# Language of solidarity: Socio-religious funds as a communication strategy and resilience of the Indonesian Shia community

**Warnis[1], Onok Yayang Pamungkas[2]\* , Siti Atieqoh[1], Kustini[1], Wakhid Sugiyarto[1], Candiki Repantu[3], Yumasdaleni[1]**
[1]National Research and Innovation Agency, Indonesia
[2]Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, Indonesia
[3]Center for Historical and Social Sciences Studies, State University of Medan, Indonesia
\*Correspondence: onokyayangpamungkas@gmail.com

## ABSTRACT

This article examines the experiences of the Shia minority community in Indonesia by highlighting their distinct identity, the various forms of discrimination they face, and their inclusive practice of khums. Despite occupying a marginal position within the predominantly Sunni Muslim society, the Shia community in Indonesia has remained resilient in preserving its religious beliefs and traditions. The study also explores the historical, policy-related, and cultural factors that have shaped Shia identity in the Indonesian context. Its future analyses both overt and covert forms of discrimination experienced by Shia Muslims in their everyday lives. In addition, this article emphasizes the strategic role of khums religious obligation in Shia Islam as a means of fostering social cohesion and economic empowerment within the community. Employing a qualitative research approach, the study utilizes interviews, observations, focus group discussions (FGD), and document analysis. Through the examination of khums practices, the article reveals innovative strategies developed by the Shia minority to confront challenges while preserving their religious and cultural heritage.

**KEYWORDS:** language, Indonesia Shia, Shia minority, discrimination, religious practice, social cohesion, economic empowerment, Islamic identity

## Introduction

Indonesia is a nation rich in religious diversity, encompassing a wide array of faiths, beliefs, and religious traditions. The state officially recognizes six religions, with Islam being the faith of the majority of the population. Amid this diversity, although most Indonesian Muslims adhere to Sunni Islam, a minority Shia Muslim community also exists. Both communities have played significant roles in the Islamization of the archipelago and have historically coexisted peacefully with other religious groups. Their religious tradition also exhibits certain similarities. Abdurrahman Wahid once stated, "NU is Shia without Imamate, and Shia is NU with Imamate; the only difference lies in the concept of Imamate" (Wahid, 2006). According to (Sunyoto, 2012), despite theological differences regarding Imamate, both communities have experienced a degree of syncretism, particularly in their Sufi practices and other religious traditions. In this context, the term Shia refers to Zaydi Shia, rather than the more widely recognized Twelver (Imamiyyah) Shia currently present in Indonesia, as the traditions in question are rooted in the Zaydi legacy.

The presence of Shia Islam in Indonesia can be traced back to the establishment of the Peureulak Sultanate in 840 CE, led by Sayyid Maulana Abdul Aziz Syah, a descendant of the Prophet (*Ahlulbait*) who followed Shia teachings. Although the sultanate eventually changed rulers, Shia Islam continued to be practiced by several sultans until 1292, before being integrated into the Samudra Pasai Kingdom (Hasymy, 1993; Nasution & Miswari, 2017). During the Samudra Pasai era (1267-1517), Shia Islam was also embraced, until the kingdom's fall and the subsequent rise of the Aceh Darussalam Sultanate in 1946. Despite this long-standing presence, the identity of the Shia community has often been ignored or viewed with suspicion by Sunni Muslims, especially concerning the theological concept of Imamate. This concept is frequently perceived as a political threat, although only countries such as Iran implement it as a governing principle (Kusumah, 2021). In contrast, Shia identity in Indonesia, especially that of the Twelver (Itsna Ashariyah) Shia, has been shaped by complex socio-political dynamics and is often marginalized due to widespread misunderstandings of Shia beliefs.

Another key difference between Sunni and Shia jurisprudence lies in the practice of khusus, a religious obligation to allocate a portion of one's wealth for religious and communal purposes (Rodin, 2013). In Sunni Islam, zakat, infaq, and sadaqah are central spiritual and social obligations emphasizing justice, compassion, and communal solidarity. Zakat is compulsory for eligible Muslims and must be distributed according to specific criteria outlined in QS At-Taubah:60, while infaq and sadaqah are encouraged but non-obligatory acts of charity. In contrast, Shia jurisprudence mandates the payment of khums, 20% of annual surplus income, based on QS Al-Anfal:41, primarily for religious and community needs. Sunni interpretation generally limits khums to wartime spoils, reflecting different approaches to scriptural interpretation and legal reasoning between the two traditions.

The Shia community in Indonesia faces numerous challenges in constructing and sustaining a strong religious identity, especially within a socio-political context that often privileges the Sunni majority (Aji, 2022; Faridah et al., 2025). Their identity is frequently questioned or misrepresented by groups that label Shia teachings as deviant. Shia Muslims have experienced various forms of discrimination, including social rejection, harassment, and more subtle forms of exclusion (Amal & Shodiq, 2019; Faturohman et al., 2024; Mubaroq, 2024; Zattullah, 2021). Nevertheless, the community does not view these differences merely as obstacles, but rather as a source of strength that affirms their unique religious identity. Upholding the values of pluralism and tolerance, they strive to make positive contributions to Indonesia's religious life.

