

## **STRENGTHENING RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL VALUES THROUGH FARDU KIFAYAH TRAINING: AN ABCD- BASED COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT STUDY**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines strengthening religious and social values through *fardu kifayah* training using Participatory Action Research (PAR) integrated with Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) principles in Tanga Batu Village, a minority Muslim community in Toba Regency, North Sumatra. Employing descriptive qualitative methodology within a community service framework, this program implemented four cyclical PAR stages: Planning, Action, Observation, and Reflection over 14 days (March 4-17, 2025). Data collection involved participatory observation, in-depth interviews with 25 community members, and comprehensive documentation. The study engaged 45 participants, including youth (60%), religious leaders (20%), and community members (20%). Findings reveal significant community understanding and skills enhancement, particularly among younger generations, in independently performing *fardu kifayah* rituals. Active involvement of educational institutions and religious figures strengthened the community's collective awareness and social solidarity. The study concludes that the ABCD approach effectively identifies and optimizes local assets, enabling the development of participatory and sustainable religious-based empowerment models in multicultural settings.

**Keywords:** *fardu kifayah*, community empowerment, ABCD approach, religious values, minority Muslim community

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## Introduction

The phenomenon of declining religious and social values in communities has become a serious concern in various academic discourses, particularly among Muslim communities residing in minority areas. Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim-populated country, experiences diverse demographic distributions of Islamic communities, including their presence in rural areas where they constitute numerical minorities.<sup>1</sup> In such regions, limited access to religious education, a shortage of qualified religious educators, and minimal worship facilities often become primary challenges in maintaining comprehensive Islamic practice continuity.

The disengagement of younger generations from religious traditions also accelerates the disintegration of social values traditionally serving as community strength, particularly in rural areas. Declining youth involvement in religious activities has been linked to various factors, including modernization processes, secularization currents, and global cultural influences. These factors drive shifts from traditional religious practices toward more individualistic and pluralistic forms of spirituality.<sup>2</sup> Minimal value transmission through educational or training channels threatens religious identity continuity and weakens social solidarity among community members.

In this context, *farđu kifayah* training functions as a medium for religious knowledge transmission and as community empowerment efforts to strengthen participation, instill collective values, and revitalize local wisdom rooted in spiritual teachings. The urgency of implementing *farđu kifayah* training in rural environments where Muslims constitute minority groups becomes increasingly essential when linked to inclusive and just social development visions.

Community-based approaches (*community empowerment*) are considered relevant for encouraging active community involvement as primary actors in building spiritual capacity while strengthening social relations. Therefore, this study addresses these needs by exploring the role of *farđu kifayah* training to enhance religious and social values in minority Muslim communities in rural areas.

### *Study Location and Context*

Tangga Batu Village is in Parmaksian Sub-district, Toba Regency, North Sumatra Province. This village sits in cool hilly areas with beautiful natural scenery, not far from Lake Toba shores. Demographically, the village community predominantly consists of the Batak Toba ethnicity practicing Christianity, both Protestant and Catholic. Within this majority, there exists a Muslim community as a minority group living harmoniously with local society.

Despite their relatively small numbers, the Muslim community in Tangga Batu Village actively participates in social and religious life. Children from this community generally attend public or private schools available in the village or sub-district areas. The inclusive national education system enables them to obtain equal educational rights in the curriculum and access to educational facilities.

Muslim children fulfill religious educational needs by participating in weekly study sessions or informal religious learning at local religious leaders' homes. However, these activities often lack regularity or structure due to Islamic religious teachers limited number and their competence.

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<sup>1</sup> Wahid Khozin, "Pendidikan Keagamaan Dan Masyarakat Minoritas," *EDUKASI: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan* 5, no. 1 (2017): 45–62, <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v5i1.276>.

<sup>2</sup> Patricia Wittberg, "Generational Change in Religion and Religious Practice: A Review Essay," *Review of Religious Research* 63, no. 3 (2021): 461–82, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13644-021-00455-0>.

### *Research Gap and Scientific Novelty*

Previous studies on *fardhu kifayah* practices have been dominated by normative *fiqh* approaches that are textual and descriptive in nature. Earlier research, including Ahmad et al.'s work, focused on the urgency of *fardhu kifayah* training based on case studies.<sup>3</sup> While important as theoretical foundations, such studies have not comprehensively accommodated social and educational dimensions, particularly regarding practice transmission to younger generations.

