

The Institutionalization of Indonesian SHIISM and the Emergence of a New Wave

Muhammad Baqir Idrus Alatas^{1*}, Dede Syarif²

Universitas Indonesia¹

UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia²

Email: muhammad.baqir@ui.ac.id^{1*}, dede.syarif@uinsgd.ac.id²

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Indonesian Shia, young generation and women, religious organizations, institutionalization

Studies of Shia Islam in Indonesia have generally focused on the role of individual figures, such as scholars, intellectuals, and campus activists, as the main drivers of the community. This approach tends to emphasize the development of Shia Islam through individuals. This study aims to identify the emergence and development of Shia Islam in Indonesia through processes of institutionalization across various institutions, as well as to explain the role of formal organizations—especially Pandu Ahlulbait Indonesia—in forming a more collective, systematic, and sustainable pattern of Shia community movements. This study uses a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews and document analysis. This method is used to trace the processes, factors, and consequences of the institutionalization of Shia communities across various organizational institutions that are developing in Indonesia. The results of the study show that the institutionalization of the Shia community marks the emergence of a new wave of Shia development in Indonesia. This is indicated by the strengthening of formal organizations, especially through autonomous institutions such as Pandu Ahlulbait Indonesia. The organization actively involves the younger generation and women, utilizes digital technology, and develops a multi-issue *da'wah* orientation, thereby forming a more collective and systematic movement. This study confirms that institutionalization is an adaptive strategy of the Shia community in responding to contemporary socio-religious dynamics in Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

Shia Islam has developed in Indonesia since the 19th century through various changes in social, political, and cultural contexts (Suaedy & Siradj, 2026; Yusuf & Situmorang, 2024). This development is influenced by three main factors, namely religious figures from the descendants of Hadramaut in the era before the 1979 Iranian Revolution, hawza 'ilmiyya graduates in Qum after the Iranian Revolution, and educated individuals and campus activists in various universities in the country (Zulkifli 2013). The mapping of Shia development through these three factors provides an overview for understanding the early genealogy of Indonesian Shia development. In subsequent developments, Shia Islam in Indonesia has shifted from a figure-centered phase to an institutional development stage (Zulkifli 2017). However, the study has not yet revealed the specifics of the dynamics in this institutionalization stage. In

fact, recent developments show that this organizational stage has given birth to various institutions with specific segmentation and distinct characteristics.

The development of the Shia community in Indonesia has taken place within an increasingly complex socio-political context since the reform era, which opened space for religious expression and organization (Syarif 2018). On the one hand, democratization provides an opportunity to articulate religious identity more openly; on the other hand, the emergence of Shia organizations has encouraged sectarian politics that has placed Shia as a target of intolerance. It is recorded that from 2000 to 2013 (Formichi 2014a, 24), several Islamic boarding schools and Shia institutions on the islands of Java and Lombok were victims of attacks by anti-Shia groups. In this situation, the pattern of Shia praxis, which previously relied on scholarly and intellectual figures (Zulkifli 2013) as well as foundations or educational institutions (Latief 2008), faces limitations, especially in ensuring community sustainability, collective protection, and legitimate representation before the state and the public. This condition encourages the need for a more stable, organized, and formal negotiation model.

Since the era of Abdurrahman Wahid (1999–2001), the Shia school has gained more support because it has been recognized as a legitimate sect within Islam and gained state recognition with the establishment of the Indonesian Ahlul Bait Jama'ah Association (IJABI) in 2000 (Formichi 2014b; Syarif 2018). The establishment of this first mass organization based on the teachings of Shia Islam was then accompanied by the birth of the Indonesian Ahlulbait organization (ABI) in 2010 (Reza 2020). This phase shows the metamorphosis of the Shia community as it expresses its identity in the Indonesian reform era through community-based organizations (CSOs). This indicates that the development of the Shia community is entering a phase of institutionalization that is increasingly formal, complex, established, and mainstream.

This institutionalization opens space for the emergence of the younger generation and women as important actors in the latest dynamics of the Indonesian Shia community. In the Shia environment, there is a youth movement that has become an autonomous institution under the auspices of AhlulBait Indonesia, namely Pandu ABI (Illiyien 2024). Since 2013 (with state legal recognition in 2018), this youth organization for Shia adherents aged 16–30 has been established, and currently there are 11 Regional Leaders (Pimwil) and more than 20 Branch Leaders (Pimcab) throughout Indonesia. In addition, there is also ABI Responsive (Ahlulbait Indonesia 2025a), which is also under the auspices of the ABI institution and recruits 100 percent of its members from young people aged 17–30 who actively focus on humanitarian, social, public health, and environmental conservation work. Although this humanitarian social movement serves the general public more broadly, it also contributes to preparing disaster-response volunteers from Shia youth. Likewise, IJABI has a wing organization for the younger generation called IJABI Muda.

