



The History and Development of Islamic Organizations in Banyumas: Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama

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Abstract

This study examines the history and development of Islamic organizations in Banyumas, Central Java, with particular focus on Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) from the colonial period to the contemporary era. The research aims to analyze the historical foundations, organizational transformation, and socio-religious contributions of these organizations in shaping local Islamic dynamics. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach integrating historical and sociological perspectives. Data were collected through literature review, document analysis, organizational archives, and interviews with local religious leaders and organizational figures. The findings reveal that the emergence of Muhammadiyah and NU in Banyumas was closely linked to the region's Islamization process and the evolving socio-religious landscape of the early twentieth century. Over time, both organizations developed distinct institutional characteristics while maintaining significant influence in education, religious outreach, social welfare, and community empowerment. Their sustained presence demonstrates a strong capacity to adapt to changing social, political, and cultural conditions. The study concludes that Muhammadiyah and NU function not only as religious institutions but also as important actors in the construction of Islamic civil society and local social transformation in Banyumas.

Keywords: Islamic Organizations, Banyumas, Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, Islamic Civil Society.



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INTRODUCTION

The development of Islamic mass organizations in Indonesia constitutes one of the most significant dimensions of contemporary Islamic civil society studies, particularly in discussions concerning the interaction between religion, social transformation, cultural reproduction, and local identity formation. Across the Muslim world, scholarly attention has increasingly shifted from examining Islam solely as a theological system toward understanding how religious organizations function as agents of social change, educational modernization, and community empowerment within specific socio-historical contexts. Indonesia presents a particularly important case because of the enduring influence of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), whose institutional trajectories have shaped religious discourse and public life for more than a century (Badriati et al., 2025). Historical studies demonstrate that the emergence of Islamic educational and organizational networks in Central and Southern Java was closely connected to broader processes of modernization, colonial encounters, and religious reform movements that transformed local Muslim societies during the twentieth century (Athoillah, 2025). The continuity of these organizations into the contemporary era illustrates their capacity to adapt to changing political and social environments while preserving distinctive ideological orientations (Nawir & Lamabawa, 2023). Current scholarship increasingly recognizes that the relevance of Islamic organizations cannot be understood merely through national narratives because their influence is continuously negotiated within localized cultural settings that generate diverse patterns of religious engagement and social participation.

Previous studies have produced important insights regarding the historical evolution, institutional development, and societal contributions of Muhammadiyah and NU, yet these findings reveal a complex and multidimensional picture rather than a singular trajectory. Research on Muhammadiyah highlights its long-standing role in educational reform, social welfare, and community empowerment,

demonstrating how organizational modernization became a vehicle for broader societal transformation from the colonial period to the Reformasi era (Aritonang et al., 2025). Investigations of Muhammadiyah's historical foundations further indicate that its organizational identity emerged through the intersection of theological renewal, social activism, and intellectual reform (Nawir & Lamabawa, 2023). Parallel scholarship on NU emphasizes its adaptive da'wah strategies and its capacity to negotiate socio-cultural changes while maintaining strong connections with traditional Islamic communities (Khasanah, 2022). Historical accounts of NU likewise reveal a distinctive organizational model grounded in pesantren networks, religious authority, and communal solidarity that enabled its expansion across Indonesian society (Nur Khalik & Ali, 2023). More recent studies have also documented how both organizations continue to respond to contemporary challenges through educational institutions, student movements, and civic engagement initiatives, illustrating their resilience in the face of globalization and technological transformation (Ni'am et al., 2026; Nuruzzaman et al., 2025). These findings collectively suggest that Muhammadiyah and NU should be understood not merely as religious organizations but as dynamic social actors whose historical development remains closely intertwined with broader processes of societal change.

