., 2023). For example, the difference in emphasis on the text of the hadith compared to the sanad has become the basis for criticism of the validity of the teaching references used by the MPTT-I. Furthermore, some believe that the expansion of MPTT-I's da'wah could displace the authority of charismatic clerics who have dominated the local socio-religious structure. This phenomenon demonstrates a contestation over religious legitimacy that influences not only theological matters but also the social dynamics of South Aceh society (Kartika, 2020).

In the sociology of religion, religious movements are understood as entities capable of mobilizing social resources to expand their influence. McCarthy & Zald (2017) explain that a movement's success depends heavily on its ability to mobilize networks, public support, and symbolic resources. Furthermore, Weber's authority theory explains that the presence of charismatic leaders like Abuya Amran Wali provides powerful cultural capital in strengthening congregational loyalty and fostering emotional bonds between leaders and followers. Therefore, the MPTT-I can be analyzed as a socio-religious movement that utilizes spiritual and social power as instruments for mobilizing and consolidating its congregation.

Previous research on the MPTT-I has generally focused on the da'wah aspect and the accompanying theological controversies. For example, Engelen et al., (2022), emphasize the societal acceptance of Sufi da'wah practices in the context of modern religiosity, particularly regarding the increasing interest in spirituality that provides inner peace. Furthermore, several

other studies have focused more on scholarly criticisms from mainstream ulama groups against the MPTT-I's epistemological approach, such as the perceived dominance of hadith texts over sanad (chains of narration), as well as debates over the legitimacy of the Sufi teachings they developed (Rozi et al., 2024).

Research highlighting the contestation of religious authority has also revealed tensions between the MPTT-I and local religious institutions with historical influence in Aceh, such as traditional dayahs and the Tastaifi movement (Zass, 2020). However, these studies have focused on theological disputes and have not comprehensively examined how the MPTT-I formulated social strategies to maintain its existence and expand its congregational network amidst resistance. Meanwhile, Research examining the MPTT-I from a social movement perspective is still scarce, including how the organization utilizes material, symbolic, and technological resources to build collective power at the grassroots level. Social dynamics and resource mobilization strategies enable contemporary Sufi movements like the MPTT-I to survive, thrive, and gain legitimacy in society. This gap is shaping the direction of the transformation of religious movements in Indonesia.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on analyzing the patterns of social, cultural, and symbolic resource mobilization employed by the MPTT-I in confronting more established religious actors. The urgency of this research is also based on the fact that the dynamics of religious authority in Aceh continue to change due to the entry of new religious movements, necessitating a comprehensive understanding to prevent relations between authorities from leading to social disintegration. By focusing on the social strategies of the MPTT-I, this research not only enriches academic scholarship on contemporary Sufism but also provides insight into the management of religious authority at the local level.

This study aims to identify the social resources utilized by the MPTT-I in spreading Sufism in South Aceh and to analyze resource mobilization strategies in the face of resistance from the dominant religious authority structure. Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to the development of sociological studies of religious movements in Indonesia, while practically, it will provide input for stakeholders in building harmonious religious relations amidst differing understandings of Islam in Aceh.

## METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a constructivist paradigm, aiming to deeply understand the dynamics of the spread of Sufism through the Indonesian Tauhid Sufism Study Council (MPTT-I) in South Aceh. This approach was chosen to describe and analyze the socio-religious phenomena that occurred as understood by the actors and parties directly involved in MPTT-I activities (Bogna & Dell, 2020).

The research location was in South Aceh Regency, with a focus on areas that are centers of da'wah activities and the development of MPTT-I's congregational network. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, selecting individuals deemed knowledgeable and directly involved in the movement. Informants in this study included MPTT-I administrators, active congregations, community leaders, and

religious scholars who responded to MPTT-I's existence. The number of informants was determined based on data sufficiency or the principle of saturation, when the information obtained was deemed sufficient for analysis.

Data collection was conducted through several techniques, including in-depth interviews, direct observation of routine MPTT-I activities such as congregational religious study and dhikr (remembrance of God), and documentation studies covering organizational archives, media publications, and relevant literature. Interviews were conducted semi-structured to provide flexibility in exploring the experiences, perspectives, and motivations behind the informants' involvement in this movement. Meanwhile, observations were conducted to understand the social interactions within the congregational community and the missionary communication strategies employed by MPTT-I to expand its influence (Paradis & Martimianakis, 2016).

