
**The Ethnography Study of Tablighi Jamaat's Da'wah Communication
in the Symbolic Interactionism Perspective**

Joni Rusdiana

Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Surakarta

Email: jonirusdi@gmail.com

Prahastiwi Utari

Universitas Sebelas Maret (UNS) Surakarta

Email: prahastiwi@staff.uns.ac.id

Abstract

*This article aims to see how the three premises of Blumer's Symbolic Interactionism are able to explain the phenomenon of the Tablighi Jamaat preaching in the form of *khuruj* and *jaulab*. The question to be answered in this article is how Tablighi Jamaat interprets the concept of *da'wah* (preaching), how the meaning constructed and how the meaning maintained or modified. Using the ethnographic method, this study looks at how the three premises of Blumer Symbolic Interactionism work. Based on the findings and results of the analysis, it was found that the construction of the meaning of *da'wah* in the Tablighi Jamaat was very different from the general understanding of the community. According to the Tablighi Jamaat, *da'wah* is not a lecture but invites others to obey the rules of Islam. The main purpose of *da'wah* according to the Tablighi Jamaat is not to improve others but to improve themselves and is obligatory for every Muslim. This series of meaningful constructs has been built since the beginning of this movement, started by Maulana Iyas. Long before Maulana Iyas chose and maintained the *madrassa* as a method of *da'wah* while continuing to evaluate it to the conclusion that *madrassas* were not the right solution to improve society as a whole. Furthermore, he applied the methods of *da'wah* and *tabligh* which he obtained not from social interaction, but obtained from God's inspired inspiration. Thus, in this phenomenon, the perspective of Blumer Symbolic Interactionism seems to be limited and unable to explain it thoroughly.*

Keywords: *Da'wah, Khuruj, Jaulab, Tablighi Jamaat, Symbolic Interactionism, Herbert Blumer*

INTRODUCTION

Among the Islamic movements, Tablighi Jamaat has a unique method of preaching. They preach by visiting houses around the mosque where they live, inviting to pray in congregation or listening to lectures at the mosque. They also went to people who were

sitting on the side of the road, talked briefly about the importance of faith and piety then invited to come to the mosque. Periodically, they also carry out da'wah to other regions and even abroad. This activity has been held for several days to several months. In addition to preaching, by visiting people personally, the Tablighi Jamaat also routinely holds a grand tabligh. Interestingly every time they hold a grand tabligh up to an international scale even though the Tablighi Jamaat never uses official invitations, pamphlets, posters or sends releases and advertises in mass media.

The Jama'at Tabligh also never built a special building as the center of their movement. All Tablighi Jama'at activities are centered at the mosque. Nor did they build a new mosque as the center of the movement. Instead of building a new mosque, their movement is to prosper existing mosques.

Tablighi Jamaat also does not know the membership system. Anyone who is a member of the Tablighi Jamaat has never gone through the registration process. Everyone who is a follower of the Tablighi Jamaah joins culturally. Tablighi Jamaat never makes data on people who have joined in the da'wah and tabligh activities. Therefore, it is very difficult to identify exactly how many followers of this movement.

The Tablighi Jamaat indeed never knew the term members, because they were not a group or organization. Tablighi Jamaat is an informal association without ever thinking about membership records, member recruitment, written constitutions, various organizational rules and governance structures. Instead of being in the form of an organization, this movement does not have the format like a large movement or community. This movement is only a collection of people who do the same activity.

This phenomenon surrounding the Tablighi Jamaat is interesting to be explored. The many followers of Tablighi Jamaat and spread in many countries show that it is not a pragmatic and opportunist movement. Various preaching activities of the Tablighi Jamaat are certainly not done without reason. This reason is the basis for the Tablighi Jamaat in applying their teachings. Da'wah activities undertaken by the them are objects that will be examined in this study. To be able to understand the da'wah carried out by the Tablighi Jamaat, we must understand how they interpret the concept of da'wah.

The study of the Tablighi Jamaat has actually been researched with a variety of approaches that differ from one another. In a historical perspective such as the Tablighi Jamaat has been investigated by Bustamam-Ahmad (2008), this study questions a lot about the development of the Tablighi Jamaat in Southeast Asia. Tablighi Jamaat is also widely researched in the perspective of Islamic law, as was done by Hermanto (2015) who reviewed the concept of Hadānah version of the Tablighi Jamaat; Mustofa (2019) who discussed the law of living towards the family of Tablighi Jamaat; Ilyas (2018) and Saepuloh (2009) who discussed the Tablighi Jamaat in the da'wah perspective. Meanwhile, this study will try to approach Tablighi Jamaah through ethnographic perspective with symbolic interactionism approach.