Despite these advances, substantial limitations remain within the existing literature, particularly concerning the relationship between national organizational narratives and local historical realities. Much of the scholarship continues to prioritize macro-level analyses that focus on ideological development, political participation, or institutional expansion at the national scale, leaving local experiences comparatively underexplored (Hasan, 2021; Arifianto, 2017). Research examining Banyumas has largely concentrated on specific themes such as Islamization processes, educational heritage, or individual religious figures rather than investigating the interconnected historical development of Islamic organizations as a broader social phenomenon (Nugroho et al., 2024; Syibromalisi et al., 2025). Studies concerning the early history of Islam in Purwokerto contribute valuable historical information, yet they do not adequately explain how organizational competition, cooperation, and adaptation shaped the religious landscape of Banyumas over time (Haryanto, 2022). Existing work on Muhammadiyah in Banyumas predominantly emphasizes prominent personalities and organizational achievements, which risks overlooking the reciprocal relationship between local society and institutional development (Fathony, 2023). The result is a fragmented body of knowledge in which historical narratives, sociological dynamics, and organizational interactions remain insufficiently integrated into a coherent analytical framework.

This gap becomes increasingly significant when considering the growing influence of Islamic organizations on contemporary public life and community governance in Banyumas. Recent research demonstrates that Islamic civil society organizations in Banyumas actively participate in public debates concerning constitutional issues, social policies, and the negotiation of state-society relations, indicating that their influence extends far beyond religious activities alone (Khashogi & Humaidi, 2023). Similar patterns are evident in discussions surrounding family law reforms, where local Islamic organizations have emerged as influential actors shaping public responses to legal and social change (Halim et al., 2024). Educational institutions affiliated with Muhammadiyah and NU continue to play a crucial role in transmitting religious values and fostering multicultural awareness among younger generations in Banyumas (Sholichatin & Nadilah, 2023). Organizational communication strategies have also evolved through digital platforms, expanding the reach of religious movements and transforming modes of community engagement (Susanti et al., 2024). The expanding social, educational, cultural, and political functions of these organizations raise important questions regarding the historical processes through which they acquired legitimacy, authority, and influence within local society.

The unresolved problem is not simply the absence of historical documentation but the lack of a comprehensive explanation concerning how interactions between Muhammadiyah and NU have shaped the distinctive character of Islamic life in Banyumas. Existing studies tend to examine each organization separately, creating analytical boundaries that obscure the relational dynamics through which identities, institutions, and social networks are continuously negotiated. The historical development of Muhammadiyah in Banyumas reflects processes of religious reform and educational expansion that cannot be fully understood without considering its engagement with other Islamic actors in the region (Suwarno & Kosasih, 2013). Likewise, the evolution of NU involves organizational adaptation and community-based religious authority whose significance becomes clearer when analyzed within broader local social structures (Fadeli & Subhan, 2010). Contemporary political studies further indicate

that organizational affiliations continue to influence patterns of social behavior and collective decision-making, suggesting that historical trajectories remain relevant to present-day realities (Mafudoh et al., 2026). A more integrated historical and sociological perspective is therefore necessary to explain how these organizations have collectively contributed to the formation of Banyumas' religious and social landscape.

This study positions itself within the intersection of historical, sociological, and literary-linguistic inquiries by examining the history and development of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama in Banyumas as interconnected processes embedded within local cultural narratives and social transformations. Rather than treating organizational history as a linear institutional chronology, the research explores how religious organizations produce meanings, negotiate identities, and shape communal discourses across different historical periods. Employing a qualitative historical-sociological approach through literature analysis and interviews with organizational leaders, this study seeks to reconstruct the development of Islamic organizations in Banyumas while identifying the social and religious roles they have performed within local society. The research aims to explain how interactions between Muhammadiyah and NU have contributed to the formation of a distinctive local Islamic dynamic and to provide a more comprehensive framework for understanding the relationship between religious organizations, social change, and local cultural contexts. The expected contribution lies in advancing localized studies of Islamic civil society, enriching theoretical discussions on religious movements and civil society, and offering a methodological model that integrates historical and sociological perspectives in the analysis of Islamic organizational development.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative empirical research design using a descriptive-historical approach to examine the history and development of Islamic organizations in Banyumas, with particular emphasis on Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). The qualitative design was selected because it enables an in-depth exploration of complex socio-religious phenomena embedded within specific historical and cultural contexts. The research combined historical and sociological perspectives to trace the evolution of Islamic organizations from the colonial period to the contemporary era and to analyze their influence on local religious and social structures. Participants consisted of key informants from Muhammadiyah and NU in Banyumas who possessed substantial organizational experience and historical knowledge regarding the development of their respective institutions. Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on their leadership positions, organizational involvement, and familiarity with local historical developments. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and an extensive review of organizational archives, books, scholarly articles, historical records, and other relevant publications.