More recent studies by Hasanuddin et al.<sup>4</sup> and Wangsadanureja et al.<sup>5</sup> Have begun directing attention to *fardhu kifayah* training as a means of community education. However, the approaches used remain dominated by formalistic and technical models without integration with community-based empowerment principles or active community participation. Training focus tends to be limited to individual skill mastery without directing toward sustainability system development, such as cadre formation or locally-based mentoring.

Furthermore, the connection between *fardhu kifayah* training and revitalizing community social and spiritual values has not received adequate attention. In rural community contexts, the potential of *fardhu kifayah* training to strengthen social solidarity, build collective awareness, and enhance community cohesion remains unexplored. This indicates a significant knowledge gap in this field. Another limitation requiring attention is the minimal interdisciplinary approach in previous studies. Generally, studies were conducted within religious education or *fiqh* frameworks without involving social science approaches, empowerment studies, or community studies. Yet, in complex socio-cultural contexts, cross-disciplinary integration becomes key in formulating relevant, adaptive, and contextual training models.

### *Methodology*

This community service employs Participatory Action Research (PAR) integrated with Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) principles as an empowerment strategy focusing on exploring, strengthening, and optimizing local community potential.<sup>6</sup> This approach is considered relevant for initiating social change based on religious values and togetherness through *fardhu kifayah* training, especially in rural communities rich in social capital and spiritual traditions.<sup>7</sup>

The PAR approach was implemented through four cyclical stages: Planning, Action, Observation, and Reflection. As the ABCD methodology emphasizes, each cycle builds upon community assets and strengths. Each stage was designed participatively, involving residents, religious leaders, youth, and local institutions to ensure empowerment processes run inclusively, adaptively, and sustainably.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Kabupaten Langkat et al., "Urgensi Pelatihan Fardhu Kifayah Dalam Meningkatkan Pengetahuan Masyarakat Tentang Fardhu Kifayah (Studi Kasus Pada Masyarakat Desa Ara Condong, Kecamatan Stabat, Kabupaten Langkat, Sumatera Utara)," *Journal of Human and Education (JAHE)* 3, no. 2 (2023): 277–82, <https://doi.org/10.31004/jh.v3i2.226>.

<sup>4</sup> Hasanuddin et al., "PKM Pelatihan Retorika Dan Fardhu Kifayah Untuk Angkatan Muda Muhammadiyah Di Kota Binjai," *Ihsan: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* 1, no. 2 (2019): 140–45, <https://doi.org/10.30596/ihsan.v1i2.4725>.

<sup>5</sup> Miftah Wangsadanureja et al., "Pelatihan Pengurusan Jenazah Di Masjid Nurul Iman, Pasirhalang, Sukaraja, Sukabumi, Jawa Barat," *Zad Al-Ummah: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* 2, no. 1 (2024): 55–65, <https://doi.org/10.55759/zau.v2i1.19>.

<sup>6</sup> J Kretzmann and J McKnight, *Introduction to "Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets"*. (1993) (Chicago: ACTA Publications, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Morrow and Lindsay Scorgie-Porter, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781912282319>.

<sup>8</sup> Bahrul Ulum et al., "Toward Holistic Community Development," *Al-ArkhabiiL: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* 3, no. 4 (2023): 11–19, [https://doi.org/10.51590/jpm\\_assunnah.v3i4.500](https://doi.org/10.51590/jpm_assunnah.v3i4.500).

Table 1: PAR-ABCD Implementation Stages

Stage	Activities	Techniques	Participants	ABCD Principles
<i>Planning</i>	Problem identification and asset mapping	Community meetings, asset inventory, stakeholder analysis	25 community members	Asset identification and mobilization
<i>Action</i>	Training program implementation	<i>Fardu kifayah</i> workshops, practical sessions, mentoring	45 participants	Community-led capacity building
<i>Observation</i>	Data collection and monitoring	Participant observation, interviews, documentation	All participants	Continuous community feedback
<i>Reflection</i>	Evaluation and planning next cycle	Focus group discussions, reflection sessions, and action planning	30 core participants	Community ownership and sustainability

Data collection techniques included participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participant selection used purposive sampling focusing on youth (ages 15-30), religious leaders, community figures, and educational institution representatives. Data analysis employed qualitative descriptive analysis with ABCD framework triangulation.

#### *Ethical Considerations*

This research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of STAI As-Sunnah Deli Serdang with approval number 024/KEP/STAI-AS/III/2025 and the Village Government of Tangga Batu and the Head of Parmaksian Sub-district through official permits for community service activities. All participants provided written informed consent to participate voluntarily, and parental/guardian consent was obtained for minor participants. All collected data is confidential, and all participant identities are fully anonymized in this research report.