For this reason it is important to understand that the study conducted by researchers is not being directed to a conclusion that states that the Tablighi Jamaat is a true or heretical movement in an Islamic perspective. Researchers also will not place the Tablighi Jamaat phenomenon as a religious social movement which is then linked to political, defense and security issues. The researcher does not intend to produce a conclusion stating that the Tablighi Jamaat is involved or not involved in the global terrorism network. This research is an academic study with the aim of scientific development, especially the theory that researchers use called Blumer Symbolic Interactionism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Three Premises of Symbolic Interactionism Herbert Blumer

The main theory in this research is the Theory of Symbolic Interactionism. This theory is used in communication studies because it places communication at the front of the study of human social existence (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). This theory is used as a perspective to explain the object of research and help the writer determine where this study is directed. The Symbolic Interactionism Theory used primarily is the three premises of Herbert Blumer.

Blumer is a student of Herbert Mead. With Mead, Blumer systematized ideas of symbolic interactionism. Blumer also gives names to Mead's ideas with the term Symbolic Interactionism (Griffin, 2000; Luthfie, S Hubeis, Saleh, & Ginting, 2017; Siregar, 2011; Wallace & Wolf, 1999; West & Turner, 2008). Even Blumer has developed this perspective

to be more complete by formulating a method and model of inquiry with the perspective of symbolic interactionism (Ahmadi, 2008; Wallace & Wolf, 1999).

Blumer is very intense in developing the idea of symbolic interactionism. Blumer's seriousness is evident from his success in formulating three main premises from the perspective of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1984):

1. *Human beings act toward things on the basis of meanings that the things have for them.*
2. *The Meaning of the such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with ones's fellows.*
3. *These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounter.*

This study will explain the three main premises further as follows below:

1. Humans Act on Something Based on Meanings

The action taken by humans is a response to the stimulation it receives. Mead explained that human actions and behavior consist of four elements called: stimulation, perception, manipulation and behavior (Allan, 2006; Sari, 2014). These four elements distinguish human and animal actions and behavior. In animals, the process from stimulation to behavior arises directly.

When humans receive stimuli, he perceives each of these stimuli after doing human perception, manipulating different elements and considering various behaviors that will be done to respond to stimuli. So, in this condition humans are ready to act.

Thus, humans do not necessarily act on an object or social reality. Humans act by interpreting and defining the object or social reality that they encounter. Objects referred to include: physical objects (such as tables, plants or cars); social objects (such as mother, teacher, minister, or friend); abstract objects (such as values, rights and regulations) (Ahmadi, 2008; Haliemah & Kertamukti, 2017; Poloma, 2007; Rochmawati & Listyani, 2016).

From the process of interpreting and defining produces meaning and with the meaning given to the object or social reality, it becomes the basis for determining action. In other words, human actions are interpretive actions which they build themselves. With this understanding, humans actually make their own reality. Humans do not live in a standardized reality.

In the philosophical beliefs of pragmatism, the highest reality is not out there in the real world, but is actively built when humans act in and against the world (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004; Thaib, 2018). This thinking was later adopted by symbolic interactionism. Mead disagreed with the idea that reality is outside human beings. Reality exists precisely because of the meaning given by humans, as Mead's statement: Once people define a situation as real, it's very real in the consequences (Griffin, 2000; van Ruler, 2018).

This Mead statement asserts that the meaning of something depends on how humans give meaning to it. So that an object or social reality has more than one meaning, according to what people give to it. To explain this, Poloma (Poloma, 2007) illustrates a snake. For some people, snakes are disgusting reptiles, poisonous animals that can be deadly. While for some others, they see snakes as beautiful animals.

The different meanings will certainly lead to different attitudes and actions towards snakes. The first person tends to react negatively when meeting a snake, perhaps moving away, always alert or even killing him to ensure his safety is not threatened. While people who see snakes as beautiful animals, tend to give a positive reaction, treat it gently and take care of it.

2. Meanings Arise from Social Interaction

Blumer explained there are three approaches that see the origin of a meaning. The first approach says that meaning is something that is intrinsic, inherent in an object or social reality. The second approach to see the meaning given by someone to an object or social reality is then used by many people. Symbolic interactionism takes a third approach, meaning meaning as something that happens between people (West & Turner, 2008).

Symbolic interactionism believes that meaning is the result of interaction with others (Ahmadi, 2008; Haliemah & Kertamukti, 2017; Littlejohn & Foss, 2005; West & Turner, 2008). Blumer said the meaning of something comes from the ways other people act on it in relation to that something. The actions that they do will give birth to something boundary for others (Poloma, 2007). In other words, meaning is not inherent in an object, so also meaning is not available first in nature.