Data analysis was conducted interactively, following the steps of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing as developed. During the data reduction stage, all interview and observation data were transcribed and sorted based on their relevance to the research focus. The data were then presented in thematic categories that reflect the resource mobilization strategies employed by MPTT-I. Furthermore, conclusions were drawn continuously throughout the research process to ensure that the final results factually reflect the empirical situation and are scientifically sound (Miles & Saldaña, 2014).

The validity of the data in this study was ensured through triangulation techniques, including source and method triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from various informants with different backgrounds, while method triangulation was conducted by combining interviews, observations, and documentation as complementary sources of evidence. This ensures the reliability and validity of the data, and the interpretation of the research results accurately reflects the actual conditions on the ground. Overall, this research methodology is designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the social resource mobilization strategies employed by the MPTT-I to strengthen the presence of the contemporary Sufism movement in South Aceh, including how this movement negotiates resistance from the dominant religious authorities in the region.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Conversion of Material and Human Resources as the Foundation of the Organization

The MPTT-I movement in South Aceh demonstrates that the success of da'wah (Islamic outreach) depends heavily on the organization's ability to utilize its various resources, both material and human. These resources include da'wah posts spread across several regions, homes of sympathizers used as centers for religious activities, waqf land used for the development of worship facilities, and logistical support from members who voluntarily contribute. This infrastructure utilization demonstrates that the MPTT-I movement has a strong physical foundation to sustain independent, structured, and sustainable da'wah activities within the community (Manan, 2021).

Furthermore, human resources play an equally important role. Through a clear cadre system, the organization is able to

produce da'wah activists with high loyalty and competence in conveying Sufism teachings. The active involvement of members in every da'wah program demonstrates a strong emotional and spiritual bond between leaders and followers, thereby strengthening the organization's internal cohesion.

This phenomenon aligns with the Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) (McCarthy & Zald, 2017), which states that the success of a social movement is determined by its ability to manage and utilize available resources, both material and non-material. In other words, the strength of MPTT-I rests not only on its spiritual dimension but also on its organizational capacity to mobilize broad support at the grassroots level. This strategic approach provides a crucial foundation for the sustainability of the modern Sufism movement in South Aceh and demonstrates how the organization's internal structure can support the expansion and stability of its social influence amidst local religious dynamics.

Religious and belief movements in Indonesia, such as research on the Gerakan Kebatinan Perjalanan (AKP) (Putri & Fedryansyah, 2021), demonstrate similar patterns in mobilization strategies. Organizations that are able to effectively gather and manage resources, both from within the community, such as member loyalty and voluntary donations, and externally through social networks and the support of local figures, along with the development of more formal institutional structures, have proven to have a greater chance of maintaining their existence amidst competition for religious authority and dynamic social change. These institutional structures serve not only as administrative platforms but also as instruments of legitimacy, strengthening the organization's standing in the eyes of the public.

This situation confirms that the success of MPTT-I is not an isolated phenomenon, but rather part of a general pattern in the development of socio-religious movements in Indonesia, where resource utilization is a primary strategy for expanding influence and strengthening the congregational base. Therefore, the conversion of material and human resources cannot be viewed merely as a technical or operational aspect, but rather as a structural foundation that significantly determines the sustainability of da'wah activities, opportunities for community network expansion, and long-term organizational stability. This strategic approach is an important element that enables MPTT-I to remain relevant and competitive in the ever-changing religious landscape.

### **Symbolic and Moral Capital: Social Legitimacy through Collective Identity**

In addition to material and human structural capital, research also shows that symbolic and moral capital play a significant role in strengthening the social legitimacy of MPTT-I within the South Aceh community. This symbolic capital is reflected in the charisma of the leader, who serves as a central figure and source of spiritual authority within the movement, fostering emotional closeness and strong loyalty among its followers. Furthermore, the implementation of collective rituals such as dhikr (remembrance of God), regular religious studies, and da'wah practices involving many participants contributes to building a sense of togetherness and collective solidarity that serves as the basis for the organization's social integration (Hanafi, 2020).

Community attributes such as activity uniforms, organizational flags, and documentation of da'wah activities on social media serve as identity markers that distinguish MPTT-I from other religious groups and strengthen the movement's visibility in the public sphere. The movement's legitimacy is further strengthened by its moral values, namely moral development, a calming spiritual approach, and the readily accepted teachings of monotheism (Sufism), which create a positive image for the organization.