## **Results and Discussion**

### *Cycle 1: Planning - Problem Identification and Asset Mapping*

The Planning stage of the first PAR cycle constituted initial collaborative processes focusing on participatory problem identification and comprehensive community asset mapping. This stage involved establishing the focus area: *Strengthening Religious and Social Values through Fardu Kifayah Training* in Tangga Batu Village, and conducting a thorough asset inventory following ABCD principles.

Through community meetings and interviews with 25 key informants including the village head, religious leaders, school representatives, and youth leaders, several main challenges were identified: (1) limited Islamic religious knowledge among Muslim youth (75% showed fundamental knowledge gaps), (2) absence of structured *fardu kifayah* training programs, (3) lack of qualified religious educators, and (4) minimal integration between formal education and religious practice.

As one religious leader stated: *"Our youth understand basic prayers, but when it comes to handling deceased relatives, they feel confused and dependent on others from outside the village."*

#### *Community Asset Mapping Results*

Following the ABCD methodology, comprehensive asset mapping was conducted through participatory methods, including community walks, focus group discussions, and individual

interviews. This process revealed significant community strengths that could be mobilized for the training program.

*Identified Community Assets (ABCD Framework):*

1. *Individual Assets:* 3 qualified religious teachers, 15 active youth leaders, experienced community elders with traditional knowledge
2. *Associational Assets:* Youth organizations, women's groups, interfaith dialogue forums, informal religious study circles
3. *Institutional Assets:* SMAN 1 Parmaksian (strong partnership potential), village government support, local mosque, health clinic
4. *Physical Assets:* Village hall suitable for training, school facilities, transportation networks, and communication infrastructure
5. *Economic Assets:* Small business networks, agricultural cooperatives, informal lending systems, skill-based micro-enterprises

One of the most significant institutional assets identified was SMAN 1 Tangga Batu Village. The research team recognized this institution's potential as a strategic partner for sustainable religious education development through collaborative discussions with school administrators and religious education teachers.

*Cycle 1: Action - Training Program Implementation*

The Action stage involved implementing the collaboratively designed *fardu kifayah* training program based on identified community assets and expressed needs. The program was structured to maximize community participation while building upon existing strengths and resources.

*Program Implementation Framework:*

1. *Asset-Based Training Design:* Utilizing identified community assets, including local religious teachers as primary facilitators, school facilities as training venues, and youth organizations as recruitment networks
2. *Participatory Learning Methods:* Interactive workshops, peer-to-peer learning, practical demonstrations, and community-based practice sessions
3. *Cultural Integration:* Incorporating local Batak cultural elements while maintaining Islamic authenticity, multilingual materials (Indonesian and local terminology)
4. *Intergenerational Engagement:* Structured interactions between elder religious leaders and youth participants to facilitate knowledge transfer

*Implementation Results:*

1. 45 participants engaged across all training sessions (100% retention rate)
2. 8 comprehensive training sessions delivered over 14 days
3. 5 community members certified as local trainers
4. 1 comprehensive bilingual training manual was developed and distributed

*Cycle 1: Observation - Data Collection and Monitoring*

The Observation stage focused on systematic data collection to monitor program implementation and early outcomes. This stage employed multiple participatory evaluation methods to ensure community voices were centered in the assessment process.

*Data Collection Methods:*

1. Participant observation during all training sessions
2. Pre- and post-training knowledge assessments
3. Focus group discussions with different stakeholder groups
4. Individual interviews with key participants
5. Photo documentation and activity logs
6. Community feedback sessions

*Key Observations:*

1. Significant improvement in participants' confidence levels when discussing *fardu kifayah* procedures
2. Increased voluntary participation in religious activities

3. Enhanced collaboration between Muslim and Christian community members
4. Growing interest from non-participant youth to join future programs
5. Strong institutional support from the school and village government

#### *Cycle 1: Reflection - Evaluation and Next Cycle Planning*

The Reflection stage brought together all stakeholders to collectively analyze the program's outcomes, challenges, and lessons learned. This stage embodied PAR's commitment to participatory evaluation and ABCD's emphasis on community ownership.

