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Worship Place and Delegitimization of Muslim Minorities in Indonesia: Insights from Indonesia

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Abstract

The phenomenon of delegitimization of minority Muslims has become a problem in religious life in Indonesia. Violence, intimidation and division are commonplace. This phenomenon will be seen from the point of view of analytic philosophy. This article aims to examine the chronology of the destruction of places of worship, the main causes of destruction, the inner experiences of the victims, and the pattern of conflict resolution that has been implemented. This article uses Wittgenstein's theory of truth claims, religious exclusivism, and language games. This study analyzes the roots of conflict, the mechanisms of delegitimization, and its impact on social cohesion. This study shows that the conflicts experienced by the Indonesia Institute of Islamic Dawah (LDII) are not solely triggered by doctrinal

differences, but are the result of interactions between minority exclusivism, the claims of the majority's truth, social delegitimization, and the failure of inclusive dialogue. The accusation of heresy reflects the struggle for interpretive authority within the Muslim community. With Wittgenstein's framework of language games, differences in teachings are understood as expressions of different ways of life so that they cannot be the basis for misdirection. Therefore, conflict resolution demands an egalitarian dialogue that recognizes the plurality of religious experience and rejects claims of a single truth.

Keywords: Delegitimization, religious exclusivism, conflict, inclusive dialogue

Abstrak

Fenomena delegitimasi terhadap Muslim minoritas menjadi problematika dalam kehidupan beragama di Indonesia. Kekerasan, intimidasi dan perpecahan menjadi pemandangan yang lumrah. Fenomena ini akan dilihat dari sudut pandang filsafat analitik. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk dikaji kronologi perusakan tempat ibadah, penyebab utama perusakan, pengalaman batin para korban, serta pola penyelesaian konflik yang telah diterapkan. Artikel ini menggunakan teori klaim kebenaran, eksklusivisme beragama, dan language games Wittgenstein. Studi ini menganalisis akar konflik, mekanisme delegitimasi, dan dampaknya terhadap kohesi sosial. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa konflik yang dialami Lembaga Dakwah Islam Indonesia (LDII) tidak semata-mata dipicu perbedaan doktrin, tetapi merupakan hasil interaksi antara eksklusivisme minoritas, klaim kebenaran mayoritas, delegitimasi sosial, dan gagalnya dialog inklusif. Tuduhan sesat mencerminkan perebutan otoritas penafsiran dalam komunitas Muslim. Dengan kerangka language games Wittgenstein, perbedaan ajaran dipahami sebagai ekspresi cara hidup yang berbeda sehingga tidak dapat menjadi dasar penyesatan. Karena itu, penyelesaian konflik menuntut dialog egaliter yang mengakui pluralitas pengalaman keagamaan dan menolak klaim kebenaran tunggal.

Kata kunci: Delegitimasi, eksklusivisme beragama, konflik, dialog inklusif

Introduction

The phenomenon of delegitimization against minority religious groups in Indonesia reflects the complex dynamics within the internal social relations of Muslims. In several studies, the causes or triggers of religious conflict are not singular but multifaceted, depending on the social context in which the conflict emerges. Internal conflicts among Muslims can be driven by various factors, including theological doctrines, exclusivist religious practices, and economic, political, or cultural tensions. These conflicts manifest in diverse forms, such as verbal assaults, as evidenced in the case of West Kalimantan (Dewantara et al.,

2024). Instances of physical violence are also frequently reported, particularly involving minority Muslim groups such as the Ahmadiyya in West Java, Lombok, Makassar, and several other major cities across Indonesia. The closure, obstruction, and destruction of places of worship represent severe cases that continue to occur in Indonesia (Alam et al., 2023; Hefner, 2022).

