

Dialectics of Islam and Bengal: A Study of the Da'wah Strategy of the *Mafia Sholawat* in Java

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ABSTRACT

The research aims to determine: the philosophical, doctrinal, and sociological foundations behind the da'wah orientation; da'wah strategy; and the transformation of religious prayer Mafia congregations. This qualitative research uses the method of observation, documentation, and interviews. The results showed that: Gus Ali Gondrong with his Mafia Sholawat preferred the Bengali community as the object of his da'wah. Gus Ali Gondrong's da'wah strategy used various media including: physical media, verbal, and amaliah media. Sholawat accompanied by music and Sufi dances, the tausyah conveyed by Gus Ali was non-judgmental and able to embrace the bengal community. Third, Gus Ali Gondrong's da'wah strategy uses Berger and Luckmann's theoretical framework by using a dialectical process experienced by humans through three momentums, namely: externalization, objectivation, and internalization. The transformation of the congregation is evidenced by changes in attitudes, behavior, and commitment to religious teachings; feel like a better human being, act the right way; as well as a change in the principle of religious life towards a more firm and clear direction. This research can contribute to development of more contextual and effective da'wah theories and strategies in dealing with ignorance, especially in the Javanese context.

Keywords: Islamic dialectics, ignorance, da'wah strategy, prayer Mafia, transformation, repentance



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INTRODUCTION

Just hearing its name makes the public curious about what and how *Mafia Sholawat* is. Although not as popular as other *sholawat* assemblies such as Ahabul Musthofa Habib Syech and Mocopat *Sholawat* Cak Nun, “*Mafia Sholawat*” is very well known and has thousands of followers in the eastern part of Central Java and parts of East Java. The lack of popularity of “*Mafia Sholawat*”, apart from its recent emergence, is also due to its image of being close to people who seem “savage”. The savagery in question is a symbolic representation that is attached to groups who are considered to be far from religion, such as thugs, punks, festivalists, and so on [1], [2].

Mafia Sholawat is a da'wah movement through music, *sholawat*, and sermons led by a young kyai who is familiarly called Gus Ali. The leader of “*Mafia Sholawat*” whose full name is Drs. KH. Muhammad Ali Shodiqin is the caretaker of the Rodloutun Nikmah Islamic boarding school in Semarang. This young kyai has an eccentric appearance with long hair, so he is often called Gus Ali Gondrong. His different appearance, his skill in singing modern songs and music with pop-rock nuances, and his relaxed and friendly da'wah style make him easily popular among young people [2], [3].

The use of the name *Mafia Sholawat* is quite unique, because the word *Mafia* is always identical to the dark world or crime. It is not surprising when it was revealed that many of the *Mafia Sholawat* congregation are from groups that are close to potential criminals such as thugs, ex-convicts, street children, and punks. The use of the name *Mafia Sholawat* could be part of a strategy so that Islamic preaching can reach groups that are quite difficult and rarely touched. Usually *sholawat* is an activity of “good people” who wear caps and dress modestly, even dominated by white clothes, so *Mafia Sholawat* seems to choose a different preaching segment, namely those who are still “black” and like to call themselves ‘*wong edan*’ or crazy people [1], [4].

In addition to being a strategy to get closer to the object of da'wah, the name *Mafia Sholawat* is actually a philosophical acronym. *Mafia* is an abbreviation of “*Manunggaling Fikiran lan Ati*”. Usually, the abbreviation of *Mafia* is then combined with “*ing dalem Sholawat*”, and then used as a slogan that is written under the symbol writing. So that the complete version becomes “*Mafia Sholawat: Manunggaling Fikiran lan Ati ing dalem Sholawat.*” The word *manunggaling* (Javanese) means the unification of something. The aspects that are united are the mind and heart (*fikiran lan ati*), and the way to unite them is within (*ing dalem*) *sholawat* [2], [3], [5].