Scholarship on Shia Islam in Indonesia generally falls into three major areas. First, Shia Identity and Minority status, which examines the construction of Shia identity from religious, cultural, and social perspectives, as well as its relationship with the Sunni majority (Azzuhri et al., 2022; Leichtman, 2020; Navvab, 2018; Syed & Pio, 2018; A. Wahid et al., 2020; R. A. Wahid, 2017). Second, Discrimination and Marginalization, which investigates the various forms of violence, exclusion, and discrimination faced by Shia communities, along with their responses (Amal, 2020; Ida, 2016; Makin, 2017; Sari et al., 2020; Sofjan, 2016; Wahyudi & Wahid, 2015). Third, Religion Practices and Khums, which explores Shia religious practices with particular attention to the collection and distribution of khums, a significant tool for economic empowerment and social solidarity (Formichi, 2014; Lubis & Rahmah, 2022; Payandeh & Kharratha, 2016; Ramadhan, 2022).

This article presents an in-depth analysis of the lived experiences of the Shia Muslim community in Indonesia, who face major challenges in maintaining their religious identity and traditions amidst Sunni

dominance and various forms of overt and covert discrimination. Despite their minority status, the Shia community holds significant historical and cultural value. Through the practice of khums, they strengthen their identity, foster social solidarity, and promote economic empowerment, such as supporting education and social welfare. Khums becomes not only a symbol of their religious resilience but also a means of survival and internal fortification amid socio-political pressures.

Nevertheless, ongoing discrimination continues to threaten their social development and well-being, ranging from societal exclusion and persecution to policies that restrict religious freedom. These challenges undermine not only their sense of security and welfare but also their participation in broader social, political, and economic life. By examining the role of khums in reinforcing identity and solidarity, and by highlighting the community's persistence in the face of discrimination, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how Indonesia's Shia community endures and contributes to the nation's Islamic diversity while underscoring the urgent need to build a more inclusive, just, and harmonious society.

## Literature Review

Several studies on religious identity demonstrate that the religious identity of a group, particularly in minority contexts, is significantly shaped by historical, political, and social factors (Geertz, 1971; Smith, 1991). Research by R. A. Wahid shows that the identity of the Shia community is formed through a long history of interaction between Shia and Sunni in Indonesia, as well as political policies that have often marginalized them (Muhammadong, 2023). The Shia community in Indonesia frequently faces tension in maintaining its identity amidst the dominance of the larger and more powerful Sunni group (Sassi, 2025; Zattullah, 2021). This is further elaborated in *Syiah di Aceh: Studi tentang pengaruh Syiah dalam tradisi keislaman-keilmuan dan pemetaan Gerakan sosial keagamaan* by (Apridar et al., 2016). (Pabbajah, 2020) notes that the Shia community in Indonesia often has to adapt its traditions for survival, while simultaneously preserving its religious teaching and values.

Discrimination against minority communities often manifests in the form of unequal treatment or social marginalization (Jhody et al., 2023; Seo et al., 2025). In the context of Shia Muslims, studies by Hasim (2012) and Taufik (2014) identify various forms of discrimination faced by this community in Indonesia, including social rejection, physical violence, and restrictions on religious freedom (Haidarrani et al., 2024). Such discrimination appears both overtly, such as hate speech against Shia by certain groups, and covertly, for instance, in limited access to education, employment, and social participation (Amal & Shodiq, 2019). Research (A. Wahid et al., 2020) highlights that discrimination against Shia is often exacerbated by policies that are unfriendly to religious diversity and tend to marginalize minority groups within a homogenizing nation-state framework. Additionally, Rangkuti reveals that discrimination against Shia frequently occurs in everyday life, including the rejection of their religious celebrations and restricted access to public facilities. (Anzaikhan, 2021; Azra, 2013; Azra & Hasan, 2002) emphasize that although Indonesia is a Muslim majority country, religious diversity within Islam is often not fully acknowledged, including the presence of Shia communities. (Shihab, 2017) also notes ongoing tensions between religious groups, including between Sunni and Shia communities.

The practice of khums, as a religious obligation in Shia Islam, plays a crucial role in fostering social cohesion and empowering the community economically. Research by (Laely, 2019) explain that khums, which is the obligation to allocate a portion of one's income for religious, social, and community development purposes, helps strengthen internal solidarity within the Shia community development purposes, helps strengthen internal solidarity within the Shia community (Asyari, 2019). Through this practice, Shia communities are able to fund various social programs such as education, healthcare, and religious activities, thereby reinforcing bonds among members. The study by (Syukriadi & Novel, 2024) also demonstrates that khums plays a vital role in enhancing the economic resilience of the community, particularly in the face of social and political challenges they experience as a minority group. In this regard, khums functions not only as a religious obligation but also as a mechanism for social and economic empowerment within the Shia community. (Laely, 2019) notes that khums is used to support both social and religious activities, while (Zadeh, 2015) states that khums funds are often allocated for education and the constructing of religious infrastructure. (Laely, 2019) also argues that Khums enhances the bargaining power of the Shia community in confronting social challenges and discrimination.