Although internal Muslim conflicts have been widely studied, research specifically examining the delegitimization of Muslim minorities due to exclusive truth claims remains limited. Warnis et al. (2024) stress the importance of religious leaders building strong social–cultural relations to secure worship permits. Mahmudah et al. (2025) show that resistance often stems from misinformation, distrust of government programs, and limited understanding. Alvian (2023) notes that extremists cultivate distrust of religious moderation. Qodir and Hefner (2025) highlight multicultural citizenship among minorities, while Regus (2019) emphasizes the need for political and social protection for groups like the Ahmadiyya. Matondang et al. (2024) reveal how marginalized Acehnese ulama contribute to human rights resolution. Collectively, these studies underscore the need for education, inclusive policies, and legitimate religious leadership to strengthen tolerance and social harmony.

However, research specifically examining the delegitimization of Muslim minorities arising from exclusive truth claims as a trigger for internal conflicts remains very limited. The case of the LDII mosque burning in Jember in 2007 highlights this gap in the literature. This event demonstrates how exclusive truth claims and rigid religious practices can provoke destructive social conflicts. In this context, delegitimization occurs not only at the theological level but also through social actions that deny the legitimacy and recognition of minority groups as integral members of the Muslim community. Research on the dynamics of truth claims and the delegitimization of Muslim minorities thus provides a novel and significant contribution to the study of religious conflict in Indonesia.

Indonesia is a country with a majority Muslim population. However, Islam in Indonesia is not homogeneous. There are different groups and streams in Islam that coexist (Gallagher, 2016; Malik, 2024). One such group is LDII (Lembaga Dakwah Islam Indonesia), which is often considered different and even distorted by some other Muslim groups. LDII is one of the Islamic organizations in Indonesia that was established in 1972 (Khamami, 2022; Khotijah, 2024). The LDII had teachings that differed in some aspects from other Islamic groups in Indonesia, which often led to friction and tension. The different

teachings of the LDII are often the reason for other groups to consider the LDII as a heretical or deviant group(Abidin, 2020). The 2007 destruction of an LDII prayer house in Tanggul, Jember, illustrates ongoing internal Muslim conflict. The small worship space, located in an LDII-dominated residential area, was demolished around 19:00 just before Tarawih. This incident reflects how interreligious tensions within Islam continue to surface in society. Research shows that religious conflict rarely stems from a single cause but from multiple factors shaped by social context (Khalli et al., 2022). Such internal conflicts may appear through verbal harassment, physical violence, closure or rejection of worship facilities, and even acts of destroying places of worship (Damayanti & Yunanto, 2022; Wahab et al., 2024).

Based on the case of the destruction of the LDII community's place of worship in Tanggul District, Jember, this study analyzes the incident through the lens of the philosophy of language, particularly Wittgenstein's concept of language games. According to Kopytko (2007), this approach helps to understand how language, including religious language, functions not only as a means of communication but also as a social practice that shapes the meaning of truth and deviation. Steensen et al. (2023) add that differences in language games between communities create internal rules for assessing legitimacy and deviance. Hamidah and Dungcik (2024) emphasize that religious language can be used to reinforce superiority and exclusion. Van der Steen et al. (2023) highlight that terms such as "deviant" reflect social conflicts arising from interpretive differences. Widiyaningtyas et al. (2024) state that this triggers social delegitimization against LDII.

The aim of this study is to explain four main aspects: capturing the conflict events that occurred, identifying the primary causes of the destruction of places of worship, understanding the inner experiences of both perpetrators and victims, and examining the patterns of dialogue employed in conflict resolution. Based on these objectives, the research questions are formulated as follows: How did the conflict involving the destruction of the LDII community's place of worship in Jember occur, and what factors influenced it? What were the main causes of the destruction, particularly concerning claims of religious truth and exclusive religious practices? How did perpetrators and victims experience and perceive the events? And how were the dialogue patterns or conflict resolution mechanisms implemented, and to what extent were they effective in alleviating social tensions between groups?

