Reproducing Participatory Inequality through Organizational Structure and Capital Distribution in Muhammadiyah A Grounded Theory Study

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Abstract. Participatory inequality may persist within religious organizations despite their normative commitment to collective and egalitarian principles. This study aims to explain how participatory inequality is reproduced through the interaction between organizational structure and capital distribution within Muhammadiyah. Employing a qualitative approach with a Straussian Grounded Theory design, data were collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involving 30 participants representing regional leadership, autonomous organizations, and professional groups. The data were analyzed through open, axial, and selective coding. The findings reveal four interrelated dimensions of organizational inequality: structural dominance and semi-traditional authority; unequal distribution of capital and access; generational participation inequality; and ideological inequality and commitment. Empirically, these dimensions are reflected in the dominance of core leadership circles in decision-making, the limited participation of members beyond consultative roles, unequal access to organizational information, the influence of seniority and internal networks, recommendation-based recruitment, and differences in educational backgrounds and organizational experience. The findings also indicate that access to deliberative spaces among younger cadres is influenced by internal networks and recognition from senior figures, while differences in ideological commitment shape variations in organizational legitimacy and influence. These findings are integrated into a conceptual model in which formal organizational structures interact with the unequal distribution of social, cultural, and symbolic capital to reproduce participatory inequality. This study contributes a contextually grounded conceptual explanation of organizational inequality within Muhammadiyah by integrating Weberian and Bourdieusian perspectives.
Keywords: Capital Distribution, Grounded Theory, Structural Inequality, Muhammadiyah, Religious Organizations

Abstrak. *Ketimpangan partisipasi dapat tetap berlangsung dalam organisasi keagamaan meskipun organisasi tersebut secara normatif berkomitmen pada prinsip kolektivitas dan egalitarianisme. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan bagaimana ketimpangan partisipasi direproduksi melalui interaksi antara struktur organisasi dan distribusi modal dalam Muhammadiyah. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui desain Straussian Grounded Theory, data dikumpulkan melalui Focus Group Discussion (FGD) yang melibatkan 30 partisipan dari unsur pimpinan wilayah, organisasi otonom, dan kelompok profesional. Data dianalisis melalui tahapan open coding, axial coding, dan selective coding. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan empat dimensi ketimpangan organisasi yang saling berkaitan, yaitu dominasi struktural dan otoritas semi-tradisional; ketidaksetaraan distribusi modal dan akses; ketimpangan partisipasi antargenerasi; serta ketimpangan ideologis dan komitmen. Secara empiris, dimensi-dimensi tersebut tercermin dalam dominasi lingkaran pimpinan inti dalam pengambilan keputusan, terbatasnya partisipasi anggota yang hanya berada pada peran konsultatif, ketidaksetaraan akses terhadap informasi organisasi, pengaruh senioritas dan jaringan internal, rekrutmen berbasis rekomendasi, serta perbedaan latar belakang pendidikan dan pengalaman organisasi. Temuan penelitian juga menunjukkan bahwa akses kader muda terhadap ruang deliberasi dipengaruhi oleh jaringan internal dan pengakuan dari tokoh senior, sementara perbedaan komitmen ideologis membentuk variasi legitimasi dan pengaruh dalam organisasi. Temuan tersebut diintegrasikan ke dalam sebuah model konseptual yang menjelaskan bahwa struktur organisasi formal berinteraksi dengan distribusi modal sosial, budaya, dan simbolik yang tidak merata dalam mereproduksi ketimpangan partisipasi. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi berupa penjelasan konseptual yang berlandaskan konteks empiris mengenai ketimpangan organisasi dalam Muhammadiyah melalui integrasi perspektif Weberian dan Bourdieusian.*
Kata Kunci: Distribusi Modal, Grounded Teori, Ketimpangan Struktural, Muhammadiyah, Organisasi Keagamaan.