Despite being close to the ‘black circles’, the *Mafia Sholawat* still does not lose its Islamic and nationalistic image. The *Mafia Sholawat* appears to have three orientations, namely inviting people to immediately repent from “black deeds”, inviting people to love religion by loving their prophet, and inviting people to maintain the integrity of the Republic of Indonesia. This is reflected in the chants and slogans that they often spread, namely “*NKRI Harga Mati, Sholawat Hingga Mati, Taubat Sebelum Mati*” [4]–[6].

From the phenomenon seen from the *Sholawat* Assembly, researchers are interested in digging deeper, what is the real reason that makes the *Mafia Sholawat* choose the segmentation of the object of preaching among the ‘black’ or unruly circles. This is interesting, because “not many preachers can embrace this circle so closely”, usually mass religious activities such as religious studies, *mujadah*, and so on are always identical to groups of good people who want to do more good.

Based on this description, this research was conducted with the aim of: 1) understanding the philosophical, doctrinal, and sociological foundations behind the orientation of the *Mafia Sholawat's* preaching, so that they choose groups of people who are identical to unruly as the objects of Islamic preaching; 2) knowing the preaching strategy developed by the *Mafia Sholawat*; 3) knowing the religious transformation of the *Mafia Sholawat* members/congregation after participating in activities held by the *Mafia Sholawat*.

METHOD

This research is a qualitative research. The subjects of the research include the *Sholawat* Assembly called "*Mafia Sholawat*" led by Gus Ali which is located in several cities in Central Java and East Java, namely: Wonogiri, Ponorogo, Ngawi, Karanganyar and Pacitan and the 'rogue community group' which is its congregation. Data collection techniques use observation, documentation, and in-depth interviews.

Observations are carried out to take a closer look at the activities of the "*Mafia Sholawat*" and the 'rogue group' being studied. In some cases, participatory observation will be carried out where the researcher will be involved in the *sholawat* activities and the activities of the 'rogue group'. In addition to observation, the researcher also uses documentation, namely looking for documentation data about the "*Mafia Sholawat*" and other documents relevant to the research theme. The researcher will also use the interview method. Interviews were conducted with Gus Ali, the administrators of "*Mafia Sholawat*", and members of the 'rogue group' in a semi-structured and open manner. This means that the interview will be fluid and flexible, but will still be focused on the data you want to find.

However, in-depth interviews will be conducted on several key persons to obtain in-depth explanations. To obtain key figures, a snowball technique will be used. By snowballing, the interviewed subjects will be traced according to recommendations from subjects who have been and are being studied. Thus, the number of informants who will be used as research subjects cannot be determined. However, informants will continue to be sought until a complete picture of the problem being studied is obtained. With this method, it is hoped that the most authoritative key figures will be found to provide information.

The documentation method will be applied to research in the form of: written archives, images, photos, videos and soft files owned by the subject. These documents are used to clarify the problems being studied. In addition to taking existing documents, researchers will also document moments and evidence that support and enrich the research data. Documentation is also carried out through literature searches from various sources that support the data.

After the data is collected, a qualitative data analysis will be carried out using the modification of Miles et al. [7]. There are several stages that will be carried out. First, data reduction will be carried out, including selection, categorization, and sorting. Second, data exploration is carried out to clarify and deepen the data found. Third, data verification is carried out to prove the accuracy of the truth of the existing data, by cross-checking with other data. The fourth stage is data contextualization, namely bringing together field data with data from library research. As a comparative study, the data that has been processed will be compared based on predetermined parameters. This entire process will produce a descriptive-analytical presentation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mafia Sholawat Profile

History of the Birth of Mafia Sholawat

The *Mafia Sholawat* Islamic study group was founded by K.H. Drs. Muhammad Ali Shodiqin. Discussing *Mafia Sholawat* cannot be separated from the figure of Gus Ali Gondrong, the popular nickname of K.H. Drs. Muhammad Ali Shodiqin, as the founder and central figure. *Mafia Sholawat* itself is an acronym for 'Manunggaling Fikiran Lan Ati Ingdalem *Sholawat*', which means the unity of mind and heart in *sholawat*. a group that teaches that the heart and mind can unite in goodness and invites love for the Prophet Muhammad SAW through the chanting of *sholawat* [2]–[5].