The Conception of Socio-Religious Delegitimation

The concept of delegitimization refers to social, political, and discursive processes aimed at weakening or removing the legitimacy of a group, practice, or institution. In discourse analysis, van Leeuwen (2007) explains that delegitimization operates through discursive functions that undermine the normality of another party's identity or actions, using techniques such as moral evaluation, rationalization, and mythopoesis. Volpato et al. (2010) add that delegitimization is carried out through communicative strategies that intentionally apply negative labels to other groups as a moral basis for discrimination or violence. Screti (2013) emphasizes that legitimacy constructs a positive self-image, whereas delegitimization disseminates negative portrayals of others. Vaara (2014) expands this understanding by arguing that legitimacy is created through impressions that an action is good, ethical, reasonable, or acceptable. Recent studies show that delegitimization is increasingly manifested through public representations that frame certain groups as unworthy, deviant, or dangerous, particularly in digital media (Dynel, 2025). In institutional contexts, delegitimization serves as a strategy to position target groups outside socially accepted norms, thereby enabling practices of control, discrimination, and exclusion (Rak, 2022). In political communication, delegitimization appears in negative messages deliberately designed to damage an opponent's credibility without substantive argumentative grounds (Campbell & Ross, 2022). Across various areas of public policy, delegitimization is understood as a systematic effort to undermine the credibility of a discourse or institution until it loses public recognition (Da Costa et al., 2023).

Contemporary research also shows that political elites frequently use delegitimization to challenge the authority of institutions such as the media and shape public opinion (Björkenfeldt & Gustafsson, 2023). The delegitimization observed in the case of the destruction of LDII worship facilities can be understood as cultural delegitimization, a process rooted in social discourse and collective representations that have long framed LDII as a deviant group. Drawing on van Leeuwen (2007) and Volpato et al. (2010), this form of delegitimization operates through moral evaluation and negative labeling that justify acts of aggression even in the absence of direct conflict. The accusation of being "heretical" functions as a moral justification, as noted by Screti (2013), making violent acts appear legitimate within a culturally constructed framework of social judgment.

Religious Conflict in Analytical Philosophy

In practice, religious conflict can be resolved when all parties develop an awareness of respecting differences and engage in genuine dialogue. Wittgenstein, as cited in (Peters, 2022a), explains that such conflicts often arise from language problems, as language operates through distinct "language games" shaped by different life contexts. What appears illogical or deviant to outsiders may hold internal truth within its own form of life. Pihlström (2012) argues that these truths are expressed through language games reflecting adherents' lived realities. Therefore, as Das & Neog (2021) note, interreligious relations require a dialogical approach to prevent exclusivist attitudes that claim absolute truth. Such an approach fosters more inclusive, open, and mutually understanding dialogue.

Discussing Wittgenstein's thought recalls contemporary analytic philosophy, which holds a central place, especially after postmodernism emerged to challenge the notion that philosophy has ended. This "end of philosophy" debate relates closely to deconstruction, understood as a method of reading philosophical texts. Deconstruction does not evaluate logical strength or argumentative validity but instead traces the underlying elements that make a text philosophical. In other words, it questions the foundations that structure the text itself (Kellner, 1988).

One of the philosophers who contributed thoughts on analytic philosophy was Ludwig Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein made the criticism that in philosophy, it is not enough just to use logic, since in human life, there are diverse contexts of life in which the language that is used is not enough to be expressed in logical language (Huang, 1995; Peters, 2022b). For Wittgenstein, the language used not only expresses logical propositions but can also be used in many different ways to express the truth and many more symptoms that can be expressed in words that are not necessarily logical. In Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein places much emphasis on the pragmatic aspects of language, its function as a means of communication in everyday human life (Huang, 1995; Kellner, 1988; Kopytko, 2007).

Language does not have a single logical structure but is used by humans within complex forms of life. For Wittgenstein, language operates as "language games" that mirror human life. Thus, many religious aspects that seem illogical, such as Heaven, Hell, the resurrection of the soul, and various rituals, are, in his view, internal truths expressed through specific language games. According to

Karunathilake (2020), because Wittgenstein rejects experience as an object that can be fully captured as knowledge or truth, he later argues that experiences that cannot be expressed in language still contain truth and are not meaningless. From this arises the idea that anyone attempting to speak about ethics or religion inevitably "clashes with the boundaries of language" (Uekusa & Matthewman, 2023).