1. INTRODUCTION

Muhammadiyah is a modern Islamic organization founded in 1912 by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan in Yogyakarta. It is grounded in the principle of renewal (*Tajdid*) and promotes the vision of a progressive Islam (*Islam Berkemajuan*) through activities in religious preaching, education, and social services aimed at fostering social and spiritual transformation (Abdillah et al., 2024). Muhammadiyah is an Islamic movement committed to *dakwah* and *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*, rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah, with the aspiration of realizing a just and prosperous society (Maftuhah et al., 2024). Muhammadiyah has a large membership base and an extensive institutional network, with its membership estimated to comprise tens of millions of people from diverse professional, ethnic, social, and cultural backgrounds across Indonesia. This diversity reflects a high degree of social heterogeneity within the organization (Ramadhan, 2023)

As an organization with a large membership base and an extensive institutional network, Muhammadiyah has a hierarchical leadership structure that extends from the central level to the grassroots level. This structure is designed based on the principle of collective-collegial leadership, which emphasizes deliberation and an equitable distribution of roles (Kim, 2025). The collective-collegial mechanism is intended to prevent the concentration of authority in particular individuals and to maintain a balance among members in the decision-making process. The principles of egalitarianism and organizational rationality are distinctive characteristics of Muhammadiyah's leadership model within the context of modern Islamic organizations (Saputra & Mas, 2023).

Thoriq et al. (2023) emphasize that Muhammadiyah has developed a structured and hierarchical cadre development system as an institutional mechanism for leadership regeneration. This system operates through standardized formal and informal pathways at the national level and is managed by the *Majelis Pendidikan Kader*, thereby establishing a rational and institutionalized organizational governance system. A study on cadre strengthening indicates that organizational effectiveness depends heavily on managerial capacity, organizational experience, and cadres' ability to articulate community needs (Wahjusaputri et al., 2025) Taken together, these findings indicate that an established formal structure alone is insufficient; rather, the dynamics of participation and the distribution of roles within the organization are also closely associated with variations in members' internal capacities and access.

However, in organizational practice, participation dynamics do not always occur homogeneously. The roles of organizational actors are often influenced by individual capacities, social legitimacy, and their positions within particular social networks (Saidang et al., 2024). Differences in educational backgrounds, organizational experience, and access to social resources may affect members' involvement in strategic organizational spaces. This condition indicates that although Muhammadiyah structurally emphasizes egalitarian principles, its organizational dynamics remain situated within a context in which human resources and capital are not distributed uniformly among members. Furthermore, religious organizations are not immune to the reproduction of social relations that develop within the broader society (Olii et al., 2021).

Although religious organizations are normatively founded on principles of collectivity and participation, an international study by Chaves & Eagle (2016) demonstrates that formal structures do not necessarily correspond to an equal distribution of participation. Involvement in social services and strategic organizational activities often depends on the availability of internal resources and the uneven distribution of organizational cadres. The relationship between leaders and members emerges through the interaction of institutional norms, ideological and religious frameworks, and local social dynamics, which ultimately shape variations in the interpretation of roles and expectations regarding participation among members (Zigan et al., 2024).

Within a hierarchical structure, participation often remains limited to the consultative level, while deliberative authority continues to reside within formal leadership circles. This indicates that institutional mechanisms designed to ensure collective deliberation continue to operate within an asymmetric distribution of authority (Zaccaria, 2024). Research on identity-based inequality has shown that social institutions, including religious organizations, operate within pre-existing social structures and may therefore reflect and reproduce patterns of social relations and capital distribution that have developed within society

(Sabates-wheeler & Barker, 2024).

Structural inequality within religious organizations can be examined more deeply by integrating Weberian rationality and Bourdieu's theory of capital within a grounded theory study of Muhammadiyah. From a Weberian perspective, bureaucratization and the institutionalization of legal-rational authority contribute to the formation of formal structures, leadership hierarchies, and rule-based selection mechanisms (Holton, R. J., & Turner, 1989). The relevance of Weberian theory is further emphasized by (Houghton, 2010), who argues that formal structures, rules, and positions remain fundamental to organizational governance. This demonstrates that rationalization continues to shape positions, authority, and legitimacy, including within religious organizations. In practice, charismatic authority does not replace legal-rational authority but interacts with it, jointly shaping differences in organizational positions and access to strategic roles.