The research focused primarily on Banyumas Regency, particularly Purwokerto and its surrounding areas, which have historically served as important centers of Islamic organizational activities. The researcher functioned as the primary research instrument responsible for data collection, interpretation, and analysis. Semi-structured interview guidelines and document review protocols were employed to ensure consistency in data gathering while allowing sufficient flexibility to capture context-specific information. Data credibility was strengthened through source triangulation by comparing information obtained from interviews, organizational documents, historical records, and academic literature. The collected data were analyzed using an interactive qualitative analysis framework consisting of data reduction, data categorization, thematic interpretation, and conclusion drawing. The analytical process was guided by civil society theory and social movement theory to examine organizational roles, patterns of interaction, institutional development, and socio-religious influence within the Banyumas community. To ensure methodological rigor, the study maintained transparency in data interpretation, cross-checked findings across multiple sources, and continuously evaluated the consistency of emerging themes. Ethical considerations were addressed by obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring voluntary participation, protecting the confidentiality of personal information, and using research data solely for academic purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical Foundations of Islam and the Emergence of Islamic Organizations in Banyumas

The historical development of Islamic organizations in Banyumas cannot be understood without examining the earlier process of Islamization that transformed the region's religious and socio-cultural landscape. Banyumas emerged as an important political entity following the establishment of the Banyumas Regency under the leadership of Raden Joko Kaiman, later known as Adipati Wargautama II, in the late sixteenth century. The formation of local political authority created opportunities for the gradual incorporation of Islamic values into governance, social norms, and community institutions. Historical evidence indicates that Islam was introduced through a combination of political networks, religious missions, and cultural accommodation rather than through abrupt social disruption. The relatively peaceful diffusion of Islamic teachings enabled the religion to become increasingly integrated into everyday life while maintaining continuity with certain local traditions. This historical trajectory provided the foundational context within which later Islamic movements and organizations would emerge and develop (Nugroho et al., 2024).

The spread of Islam in Banyumas was closely linked to broader religious and political developments occurring in Java, particularly the influence of the Demak Sultanate and the activities of Islamic scholars associated with regional networks of *da'wah*. Historical accounts describe how local rulers and religious figures functioned as intermediaries who facilitated the acceptance of Islamic teachings among diverse segments of society (Nugroho et al., 2024). Religious propagation relied heavily on persuasive approaches that emphasized moral guidance, social integration, and communal solidarity. Islamic values gradually became embedded within local customs, producing a distinctive form of religiosity characterized by adaptation rather than confrontation. The interaction between Islamic teachings and indigenous cultural traditions generated a dynamic religious environment in which authority was negotiated through both spiritual legitimacy and social influence. These developments established an enduring religious foundation that continued to shape Banyumas society during subsequent centuries.

A significant transformation occurred during the early twentieth century when colonial modernization policies altered patterns of education, communication, and social mobility throughout Java. The implementation of the Dutch Ethical Policy expanded educational opportunities and contributed to the emergence of a new Muslim intellectual class that was increasingly exposed to reformist and revivalist ideas (Haryanto, 2022). Improvements in transportation infrastructure facilitated the circulation of people, religious texts, and organizational ideas between urban and rural areas. Muslim communities in Purwokerto became increasingly connected to broader debates concerning Islamic reform, educational modernization, and socio-political participation. The growing accessibility of knowledge encouraged critical engagement with existing religious practices and stimulated discussions regarding the future direction of Muslim society. These changes transformed religion from a largely localized experience into a field of organized intellectual and social activism.