All of these forms of capital align with the theoretical perspective of Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT), which emphasizes that non-material resources such as social legitimacy, member loyalty, moral commitment, interpersonal trust, and strong social networks are crucial factors in social mobilization and the success of religious movements. Thus, symbolic and moral capital not only complements da'wah activities but also constitutes a strategic asset that supports the consistency, public acceptance, and resilience of the MPTT-I in the contestation of religious authority in Aceh.

Empirical research also supports the importance of symbolic and moral capital in underpinning the success of socio-religious movements. Various studies of contemporary social movements show that religious communities and belief systems often utilize specific symbols, rituals, and religious narratives as tools to foster solidarity and strengthen a sense of belonging among their members. These symbolic aspects from the interpretation of teachings deemed authentic to the use of organizational attributes and symbols serve as markers of collective identity that distinguish the group from other religious communities. The presence of a clear identity fosters a sense of shared spiritual purpose among members, thus strengthening collective commitment and loyalty to the organization.

Furthermore, symbolic and moral capital function not only as ritual elements or aesthetic aspects within religious organizations but also as strategic sources of legitimacy for the movement's long-term sustainability. This capital can increase social acceptance, expand public support, and help the movement withstand pressure or resistance from groups with more dominant religious authority. Therefore, in the context of MPTT-I, the organization's ability to frame Sufism teachings as a legitimate and beneficial path of spiritual development for society is a crucial key to maintaining its existence amidst the socio-religious dynamics of South Aceh.

### **Social Networks and Technology: Relational Capital for Modern Mobilization**

Field findings indicate that social networks play a significant role in expanding the reach of MPTT-I's da'wah program in South Aceh. These networks are built through strong interpersonal relationships among members, both within families, friendships, and within the local communities where they operate. At the organizational level, coordination between da'wah posts spread across various sub-districts strengthens the movement's integration, allowing for structured and equitable delivery of da'wah messages and agendas down to the grassroots level. The existence of these internal networks creates effective communication channels, accelerates decision-making processes, and ensures member involvement in all activities (Darmadi & Zainal, 2025).

In addition to direct community-based social networks, the use of digital media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and streaming channels is a crucial element in expanding mobilization space amidst current advances in information technology. Social media is used not only as a means of publicizing da'wah activities but also as a platform for building a sense of community, introducing Sufism to a broader audience, and recruiting new members across regions previously unreachable by conventional da'wah. This phenomenon aligns with modern social movement literature, which asserts that organizations that optimize media opportunities and broad networks are more likely to disseminate ideas, strengthen community consolidation, and increase the movement's appeal within the community. Thus, the power of social networks and the use of information technology are highly strategic relational capital for the sustainability and expansion of MPTT-I in the digital age (Mansursyah, 2021). The following are the results of the MPTT-I capture of Social Media Channels, Websites, Instagram, and Facebook:



Source: Processed by researchers (2025)

Contemporary movements, both environmental and faith-based, emphasize that digital mobilization is now a key strategy for strengthening social movements. The use of social media and various digital platforms creates a more open, rapid, and efficient communication space, enabling the exchange of information and collective appeals at low cost yet with broad impact. Information technology enables activists to disseminate movement narratives, document activities, and foster sustainable public participation through various forms of easily accessible da'wah content (Munandar, 2025; Wibisono & Rahman, 2025).

The existence of this digital space also makes movements more adaptable to constantly changing socio-religious dynamics, as relationships between members are no longer solely dependent on geographic proximity. Through virtual communication networks, the recruitment process can reach new communities beyond their original regions, even transcending administrative boundaries that previously hampered the spread of da'wah. Thus, social networks

integrated with modern communication technology serve as highly strategic relational capital for strengthening organizational structures, expanding the support base of congregations, and accelerating movement mobilization in today's increasingly digital society.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the successful development of the Indonesian Tauhid Tasawuf Study Council (MPTTI) in South Aceh is influenced by the organization's ability to strategically mobilize resources, including material support, a multi-level leadership structure, social legitimacy through symbols and leader charisma, and the utilization of social networks and digital media. The integration of traditional community-based da'wah practices with modern organizational management strategies enables this movement to develop sustainably and adapt to broader social dynamics.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that MPTTI continue to strengthen its institutional capacity and cadre development at the regional level, improve coordination of da'wah posts, and develop a better internal communication system. Local governments and religious institutions are also expected to support inclusive dialogue to prevent misunderstandings between religious organizations. Further research could deepen the study of internal relations, the dynamics of congregational identity, and compare MPTTI with other Sufism movements in Indonesia to produce richer and more comprehensive academic contributions.

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