From a Bourdieusian perspective, however, underlying these formal structures is a distribution of various forms of capital. Cultural capital, including education and intellectual capacity; social capital, including networks and organizational connections; and symbolic capital, including religious legitimacy and moral reputation, play important roles in determining access to strategic positions (Apple et al., 2010) ; Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008)

However, formal structures alone cannot fully explain variations in the roles, contributions, and involvement of members in organizational practice. To address this limitation, Bourdieu's theory of capital is employed to reveal how the unequal distribution of cultural, social, and symbolic capital among organizational actors influences their capacity for participation and recognition within the organizational field.

The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to synthesize these two perspectives within a grounded theory design, thereby generating a conceptual construction derived from empirical findings rather than merely applying or testing established theories. The novelty of this study lies not merely in combining Weberian and Bourdieusian perspectives, but in using a grounded theory approach to empirically examine how formal organizational structures and the distribution of different forms of capital interact in producing participatory inequality within a modern religious organization. Previous studies have generally examined organizational authority, leadership structures, or social and symbolic capital as relatively distinct dimensions of organizational dynamics. This study seeks to move beyond these separate explanations by examining how legal-rational structures of authority interact with the unequal distribution of social, cultural, and symbolic capital in shaping cadres' access to information, deliberative spaces, and organizational influence.

Grounded theory provides the methodological basis for developing this explanation from the empirical data, while Weberian and Bourdieusian perspectives provide complementary analytical lenses for interpreting the emerging categories. The Weberian perspective helps explain the structural dimension of authority, bureaucracy, and formal organizational rationalization, whereas the Bourdieusian perspective helps explain how social, cultural, and symbolic capital shape differentiated access and legitimacy within the organizational field. Through the grounded theory coding process, these dimensions are integrated into a conceptual model that explains participatory inequality as an emergent interaction between formal organizational structure and the unequal distribution of capital. Accordingly, this study contributes a contextually grounded theoretical model that explains how participatory inequality can become institutionalized within a religious organization that normatively upholds egalitarian and collective-collegial principles.

The Weberian perspective provides an analytical basis for interpreting how formal organizational arrangements shape the distribution of authority and participation within Muhammadiyah. The FGD findings concerning the dominance of core leaders and the limited involvement of members in decision-making illustrate how hierarchical positions and formal authority structures influence organizational participation. These findings can be understood through Weber's concepts of bureaucracy and legal-rational authority, which explain how organizational power is institutionalized through formal positions, rules, and hierarchical arrangements. In this context, formal organizational structures do not merely facilitate coordination and governance but may also create

differentiated opportunities for cadres to exercise influence in organizational decision making.

Complementing this structural interpretation, the Bourdieusian perspective helps explain how unequal access to organizational resources reinforces differences in participation and influence. The FGD findings concerning internal recommendations, proximity to organizational leaders, seniority, and the influence of education and experience illustrate the operation of different forms of capital within the Muhammadiyah organizational field. Internal networks and personal relationships represent social capital that facilitates access to organizational opportunities. Educational qualifications and organizational experience reflect cultural capital that may influence the allocation of organizational roles. Meanwhile, seniority and organizational recognition constitute forms of symbolic capital that affect whose opinions receive greater legitimacy and consideration. These findings suggest that organizational influence is not determined solely by formal positions but is also shaped by the unequal distribution of resources and recognition among cadres.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using the Straussian Grounded Theory design developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) to develop an explanatory conceptual framework concerning structural inequality and the distribution of capital within Muhammadiyah. This approach was selected because it provides a systematic analytical procedure for identifying concepts, developing categories, and examining relationships among emerging categories through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

Data were collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involving representatives of the Muhammadiyah Regional Leadership, autonomous organizations, including the Muhammadiyah Student Association (IMM), Muhammadiyah Youth Association (IPM), Muhammadiyah Youth, Nasyiatul Aisyiyah, and Aisyiyah, as well as professional groups. The FGDs explored participants' experiences and perspectives regarding decision-making mechanisms, the distribution of organizational authority, access to information, and barriers to participation within the organization (Krueger, R. A., & Casey, 2002)

Participants were selected purposively to represent variations in structural positions, organizational experience, and levels of involvement in Muhammadiyah. A total of 30 participants took part in the FGDs, which were conducted at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi, on 12 June 2026. The discussions were organized into three sessions, each lasting approximately 45 minutes, and guided by a semi-structured discussion guide developed in accordance with the research objectives.