The origin of the *Mafia Sholawat* assembly began with the Roudhotun Ni'mah Islamic boarding school. Before establishing *Mafia Sholawat*, he first established an Islamic boarding school called Raudhotun Ni'mah in Semarang City. This Islamic boarding school was originally founded by Habib Alwi bin Ahmad bin Mukhsin Asegaf, located in the village of Kalicari Pedurungan Semarang. In 1990 Habib Alwi died, and after his death there was a vacuum in the leader of the boarding school/kyai and that caused the students to gradually leave the Islamic boarding school. The Islamic boarding school became empty and the condition of the building seemed haunted [4].

From there the idea and embryo of the history of *Mafia Sholawat* began. When he first pioneered and managed the Islamic boarding school, he was assisted by his wife, Umi Denik. It can be said that the pioneering period was carried out by the two of them. Gus Ali Gondrong's real name is Muhammad Ali Shodiqin. He was born in Brati, Purwodadi on September 22, 1973. From his marriage to Umi Denik, he was blessed with three children, namely Ayuk, Alwi and Diah. Since deciding to care for and manage the boarding school, he, who is now often called Gus Ali Gondrong, began looking for prospective students, in the midst of his busy schedule carrying out preaching activities in night entertainment venues such as discos, cafes and even thug dens became the targets of his preaching (Interview with Gus Oon, 2020).

Furthermore, when Gus Ali Gondrong was actively pioneering da'wah in entertainment venues and mingling with those who lived in the dark world, at the same time the household relationship he built with Umi Denik faced trials, experienced disharmony and fate said otherwise, his household with Umi Denik which had been blessed with 3 (three) children ended in divorce, after various efforts to improve it had been made of course. Even though at that time Gus Ali Gondrong lived alone without a wife, it did not reduce his commitment to advancing the Islamic boarding school with his students, advancing the boarding school. His daily life was still filled with da'wah activities; going to places of prostitution, cafes, discos not to entertain himself but instead, to awaken and guide them to the path that was approved by Allah, and solely to fight to advance the Islamic religion (Interview with Gus Oon, 2020).

Before Being Named Mafia Sholawat

Before being called *Mafia Sholawat*, this assembly actually existed in 2010, with the name "*Bodrek*". *Bodrek* itself is the initial name given by Gus Ali Gondrong to the group in the assembly in Ponorogo. The philosophy of the name *Bodrek* is quite unique, namely that most people who attend Gus Ali Gondrong's religious studies are people who are still confused (want to be good, but have not found the right place for them). *Bodrek* (for Javanese) can also be interpreted as a headache, that's why he used the term *Bodrek* so that people who feel confused and have a lot of things to do can attend the religious studies and get the cure.

Vision and Mission of Mafia Sholawat

The *Sholawat Mafia* Assembly as an organization or association also has a vision and mission that are used as part of strategic planning to achieve the future imagination that the organization dreams of. In fact, the great ideals that the *Sholawat Mafia* wants to realize are very much based on nationalism; strengthening the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). This vision is important to raise because in Gus Ali Gondrong's view, this has begun to be eroded by irresponsible individuals, caused by, among other things, a lack of insight into the NKRI. In addition, according to Gus Ali Gondrong, the *Sholawat Mafia* is also a medium to strengthen and maintain the culture of Nahdlatul Ulama. One of them is the tradition of reciting *sholawat* which is considered heretical and forbidden by certain groups who are anti-*sholawat* but still claim to be experts on the *sunnah wal jamaah*.

Departing from these two great ideals and to realize all its ideals, *Mafia Sholawat* which is centered at the Raudlotun Ni'mah Islamic Boarding School Foundation is used as a center for learning and coaching with a vision to make students into pious, intellectual and moral individuals. While the derivation of this vision, the following missions are formulated: a) strengthening guidance for religious practices (Islam) b). providing educational services c). increasing training and skills d) developing motivation, mental and spiritual e) empowering potential and intellectual abilities in an integrated manner.