## Methodology

This study aims to explore the lived experiences of the Shia minority community in Indonesia, with a focus on their identity, the discrimination they face, and their inclusive practice of khums. A qualitative approach and case study method were employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the social, cultural, and religious life of the Shia community. This approach enables the researcher to uncover the meaning embedded in their experiences and to understand both discrimination and religious practices from the Shia community's perspective.

The study focuses on the everyday lives of Shia communities in Indonesia, particularly regarding their identity, experiences of discrimination, and khums practices. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with members of the Shia community, religious leaders, and other individuals knowledgeable about Shia religious life. Interviews were also conducted with external parties, such as members of the Sunni community, to gain perspectives on intergroup relations. In addition, focus group discussions (PGDs) were held with Shia community members to explore their experiences of discrimination and religious practices, including khums. The researcher also conducted direct observation of religious and social activities within the Shia community, along with document analysis of relevant sources, such as annual reports and media articles.

The fieldwork was carried out in two regions in Indonesia, Jakarta and Medan, which both host significant Shia populations. The research subjects included Shia community members from various age groups and social backgrounds, Shia religious leaders, and several individuals from the Sunni community or the general public, in order to understand broader societal perceptions of the Shia. The data collected were analysed using thematic analysis, where data from interviews, FGDs, observations, and documents were categorized into key themes such as identity, discrimination, khums, and social solidarity.

To ensure data validity, the study employed data triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail. Through this qualitative and case study approach, the research aims to provide a deeper understanding of identity, discrimination, and khums practices within Indonesia's Shia community, while also contributing to broader scholarship on religious diversity in Indonesia.

## Fundings

### 1. The Identity of the Shia Community in Indonesia: Strengths and Challenges in History

The history of Shia presence in Indonesia is a complex topic and remains a matter of debate among scholars. The question of when Shia teaching first entered the archipelago has yet to find a single definitive answer. Some scholars argue that Shia Islam has been present since the early arrival of Islam in the region (Dewi & Istiadi, 2016; Hasyim, 2012), while others challenge this claim due to the lack of convincing historical evidence (Widyadara, 2015; Zattullah, 2021). However, various sources note that the influence of Shia Islam, particularly Zaydi Shia, was evident as early as the 9th century CE, notably through the establishment of the Peureulak Sultanate around 840 CE. Islam was spread by scholars and traders from Persia and Yemen who adhered to Zaydi teachings. They employed *taqiya* as a strategy and formed Muslim communities led by descendants of the Prophet's family (*Ahlulbait*) (Akbar, 2020; Saby, 1995). During this period, sectarian differences were not a major issue among the general population but remained confined to elite circles, such as sultans and religious scholars (Aboebakar, 1979; HADZIR, 1971; Pabbajah, 2020).

The Zaidi School of thought shares many jurisprudential similarities with the Shafi'i school, leading it to be referred to as the fifth madhhab within Sunni tradition. This closeness allowed for relatively harmonious religious acculturation. While the broader society in the archipelago largely followed Shafi'i jurisprudence, elements of Shia religious traditions, particularly those originating from Zaydi Shia, persisted (Hasymy, 1993; Sofjan, 2013; Sunyoto, 2016). The debate over whether Shia or Sunni Islam arrived first remains unresolved. Although some argue there is no strong evidence of early Shia dominance, the widespread dissemination of religious traditions with Shia characteristics suggests that Shia communities played a significant role in the early Islamization of the archipelago.

Shia influence reemerged in the 20th century, especially after the 1979 Iranian Revolution. This revolution inspired renewed interest in Shia theology and political thought among Indonesian intellectuals and university students (Hasyim, 2012; Sofjan, 2016). During this period, some Habib who had previously taught Sunni jurisprudence began to openly identify as Shia, although Shia teachings were not explicitly propagated to avoid conflict (W.S., interview, 2024).

The Indonesian government responded to this development with concern, particularly over the potential spread of Ja'fari ideology. A Number of seminars were organized to preempt the dissemination of Shia teachings. In contrast, the academic community and younger activists warmly welcome ideas from the Iranian Revolution, leading to an increase in books and discussion about Shia Islam. However, the Shia community in Indonesia is not monolithic. There is diversity in doctrine, international orientation, and leadership among Shia groups (Assegaf, 2012). Public responses to Shia communities also vary, ranging from acceptance to discrimination, vilification, and even violence. Rejections of Shia Islam are often linked to truth claims that are perceived as contradictory to dominant Sunni doctrines (Khairifa et al., 2024).

The open use of the sectarian Shia label is often avoided for both theological and political reasons. One example of sectarian tolerance can be seen in the Alawi community, where some members follow Shia teachings but present Islam within a Sunni framework. However, tensions may arise when sectarian identity is publicly revealed, as illustrated by the case of *Habib Al Atas* in Tanjung Balai Karimun. After it became known that he was Shia, he faced social exclusion, and Salafi Wahhabi groups demanded a heresy fatwa from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) (Sugiyarto, 2018). This incident illustrates that sectarian issues in Indonesia are intertwined with global geopolitical dynamics, such as the conflict in Syria and the rise of transnational movements.