Two people have different meanings for snakes, based on the experience they have with the environment. The first person may be ordered as a child to be alert to snakes because

they are poisonous, dangerous and can be deadly. Whereas the second person might live in a snake-loving environment. So the attitudes and behaviors that the environment teaches him are different from the first person.

Every meaning is manifested in a symbol. Symbols are a stimulus that has meaning and value for people (Griffin, 2000). Through this symbol, humans can learn to interpret an object or social reality. The level of human understanding of an object or social reality depends on the extent to which the symbols available and are able to represent the intended meaning. Without symbols, humans cannot interpret the objects and social realities around them.

Then through this symbol the meaning continues to be negotiated (Griffin, 2000). More symbols do not have a logical relationship to the object they represent. Because of that the symbol is arbitrary.

3. The Meaning of a Symbol Modified Through Interpretive Processes

The meaning is modified through an interpretive process. A meaning obtained by humans is not necessarily internalized because there are various meanings encountered by humans. Blumer writes: the actor chooses, examines, restrains, rearranges, and changes the meaning to know the situation in which he is placed and the direction of his actions (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005; Poloma, 2007). Blumer called this process self-indication, which is an ongoing communication process where the individual knows something, evaluates it, gives meaning, and decides to act on that meaning (Harihanto, Riska, & Nurmanina, 2013; Poloma, 2007).

Blumer states that the human process of interpreting things through two steps (Putri, 2016; Soeprapto, 2002; West & Turner, 2008):

- a. The first step, the actors determine objects that have meaning.
- b. The second step involves the actors to choose, check, and carry out transformation in the context in which they are.

Hence, interpretation is not a process of understanding existing meanings and acting according to those meanings. Poloma (2007) said that interpretation should not be considered only as the application of predetermined meanings, but as a process of formation

in which meanings are used and refined as instruments for direction and formation of actions.

The interpretation involves thinking processes. Symbolic interactionism describes thinking as an inner conversation. Mead calls this dialogue that occurs within us as minding, namely a pause of about two seconds when we are ready to act (Aji, Utari, & Slamet, 2019; Griffin, 2000).

History and Character of Tablighi Jamaat

Da'wah and Tabligh movements or commonly known as Tablighi Jamaat were born in Mewat, as a result of the anxiety of an Indian cleric named Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Al Kandhalawi (Aguswara, Toha, & Jalal, 2018; Umdatul Hasanah, 2014; Indra Putra, 2017; Mustafa & Al-hikmah, 2017; Tholhah, 2010; Yusuf, 2016). Among Indian Muslims, actually Maulana Ilyas is not included in the ranks of large and popular scholars. Maulana Ilyas also never wrote a single book as well as the major scholars. When Maulana Muhammad Ilyas started the Da'wah and Tabligh movement in Mewat, most of the people were Muslims whose names remained. Their religious method at that time was to combine Islamic and Hindu teachings (Esposito, 2002; Hamdi, 2015; Junaedi, 2013).

After Maulana Ilyas conducted da'wah and tabligh the Muslim Mewat gradually began to practice Islamic teachings correctly. They returned to pray, fasting and other worship. They also began to abandon Hindu rituals and be replaced with Islamic traditions.

After Maulana Muhammad Ilyas died, the amir or leadership of the Tablighi Jamaah was continued by his son, Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Al Kandhalawi. Maulana Yusuf is tenacious workers and known to have the ability to organize. During his leadership, the Tablighi Jamaat movement expanded throughout India as well as Pakistan and Bangladesh. During his leadership also, the movements spread to Arab countries and even to Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America (Esposito, 2002; Junaedi, 2013; Subu, Arifudin, & Jasad, 2017).

Although the Tablighi Jamaat has a wide distribution and large followers, this movement does not recognize the term membership. Tablighi Jamaat is not a group or organization, so they are not familiar with membership systems, member recruitment, written constitutions, various organizational rules and governance structures. Instead of being in the

form of an organization, even this movement does not have the format like a large movement or community. Abu Muhammad Ahmad Abduh (Abduh, 2008) stated, "This congregation is a form of practice, a collection of several people who donate together. The leadership in the Tablighi Jamaat is held by a person called an amir or zumidar with an indefinite tenure. This movement actually also never has an official name. Since the beginning of this movement, Maulana Ilyas has never given a single name to this pioneered movement.

In the belief of the Tablighi Jamaat, the most ideal community life was during the time of the companions with the Prophet Muhammad. The Companions of the Prophet were able to practice the teachings of Islam perfectly. This condition is according to the Tablighi Jamaat because the Companions have good qualities. The good qualities possessed by the Companions were later compiled and formulated by the Tablighi Jamaat by the name of the Six Attributes of Prophet's Companions. In the Tablighi Jamaat, the six characteristics of companions become the philosophy of the da'wah movement they run (Masmuddin, 2019; Munir, 2017).