Data analysis followed three interconnected stages of the Straussian Grounded Theory approach. First, open coding involved examining the FGD data to identify meaningful statements, recurring issues, and patterns related to organizational practices and participants' experiences. These statements were assigned initial codes representing emerging concepts, including leadership dominance, limited participation, unequal access to information, seniority, internal networks, and differences in cadre capacity. Second, axial coding involved comparing and grouping the initial codes into broader conceptual categories by examining their similarities, differences, and relationships. At this stage, the emerging concepts were organized into structural dimensions, particularly the concentration and asymmetry of organizational authority, and capital-related dimensions, including social, cultural, and symbolic capital. Third, selective coding integrated these categories around a central conceptual relationship, namely the interaction between formal organizational structure and capital distribution. This integration was undertaken to explain how organizational authority and unequal access to different forms of capital jointly shape cadres' access to information, deliberative spaces, and organizational influence.

The development of the core conceptual relationship was based on the integration and interpretation of the categories identified throughout the coding process. By examining the connections between structural arrangements and the distribution of organizational capital, the analysis indicated that participatory inequality does not emerge solely from formal organizational

hierarchies or unequal capital distribution independently. Rather, it is reproduced through their interaction in shaping organizational participation and influence. This analytical process provided the empirical basis for developing the study's conceptual framework concerning structural inequality within Muhammadiyah.

To enhance data trustworthiness, source triangulation and reflexive discussions among the researchers were employed to examine the consistency of participants' perspectives and the interpretations developed during the analytical process (Nowell et al., 2017). The analytical interpretations were examined in relation to the FGD data to maintain consistency between the empirical evidence, coding categories, and the resulting conceptual framework.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The grounded theory analysis indicates that inequality within Muhammadiyah does not stem solely from the design of its formal organizational structure but rather from the interaction between structural authority and the unequal distribution of capital among Muhammadiyah cadres. The grounded theory coding process based on the FGD findings concerning structural inequality within Muhammadiyah is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Grounded Theory Coding Process Based on FGD Findings

FGD Findings / Issues	Open Coding	Axial Coding (Conceptual Category)	Selective Coding (Core Category)
Decisions are often dominated by core leaders	Dominance of core leaders	Concentration of authority	Reproduction of Participatory Inequality through the Interaction between Organizational Structure and Capital Distribution
Member participation is limited to consultation	Limited participation	Asymmetry of authority	Same core category
Information is not always accessible to all cadres	Unequal access to information	Information access inequality	Same core category
Senior members are listened to more than junior members	Seniority-based recognition	Symbolic capital and legitimacy	Same core category
Internal recommendations influence recruitment	Recommendation practices	Social capital and network-based access	Same core category
Proximity to leaders facilitates access	Internal networks	Unequal access through social networks	Same core category
Education and experience determine roles	Cadre capacity	Cultural capital and organizational competence	Same core category
Some members use Muhammadiyah as a means to pursue political, economic, social, and cultural interests	Organizational instrumentalization	Instrumentalization of organizational resources	Same core category
Not all cadres have equal access to organizational information and policies	Unequal access to organizational information	Information access inequality	Same core category
Formal structures continue to regulate mechanisms	Formal bureaucracy	Organizational authority and rationalization	Same core category

Source : Primary data, Processed by the researches, 2026

Figure 1. Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Reproduction of Participatory Inequality through the Interaction between Organizational Structure and Capital Distribution