Thus, following Wittgenstein's thought pattern would explain the meaning in a religious context: that one's belief in God, the day of judgment, Heaven, and Hell is a picture that one has of something else. This view will see that every religion has its own rules of the game in viewing reality. Of course, in expressing a reality, society is very dependent on the context of life, so the belief in religion or perhaps the existence of God in each person will certainly be different because it has language limitations, but everyone can be allowed to have the same truth in understanding reality, especially regarding transcendent things (Peters, 2022a, 2022b).

Unexpected Fire Incident in Socio-Religious Cases

Several LDII residents were distressed when their small congregational prayer house, built collectively and used for worship and study, was suddenly demolished on the fifth night of Ramadan in 2007 by a group opposing its presence. Reported by detik.com, Radar Jember, and national media, the incident occurred in Wisma Handayani, East Tanggul Village, about one kilometer south of Tanggul market. The prayer house, located at the center of a modest neighborhood of nine LDII families, was an important communal space. Its abrupt destruction caused deep concern and exposed underlying tensions within the local community.

Mr. Khoirul Anam (pseudonym, 58 years old) is a resident of LDII who occupies one of the nine houses in Wisma Handayani. At length, he told the chronology of the demolition and destruction of the mosque as follows:

> *"... The demolition of the LDII prayer house happened during Ramadan. "After Isha, we were preparing for Tarawih when a group suddenly came and told us to leave. As soon as we stepped out, they tore down the prayer house," said a congregant. "They kept chanting takbir during the demolition. To this day, we don't know the reason," they added". (interview)*

According to Agus, the Public Relations District Police embankment stated that the arson was triggered by suspicion of several groups of other Muslims, who consider Jama'ah LDII as a very exclusive community. It narrates as follows:

> *"... The demolition of the LDII place of worship occurred due to misinformation and poor communication. LDII was perceived as closed-off, compounded by accusations of deviations such as cleaning the prayer room after use, partner-swapping, and "inner contact" during rituals. Nevertheless, there were no casualties, and the exact reason for the demolition remains unclear". (interview)*

From the explanation of the police, it became very clear that the main driver of the destruction of the worship place was the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI). FPI, as an organization that stood in conjunction with the fall of the New Order, often brought up sensitive religious issues in mobilizing the masses.

Before the destruction, LDII's Ar-Royyan Mosque in Mangli had already faced tensions with local residents. According to MUI Jember Chairman Halim Soebahar, residents were uncomfortable with LDII's distinct practices, and the mosque lacked community support. Its management also failed to meet the requirement of 60 ID cards, further escalating tensions. (Interview)

In some detail, Muhammad Muslim, as the official of the Ministry of Religion of Jember, explained, namely:

> *"... The conflict over the establishment of the Ar-Royyan Mosque arose because the LDII group built the mosque without prior consultation with local residents, which created suspicion, especially given their perceived closed attitude. The case was handled by the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Jember and the MUI, and after a lengthy process it was agreed that the imam for Friday prayers and the five daily prayers could come from outside LDII. Once this agreement was accepted, the conflict subsided, and the informant was assigned to serve as the Friday prayer imam at the mosque". (Interview)*

It became clear that the trigger for the burning of the mosque was caused by the views of Muslims towards LDII, who considered that LDII was too exclusive in socializing, especially in the practice of worship and the use of places of worship.

Claim of Religious Truth as a Trigger For Destruction

The acts of violence by FPI against LDII members were not without reason. Beyond unfounded issues such as exclusivity in worship, washing the mosque,

and partner exchanges, there were various justifications for the violence. According to Hamid (a pseudonym), Nahdiyin members who joined FPI clearly explained the reasons for demolishing the mosque, as follows:

> *"...At that time, LDII built a new prayer house even though there was already a mosque. Residents were disturbed because the prayer house was always cleaned after outsiders used it, and LDII was seen as unwilling to integrate. Despite repeated invitations to dialogue, they remained adamant. Tensions peaked, the prayer house was demolished, and no further dialogue took place". (Interview).*