In summary, the following author conveys the contents of six qualities of companions, namely: first, they believe in the sentence *thoyibah: laa ilaha illalloh muhammadur rosululloh* which means there is no God who has the right to be worshiped other than Allah and the Prophet Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. Second, they do prayer solemnly and resident. Third, they search for knowledge is accompanied by *dzikir*. The fourth is *ikramul Muslimin* which means to glorify Muslim brothers. Fifth, *tashihun* intention, meaning straightening intention. Sixth, do da'wah and *tabligh* or invite and convey Islamic teachings to others.

The activities that characterize Tablighi Jamaat are the da'wah that is carried out with *khuruj* and *jaulah* method. *Khuruj* comes from Arabic which in Indonesian means is 'out'. *Khuruj* as a method of preaching is practiced by leaving family for amount of time. The length of time for *khuruj* varies: 3 days, 40 days, 4 months or more. 3 days-*khuruj* is done every month. A total of 40 days is performed at least once a year. Whereas the 4-month *khuruj* is conducted at least once a lifetime (Bakar, 2016; Hayadi, 2016; Saepuloh, 2009).

The next activity is *jaulah*. The word *jaulah* also comes from Arabic which means to go around, which can be done by going around the village and by going to the house or

people directly to increase their faiths and pieties. In carrying out the jaulah, Tablighi Jamaat apply the method to avoid discussing worldly affairs. The discussion in jaulah must be directed towards faith, piety and the afterlife (Zulaiha, 2016).

Like other Islamic movements, Tablighi Jamaat also hold a large-scale gathering of followers. This meeting is called *ijtima*. *Ijtima* events are held on various scales. On the smallest scale, *ijtima* is held every Friday night. This event is held in almost every city or residence in the mosque which is the center of the coordination of the Tablighi Jamaat in each region. At a greater level, *ijtima* is held on a national scale. This event is held once a year. If the number of followers of the Tablighi Jamaat is very large, this meeting will be divided into several regions. In the national *ijtima* events, a number of followers of the Tablighi Jamaat from neighboring countries are also come. At the end of the *ijtima* event, groups are always formed to be sent to various regions and even abroad to make *khuruj* (Sultana, Islam, & Uddin, 2017).

It has already been mentioned above that the Tablighi Jamaat is not a group or organization, but only a movement. However, the Tablighi Jamaah movement is organized quite systematically and neatly. Tablighi Jamaat routinely coordinates their activities in the deliberative forum to discuss their *da'wah* agendas. This forum functions to coordinate, monitor, evaluate and make various policies related to their *da'wah* movements. Deliberation is usually carried out at the Tablighi Jamaah base, a mosque which is the center of coordination of the Tablighi Jamaat. This forum is open. In fact every religious worker is advised to take the time to attend in it even though in practice only a small proportion are present (Kasmana, 2011; Mahdi, 2007).

Symbolic Interactionism of Tablighi Jamaat

The presentation in this section consists of 3 main points which are divided according to the formulation of the three premises of Blumer's Symbolic Interactionism. The first point explains how the meaning of *Da'wah* is built in the *Da'wah* and *Tabligh* movements. In the second point the author explains how the meaning is developed through a process of

interaction. Furthermore the third point explains that through the process of interpretation the meaning is modified. While in Tablighi Jamaat, carrying out missionary and tabligh missions using their own expense has become part of the religious way of the followers of this movement.

1. Meaning Determines Actions

Proponents of Symbolic Interactionism believe that the highest reality is not out there, in the real world, but is actively created when humans act in and against the world (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004; Thaib, 2018). Thought which originated from the philosophy of pragmatism was later adopted by symbolic interactionism. Herbert Mead disagreed with the idea that reality is outside human beings. Reality exists precisely because of the meaning given by humans, as Mead's statement: Once people define a situation as real, it is very real in the consequences (Griffin, 2000).

This statement asserts that the meaning of something depends on how humans give meaning to it. So it is very possible for an object or social reality to have more than one meaning, in accordance with the meaning that people attach to it. To explain this idea Poloma (2007) illustrates a snake. For some people, snakes are disgusting reptiles, poisonous animals that can be deadly. While for some others, they see snakes as beautiful animals.

The different meanings will certainly lead to different attitudes and actions towards snakes. In accordance with Blumer's first premise, which is *human beings act toward things on the basis of the meaning that the things have for them* (Blumer, 1984). The first person tends to react negatively when meeting a snake. Maybe he moved away, always alert or even killed him to ensure his safety was not threatened. While other people who see snakes as beautiful animals, tend to give a positive reaction, treat it gently and take care of it.