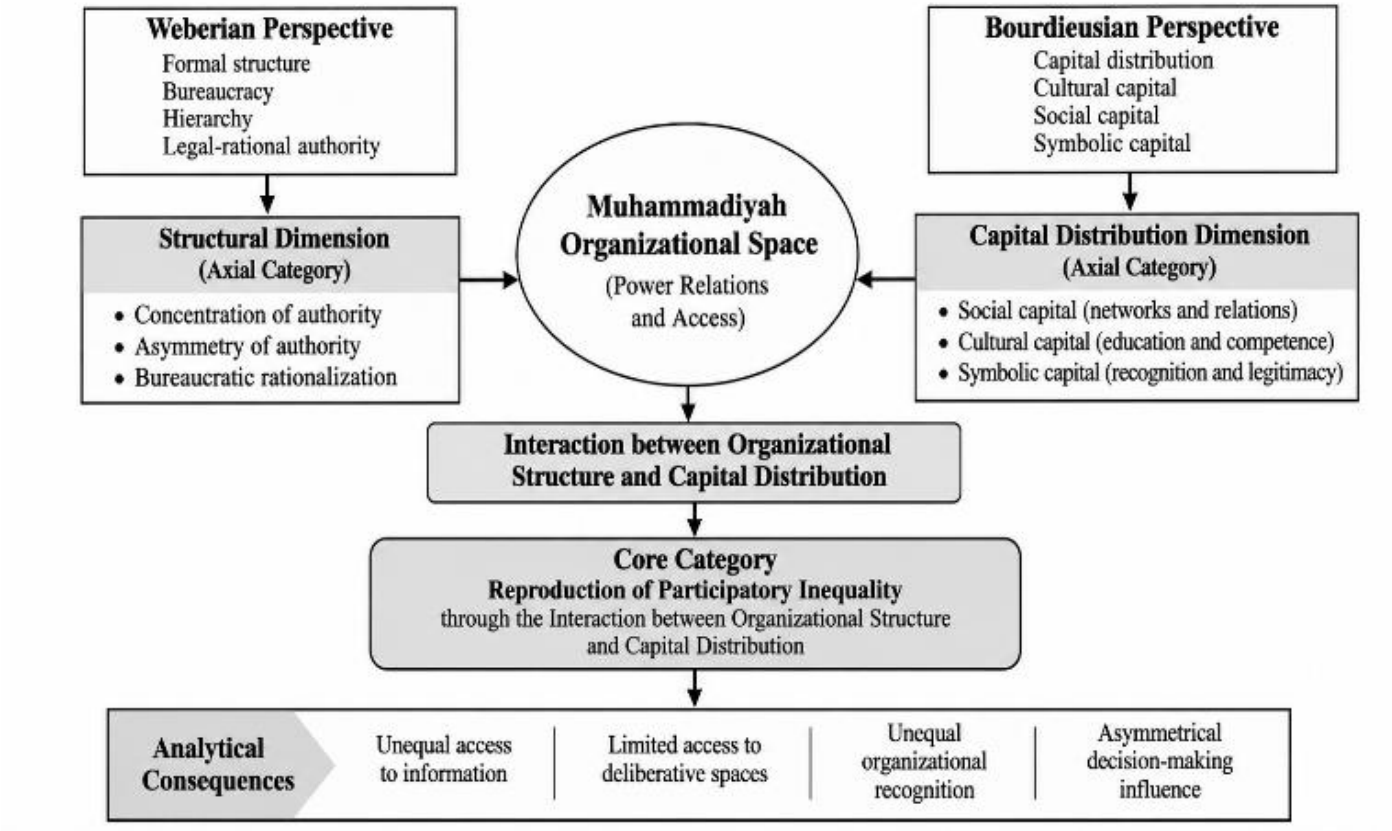


Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model developed through the integration of empirical findings and the grounded theory coding process. The model explains how participatory inequality within Muhammadiyah emerges through the interaction between organizational structure and the distribution of capital. These two dimensions represent interconnected mechanisms that shape power relations, access to organizational resources, and opportunities for participation within the organization.

The first dimension, interpreted through the Weberian perspective, concerns the structural arrangements governing organizational authority and decision-making. The findings indicate that formal structures, bureaucratic procedures, hierarchical relationships, and legal-rational authority shape how organizational power is distributed and exercised. Through axial coding, these patterns were conceptualized into three categories: concentration of authority, asymmetry of authority, and bureaucratic rationalization. These categories suggest that although formal organizational structures provide mechanisms for coordination and institutional governance, they may also create unequal opportunities for cadres to participate in organizational decision-making.