Background of the Mafia Sholawat Da'wah in Bengal Society

Mafia Sholawat was originally intended for people who were identified with immorality and unruly. Therefore, it is not surprising that most of the members/congregation of *Mafia Sholawat* consisted of various groups that had often been identified with "black life". The preaching carried out by Gus Ali Gondrong with his *Mafia Sholawat* was quite unique at that time. In general, preachers in mosques go through religious study forums, but he actually visited those who lived in the dark world, including street children, drunkards, drug addicts, prostitutes, and so on, who were in the crowds of Semarang City. The choice to make thugs, prostitutes, thieves, street children and those who lived in the world of immorality became the attraction of Gus Ali Gondrong and the *Mafia Sholawat* assembly which was glanced at by many parties to be studied. Not many preachers were willing and able to touch these groups. The preaching approach that Gus Ali Gondrong used was also another attraction.



Figure 1. Researcher with Malik, a student at the Raudhlatun Ni'mah Islamic Boarding School

Mafia Sholawat Preaching Strategy

Events in Open Spaces

Mafia Sholawat activities are mostly carried out in open spaces and using public facilities such as fields or main roads. As stated earlier, this is due to the increase in followers

since *Mafia Sholawat* took a stance as an open assembly for the general public. Therefore, using public facilities is a must and cannot be avoided so that the congregation can be accommodated, in addition to of course to maintain the activities. A series of complete active speakers and other supporting components for religious study activities accompany each activity. *Mafia Sholawat* activities require a stage approximately 1.5 meters high with a width that adjusts to field conditions. The selection of public facilities is an additional attraction for young people to attend. Although it is held using public facilities such as fields or main roads, because it is held at night, it practically does not disrupt the order of road users, even so, the committee always cooperates with security forces such as the police (Interview with Sarkub, a student at the Raudhlatun Ni'mah Islamic Boarding School, 9-11-2020).

Drinking Water Distribution

Regarding the distribution of special items to the congregation by spreading and throwing them is part of a series of subsequent da'wah event activities. However, specifically regarding the drinking water that is distributed, it is not just sharing water without meaning. Behind it is a prayer from Gus Ali Gondrong. The method before the water is distributed, a prayer is inserted from his mouth and then sprayed into the drinking water that will be distributed. In the congregation's belief, the water that has been prayed for is believed to have a kind of blessing or advantage, so that when the water is thrown by Gus Ali Gondrong, the congregation fights over it. Once again, this activity is not merely sharing water, but deeper than that, expecting blessings through the medium of water that has been prayed for by Gus Ali Gondrong; a figure they consider to have "advantages". Based on the congregation's belief, Gus Ali Gondrong does not forbid the congregation's belief, allowing the congregation's belief to be like that. However, he advised that the important thing is not to ask where this item came from, its origin, and how it was done (Interview with Gus Oon, 9-11-2020).

Chanting of Sholawat Accompanied by Music

One of the attractions of the *Majelis Mafia Sholawat* da'wah event is the chanting of *sholawat* accompanied by music. As explained earlier, the Semut Ireng rebana is a da'wah medium used by Gus Ali Gondrong in his da'wah strategy. This rebana group always accompanies him wherever he preaches. The presence of Semut Ireng always steals the attention of the congregation and is also one of their attractions. The reason is that it has a variety of *sholawat* that can be sung with a variety of songs, the instruments in the Semut Ireng vehicle are a combination of modern musical instruments such as guitars, buses, drums, and electric organs combined in hadrah or tambourine musical instruments. One thing that is typical of the *sholawat* music event that is played, from the variety of *sholawat* that are performed in various songs, there is one song that is sung and made into a "mars" by *Mafia Sholawat* which is always sung at the beginning of the event, before the other series of events.