Thus human actions are interpretive actions that they build themselves. With this understanding, humans actually make their own reality. Humans do not necessarily act on an object or social reality. Humans act preceded by interpreting and defining the object or social reality that they encounter. The object in question can be: physical objects, social objects or abstract objects (Ahmadi, 2008; Haliemah & Kertamukti, 2017; Poloma, 2007; Rochmawati & Listyani, 2016). From the process of interpreting and defining it will produce meaning.

With the meaning given to the object or social reality then becomes the basis for determining action.

Da'wah activities undertaken by the Tablighi Jamaat are also symbolic actions, actions that go through the mind (mind) and have meaning (meaning). The perspective of symbolic interactionism believes that meaning is not inherent in social objects or reality but rather the people who construct it. Meanings Rest in People, Not Words (Adler & Rodman, 2006). The consequence of this idea is that an object or social reality is possible to have a number of meanings. The next consequence is that different meanings will result in different actions. Quoting Barbara Ballis Lall, Littlejohn (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005) writes that human actions are based on their perceptions. Humans make decisions and take action based on their subjective knowledge of the situation in which they find themselves.

The results of the study show that the method of Da'wah Tabligh which looks unique to the community, in the form of *khuruj* and *jaulah*, is based on a very strong understanding. Tablighi Jamaat has a unique understanding of the concept of da'wah. This concept of da'wah is different from general Islamic movements hence it produces actions that are also in the different form called *khuruj* and *jaulah*. This phenomenon proves the premise mentioned above, that *Meanings Rest in People, Not Words* (Adler & Rodman, 2006).

In the teachings of the Tablighi Jamaat, the task of da'wah has become a necessity for every Muslim. If preaching activities are carried out it will get so many benefits as followed (Shahab, 2007):

1. *Causes of God's guidance in all nature.*
2. *People will practice religion and will not abandon prophet's messages*
3. *God will bring blessings from the heavens and the earth*
4. *Everywhere, people always talk about the greatness of God so that people are pleased ruled by the law of Allah and by way of the Messenger of Allah*
5. *Mankind will be able to say tayyibah (good words) when he dies*
6. *People will be free from Allah's punishment*
7. *People will enter the heaven in congregation earlier than the previous people*
8. *Humans will be resurrected with radiant faces as the faces of the Prophets*
9. *The Messenger of Allah will give a drink from the Kautsar lake directly with his hand.*

On the contrary, if preaching activities are not carried out, various problems will befall Muslims. Losses if da'wah is abandoned (Shahab, 2007):

1. *Suspension of guidance.*

2. *People will leave religion and abandon the prophet's messages (sunnah)*
3. *The Curse of Allah comes down so that mu'amalah, mu'asyarah and morals become corrupted*
4. *The good ones are considered evil and the bad ones are considered good.*
5. *People no longer know God and the afterlife*
6. *People who have strong faith become weak, and those who have weak faith will become apostates.*
7. *Non-Muslims are reluctant to convert to Islam.*
8. *Fake Prophets are appeared and have many followers, such as artists, sportsmen, politicians, etc.*
9. *Unbelievers attack Muslims in the fields of ideology, economics, social, culture, etc.*

Khuruj and *jaulah* activities are rooted in Tablighi Jamaat's understanding about life. In their believes, the function of human life in the natural world is to prepare the provisions used in the afterlife. Tabligh Jamaat believes that Allah created the humans not to have fun in the world but to live in the hereafter.

Provisions that must be prepared for the afterlife are faith and good deeds. People who have faith and good deeds will live happily ever after in heaven. While those who do not have faith and good deeds then in the hereafter will go to hell. Therefore faith and good deeds become important matters that must be taken seriously to get good life in the hereafter.

In lectures, mudzakaroh or the topic often conveyed are all people actually human hereafter. The place of human life is actually in the afterlife, not in the world. Every human being is essentially traveling. In today's world, humans only stop by whose need to gather provisions for eternal afterlife.

The value of faith, worship, preaching, merit, sin, afterlife, heavenly pleasures, and the torments of hell are real things. This belief was instilled very strongly in the Tablighi Jamaat. People who have faith and do good deeds will be rewarded and in return in the hereafter will be put into heaven so that they live happily ever after. Conversely people who do bad deeds and are unfaithful will get sin and in return in the hereafter will be included in hell and suffer forever.

The author often hears the words conveyed by religious workers that the afterlife is certain while the world is actually uncertain. The belief instilled by the Tablighi Jamaat on the value of faith, worship, preaching, merit, sin, afterlife, heavenly pleasure, and the torments of hell is so strong that many religious workers choose to live a very simple life. They prioritize the interests of religious struggle rather than fulfill worldly desires.