The second dimension, interpreted through the Bourdieusian perspective, concerns the unequal distribution of social, cultural, and symbolic capital among organizational cadres. Social capital is reflected in internal networks, personal relationships, and access facilitated by proximity to organizational leaders. Cultural capital is associated with educational backgrounds, knowledge, experience, and organizational competence that influence the allocation of organizational roles. Meanwhile, symbolic capital is reflected in seniority, recognition, prestige, and legitimacy that determine whose opinions receive greater consideration within organizational interactions. These forms of capital contribute to differences in cadres' access to organizational opportunities and influence.

The integration of these two dimensions reveals that structural arrangements and capital distribution do not operate independently. Rather, they interact in shaping the dynamics of power and participation within Muhammadiyah. Formal organizational positions may determine access to decision-making authority, while social networks, cultural qualifications, and symbolic recognition may further reinforce or differentiate the influence of individual cadres. Consequently, organizational participation is not necessarily distributed equally, even when formal mechanisms of consultation and representation are available.

Based on this integration, the central

analytical category is identified as the reproduction of participatory inequality through the interaction between organizational structure and capital distribution. This interaction produces several analytical consequences, including unequal access to organizational information, limited access to deliberative spaces, unequal organizational recognition, and asymmetrical decision-making influence. Thus, the conceptual model demonstrates that participatory inequality is not merely a consequence of formal organizational hierarchy but is also reproduced through unequal access to organizational resources and different forms of capital.

2.1 Structural Dominance and Semi-Traditional Authority

The FGD findings indicate that, although Muhammadiyah formally applies the collective-collegial principle in decision-making, in practice, the organization is characterized by the dominance of core leaders and senior cadres, who exert considerable influence over the decision-making process. Similar findings were reported by Latief & Nashir (2020), who explain that contemporary Muhammadiyah dynamics reflect an interaction between formal organizational structures and central figures who possess moral authority, extensive networks, and historical legitimacy in shaping the orientation of the movement. Yaghi (2007) further argues that, in religiously value-based organizations, organizational culture and guardianship values may exert greater influence on decision-making processes than the substance of the decisions themselves. Formal structures continue to operate collectively; however, issue framing, the filtering of alternatives, and consensus-building are often influenced by elites who possess moral legitimacy and extensive organizational experience.

Several FGD Partisipant revealed that strategic decisions tend to be influenced by the core leadership circle, while other members primarily play a consultative role. Seniority and organizational track record were identified as important factors. This finding is reinforced by a study by Kim (2025), which emphasizes that relationships among leaders at certain stages remain influenced by seniority and internal networks. Consequently, symbolic position and organizational track record give greater weight to the voices of senior cadres in deliberative processes.

The FGD findings reveal a discrepancy between the legal-rational ideal type and actual organizational practice. Seniority, organizational track record, and proximity to internal networks strengthen individual influence in deliberative processes. The legitimacy of decisions depends not only on formal positions but also on reputation and collective recognition. From a Weberian perspective, modern organizations ideally operate through impersonal legal-rational authority based on formal rules, with legitimacy vested in positions rather than individual figures Weber (1922). The FGD findings reinforce the argument that formal structures often interact with social networks and informal relationships in actual organizations. Interpersonal interactions and informal networks influence the flow of information and decision-making, even though the formal hierarchical structure remains dominant (Whetsell et al., 2021)

The Bourdieusian perspective is relevant for understanding the dynamics of Muhammadiyah as an organizational movement, viewing the organization as a site of symbolic competition in which cadres maintain their positions through the accumulation of cultural, social, and symbolic capital (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008). The FGD findings also indicate that dominance within the organizational structure is determined not only by formal positions and the influence of senior cadres but also by internal networks, education, and organizational experience. The accumulation of social, cultural, and symbolic capital strengthens legitimacy beyond administrative mechanisms, meaning that the authority established within the organization is not entirely impersonal but instead reflects semi-traditional patterns of authority in practice.