The statement shows he was influenced by unverified rumors, heightening suspicion toward LDII's exclusive practices. Although a dialogue occurred before the demolition, it aimed not at mutual understanding but at pressuring LDII to halt construction and abandon the mosque project. Other fundamental reasons why vandalism is carried out, he explains further:

> *"... They were clearly seen as missing the mark. Residents felt that LDII was forming its own separate community, was difficult to gather with, and was unwilling to communicate. They were also suspicious of the monetary contributions sent to a teacher in Kediri. Many things remained unclear to the residents, but LDII's closed attitude made the Tanggul community unable to accept their presence, which heightened tensions". (interview)*

He views LDII's teachings as deviant because they differ from mainstream Islam. Such rigid judgments reflect a hasty perspective. While factors like poor communication, exclusivist behavior, and misunderstandings contributed to the mosque burning, the core issue is why some Muslims feel disturbed by others' worship, driven by unilateral claims of religious truth without objective assessment. One-sided judgments about others' beliefs have harmed groups labelled heretical and can escalate into efforts to silence those confident in their own teachings. Subjective interpretations of Islam by some individuals have even fueled anarchic actions against others, demonstrating the danger of unchecked religious assumptions. Mr. Kasman, for example, as chairman of DPD Muhammadiyah Jember, period 2011-2016, explained:

> *"... there is a verse to legitimise groups that commit anarchist acts, as stated in the Qur'an, which means whoever punishes a law that is not in accordance with what Allah's law determines, that person is called a dholim person. This verse is legitimized by these anarchist groups. Then there is a hadith that says that. When you see evil, change it by hand." (Interview,)*

According to Mr. Kasman, religious understanding that begins with the interpretation of verses contributes to acts of violence in the name of religion, as its truth is difficult to measure and religious language cannot always be grasped by scientific logic. Therefore, he rejects subjective interpretations that lead to violence. Mr. Pujiono shares a similar view. Claims of religious truth arise from misinterpretation, misinformation, and the absence of open dialogue.

Lembaga Dakwah Islam Indonesia Rejection of Accusations of Heresy

The following interview with Mr. Taufikurrahman, as the board of LDII Jember, namely:

> *"... As an LDII member, I believe our duty is to uphold the Qur'an and Hadith as ultimate guidance. Violence is never the answer; even the Prophet treated his opponents with wisdom. Personally and organizationally, we prioritize dialogue. LDII follows the Qur'an and Hadith in practice, while groups like Muhammadiyah or NU find spiritual fulfillment in their own paths. We respect those differences because faith cannot be imposed.". (interview)*

LDII members follow long-held Islamic beliefs, choosing the organization for its alignment with their convictions. Mr. Taufiqurrahman expressed disappointment over hatred toward sincere beliefs, emphasizing that Muslim diversity should be respected. He questioned how people could chant takbir while proudly burning a mosque recently used for Isha prayer and prepared for Tarawih.

In some detail, Mr. Budiono told the researchers that, because of his status, he was a physics teacher at SMAN I Tanggul and at the same time an LDII figure who occupied Wisma Handayani. He expressed his disappointment over the incident.

> *"... Actually, our relationship with the community has been good. When NU residents built a mosque in front of our complex, we also helped with manpower. Maybe there was some unseen jealousy. But our scripture, prophet, religion, and qibla are the same. If LDII had a new prophet or scripture like Ahmadiyah, questioning us would make sense. For us, LDII is fundamental, but our NU brothers also have their own foundations" (interview).*

What LDII residents experienced is difficult for them to understand. They do not know why violence was directed at them or their mosque, which served only for worship. They could not foresee such hatred. Before the incident, they sensed no hostility; relations with the predominantly NU community were good, including cooperation in building NU mosques.

The conflict arose from unfounded rumors, such as spouse swapping and refusing handshakes, spread by irresponsible parties and denied by LDII members. The incident reflects baseless religious violence driven by misinformation and unilateral truth claims without evidence. Labeling deviance should involve understanding diverse religious views shaped by personal and contextual factors, not rigid norms.