This phenomenon in the Tablighi Jamaah is in accordance with Mead's statement: *Once people define a situation as real, it is very real in the consequences* (Griffin, 2000; van Ruler, 2018). Reality exists because of the meaning given by humans. Because the value of faith, worship, preaching, merit, sin, afterlife, heavenly pleasures, and the torments of hell are very real for the Tablighi Jamaat, they are very enthusiastic and ready to sacrifice other interests to be part of religious struggle.

2. Interactions Produce Meanings

The da'wah and *tabligh* movements were pioneered by Maulana Ilyas. He began the da'wah and *tabligh* movements in Mewat, a remote area in the highlands of North India (Esposito, 2002; Junaedi, 2013). The people of Mewat are known to have brutal, vicious, and often cruel behavior towards others. However, they have a good relationship with the family of Maulana Muhammad Ilyas. This relationship has existed for a long time since Maulana Muhammad Ismail, Maulana Muhammad Ilyas's father, was still alive.

During his life, Maulana Muhammad Ismail continued to guide the people of Mewat with tenderness. Mewat's children and youth were invited to his madrasa in Nizamuddin to study Islam. While in madrasa they were taught the Koran and Islamic laws. For this purpose they are not asked for any fees at all. All their daily needs are borne by Maulana Muhammad Ismail. After having enough knowledge about religion, they will be told to return to Mewat to teach religion to the people there.

When Maulana Muhammad Ismail died, the effort was continued by Maulana Ilyas. Unlike his father, Maulana Ilyas intends to guide the religion of the Mewat people by establishing madrasas in their own neighborhood. So they do not need to come to Nizamuddin or other regions to study religion. Then began to establish madrassas in Mewat as an effort by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas to improve the way of life of Mewat people.

Mewat residents do not need to provide a building as a madrasa. They simply use the existing mosque as a madrasa. A number of mosques welcomed the program. The mosques were then connected to one another, so a mosque-based madrasa network was built. Through these madrassas, the surrounding Muslim community is educated about the faith and practice of true Islamic teachings (Esposito, 2002).

In a short time many mosque-based madrassas stood up. This program succeeded in increasing students' understanding of true Islam. Quantitatively this shows the success of the da'wah approach by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas. Apparently this result was not as expected by Maulana Ilyas.

The experience of the Maulana Ilyas family in guiding the people of Mewat can be said to be the social interaction of Maulana Ilyas before starting the Da'wah and Tabligh movements. The experience finally brought Maulana Ilyas to the conclusion that madrasa was not the right solution in improving society as a whole. Maulana Muhammad Ilyas saw the da'wah approach by establishing a madrasa that was only able to provide improvements in a small part of life. While there are still many aspects of community life that have not been touched by establishing madrassas.

Blumer said, "*The Meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows.*" Meaning arises from the results of interactions with the environment. Initially, Maulana Ilyas had high hopes that the madrasa could improve the conditions of the community. This hope can be understood since Maulana Ilyas was born and raised in a madrasa environment.

His father, Maulana Muhammad Ismail, was an influential scholar in India and had a madrasa in Nizamuddin. Meanwhile, his brother, Maulana Muhammad Yahya, is a teacher at Madrasah Mazhahir Al Ulum in Saharanpur. Since childhood, Maulana Ilyas studied religion at Mazhahir Al Ulum in Saharanpur. At the age of 10 years Maulana Ilyas studied directly with Maulana Rasyid Ahmad Al Gangohi, one of the great scholar in the Gangoh region. Then at the age of 23 Maulana Ilyas studied with Maulana Hindi Mahmudul Hasan in Darul Ulum Deoband.

According to Maulana Muhammad Ilyas the damage done to the Mewat people is because they do not know Islamic laws. Thus, according to him the way to guide the people of Mewat is to raise religious education for them through the madrasa. By studying in madrasas they will understand Islamic laws. After finishing their studies, they will be told to return to Mewat to teach religion to the population.

However, after this method was implemented and within a relatively short period of time received a response from the community, Maulana Ilyas was disappointed with

madrakah. Maulana Muhammad Ilyas sees education through madrasas as only producing lecturers and religious experts. While Mewat people in general, who did not study at the madrasa, still remained stagnant. They are still far from the teachings of Islam, not different from the conditions before the madrasa stood in Mewat. The majority of them even objected to sending their children to study at the madrasa. They also did not respect the madrasa graduates.

Seeing this condition, Maulana Muhammad Ilyas finally realized that establishing a madrasa was not the right solution. A large number of madrasas will not be able to reach all levels of society. It is also impossible to put all the children of Mewat into madrasas, where they must study every day and leave all their activities including helping parents in making money.