Sufi Dance as an Attraction for the Congregation

Regarding this Sufi dance, it has been mentioned before that this dance is part of Gus Ali Gondrong's da'wah media. The dancers are his own students who are already proficient. This Sufi dance is never absent from every *Mafia Sholawat* performance wherever it is held in various regions. Therefore, this dance is a series of events that are also mandatory in every performance. When performing, this dancer wears long clothes; the dancer wears pants then adds a piece of cloth like a skirt so that when the dancer does a spinning movement, the cloth blooms like an umbrella. Usually, in one performance in a *sholawat* event, 10 male and female dancers appear. The colors of the dancers' uniforms vary, there are red, yellow, green, orange, white, and so on. The appearance of the dancers in every *Mafia Sholawat* da'wah performance

certainly raises curiosity. From this curiosity, they then want to find out what the motive is behind the Sufi dance. *Sholawat* or contemporary songs performed with musical accompaniment, then Sufi dances, especially held in open fields and lively, of course for young people who are members of the congregation, are media that they like and become a special attraction for the congregation. This is of course a gap for Gus Ali Gondrong's preaching to introduce ways to get closer to Allah SWT (Interview with Gus Oon, 9-11-2020).

Mafia Sholawat Slogans

There are several unique slogans that *Mafia Sholawat* has to greet the congregation. And these slogans become strong and inherent characters. As explained, the unique and eccentric greetings, although simple, have meaning, especially regarding the vision of *Mafia Sholawat* that they want to realize. At least through these greetings, it becomes a reminder for the congregation regarding the vision and mission of *Mafia Sholawat*'s existence or the reason why *Mafia Sholawat* was presented. Some greetings using the slogans used by Gus Ali Gondrong are as follows:

Gus Ali Gondrong while standing *Mafia Sholawat*...?

Audience: Great!

Gus Ali Gondrong: NKRI?

Audience: Non-negotiable!

Gus Ali Gondrong: *Sholawat*.

Audience: Until Death!

Gus Ali Gondrong: Repentance...?

Audience: "Before you die!"

Model of Mauidzoh Hasanah

The final session of the *Mafia Sholawat* assembly series is prayer. The duration of this prayer session is usually one to two hours. This is the session where Gus Ali Gondrong gives sermons and motivation to his congregation. The religious doctrines conveyed are simple about life, but the sermons conveyed are far from judgmental. On the contrary, it is more about trying to encourage the congregation who are mostly from the black community, and giving hope that there is still a chance to return. So, it is more about encouraging. Regarding this, Gus Oon stated the following:

"Abah Ali, in preaching or giving advice to the congregation, has a principle like this, if you don't eat fish, don't change the old man's butt. It's easy to admit that you're crazy, but it's hard to admit that you're sane. It's easier to invite a congregation who lives in the black world but realizes that their life is wrong than to invite people who feel they're right when they're wrong." (Interview with Gus Oon, 11-9-2020).

About how the congregation responded and why they always faithfully follow the *Mafia Sholawat* religious studies, explained by Sarkub, a street child who is currently a student at the Raudhlotun Ni'mah Islamic Boarding School as follows:

"The *Mafia Sholawat* congregation, especially those with backgrounds like mine, street children or those with dark lives, drunkards, prostitutes and so on, can feel at home because Gus Ali Gondrong made them happy first. So, in the pengajian before the main event, they were invited to sing, the songs were also their favorites. Abah always adjusted if the congregation were children of the rank or young people, then the songs were familiar to them. If there were many older people in the congregation, the songs

they liked were also chosen. So, coming to pengajian was like coming to a music concert. That's what made them feel at home" (Interview with Sarkub, 9-11-2020).

Cultivation of Symbolic Aspects of Mafia Sholawat

Symbols and social interactions cannot be separated in communication studies. The use of symbols will always be present in every communication process, including in da'wah communication. George Harbert Mead explained that humans are motivated to act based on the meaning they give to other people, objects, and events. This meaning is created through the language used by humans when communicating with other parties, namely in the context of interpersonal communication or interpersonal communication and intrapersonal communication or self-talks or in the realm of their personal thoughts [12].

These symbols, for example, can be seen from the pattern of clothing worn; from head coverings to footwear and the accessories he wears. All the symbols initially came from a person, namely Gus Ali Gondrong himself who carried out symbolic interactions with members, members as self also carried out the process of thinking about the *Mafia Sholawat* symbol which eventually became a joint action. The meaning of the symbol is a symbol used to unite groups from various branches.