### Data on the Number of Shia in Indonesia

The exact Number of Shia adherents in Indonesia is difficult to determine due to the lack of official data and the practice of *taqiya* (religious dissimulation) by some followers to avoid discrimination. Various sources provide differing estimates: the State Intelligence Agency (BIN) and the National Policy Headquarters (Mabes Polri) have reported figures ranging from 6 to 7 million individuals, although these members have not been independently verified; the Research and Development Agency of the Minority of Religions Affairs (Balitbang Kementerian Agama) estimates approximately 200.000 Shia Muslims spread across various regions (Rochmat & Setiawan, 2017); and a prominent Shia figure and founder of IJABI (The Indonesian Ahlulbait Association). Jalaludin Rakhmat estimates the number to be between 2.5 and 5 million, with concentration in major cities such as Bandung, Makassar, Jakarta, and regions in Central and East Java (Qiblati, 2013).

The discrepancies reflect the complexity of openly identifying Shia communities, which is influenced by socio-political factors and religious sensitivities in Indonesia. Many Shia adherents choose not to be officially registered and conceal their religious identity to avoid ongoing pressure or discrimination. As a result, the visibility of these communities remains limited, making accurate population counts a significant challenge.

### Cultural Aspect

Over a long historical trajectory, Shia teachings and influence in Indonesia have become traceable through various local religious (*hikayat*) and traditions. Certain communities, such as *Islam Tua* in Talaud, *Islam Wektu Telu* in Lombok, and *Islam Ma'rifat* in Hatuhaha, demonstrate strong adaptation to local socio-cultural contexts, where Islam evolved and integrated with indigenous elements. In theology, syncretic elements are also found, such as the mystical doctrine of *manunggaling kawulu Gusti* developed by Syekh Siti Jenar and Sunan Kalijaga. This teaching, imbued with mysticism and esotericism, is still upheld by segments of the Javanese Muslim population today. In this context, the explicit and clearly identified Shia identity as a school of thought only became visibly articulated after the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution, as discussed earlier.

In terms of religious practices, the Shia community possesses a rich tradition that is widely practiced by Sunni communities in Indonesia, particularly among traditionalist Muslims. (Apridar et al., 2016; Hakim, 2024; Lukman, 2020) It has been shown that many religious practices found within traditional Islamic mass organizations, such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), as well as similar groups like Al-Washliyah, PERTI, and *Mathla'ul Anwar. LDDI (Lembaga Dakwah Islam Indonesia)* and *Nahdlatul Wathan* have roots in Shia religious traditions, particularly those of the Zaydi school. Although NU and Shia differ in some aspects of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), their religious practices reveal significant similarities. Sirajuddin & Saimima (1986) describe NU's religious tradition as syncretic, having adopted many Shia elements, especially in the form of religious rituals, veneration of the *Ahlulbait*, and *tariqa* (Sufi order) traditions.

All major *tariqas* in Indonesia mention the names of the *Ahlulbait* in their *tawassul* (intercessory prayer),

including the seven, nine, twelve, or even fourteen Shia Imams. The *Tariqa Syattariyah*, for instance, includes the name of Imam Ali Ridha, the ninth Imam in the Twelve Shia tradition. In the *sanad* (spiritual chain transmission) of these orders, nearly all place Imam Ali as a central link following the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In tradition, elements of belief found in traditional Muslim communities, such as the belief that Nabi Khidr is still alive, the anticipated appearance of Imam Mahdi, and the mystico-theological concept of *manunggaling kawula Gusti,* are often viewed as irrational or deviant by modernist Islamic groups like *Muhammadiyah* and their counterparts (Interview, WS, 2024).

### *Innovation Strategies of the Shia Community in Facing Challenges*

The Shia community in Indonesia indeed faces numerous challenges going forward. However, they have developed several strategies to respond, one of which is the strategic utilization of advancements in science and technology, particularly information technology. Digital technologies such as the internet, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and others have proven effective tools for disseminating information, spreading religious teachings, and countering negative narratives that portray Sunni-Shia relations as inherently hostile. Through social media platforms, anyone can access balanced knowledge and information, including accurate understandings of Shia history and doctrine from credible sources.

Previous efforts to catalogue anti-Shia websites on the internet have proven useful in identifying the arguments, ideas, and agendas behind their campaigns, which often flood social media with slander, misinformation, and sectarian provocation. However, this anti-Shia online activity can backfire. It has sparked intellectual debates, stirred curiosity, and opened minds across various groups to explore and learn more deeply about the history, teachings, and struggles of Shia communities in different parts of the world. Many individuals, after rational reflection, make personal decisions about which *madhhab* aligns best with their understanding and beliefs.