Maulana Ilyas was thinking this problem deeply. He started comparing his hopes in the madrasa with the reality he encountered. Dewey said the mind is not a thing or a structure, but a process that involves a number of stages (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). In the process of thinking, the actor chooses, examines, groups, and transforms meaning in relation to the situation in which he is placed and the direction of his actions (Poloma, 2007). Blumer calls this process self-indication, which is an ongoing communication process where the individual knows something, evaluates it, gives meaning and decides to act on that meaning (Poloma, 2007).

From experience, continuous evaluation and conclusions he obtained, finally Maulana Ilyas decided not to continue the method of improving society through madrasas. The established madrasas are still maintained but Maulana Ilyas does not expect much to be a solution to improve the community. This condition again made Maulana Muhammad Ilyas feel serious anxiety. Until when Maulana Muhammad Ilyas performed his second pilgrimage, in 1927, he received a kind of inspiration from God. An understanding of the method of da'wah as practiced by the prophet and friends (Subu et al., 2017).

After returning from the pilgrimage, arrived in India, Maulana Muhammad Ilyas started the da'wah movements. Maulana Muhammad Ilyas traveled around the Mewat area to meet people in person to be invited to obey religious teachings. Everyone who was met was taught about the sentence of the sahadat, prayer and so on. Of course this da'wah

movement is not unusual, not only for ordinary Mewat people but also for scholars in general.

Initially, Maulana Muhammad Ilyas carried out this da'wah and tabligh movement himself. In its development, Maulana Muhammad Ilyas began inviting others to carry out the da'wah as he did. The trick is to organize several people to form a congregation. One congregation usually consists of about ten people, but this number is flexible. The group that has been formed is then sent to other villages or areas to carry out da'wah activities.

The method of Da'wah and Tabligh of Maulana Muhammad Ilyas showed significant success. The method in the form of *jaulah* and *keburuj* does not only produce religious experts, more importantly is to form people who are ready to spread religion directly to homes and individuals.

Through the method of da'wah and the sermon of Maulana Muhammad Ilyas, Mewat Muslims began to re-practice the teachings of Islam correctly. They again performed the obligatory prayers, fasting in the month of Ramadan and other worship services. They also began to abandon Hindu rituals. Traditions related to birth, marriage and death began to be carried out with Islamic traditions.

Many Mewat people sympathize with the method of da'wah and the sermon of Maulana Muhammad Ilyas. In a relatively short time, the groups formed by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas increased. When Maulana Muhammad Ilyas died, the method of da'wah and tabligh which he carried out was considered to have succeeded in reviving Islam in Mewat.

Compared to various other Islamic movements, Tablighi Jama'at has never been shown to have a political agenda and political affiliation. Tablighi Jamaat is a puritan Islamic movement. The mission of the Tablighi Jamaat who preach everywhere is the same which is to perfect the faith without being interfered with by any political interests. Metcalf wrote in his article entitled *Traditionalist Islamic activism: Deoband, Tabligh and Talib*:

"Tablighi Jamaat is a branch of the Deoband movement. In some ways, the Tablighi Jamaat is a strengthening of Deobandi's initial commitment to the renewal of the individual's soul regardless of any real political program." (Metcalf, 2003)

Every Tablighi Jamaat program is free from political interests is indeed true. However, Metcalf's statement that the Tablighi Jamaat is a branch of the Deoband movement according to the author is incorrect. Deoband is the largest madrasa for followers of Imam Hanafi in India and beyond. While Tablighi Jamaat is a transnational Islamic movement that does not carry certain schools of thought. It is true that the pioneers and scholars of the Tablighi Jamaat in India, Pakistan and its surroundings were Deoband graduates. Perhaps for this reason, Metcalf draws conclusions as above.

Apart from this debate it seems that the attitude of the Tablighi Jamaat who refrained from practical politics was directly or unaffected by Deoband's attitude who was also not involved in practical politics. In other words, the non-political attitude of the Tablighi Jamaat is more or less the result of Maulana Ilyas's interactions when studying at the Deoband madrasa. Thus Maulana Ismail, Maulana Muhammad Yahya, Maulana Rasyid Ahmad Al Gangohi, Maulana Hindi Mahmudul Hasan and mosque-based madrassas that have been established can be said to be *significant others* for Maulana Ilyas before starting the Da'wah and Tabligh movements.

3. Meaning Changes Through Interpretation

"These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounter." (Blumer, 1984)

Thus the sound of the third premise of Blumer. The meaning of something is maintained and modified through an interpretive process. Furthermore Blumer stated that the human process in interpreting something through two steps (Soeprapto, 2002; West & Turner, 2008):

- a. The first step, the actors determine objects that have meaning.
- b. The second step involves the actors to choose, check, and carry out transformation in the context in which they are.