The socio-religious landscape of Banyumas before the emergence of formal Islamic organizations was marked by considerable diversity in religious orientation and practice. Historical sources reveal the presence of influential Sufi traditions, particularly the Naqshbandiyah and Qadiriyyah orders, alongside communities associated with mystical interpretations of Islam (Suwarno & Kosasih, 2013). Certain groups emphasized spiritual exercises, ascetic practices, and metaphysical understandings of religious experience, while others prioritized adherence to formal religious jurisprudence. Such diversity demonstrates that Islamic identity in Banyumas was neither monolithic nor static. Different forms of religious authority coexisted and occasionally competed in shaping public understandings of Islamic teachings. The plurality of religious expressions created an environment in which organizational initiatives would later become important mechanisms for defining, preserving, and disseminating particular interpretations of Islam.

Among the most influential religious communities in early twentieth-century Purwokerto were groups associated with the Shafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence. These communities gradually developed around local religious leaders who commanded significant authority within their respective congregations (Suwarno & Kosasih, 2013). One prominent group was centered around the Great Mosque of Purwokerto under the leadership of K.H. Halimi. Members of this community displayed an increasing openness toward educational reform, organizational management, and modern approaches to religious propagation. Their engagement with emerging intellectual currents reflected a broader

desire to strengthen the position of Muslims within a rapidly changing colonial society. The presence of such reform-oriented circles created favorable conditions for the introduction and eventual institutionalization of Muhammadiyah in Banyumas.

The emergence of Muhammadiyah in Banyumas reflected broader patterns of Islamic reform that were taking place across Indonesia during the early twentieth century. Historical records indicate that the arrival of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan in Purwokerto in 1920 became a decisive moment in introducing Muhammadiyah's reformist vision to local Muslim communities (Fathony, 2023). His public lectures attracted considerable attention from religious leaders and community members, generating both support and resistance toward the idea of establishing a Muhammadiyah branch. The differing responses demonstrated that religious reform was not universally accepted but instead emerged through negotiation and debate within existing religious structures. The eventual establishment of Muhammadiyah in Purwokerto signified the institutionalization of reformist aspirations that emphasized education, organizational discipline, and religious renewal. Similar patterns of organizational expansion were also evident in other regions where Muhammadiyah functioned as a vehicle for social and educational transformation (Nawir & Lamabawa, 2023).

Parallel to the rise of Muhammadiyah, the foundations of Nahdlatul Ulama in Banyumas developed through networks of ulama, pesantren, and traditional religious communities. The rapid spread of NU following its establishment in 1926 enabled the organization to reach Banyumas through scholars who had previously studied in major pesantren centers across Java (Nur Khalik & Ali, 2023). Local religious leaders played a crucial role in introducing NU's vision of preserving Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah traditions while responding to emerging social challenges. Unlike reformist movements that prioritized institutional modernization, NU relied heavily on established patterns of religious authority rooted in pesantren education and communal religious practices. The organizational expansion of NU in Banyumas illustrates how traditional Islamic institutions were capable of adapting to modern organizational forms without abandoning their foundational values. This process contributed to the emergence of a strong religious constituency that would later become an influential component of local civil society.

From a historical-sociological perspective, the simultaneous emergence of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama in Banyumas reflected a broader process of religious institutionalization occurring within Indonesian Muslim society. Both organizations emerged from the same socio-historical environment yet developed distinct strategies for responding to modernization, educational reform, and community needs. Muhammadiyah emphasized rationalization, educational advancement, and organizational modernization, whereas NU reinforced the authority of pesantren networks and traditional religious scholarship as mechanisms for social continuity (Badriati et al., 2025). The coexistence of these two orientations did not simply produce ideological competition but also generated diverse pathways through which Muslims could engage with social change. Historical evidence suggests that their presence contributed significantly to the strengthening of religious education, community organization, and civic participation across Banyumas. These formative developments established the institutional foundations upon which both organizations would continue to expand their influence throughout the colonial, post-independence, and contemporary periods.

Organizational Development and Institutional Transformation of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama in Banyumas

The organizational development of Muhammadiyah in Banyumas was closely associated with its commitment to educational reform and cadre formation as strategic instruments for sustaining the movement across generations. Interview data and historical records indicate that Muhammadiyah leaders in Purwokerto viewed organizational continuity as dependent upon the systematic preparation of future leaders capable of responding to evolving social conditions. This orientation encouraged the organization to invest heavily in educational initiatives and youth development programs from its earliest period. Rather than limiting its activities to religious instruction, Muhammadiyah promoted intellectual advancement as a means of strengthening the capacity of Muslims to participate in modern society. Such a strategy reflected broader reformist currents within Indonesian Islam that regarded education as an essential mechanism for social transformation and community empowerment (Aritonang et al., 2025). The institutional emphasis on knowledge production and leadership development became one of the defining characteristics of Muhammadiyah's expansion in Banyumas.