2.2. Unequal Distribution of Capital and Access

Seniority, internal networks, recommendations, and cadre capacity reflect the distribution of capital within the organization. Social, symbolic, and cultural capital determine cadres' relative positions and their access to decision-making mechanisms. The unequal distribution of capital creates disparities in access to organizational resources, as evidenced by ineffective communication, recommendation-based recruitment, and limited transparency. Consequently, information and opportunities are not distributed equally but instead tend to follow

established social relationships**.** Based on these findings, unequal access can be understood as an empirical manifestation of the differentiation of capital within the organizational space of Muhammadiyah. The findings from the FGDs are consistent with the study by Shorfana et al. (2025), which demonstrates that the distribution of social, symbolic, and cultural capital within an organizational field creates differentiated access to influence and legitimacy. Social and symbolic capital function as strategic resources in the acquisition and maintenance of legitimacy.

This condition may trigger perceptions of injustice, reduce levels of internal trust, and potentially lead to participatory exclusion. Unequal access to information and opportunities is often reinforced by informal networks and recommendation mechanisms, enabling some cadres to make more effective use of formal structures than others. Horak & Suseno (2023) demonstrate that information networks embedded within social institutions and cultural norms tend to restrict certain groups' access to strategic resources, resulting in marginalization and limited participation in decision-making processes. This finding reinforces the argument that organizational dominance is not solely produced by formal organizational design but also by social mechanisms that regulate the distribution of access and recognition within the organizational space. Furthermore, unequal access to information and communication is closely associated with declining levels of trust, particularly when the quality of internal communication deteriorates, which subsequently undermines the legitimacy of decision-making processes (Zoonen et al., 2024)

Based on the FGD findings and supported by several previous studies, it can be understood that unequal access within Muhammadiyah is determined not only by formal structures but also by the unequal distribution of capital. The organizational structure provides a collective legal-rational mechanism; however, the possession of social, symbolic, and cultural capital determines who can more easily access information, opportunities, and strategic positions. Consequently, participation in decision-making processes does not occur on an equal basis, even though the organizational framework appears formal and collegial.

2.3. Generational Participation Inequality

Generational participation inequality within Muhammadiyah, as a modern religious organization in Indonesia, cannot be adequately understood solely in terms of structural dominance or capital distribution; rather, it should also be viewed as an ongoing process of social reproduction. The FGD findings indicate that senior generations not only hold dominant positions in deliberative forums but also play a central role in cadre development, legitimation, and informal selection of cadres who have the potential to advance to strategic positions. Thus, young cadres' access to deliberative spaces is determined not solely by formal rules but also by mechanisms through which legitimacy and networks are reproduced and institutionalized.

The FGD findings indicate that young cadres who successfully gain access to the core leadership circle are generally those who have close connections within internal networks or have received legitimacy from senior figures. This finding suggests that social relationships and internal networks play an important role in shaping the inclusiveness of participation, particularly in determining young cadres' access to deliberative spaces. This interpretation is consistent with Herdiyanti (2024), who shows that social relationships and networks can influence the inclusiveness of participation within social and political contexts. Xu & Marandola (2023) further demonstrate that social inequality is associated with an unequal distribution of social capital, whereby groups occupying more advantaged positions within the social structure tend to possess stronger social capital. In the context of this study, internal networks and recognition from senior figures therefore function as forms of social and symbolic resources that facilitate access to organizational participation. Consequently, generational mobility within the organization is not entirely open.

2.4. Ideological Inequality and Commitment

In addition to structural inequality and the distribution of capital, the FGD findings also reveal differences in the level of ideological internalization and organizational commitment among Muhammadiyah cadres. Not all members possess the same level of understanding, orientation, and depth of commitment to the values of *Tajdid*, the collective-collegial principle, and the vision of *Islam Berkemajuan*. These differences are not always visible within the formal organizational structure but have a

significant influence on moral legitimacy and substantive influence within the organization.