A Shia follower in Indonesia explained that through social media, Shia scholars and intellectuals are now able to clearly explain what Shia Islam is, who adheres to it, and how it has developed along with its historical journey and the reasons why Shia communities have consistently faced oppression from the time of the Umayyads to the present Reformasi era. These platforms also open up space for public questions and comments, turning them into forums for dialogue. Whether one chooses to convert to Shia Islam or not is, ultimately, a personal decision. One informant share a personal testimony about their conversion to Shia Islam after reading the book "*Then I Was Guided*" (*Akhirnya Kutemukan Kebenaran*) by Muhammad al-Tijani, a Sunni scholar who embraced Shia Islam after traveling through several countries, meeting Shia scholars and intellectuals, studying the school, and participating in religious traditions in Iran and Iraq (Muchsin, interview, 13 February 2020, in Solo).

In a similar vein, the Abu Thalib Islamic Foundation in Medan, a foundation whose members possess deep knowledge of various Islamic traditions, including both Sunni and Shia, provides a balanced perspective in its writings, lectures, and dialogues, presenting the arguments of both schools with openness and fairness. Another example is the *Bait al-Hikmah* website, which hosts a wealth of religious content covering different Islamic *madhhab*, Sufism, and other theological perspectives offering accessible and well-rounded knowledge. It is also important to note that many student activists who eventually converted to Shia Islam were initially academics and idealists. These individuals often expressed a desire to understand Islam more comprehensively, which they pursued through books, the internet, and direct encounters with Shia followers (RC, interview, 2024).

### 2. Social and Psychological Dimension of Discrimination Against the Shia Community

Indonesia, as a country founded on Pancasila and the principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), constitutionally guarantees religious freedom for all its citizens. However, in practice, the Shia Muslim community has faced various forms of systematic discrimination rooted in a long history of theological divergence, socio political tensions, and the construction of exclusive religious identities. This is despite the fact that Shia Islam has been recognized as a legitimate part of Islam in the 2006 Amman Message. Nevertheless, in Indonesia, the Shia are often associated with heretical teachings, making them targets of violence, exclusion, and the restriction of civil and religious rights (Faridah et al., 2025; Makin, 2017; Sultriana & Mustahyun, 2017; Ulum, 2021).

Since the early 2000s, report of persecution against Shia communities have increased. Cases of forced eviction, prohibition of worship, and attacks on places o worship have formed a recurring pattern of violence (Formichi, 2014). This discrimination is not merely the result of spontaneous outbursts of intolerance but is deeply rooted in theological differences and the pursuit of certain political interests (Ramadhan, 2022). One of the actors contributing to the normalization on this discrimination is the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI). Through its fatwa declaring Shia as deviant, MUI has indirectly provided moral legitimacy to acts of intolerance (Achmad, 2019). The fatwa reinforces the perception that Shia are the other within the body of Islam and may therefore be marginalized both socially and legally. The gap between constitutional guarantees and on the ground practices demonstrate the state's weak commitment to upholding justice and human rights.

Experiences of Shia communities also very across regions. In some areas, they are able to live peacefully alongside other groups, while in others, such as Sampang, Madura, they have been subjected to violent expulsions. Although the courts have upheld their right to return to their land, local political realities often obstruct the enforcement of such legal decisions (Abidin et al., 2018). This phenomenon shows that violence and discrimination are not only the result of religious differences but are also closely tied to loyal power structures and political interests. In many cases, alliances form between intolerant groups and government officials, jointly shrinking the living space of the Shia community (Amal, 2020).

Beyond legal and social impacts, such discrimination also generates deep psychological trauma. Violence based on religious identity has disrupted community structures, fostered a sense of insecurity, and caused intergenerational wounds. Children from Shia families experience social rejection and bullying at school, while their parents are forced to worship in secret to avoid intimidation. Over time, this situation has led to the internalization of stigma, wherein those who are discriminated against begin to accept the negative labels imposed by the dominant group. This process produces feelings of inferiority, identity crises, and fear of expressing oneself publicly as a Shia. Furthermore, the community experiences restricted access to education, employment, and religious participation even within their own community.

Persecution of the Shia community also occurs through the media. Hate speech, the spread of hoaxes, heresy labelling in sermons and literature, and anti-Shia religious lectures are among the tools used to delegitimize Shia presence in the public sphere. This affirms that discrimination against Shia is not incidental but part of a systematic effort to erase a religious identity deemed deviant. In this context, the state often remains absent in providing protection or is even complicit in reinforcing such stigmatization.

To address this issue, several scholars and human rights activists have called for the adoption of a multicultural approach that is inclusive and guarantees equal rights for all citizens. A multicultural policy should not merely recognize the existence of minorities but must also ensure their full participation in social, political, and cultural life (Abidin et al., 2018). Furthermore, sincere interfaith dialogue based on shared values must be strengthened, especially at the grassroots level. Dialogue initiatives that are purely symbolic or elitist will not be sufficient to resolve deeply rooted tensions within society.

Discrimination against the Shia community in Indonesia is a manifestation of the state's failure to translate constitutional principles into equitable practice. It should not be understood solely as a religious conflict, but as a form of structural marginalization that requires systemic and progressive policy intervention. Recognising Shia Islam as a legitimate part of the Islamic tradition and taking political courage to uphold legal protection without discrimination are essential steps toward building a truly inclusive and socially just Indonesia.