Historical evidence demonstrates that cadre formation within Muhammadiyah Banyumas was implemented through structured educational mobility and the cultivation of religious expertise. One notable example involved the delegation of promising youth to educational institutions operated by Muhammadiyah in Yogyakarta, where they received formal religious and secular instruction. This policy reveals that local leaders possessed a long-term vision regarding organizational sustainability and human resource development. Exposure to broader intellectual networks enabled young cadres to acquire new perspectives on religious reform, organizational management, and social engagement. The process simultaneously connected Muhammadiyah Banyumas to wider national movements and debates occurring within Indonesian Muslim society. Such findings support previous arguments that Muhammadiyah's growth was driven not merely by theological reform but also by its capacity to institutionalize education as a vehicle for social mobility and organizational reproduction (Nawir & Lamabawa, 2023).

The development of Muhammadiyah in Banyumas was not free from internal and external challenges, particularly those arising from competing religious interpretations during the early decades of the twentieth century. Historical documents indicate that interactions between Muhammadiyah members and Ahmadiyah intellectual circles generated significant debates concerning doctrinal authority and religious authenticity (Valid Fathony, 2023). The influence of transnational religious ideas introduced through educational programs and language courses created new forms of theological engagement among young Muslims. Some Muhammadiyah cadres became attracted to alternative interpretations of Islam, creating concerns regarding ideological coherence within the organization. These developments encouraged Muhammadiyah to strengthen its institutional mechanisms for religious guidance and doctrinal clarification. The establishment and strengthening of religious deliberative bodies reflected an organizational effort to preserve identity while continuing to engage with modern intellectual currents. Such adaptive responses demonstrate how religious organizations negotiate tensions between openness to new ideas and the preservation of institutional boundaries.

The post-independence period introduced a new phase in Muhammadiyah's organizational trajectory. Historical accounts suggest that the years immediately following Indonesian independence were characterized by relatively slow organizational growth because many members became involved in broader national struggles and post-war reconstruction efforts (Fathony, 2023). As political stability gradually improved, Muhammadiyah initiated a process of institutional consolidation that included administrative restructuring, membership reorganization, and the recovery of organizational assets. Archival evidence indicates that Banyumas emerged as one of the important regional centers within this consolidation process, reflected in the increasing number of branches and community-based activities. The ability of Muhammadiyah to reorganize itself after a period of political uncertainty illustrates a high degree of institutional resilience. Such resilience contributed to the organization's continued relevance within changing political and social environments.

While Muhammadiyah pursued modernization through educational and organizational reform, Nahdlatul Ulama expanded its influence in Banyumas through the strengthening of pesantren networks and community-based religious authority. Historical findings reveal that local ulama played a decisive role in establishing organizational structures capable of connecting religious communities across urban and rural areas (Nur Khalik & Ali, 2023). The development of NU in Banyumas was closely linked to the authority of pesantren leaders who functioned not only as religious teachers but also as social mediators and community organizers. Organizational growth occurred through regular religious gatherings, educational activities, and the formation of local branches that reinforced communal solidarity. This pattern reflects a distinctive model of institutional development in which religious legitimacy and social trust served as the primary foundations of organizational expansion. The continuity of these networks enabled NU to maintain a strong presence despite changing political and social circumstances.

The transformation of NU in Banyumas after independence demonstrates the organization's capacity to adapt while preserving its traditional religious orientation. Evidence gathered from interviews and documentary sources indicates that NU increasingly expanded its activities beyond religious instruction to include educational initiatives, social welfare programs, and broader civic engagement. This transformation corresponds with broader observations regarding the evolving role of NU as a major actor within Indonesian civil society (Khasanah, 2022). The strengthening of educational institutions, including pesantren and madrasah networks, contributed to the reproduction of religious

knowledge and organizational values across generations (Ni'am et al., 2026). At the same time, NU maintained its commitment to preserving local religious traditions and communal practices that remained important elements of Banyumas society. The combination of institutional adaptation and cultural continuity enabled NU to sustain its relevance in an increasingly modernized environment.