Some cadres demonstrate participation that is primarily normative and administrative, whereas others exhibit engagement based on a deeper ideological commitment. In the context of religious organizations, the depth of value internalization often serves as a strong source of symbolic legitimacy. Thus, in addition to social and cultural capital, ideological alignment is also an important factor in determining credibility and trust within deliberative forums. In religious organizations, the internalization of religious values shapes organizational culture and strengthens members' trust and moral integrity (Daas, 2024).

Ideological inequality is not always visible in the formal organizational structure but can be reflected in differences in the depth of commitment and orientation toward organizational goals. Some Muhammadiyah cadres demonstrate normative and instrumental forms of participation, engaging in organizational activities without strong ideological attachment. Others, however, demonstrate a deeper substantive commitment to the mission of *dakwah* and social transformation. This differentiation results in variations in contributions and positions of influence within the organizational space. This pattern is consistent with the findings of Syamsudin et al. (2019), who argue that commitment within Muhammadiyah is multidimensional, encompassing normative, instrumental, and affective dimensions, such that not all members possess the same level of value-based attachment. Some young Muhammadiyah cadres develop commitment through deeper theological and ideological internalization, which encourages a transformative orientation toward the movement. This differentiation in commitment indicates that contributions and positions of influence within the organizational space are not determined solely by formal positions but also by the depth of ideological attachment (Fauzan & Firdiansyah, 2025)

From a Bourdieusian perspective, ideological internalization can be understood as part of the organizational *habitus*, namely the internalized dispositions that shape how cadres perceive their roles and responsibilities within the organization. Cadres whose *habitus* is aligned with the organization's dominant values tend to receive greater symbolic recognition and are perceived as more legitimate participants in decision-making processes. From a Weberian perspective, legitimacy in value-based organizations derives not only from procedural legality but also from moral authority that is collectively recognized (Recke, 2011; (Bourdieu, 1990). Accordingly, ideological inequality and differences in commitment constitute a cultural dimension of organizational inequality. While structural dominance explains the concentration of authority and capital distribution explains differentiated access, ideological differentiation explains variations in moral legitimacy that influence the effectiveness of individual influence within the organization. This dimension demonstrates that participation is determined not only by formal positions and resources but also by the depth of commitment to the organization's values and vision.

4. CONCLUSION

This study develops a grounded theoretical explanation of participatory inequality within Muhammadiyah by examining the interaction between formal organizational structures and the distribution of social, cultural, and symbolic capital. The findings indicate that participatory inequality is not produced by formal organizational hierarchy alone, but emerges through the interaction of concentrated authority, unequal access to organizational resources, and differences in the recognition and influence of cadres. This interaction is reflected in the dominance of core leadership circles, asymmetrical access to information and deliberative spaces, and the differentiated influence of cadres in organizational decision-making. Furthermore, generational reproduction and differences in ideological commitment represent additional dimensions through which participation and organizational legitimacy are differentiated.

The main theoretical contribution of this study lies in developing a grounded conceptual explanation of how structural arrangements and capital distribution jointly reproduce participatory inequality within a modern religious organization. By bringing Weberian and Bourdieusian perspectives into an integrated analytical framework, the study explains how formal authority and bureaucratic arrangements interact with social networks, cultural resources, and symbolic legitimacy in shaping cadres' access

to organizational participation and influence. Rather than treating organizational structure and capital distribution as separate sources of inequality, this study demonstrates their interconnected roles in the reproduction of participatory inequality. This conceptual contribution extends the understanding of organizational inequality beyond formal institutional arrangements by highlighting the interaction between institutional authority and differentiated access to capital.

Future research could examine the applicability of this conceptual explanation in other religious organizations and institutional contexts through comparative studies. Such research may help identify whether similar interactions between formal organizational structures and capital distribution shape patterns of participation and influence across different organizational settings.

5. ETHICS STATEMENT

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles for social science research involving human participants. Participation in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) was voluntary, and participants were informed about the purpose and scope of the research prior to data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before their involvement in the study. The researchers-maintained confidentiality and protected participants' identities throughout the research and publication processes. The data were used exclusively for academic and research purposes. The researchers also sought to ensure that participants' opinions and contributions were represented accurately and responsibly, without compromising their privacy or organizational positions.

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