## 3. Khums Practices: Social Mechanism and Economic Empowerment

Khums is a religious obligation recognized by both Sunni and Shia schools of thought. The difference lies in how each interprets the subject of khums, especially the meaning of ghanimah as it appears in the Qur'an and hadith from both traditions (Al-Isfahani, 2009; Sugiyarto, 2018). Linguistically, khums means one-fifth. In Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), it obliges every Muslim to allocate one fifth of specified qualifying assets, ranking among the essential religious duties (*dharuriyat ad-din*) alongside ritual prayer, fasting, zakat and pilgrimage. Sunni jurisprudence typically limits the khums obligation to war booty (*ghanimah*), based on interpretation from scholars such as Al-Qurtubi (n.d). In contrast, the Shia school (Ja'fari fiqh) extends khums to include treasures, mineral yields, marine harvesting, and surplus annual income after basic needs are met (Ath-Thabarsi

& Abu Ali al-Fadhl bin al-Hasan, 2006; Pur, 2013).

The interpretation of *ghunm* in the Qur'an underpins this divergence. The term appears in nine verses carrying meanings ranging from abundant wealth (QS an-Nisa' 4:94), sheep/goats (QS al- An'am 6:146), to war spoils (QS al-Anfal 8:41). Shia scholars assert that nones of these verses explicitly restrict khums to war booty; rather they are seen as general in scope (Al Sayf, n.d.; Ath-Thabarsi & Abu Ali al-Fadhl bin al-Hasan, 2006; Ath-Thabathabai & Al-'Allamah Sayid Muhammad Husain, 1997, 1997; Ath-Thusi & Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Hasan, 1440; nasir-makarim et al., 2024; Syirazi & Makarim, 2013; Yunus, 2014).

The primary text for khums is QS al-Anfal:41, which mandates that a fifth of acquired gains be allocated to Allah, the Prophet, relatives of the Prophet, orphans, the poor, and travelers. Over 110 supporting hadiths are recorded. For example, Imam Muhammad Jawad (as) emphasized that khums is obligatory on all forms of income after fulfilling essential needs (al-Amili & Muhammad bin Hasan bin Ali bin Husain Hurr, 1409).
In Ja'fari jurisprudence, there are seven categories of assets subject to khums: (1) surplus annual income, (2) mined minerals, (3) treasures, (4) lawful assets mixed with unlawful ones, (5) marine-limited earnings, (6) legitimate war booty, and (7) lands purchased from dhimmi non-Muslim. Detailed explanations are provided by(Mughniyah et al., 2004; Rizvi, 1992). Exempt assets include inheritance, dowry, gifts of reasonable value, waqf and its yields, previously distributed zakat/khums, business capital, and nonutilized assets. Official scholarship, unpaid, loans, and insurance funds are also excluded (Pur, 2013).

According to Shia *fuqaha*, based on QS al-Anfal:41, khums is divided into six categories: (1) Allah, (2) the Prophet, (3) *Dzi al_Qurba* (Imams of Ahlulbait), (4) orphans from Bani Hashim, (the poor from Bani Hashim, and (6) indigent travelers from Bani Hashim. The first three parts form the *sahm al-imam* (Imam's share), managed by the infallible Imam. The last three constitute the *sahm al-sadat*, designated for the descendants of Bani Hashim. During the occultation of the Imam Mahdi, the *sahm al-imam* is managed by living *marja' taqlid* and their representatives, who allocate funds according to Sharia guidance for community welfare. Similarly, *saham al-sadat* may be provided to needy Sayyids directly or via the marja' (Mughniyah et al., 2004; Pur, 2013). In Indonesia, khums collection and distribution are conducted through institutions or scholars appointed as representatives of the *marja' taqlid*, such as ICC Jakarta and Dana Mustadhafin. Shia adherents submit their khums to these bodies, which then distribute funds according to jurisprudential standards. The mechanism comprises three main actors: the payer, who earns income, the administers *marja' taqlid* ((e.g., Ayatullah Khamenei, Ayatullah Sistani) or their representative via institution like ICC Jakarta and Dana Mustadhafin; and the recipients: *sahm al-imam* and *sahm al-sadat*. *Sahm al-imam* supports social initiatives such as scholarship, aid for orphans and the poor, stipends for da'I, vocational training, and Islamic educational institutions. *Sahm al-sadat* is allocated to needy Sayyid, orphans, and travelers from Bani Hashim (source: Dana Mustdhafin weside, www.danamustadhafin.com).

Various Shia organizations and foundations in Indonesia demonstrate solid coordination an orchestrated effort to empower communities through vocational training such as tailoring, cooking, welding, and mechanics. They also allocate funds to social services: house renovation, classroom repairs, book and eyeglasses distribution, food packages, and community development. The activities are financed via khums funds as well as partnership with individuals, government, state owned enterprises, and the private sector. Such initiatives are undertaken by Dana Mustadhafin and other institutions at the local level (Hussain Sahab, interview, 21 May 2024).