At first Maulana Ilyas had high hopes that the madrasa could improve society as a whole. In other words madrasa has a very significant meaning for Maulana Ilyas in relation to efforts to improve society. This is the meaning of madrasa construction on Maulana Ilyas. The meaning of construction owned by Maulana Ilyas does not necessarily take place but has been built through the process of social interaction with madrasas since childhood.

Through the process of interaction, Maulana Ilyas's *meaning construction* regarding madrasa changed 180 degrees. Through experience and evaluation, Maulana Ilyas saw that madrasas were unable to improve society as a whole. Maulana Muhammad Ilyas sees education through madrasas as only producing lecturers and religious experts. While most society who did not study at the madrasa still remained in their original condition, far from religious values.

Hence, an interpretive process occurs. In the interpretive process the actor selects, examines, restrains, rearranges, and changes the meaning to know the situation in which he is placed and the direction of his actions (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005; Poloma, 2007). Initially Maulana Ilyas chose madrasa as a method of improving society, then he evaluated, maintained it while continuing to evaluate it to the conclusion that madrasa was not the right solution to improve society. Blumer calls this process self-indication, which is an ongoing communication process where individuals know something, judge it, give meaning, and decide to act on that meaning (Ahmadi, 2008; Aji et al., 2019; Harihanto et al., 2013; Poloma, 2007; Rochmawati & Listyani, 2016). The action taken by Maulana Ilyas was to stop his efforts to establish mosque-based madrassas.

After discovering that the madrasa was not able to improve society as a whole, Maulana Ilyas adopted another method of da'wah and tabligh. The method he obtained was not from the process of social interaction, but rather was obtained from inspiration given by God.

Da'wah understood by Maulana Ilyas is not a lecture but a da'wah as the Prophet did that is to plunge directly into the community. The mission that was brought was not invited to the group or organization but to invite people to be sure of three cases to three cases, namely:

1. From being convinced of *makhluk* (creation) to being convinced of *khaliq* (creator, Allah)
2. From believing in *maal* (property) to being convinced of charity (acts of worship)
3. From being convinced to mortal world life to being convinced of eternal afterlife

In the understanding of Tablighi Jamaat, the main purpose of carrying out da'wah is to improve oneself or what is referred to as *ishlahun nafs* is not to improve others. Improving

oneself as intended by the Tablighi Jamaat is primarily to improve faith. According to the understanding of the Tablighi Jamaat, the most important need for everyone is faith. Therefore, improving faith to the level of perfect faith becomes everyone's needs. Based on this understanding, preaching becomes a mandatory requirement for every Muslim.

Meaning construction of da'wah in the Tablighi Jamaat seems very different from the average understanding developed in the community. Most people understand da'wah (preaching) is a lecture whose aim is to improve others, especially listeners. Most people also interpret the da'wah not the duty of every individual Muslim, but the obligation of Islamic scholars.

So, the interpretation is not a process of understanding existing meanings and then acting according to those meanings. Poloma (2007) says that interpretation should not be considered only as the application of predetermined meanings, but as a process of formation in which meanings are used and refined as instruments for direction and formation of actions.

CONCLUSION

From the data analysis that has been done, the researcher finds that for the Tablighi Jamaat, da'wah is to invite, not to lecture. Da'wah is inviting to Islam as practiced by the Prophet Muhammad which is to come directly to humans. For the Tablighi Jamaat, da'wah is inviting humans from three cases to three cases, namely: first, inviting humans from being faithful to human to be faithful to Allah Almighty; second, inviting people which is previously believing the value of maal (property) to believe the value of charity; and third, inviting people to shift from believing a worldly life to be convinced in an eternal afterlife. Therefore, if there is someone who claims to be preaching, but his invitation is not about these three things, then for the Tablighi Jamaat it is not da'wah.

Tablighi Jamaat strongly believes that if da'wah is carried out, so many benefits will be felt by Muslims. Conversely, if it is not carried out, so many losses and calamities will befall Muslims. Da'wah in question is in the form of khuruj and jaulah. Khuruj is going away for some time (usually 3 days, 40 days or 4 months) leaving family and work to spread religion in other regions. While jaulah is going around in the midst of the community to invite them to obey Allah Almighty. In this paper, the researchers conducted an analysis at the conceptual

level. Blumer's first and second premises work very well in explaining the meaning construction of Tablighi Jamaat. However, the third premise of this analysis experiences limitations. Symbolic interactionism believes that meaning is always modified through social interaction. While the meaning of da'wah in the Tablighi Jamaat is obtained by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas as inspiration or a direct gift from Allah.

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