Religious Conflict Resolution Patterns

Based on the conflict resolution agreement, the embankment police asked LDII residents not to file further lawsuits so the issue could be settled through deliberation. A formal agreement was signed by relevant parties to prevent the case from dragging on, and the situation has remained safe. However, the dialogue conducted by the government and Islamic organizations MUI, NU, Muhammadiyah, LDII, and others was inadequate, lacking mature and logical discussion to find common ground. Instead, only unilateral pressure aimed to stop others' beliefs. Such coercion is temporary and ineffective, as religious beliefs cannot be forcibly stopped and require no force to be practiced.

The dialogue that has taken place so far appears limited to respecting others' religions within a state framework that promotes tolerance and legal protections for harmony. It does not extend to deeper engagement with questions of religious truth. Claims of exclusive truth held by religious communities remain unaddressed and can become suppressed tensions that may erupt if ignored. When such truth claims emerge, they often lead to viewing other religious beliefs as false, creating potential conflict. Serious attention to these truth-claim dynamics is therefore essential for preventing future tensions and fostering genuine interreligious understanding.

The conflict between MUI Jember and LDII stemmed from limited dialogue. MUI labeled LDII as potentially heretical despite the group having been supervised by MUI and the Ministry of Religious Affairs since 1987 for alleged communication and worship errors that were never proven, worsened by LDII's isolationist tendencies. Halim Soebahar emphasized that MUI does not easily

declare a group deviant; such judgments rely on clear criteria, including rejecting core pillars of faith and Islam, promoting teachings outside the Qur'an–Sunnah, acknowledging new revelation, denying Qur'anic authenticity, rejecting hadith, denying Muhammad's final prophethood, altering essential worship, or unjustly declaring other Muslims infidels (Interview). The data above shows that internal Muslim conflict is complex, as exclusivity in worship and doctrinal understanding is inevitable. Such exclusivity can trigger hostility, especially when new rumors inflame emotions. Conflict resolution through open dialogue, respect for differences, and avoiding quick accusations of heresy has not been fully implemented by all parties.

Conflict Prevention and Protection of Places of Worship

This study reveals several key findings regarding the conflict experienced by LDII. The destruction of LDII places of worship was triggered by the group's exclusive religious practices, including the establishment of prayer facilities, which created tension with the majority community. According to Black et al. (2024), such conflicts often arise from differences in interests, values, and social dominance. Schneewind (2015) emphasizes that divergent religious interpretations and practices between minority and majority groups can generate social friction that may escalate into physical conflict. Moreover, LDII's exclusivism prompted accusations of heresy and deviation from Islamic teachings, which, as noted by Bos et al. (2013), function not merely as theological judgments but also as social mechanisms to maintain majority legitimacy and restrict the mobility of minority groups.

The LDII community rejects accusations of heresy, asserting that their practices and teachings do not substantially differ from other Muslim groups and remain consistent with Islamic principles. According to Alemayehu et al. (2023), minority groups tend to uphold specific interpretations and practices to preserve the integrity of their identity, even when these are perceived as deviant by the majority. The accusations voiced by FPI stem from unilateral truth claims based on limited information, wherein groups perceiving themselves as exclusive bearers of truth reject the plurality of religious practices (Bano et al., 2022). Furthermore, the dialogue facilitated by the government and MUI in Jember failed to satisfy LDII. Agung et al. (2024) emphasize that normative, unilateral, or formalistic dialogues are ineffective; instead, inclusive, egalitarian approaches that value individuals' spiritual experiences are necessary to ease tensions and foster acceptance of pluralism.

The conflict and destruction of LDII places of worship cannot be understood solely as doctrinal differences but as the result of complex interactions between minority exclusivism, majority truth claims, social delegitimization, and the failure of inclusive dialogue. Corpuz (2025) highlights that these factors mutually reinforce conflict potential. Setinawati et al. (2025) argue that conflict prevention and the protection of places of worship require a holistic approach that considers social, cultural, and religious contexts. Fidelis et al. (2024) further propose essential measures, including raising social awareness, fostering tolerance, and promoting egalitarian dialogue that respects individuals' spiritual experiences. These strategies can minimize conflict escalation and ensure the sustainable protection of the rights and religious sites of minority groups.