Economic empowerment strategies include Regional Vocational Training (PKD) in collaboration with local government training centres. Opening annually since 2012, this program equips community members with skills for entrepreneurship or wage employment. Another strategi supports MSMEs through interest free loans, business training, mentoring, and regular evaluation, with revolving funds. Notable programs are UMKM Success Tips with consultant Abdullah al-Jufri, and training on the 7P marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion, people, process, physical evidence), which is especially popular among youth in the digital era.

In Medan, the Shia community managed by Yayasan Islam Abu Thalib (YIAT) also regularly conduct empowerment training, discussions, and Islamic seminars. The curriculum covers Islamic logic, philosophy, politics, Sufism/'irfan, Islamic history, fiqh, and comparative madhhab studies. Sessions take place three times a year, lasting 3-7 days, with up to 20 participants. YIAT also initiates productive ventures to support congregational welfare: business capital grants, a small market in Ujung Rambe Village (Deli Serdang), a cooperative in Tangjung Morawa, and agricultural and livestock partnerships in Labuhan Batu Utara Regency

(Yayasan Islam Abu Thalib, 17 Years of YIAT, Medan, 2023; RC, interview).

The existence and vitality of the Shia madhhab in Indonesia are supported by academic, sociological, anthropological, and organizational factors. A primary strength is their ability to manage socio-religious institutions with funding sources such as khum, zakat, infaq, sadaqah, honors donations, and waqt sourced from individuals, institutions, government, NGOs, state-owned enterprises, and the private sector. Among these, khums hold a special position as a distinct Shia legal pillar (Hussain Sahab, interview, 12 February 2025). According tu Hussain Sahab, the khums collected through agency (*wakalah*) mechanisms (by *marja'* representatives) is not only used for operational expenses of bodies such as Dana Mustdhafin but also allocated for community empowerment. Operational costs include employee salaries, utilities, vehicle expenses, and support for social projects like well construction, school and pesantren renovations, disaster relief, and village/farmer development (Hussain Sahab, interview, 7 May 20240. Globally, the Shia community is known for active engagement in social piety advocacy, consciousness raising, poverty alleviation, and establishing educational and economic nonprofit institutions. Hussain Sahab cited Iran during the Iran-Iraq war and under sanctions as an example of how khums, managed by religious institutions, supported societal resilience and progress in science and technology (Hussain Sahab, interview, 21 May 2024).

In Indonesia, despite their minority status, the Shia have successfully established over 140 social humanitarian foundation and institution over the past two decades. This activism has occasionally resulted in negative accusations, such as an alleged agenda to Shiah-ify Indonesia Muslim. Such allegations are politically motivated, born from prejudice and hostility not factual evidence (Akmal Kamil, interview, 16 May 2024). Thus, khums functions not only as a religious imperative but also as a vital instrument for preserving Shia traditions and identity amid social and political challenges. By managing khums inclusively, the community sustains its community and contribution to broader society.

## Discussion

Shia religious identity constructed through collective rituals and symbols functions not only as spiritual expression but also as a symbolic resistance to social and political pressure. In this context, identity becomes a field for articulating resistance against majority hegemony (Hall, 2015; Jenkins, 2014; Yudiyanto & Sazali, 2025). Moreover, the Shia community's religious identity reflects an ongoing contestation of meaning within Indonesia's Islamic sphere, which is dominated by Sunni narratives (Afdillah, 2016). Through traditions such as *Ashura* commemoration, ziyarah to Shia figures tombs, and teaching of Ja'fari theology, the community asserts its epistemological and cultural existence. These practices represent a contestation of meaning in Indonesia's plural Islamic landscape.

Survival strategies leveraging education, digital media, and inter sectarian dialogue demonstrate that the Shia community is not only defensive but also adaptive and proactive in expanding their religious space. The use of social media and participation in public forums exemplify *everyday resistance*, broadening the arena for identity contestation within digital society. This strategy also illustrates the capacity of minority communities to reclaim a more  pluralistic and inclusive Islamic narrative (Disyacitta, n.d.; Kersten, 2015). On the other hand, this communication strategy is part of the process of normalizing Shia presence' in Indonesia's public spere. By projecting a moderate, rational, and dialogue-oriented image, they seek to reduce sectarian tensions and create safe spaces among different legal school (*madhhab*). This shows that information technology serves not only as a survival tool but also as a medium for image construction and cultural diplomacy an increasingly important aspect of a multicultural society (Mustira & Wiryany, 2025).

Discrimination experienced by the community, whether in the form of direct violence or covert social exclusion, has reinforced their collective awareness and internal solidarity. As shown in studies on religious minorities, external pressure often triggers internal consolidation and the emergence of autonomous social and economic initiatives. In this sense, discrimination becomes not only a source of suffering but also a driver for social innovation. However, systematic discrimination also carries long-term effects particularly on psychological and political dimensions. Social stress may result in collective trauma, strengthen social polarization, and erode trust in state institution (Kadir, 2025). Over time, this dynamic threatens to deepen religious segregation and hinder healthy social integration (Erinaldi, 2024). Therefor, understanding the dynamics of discrimination against Shia is essential not only from a religious perspective but also from a standpoint of inclusive development and

substantive democracy (Haeba et al., 2024; Syukron, 2017; Vidi et al., 2025).