Black clothes as a symbol of individuals who are still dirty. Sufi dance as a soother for the soul of members, cheers as a motivator for members and the 3-finger salute as a symbol of change. These interpreted identity symbols initially described the *Mafia sholawat* group as a humanist group that cares about society and others. However, the meaning given has undergone refinement, not only a humanist group but this *Mafia Sholawat* has become a political group, namely wanting to maintain the unity of Indonesia [13]

Charisma is a special ability that is found in a person, which is based on an emotional or irrational nature and is above the strength and abilities of humans in general [14]. Max Weber uses the term charisma to explain a form of influence of a person in society. A leader is called charismatic because he is considered to have an 'abundance of grace', an ability that has a very strong and binding attraction that attracts people to him. In Weber's analysis, charisma includes personal characteristics that inspire those who will become his followers [15]. Meanwhile, in Bruinessen's perspective (Bruinessen, 1995), charisma is based on spiritual power and the ability to give blessings because of its relationship with the supernatural. Therefore, charismatic leadership always invites deification of the Leader [17]. The charisma possessed by Gus Ali Gondrong is what seems to have made him have many followers, especially from the bengal community group.

In addition to the model and pattern of clothing worn by Gus Ali Gondrong, the logo that is a formal part is also inseparable from the meaning of symbols. The *Mafia Sholawat* logo is the earth with a circle, then the writing for the invitation to pray to the Prophet, with the writing of the Prophet Muhammad in Arabic letters, above the circle there are nine stars. If you look closely at the logo, Gus Ali Gondrong when creating the logo design was inspired by the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) logo. Apart from that impression, the logo means that prayer is a guide for all mankind in this world, with the large writing of Muhammad indicating that he is the last prophet for all mankind. The stars above the circle numbering nine are the number of Wali Songo, scholars who spread and preached in the archipelago first.

Religious Transformation of the Mafia Sholawat Congregation

The process of religious transformation that occurs through long stages and does not happen suddenly. To see the religious transformation of the *Mafia Sholawat* congregation, we can use a theoretical framework [19]. Berger (1991) uses the dialectical process experienced by humans through three moments; externalization, objectivation, and internalization. These

moments do not always occur in a time sequence, but society and each individual who is part of it are simultaneously characterized by these three moments, so that analysis of society must go through these three moments.

Psychologically, the members of the *Mafia Sholawat* claim to have experienced religious change or transformation. The forms of this transformation include changes in attitude, behavior, and commitment to religious teachings. Transformation in this case is not measured quantitatively, but is seen from the subjective recognition of the perpetrators or congregation. The members/congregation of the *Mafia Sholawat* claim to have experienced changes from moderate to significant and even drastic changes. This can be seen from the behavioral changes that occurred in Malik. He admitted that since attending the *Mafia Sholawat* study, he felt closer to God. In terms of attitude, he felt more serious about being a good person, while in terms of behavior, he felt that he was acting more correctly towards others. Religious transformation is also seen in the change in the principles of religious life towards a more solid and clear direction. Malik feels clearer in viewing religion and how to behave religiously in everyday life. He no longer views religion as a burden, but something light (Interview with Malik, 9-11-2020).

Based on Berger and Luckmann's theory on the social construction of reality, the preaching carried out by Gus Ali Gondrong can be summarized into 4:

- 1) Externalization, Gus Ali Gondrong and his *Mafia Sholawat* carried out externalization by creating a new social reality that was different from the previous social reality. They created an inclusive community and embraced the unruly community who had been considered the "scum of society". This externalization allowed members of the *Mafia Sholawat* to experience a change in identity and become part of a new community.
- 2) Objectivation, Gus Ali Gondrong and his *Mafia Sholawat* carried out objectivation by creating a stable and predictable social structure. They created unique and interesting religious rituals, such as *sholawat* accompanied by music and Sufi dance. With this objectivation, members of the *Mafia Sholawat* experienced a sense of security and stability in their community.
- 3) Internalization, Gus Ali Gondrong and his *Mafia Sholawat* carry out internalization by creating an effective socialization process. They create a supportive and embracing environment, so that members of the *Mafia Sholawat* can experience internal changes and become stronger in their faith. This internalization allows members of the *Mafia Sholawat* to experience a deeper and more sustainable religious transformation.
- 4) Religious Transformation, that members of the *Mafia Sholawat* experience significant religious transformation, including changes in attitudes, behavior, and commitment to religious teachings. This transformation can be understood as the result of the externalization, objectivation, and internalization processes carried out by Gus Ali Gondrong and his *Mafia Sholawat*. This religious transformation can also be understood as a form of resistance to the stigma and discrimination experienced by the Bengali community.

By using Berger and Luckmann's theory, it can be understood that Gus Ali Gondrong and his *Mafia Sholawat* have created a new social reality that is different from the previous social reality. They have created an inclusive and embracing community, and created an effective socialization process for experiencing deeper and more sustainable religious transformation.

The limitations of this study include the potential for bias when collecting research data, especially in interviews and observations. Bias in interviews can be in the form of question bias, respondent bias, or interview process bias. Undirected interview questions can influence respondents' answers. To overcome this, researchers can create neutral and open questions, and it can be ensured that the questions do not have incorrect assumptions. Respondent bias is likely

that respondents do not answer questions honestly or completely. To overcome this, researchers must first ensure that the respondent's mood is made to feel comfortable and safe, and their confidentiality is guaranteed so that the answers given are in accordance with expectations. However, this interview bias can also be influenced by various factors such as language, culture, and the respondent's background. For this reason, researchers must be able to ensure that they have sufficient knowledge of the respondent's language, culture, and background, and the language used must be simple and easy to understand. The potential for bias in observation can occur when the observer has assumptions or prejudices that influence observations. For this reason, it must be ensured that the researcher has sufficient knowledge of the context and background of the observation, and the researcher must use systematic and objective observation techniques.

In observations, it is also possible for context bias to occur, meaning that the context of the observation can influence the results of the observation. To overcome this, make sure the researcher considers the observation context and has sufficient knowledge of the factors that influence the context. In addition, instrument bias means that the observation instrument can have weaknesses or biases that affect the observation results. To overcome this, make sure the researcher uses a valid and reliable observation instrument, and has sufficient knowledge of the weaknesses and biases of the instrument. By using these methods, it is hoped that researchers can reduce the potential for bias in research and increase the validity and reliability of research results.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that: First, Gus Ali Gondrong with his *Mafia Sholawat* prefers the bengal community as the object of his preaching because not many preachers pay attention to them. In reality, they have often been labeled as the dregs of society. It is very possible that some of them want to repent, but do not know how or there is no forum that they consider appropriate to undergo the process towards repentance. Second, Gus Ali Gondrong with his *Mafia Sholawat* uses various media as his preaching strategy. These media can be divided into several, namely: physical media, verbal media, and practical media. The *Mafia Sholawat* preaching can be accepted by the general public, especially the bengal community because the *Mafia Sholawat* preaching is very interesting and entertaining. The *sholawat* accompanied by music and Sufi dances is able to captivate them. In addition, the religious sermons delivered by Gus Ali Gondrong are very soothing, non-judgmental, and able to embrace the "black group" who have been considered the dregs of society. Third, to see the religious transformation of the *Mafia Sholawat* congregation, we can use the theoretical framework of Berger and Luckmann by using the dialectical process experienced by humans through three moments, namely: externalization, objectivation, and internalization. These three processes are da'wah strategies and are well implemented by Gus Ali Gondrong. In addition, psychologically, the members of the *Mafia Sholawat* admitted to experiencing religious changes or transformations. The forms of this transformation include changes in attitudes, behavior, and commitment to religious teachings. In terms of attitude, they feel like they are becoming good people, while in terms of behavior, they feel like they are increasingly acting correctly towards others. Religious transformation is also seen in changes in the principles of religious life towards a more solid and clear direction.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest.

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