Efforts to Prevent Violence and Delegitimization of Minority Groups

This conflict illustrates how mainstream Islamic organizations, such as NU, Muhammadiyah, and FPI, tend to frame LDII doctrines as deviant and outside the mainstream. According to Alfawzan et al. (2024), accusations of heresy against LDII are part of a broader process questioning Islam within the intellectual sphere of the Muslim community in Jember. Teixeira (2023) emphasizes that this tension arises between Islam as an ideal doctrine and the actual religious practices carried out by Indonesian Muslims. DeCamp & Smith (2019) note that LDII religiosity is often perceived by the majority as deviant, heretical, or even apostate due to differences in interpretation and religious practice.

Labeling minority Muslim groups as deviant, heretical, or apostate solely because they differ from mainstream Islamic norms constitutes a form of social delegitimization. Igwebuike and Akoh (2022) further argue that the physical destruction of LDII prayer facilities reflects delegitimization through intimidation and physical violence. Hameleers (2022) emphasizes that such delegitimization practices originate from truth claims made by formalist or fundamentalist groups, who believe that only their interpretation is correct while others must be rejected. Alvian (2023) highlights that such groups even attempt to impose their views on others through various forms of coercion.

Efforts to prevent violence and delegitimization against minority groups must involve strategic measures. Agung et al. (2024) stress the importance of enhancing religious social awareness among both majority and minority communities. Anas et al. (2025) highlight the role of religious tolerance

education in fostering mutual respect. Meanwhile, Setinawati et al. (2025) emphasize developing inclusive dialogues that respect differences in religious practice as a key approach to conflict mitigation. This integrated approach is believed to minimize conflict potential, protect minority rights, and ensure the sustainable security and existence of places of worship.

Wittgenstein's Critique of Truth Claims in Religious Practice

Wittgenstein's philosophy of language provides a fundamental critique of how religious communities claim singular truths. By rejecting the universality of meaning, Wittgenstein demonstrates that language is inherently limited and cannot fully capture inner spiritual experiences. This perspective warns that imposing a single form of religious expression as a standard of truth creates symbolic domination. In the context of interfaith relations, including the relationship between LDII and mainstream Muslim communities, this reading emphasizes that differences in religious expression are not deviations but natural consequences of differing linguistic frameworks (Alpaslan & Mitroff, 2024). Arguments by Baker-Smemoe and Bowie (2015) reinforce this critique, noting that accusations of heresy often arise not from substantive theological deviation but from a failure to understand how others use language to express their faith.

Furthermore, Wittgenstein's reading critiques the tendency of religious traditions to universalize internal categories as objective truths. He asserts that religious beliefs are conceptual representations embedded within the "language life" of particular communities. This critique shifts the focus from doctrine as absolute truth to doctrine as a product of rule-governed language games shaped by social contexts. Huang (1995) emphasizes the importance of recognizing that each tradition possesses its own interpretive apparatus. Accordingly, Stetsenko (Stetsenko, 2020) notes that claims labeling a group as deviant cannot be separated from the socio-political position of the evaluator and are not merely doctrinal differences. Here, Wittgenstein's critique helps reveal that interreligious conflicts are often constructed through struggles over interpretive authority, rather than purely theological disagreements.

Finally, this framework critiques exclusivist approaches to resolving religious conflicts that tend to reinforce polarization. Fidelis et al. (2024) note that although religious practices differ, all traditions recognize the existence of a transcendent reality. From a Wittgensteinian perspective, focusing on symbolic differences obscures structural commonalities that could form the basis for dialogue. By prioritizing inclusive dialogue not to homogenize doctrines but to

understand the rules of each tradition, conflict resolution can occur without perpetuating hierarchies of truth (Banda et al., 2024). This approach not only reduces the potential for delegitimization but also critiques the tendency of societies to measure others' faith according to standards shaped by the language and experiences of dominant groups.