Indonesia's religious and cultural plurality is both an asset a challenge especially when sectarian differences are politicized or used as exclusive identity markers (Tahir, 2018). Past sectarian conflicts and geopolitical influences such as Saudi-Iran rivalry have generated anti Shia sentiment at the local level (Makhsum, 2019). Some actors have used doctrinal purity as a rallying point to mobilize mass movements and even create anti Shia campaigns. This phenomenon suggests that religious tolerance in Indonesia remains fragile and superficial (Supriadi et al., 2020). In this context, individual conversions to Shia, particularly among students and intellectuals, reflect intellectual exploration aware of social risk, rather than mere identity change.

In response to these tensions, it is important to promote a vision of religious pluralism that frames religious not only as a personal belief but also as an intellectual and social enterprise (RC, interview, 2024). Inter madhhab dialogue has long been advocated through national and international forums. Institutions such as *Majma' Taqrib Bain al Madhahib* in Iran and support from Egypt's Al-Azhar demonstrate global commitment to intra-Islamic *Madhahib* and condemned takfir practices. Indonesian Islamic figures like Maftuh Basyuni, Hasyim Muzadi, and Din Syamsuddin participated in this declaration. This, reinforcing inclusivity and internal recognition within Islam is key to maintaining peaceful coexistence in a plural society like Indonesia.

An inclusive and tolerant approach in religious life has indeed grown within Indonesian culture, including among Shia communities. This is reflected in five pluralistic visions outlined (RC, interview, 2024): (1) religion seen as a natural and intellectual human need: (2) freedom of religion of religion guaranteeing individual theological choice without coercion (QS al-Baqarah: 256); (3) unity of religions rooted in Abrahamic lineage, yet expressed diversely; (4) interfaith dialogue grounded in phenomenological and fraternal approaches as advocated by Jalaluddin Rahmat; and (5) interfaith cooperation in the public sphere to build society substantively. These five visions demonstrate that diversity becomes a strength when supported by principles of openness, dialogue, an recognition of belief plurality.

Nonetheless, these values still face challenges. Certain religious groups such as Salafi Wahhabi at Al-Jihad Mosque in Medan actively spread hate speech and *takfir* against the Shia and traditional Muslim (Sugiyarto, 2018). This phenomenon indicates a regression in peaceful religious practice. On the other hand, Shia communities, like those represented by Muhammad Hafidz Hasibuan o Yayasan Islam Abu Thalib, continue to advocate for inclusivity and inter madhhab cooperation to support unity. Shia scholars such as Imam Khomeini, Sayyid Ali Khamenei, and Ayatullah Sistani consistently call for *ukhuwah Islamiyah* as a guiding principle for religious social life (Interview, Hafits Hasibuan, 10 January 2025). Therefore, strengthening tolerance and open dialogue remains crucial to fostering a plural, just, and dignified Islamic society in Indonesia.

The role of khums as a socio-economic instrument illustrates how Shia communities develop a redistributive system based on religious values. Collectively managed khums funds establish resilient economic networks independent of the state while reinforcing internal social bonds (Rustandi et al., 2021). This aligns with the concept of moral economy, which posits that religious system can form the foundation of community solidarity and autonomy (Amsari et al., 2024; Mardiana et al., 2025). Beyond economic redistribution, khums also serves as a symbolic political instrument that reinforces religious authority and internal social structures. Its collection and distribution are managed through networks of scholars or *marja'*, which in turn enhance community trust in religious leadership. This system not only preserves cohesion but also creates internal legitimacy distinct from state, where spiritual authority manages communal resources and safeguards collective identity (Fischer, 2003).

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the Shia community in Indonesia, despite its socially and religiously marginalized position, has developed a complex and adaptive infrastructure of social resilience. This construction of Shia religious identity is not only a form of spiritual expression but also a symbolic resistance against the dominance of mainstream Islamic discourse. Experiences of discrimination both overt and covert have instead triggered the emergence of internal solidarity and autonomous initiatives in the fields of welfare and economic empowerment. The practice of khums functions as a dual mechanism: on the one hand, as a form of religious devotion, an on the other, as a redistributive system that strengthens communal self-reliance. Furthermore, the strategic use of digital media and active engagement in interfaith dialogue have become crucial tools in expanding religious

space and reinforcing social positioning within a plural yet hierarchical society.

While this study offers empirical and theoretical contributions, several limitations must be acknowledged: First geographical and communal scope limitations the research focuses only on specific Shia communities in certain regions of Indonesia and does not cover the full geographic and sociocultural spectrum, such as the differences between urban and rural communities, or those with international versus local affiliations. Secon, access to sensitive data due to the sensitivity of the topic and the community experiences of discrimination, access to internal data particularly concerning the management of khums and the structure of religious leadership was relatively limited.

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