#### *Participatory Evaluation Results:*

##### *Quantitative Outcomes:*

1. 92% of participants reported increased confidence in *fardu kifayah* responsibilities
2. 88% indicated willingness to teach others in their community
3. 95% expressed satisfaction with training quality and cultural relevance
4. 75% demonstrated practical competency in post-training assessments

*Qualitative Insights:* Community members identified several key impacts through focus group discussions:

"Before this training, I was always worried about what to do if someone in our family passed away. Now I feel prepared and can even help others." (Youth participant, age 19)

"This program didn't just teach us about religious duties - it brought our community closer together and showed us we have more resources than we thought." (Community elder)

"As a teacher, I can see how this approach could be integrated into our regular curriculum. The students are more engaged because they feel ownership." (School representative)

##### *Challenges and Adaptive Responses:*

1. Time Coordination: Initial scheduling conflicts were resolved through flexible timing, accommodating work and school commitments
2. Language Barriers: Addressed by developing bilingual materials and using local cultural references
3. Interfaith Sensitivity: Managed through transparent communication and inclusive community meetings
4. Resource Limitations: Overcome by mobilizing identified community assets rather than relying on external resources

Planning for Cycle 2: Based on reflection outcomes, the community collaboratively planned the second PAR cycle, focusing on:

1. Establishing regular monthly refresher sessions
2. Training additional local facilitators
3. Developing integration with the formal school curriculum
4. Creating peer support networks among trained participants
5. Documenting and sharing the model with other communities

#### *Discussion: Theoretical and Practical Implications*

The success of this ABCD-based *fardu kifayah* training program provides several important insights for community empowerment theory and practice. First, the asset-based approach proved more effective than deficit-based models in engaging minority communities. The program generated higher participant motivation and ownership by identifying and building upon existing strengths rather than focusing on problems.<sup>9</sup>

Second, integrating religious education with community development principles demonstrates the potential for faith-based approaches to social change. This aligns with Putnam's social capital theory, where religious institutions are crucial sources of community bonding and bridging capital.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Jim Ife, *Community Development in an Uncertain World: Vision, Analysis and Practice*, *Community Development in an Uncertain World: Vision, Analysis and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316342855>.

<sup>10</sup> Robert D. Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," *Culture and Politics* 6, no. 1 (2000): 223–34, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-62965-7\\_12](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-62965-7_12).

In Tangga Batu Village, *fardu kifayah* training transmitted religious knowledge and strengthened social networks and collective efficacy.

Third, the participatory methodology ensured cultural sensitivity and contextual relevance. Unlike top-down training programs, the ABCD approach allowed the community to define its needs, draw upon local wisdom, and design solutions that respected the village's multicultural environment.

*Comparative Analysis:* Compared to similar studies in different contexts, this research demonstrates several unique contributions:

1. Integration of Islamic education with secular community development frameworks
2. Application of ABCD in minority religious community settings
3. Successful navigation of interfaith dynamics in rural Indonesia
4. Development of sustainable local capacity rather than external dependency

*Limitations:*

1. Limited long-term impact assessment due to recent implementation
2. Focus on single community limits generalizability
3. Potential social desirability bias in participant responses
4. Need for longitudinal studies to assess sustainability

## Conclusion

Implementing *fardu kifayah* training using Participatory Action Research (PAR) integrated with Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) principles in Tangga Batu Village demonstrates that strengthening religious and social values can be realized through empowerment strategies oriented toward local assets and active community participation. The cyclical PAR process—planning, Action, Observation, and Reflection—successfully built collective awareness and shared commitment to maintaining the sustainability of community-based religious practices while maximizing existing community strengths.

Training results showed increased knowledge, skills, and youth involvement in religious traditions, strengthening social cohesion and reinforcing Islamic identity within the minority Muslim community. This asset-based strengthening strategy successfully revitalized local social and institutional assets, such as the active roles of schools and religious teachers as educational agents beyond formal classroom spaces.

The findings confirm the importance of interdisciplinary and community-based approaches in designing religious training programs, particularly in rural areas facing limited access and resources. The PAR-ABCD integration proved adaptive and relevant in combining local values, spiritual traditions, and participation-based social development, making it worthy of recommendation as an alternative empowerment model in similar communities.

*Recommendations for Future Research:*

1. Longitudinal studies to assess long-term sustainability and impact
2. Comparative studies across different minority religious communities
3. Integration of digital technologies in community-based religious education
4. Development of standardized ABCD training modules for religious contexts

*Policy Implications:*

1. Integration of community-based approaches in national religious education policies
2. Support for minority religious communities through asset-based development programs
3. Enhancement of interfaith dialogue and cooperation mechanisms
4. Investment in local capacity building for sustainable religious education

The success of this program offers a replicable model for strengthening religious values while promoting social harmony in Indonesia's diverse society. Through asset-based community development, minority communities can maintain their spiritual identity while contributing positively to national unity and social cohesion.

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