Egalitarian Dialogue as a Solution to Religious Delegitimization: A Wittgensteinian Analysis

Ending the delegitimization of Muslim minority groups requires a collective awareness to refrain from exclusive truth claims and unilateral accusations. Ardi and Budiarti (2020) emphasize that authentic acceptance of diversity can only be built through open and egalitarian dialogue free from intimidation. However, dialogues facilitated by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) have generally been normative, focusing primarily on drafting guidelines regarding the orthodoxy or heresy of religious teachings. As critiqued by Krueger et al. (Krueger et al., 2022), such approaches often fail to address the underlying relational and social issues causing intergroup tensions.

If MUI were to develop religious dialogue through a more reflective philosophical approach, for instance using Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, the discussion could shift from doctrinal judgment toward understanding that religious truth cannot be standardized solely by institutional decisions. This aligns with Johnson et al. (2023), who show that individuals' understanding of religion is highly influenced by their mindset, life experiences, and interpretive frameworks. Religious truth must consider the inner spiritual experiences of each individual, including LDII members, who interpret their beliefs through the lived experiences and internal language of their own community.

The beliefs held by LDII members can be understood as expressions of their inner spiritual experiences. As Fidelis et al. (2024) assert, spirituality is always rooted in subjective experiences that cannot be fully evaluated externally. When these internal experiences are expressed through language, the expression inevitably encounters linguistic limitations. Ryan (2022) notes that language has its own "games" and internal rules, making it impossible to fully capture the depth of feelings or meanings an individual intends to convey. Consequently, when LDII members express their beliefs, others' interpretations of these statements are likely to differ or even be mistaken due to the limitations of language in representing deeply personal spiritual experiences.

LDII's exclusivism, such as refraining from participating in other Muslim groups' religious practices, can be understood as part of the community's internal dialectic in responding to the development of Islam in Indonesia. Elhady (2022) emphasizes that a group's religious expression often reflects its struggle to maintain identity amidst social and religious change. Conversely, accusations of heresy against LDII demonstrate how Islamic discourse is shaped through social negotiation. Törnberg and Törnberg (2016) explain that perceptions of religious groups are constructed through social frameworks and public opinion. Therefore, religious expression must respect the rights and space of other groups to prevent differences from escalating into conflict.

Conclusion

This study shows that the conflict involving LDII is not solely rooted in doctrinal differences but emerges from the interaction of minority exclusivism, majority truth claims, social delegitimization, and the absence of inclusive dialogue. Accusations of heresy reflect struggles over interpretive authority within the Muslim community rather than purely theological error. Through Wittgenstein's language-games framework, doctrinal differences are viewed as expressions of distinct ways of life, not grounds for judging another group as misguided. Conflict resolution therefore requires egalitarian dialogue that honors individual spiritual experience and avoids exclusive truth claims. Measures such as tolerance education, stronger social awareness, and protecting places of worship are essential to prevent violence and uphold religious diversity in plural societies.

Theoretically, this study positions religious intolerance within analytic philosophy, especially Wittgenstein's language games, showing that religious expressions arise from distinct forms of life and linguistic practices. When religious language is treated as absolute, it loses its dialogical function and instead produces "epistemic violence," rejecting others' belief legitimacy. This perspective also exposes the limits of institutional authorities such as MUI, which standardize truth while overlooking the phenomenological dimensions of faith. Practically, the study calls on the state, religious institutions, and scholars to shift from passive tolerance to dialogical pluralism. Further research should develop dialogue models grounded in analytic philosophy and phenomenology to build a more inclusive religious epistemology.

The implications are significant: resolving religious conflicts cannot rely solely on formal dialogues or normative fatwas, which often legitimize majority

positions. Open and egalitarian dialogue is required, recognizing that each religious expression holds validity within its own language game. This approach enables acknowledgement of the plurality of religious experiences and reduces delegitimization practices that frequently lead to violence. Future studies should apply the language games framework to various intra and interfaith conflicts to assess its potential in enriching conflict resolution strategies based on lived experiences and linguistic expression. Comparative cross-context studies can support the development of inclusive interfaith dialogues, allowing religion to function as a constructive force for social harmony.

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