The contemporary development of both Muhammadiyah and NU illustrates how Islamic organizations continue to evolve in response to new social and technological realities. Interview findings suggest that organizational leaders increasingly recognize the importance of digital communication, youth engagement, and public outreach in maintaining institutional relevance. Muhammadiyah has expanded literacy movements, intellectual forums, and media-based da'wah initiatives, while NU has strengthened community-centered programs and digital religious education. These developments reflect broader patterns of adaptation observed among Islamic organizations throughout Indonesia as they respond to globalization and technological change (Susanti et al., 2024). Student organizations affiliated with both movements have also become important arenas for leadership formation and ideological transmission among younger generations (Nuruzzaman et al., 2025). Such initiatives demonstrate that organizational sustainability increasingly depends upon the ability to combine historical identity with contemporary innovation.

From a broader analytical perspective, the organizational trajectories of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama in Banyumas reveal two distinct yet complementary models of Islamic institutional development. Muhammadiyah advanced primarily through educational modernization, bureaucratic organization, and intellectual reform, whereas NU relied on the consolidation of pesantren networks, traditional scholarship, and community-based authority. These differences did not prevent both organizations from becoming influential actors in the religious and social life of Banyumas. Historical evidence indicates that each movement developed institutional mechanisms capable of responding to local needs while remaining connected to national organizational structures (Badriati et al., 2025). Their sustained growth across different political periods demonstrates the adaptability of Islamic organizations within changing socio-cultural contexts. The institutional transformations experienced by Muhammadiyah and NU ultimately contributed to the emergence of a vibrant Islamic civil society that continues to shape the contemporary development of Banyumas.

Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, and the Construction of Islamic Civil Society in Banyumas

The contemporary influence of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama in Banyumas extends beyond religious activities and reflects their broader roles as pillars of Islamic civil society. Findings from interviews and document analysis indicate that both organizations have become important mediating institutions connecting religious values with social development initiatives. Their activities encompass educational services, charitable programs, community empowerment, and public advocacy, illustrating how religious organizations increasingly function as social actors rather than solely theological institutions. This transformation corresponds with theoretical perspectives that view civil society organizations as essential intermediaries between the state and society. In Banyumas, the capacity of Muhammadiyah and NU to mobilize community participation has strengthened social cohesion while simultaneously creating spaces for public engagement in social and religious affairs (Khashogi & Humaidi, 2023). The significance of these organizations lies not only in their institutional longevity but also in their ability to generate collective responses to evolving societal challenges.

One of the most visible contributions of Muhammadiyah and NU in Banyumas is found within the educational sector. Historical and contemporary evidence demonstrates that both organizations have established extensive educational networks that serve as important channels for transmitting religious values, social ethics, and civic awareness. Muhammadiyah has generally emphasized modern educational management and curriculum development, whereas NU has combined formal education with pesantren-based traditions that preserve classical Islamic scholarship. Despite these differences, both organizations contribute significantly to improving educational accessibility and quality within local communities. Educational institutions affiliated with Muhammadiyah and NU have also become important sites for cultivating religious moderation and social responsibility among younger generations (Ni'am et al., 2026). Their educational engagement illustrates how Islamic organizations participate in shaping human capital while reinforcing communal identities rooted in religious values.

The influence of these organizations is equally evident in their efforts to promote social inclusion and multicultural awareness. Data collected from local educational institutions suggest that religious

values are increasingly integrated with principles of tolerance, coexistence, and social harmony. Such developments are particularly important within a pluralistic society where religious organizations play a central role in shaping public attitudes toward diversity. Several educational initiatives associated with Muhammadiyah and NU have encouraged students to engage constructively with differences while maintaining strong commitments to Islamic teachings (Sholichatin & Nadilah, 2023). This approach demonstrates that religious identity and multicultural engagement are not necessarily contradictory but can coexist within a shared framework of civic responsibility. The findings indicate that both organizations contribute to the cultivation of inclusive forms of religiosity capable of supporting social stability within Banyumas.

Beyond education, Muhammadiyah and NU have become influential actors in addressing contemporary social and legal issues. Evidence from recent public discussions concerning family law reforms reveals that Islamic organizations in Banyumas actively participate in debates surrounding social policy and legal change (Halim et al., 2024). Their involvement demonstrates an ongoing process through which religious institutions engage with modern governance and public decision-making. Rather than functioning as passive observers, both organizations articulate perspectives that reflect religious values while responding to contemporary societal concerns. Such engagement illustrates the dynamic relationship between religion and public life in Indonesia, where civil society organizations frequently act as intermediaries between state regulations and community expectations. The ability of Muhammadiyah and NU to contribute to these discussions reinforces their significance as influential stakeholders within local democratic processes.

The strengthening of Islamic civil society in Banyumas has also been facilitated by the expansion of religious communication and community outreach strategies. Muhammadiyah, in particular, has demonstrated increasing engagement with literacy movements, public discourse, and digital media as instruments for disseminating religious and social messages. The growing utilization of digital platforms reflects broader efforts among Islamic organizations to adapt their communication practices to contemporary technological environments (Susanti et al., 2024). At the same time, NU continues to strengthen community-based religious activities through traditional gatherings, pesantren networks, and grassroots organizational structures. The coexistence of these approaches illustrates how organizational diversity can contribute to broader societal resilience. Different modes of engagement allow each organization to reach distinct social groups while maintaining relevance within an increasingly interconnected society.

The political and civic influence of Muhammadiyah and NU further demonstrates their importance in shaping contemporary social dynamics. Studies of Islamic organizations in Indonesia have shown that religious affiliations often influence political attitudes, leadership preferences, and patterns of community mobilization (Mafudoh et al., 2026). In Banyumas, interview findings suggest that organizational networks frequently function as platforms for civic participation, social advocacy, and community representation. Although Muhammadiyah and NU maintain distinct historical identities and organizational cultures, their interactions have contributed to the formation of a vibrant public sphere in which religious discourse remains connected to broader social concerns. The persistence of these organizations across different historical periods indicates that their significance extends beyond institutional survival. Their continued engagement in education, social welfare, public policy, and community development demonstrates how Islamic organizations have become integral components of civil society, shaping both the religious character and the socio-cultural development of Banyumas.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the historical development of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama in Banyumas was deeply rooted in the long process of Islamization and the transformation of local religious life from the pre-organizational period to the contemporary era. The findings indicate that the emergence of both organizations was influenced by the socio-religious diversity that characterized Banyumas in the early twentieth century, including the presence of pesantren networks, Sufi traditions, reformist circles, and Shafi'i-based religious communities. Muhammadiyah developed through educational modernization, cadre formation, and institutional reform, while Nahdlatul Ulama expanded through the consolidation of pesantren authority, community-based religious networks, and the preservation of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah traditions. Although each organization adopted different approaches to religious and social engagement, both played important roles in shaping the religious

identity, educational development, and social structure of Banyumas society. Their historical trajectories reveal that Islamic organizations functioned not merely as religious institutions but also as agents of social transformation capable of responding to changing political, cultural, and societal conditions across different historical periods.

The study further finds that Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama have become integral components of Islamic civil society in Banyumas through their sustained contributions to education, social welfare, religious outreach, community empowerment, and public participation. Their organizational resilience reflects a capacity to adapt to modernization, technological developments, and shifting societal demands without abandoning their foundational values and institutional identities. The interaction between reformist and traditionalist orientations has contributed to the formation of a dynamic local Islamic landscape in which diversity of religious expression coexists with shared commitments to community development and social cohesion. From a theoretical perspective, the findings affirm the relevance of civil society theory and social movement theory in explaining how religious organizations mobilize social resources, construct legitimacy, and maintain influence within local communities. The integration of historical and sociological approaches employed in this study also demonstrates the importance of examining Islamic organizations as evolving social institutions whose development is inseparable from broader processes of local social and cultural transformation.

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