The presence of the younger generation is also accompanied by the emergence of Shia women. Within the IJABI organization, there is a special department called Fathimiyyah (Inayatussahara 2023; Halimatusa'diyah 2013). Meanwhile, the ABI organization has an autonomous institution that runs work programs—especially in the field of women and children—namely Muslimah ABI (Ahlulbait Indonesia 2025b).

Looking at the latest developments of the Shia movement in Indonesia along with the emergence of the younger generation and women, the researcher argues that the emergence of

this new wave is driven by the institutionalization process carried out by the Shia community, leading to the formation of mass organizations along with autonomous institutions and organizational wings in both segments. In other words, this study proposes a new-wave categorization of the Shia community in the country. These groups, especially the younger generation and women, conduct *da'wah* in a more organized manner because they are involved in formal organizations, engage in multi-issue *da'wah*, do not emphasize individual personalities, and are technologically literate. These characteristics differ from the previous three generations, which tended to preach in a fragmented manner, relied on individual figures, and focused on the offline realm.

In this article, institutionalization is understood as the process of formalization, professionalization, and the effort to acquire institutional legitimacy that allows a movement to survive and operate within a broader social structure (Staggenborg 2013; Rahal et al. 2025). Thus, this article addresses three research problems. The first concerns the context behind the emergence of an increasingly institutionalized Shia community. The second examines the characteristics of institutionalized Shia that distinguish it from previous generations. The third analyzes the reasons why the Shia community is encouraged to institutionalize.

The novelty of this research lies in its proposal of a new-wave categorization of the Shia community in Indonesia. Unlike previous studies that focused on intellectual figures or foundational periods, this research examines how institutionalization has produced distinct characteristics among the younger generation and women: they conduct *da'wah* in a more organized manner due to organizational involvement, carry out multi-issue *da'wah*, do not highlight individual personalities, and are technologically literate. This set of characteristics differs fundamentally from the previous three generations, which tended to preach in a fragmented manner, relied on individual figures, and focused on the offline realm. Thus, this study offers an original contribution to the literature on Islamic movements in Indonesia by shifting the analytical lens from leadership-centered to institution-centered analysis.

In this article, institutionalization is understood as the process of formalization, professionalization, and the effort to acquire institutional legitimacy that allows a movement to survive and operate within a broader social structure (Staggenborg, 2013; Rahal et al., 2025). Drawing on this theoretical framework, this article addresses three research problems. First, it examines the context behind the emergence of an increasingly institutionalized Shia community. Second, it identifies the characteristics of institutionalized Shia that distinguish it from previous generations. Third, it analyzes the reasons why the Shia community is encouraged to institutionalize. The purpose of this research is to provide a comprehensive understanding of how institutionalization has transformed the Shia movement in Indonesia. The contribution of this research is twofold: theoretically, it extends institutionalization theory to the study of minority religious movements in democratic Indonesia; practically, it offers insights for religious organizations and policymakers regarding the dynamics of identity, adaptation, and sustainability. The objectives are to trace the genealogy, map the characteristics, and explain the driving factors of Shia institutionalization. The benefits include enriching academic discourse on Islamic movements and providing empirical evidence for understanding minority–majority relations in contemporary Indonesia.

METHOD

The research used a descriptive qualitative approach to understand the genealogy, characteristics, and emergence of new waves along with the institutionalization of the Indonesian Shia community. Primary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with informants consisting of two members of the Board of Trustees of Pandu ABI, one founder, and one active administrator of Pandu ABI, as well as women activists in Muslimah ABI. This method was used to explore informants' views on the role of organizations, the use of technology, *da'wah* strategies, and the character of the Shia movement among the younger generation and women. For secondary data, the researcher utilized literature studies that included internal organizational documents and scientific publications related to studies on the younger generation, women, and socio-religious movements. Data were analyzed through the stages of data reduction, thematic grouping, and interpretation based on the framework of institutionalization theory.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Genealogy of the Institutionalization of the Indonesian Shia Community

The process of institutionalization of the Shia community in Indonesia cannot be separated from a long historical genealogy, along with the transformation of the spread of the teachings of Ahlulbayt from an intellectual discourse to a formally organized movement. Before the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the existence of the Shia community in Indonesia tended to be difficult to trace because many of them practiced *taqiyah* (hiding their beliefs) as a mechanism of self-protection from potential threats in the surrounding environment (Latief 2008; Zulkifli 2013a). The tendency of *da'wah* activities is still carried out individually, tends not to be institutionalized, and is even often carried out underground, except for the role played by the Islamic Education Foundation (YAPI) in Bangil, East Java. The reason is that the government and religious authorities in Indonesia cannot identify the existence of this community, so there is no known institutional center related to Shia (Zulkifli 2013).

A fundamental turning point occurred after the 1979 Iranian Revolution which shook the geopolitics of the region, as well as arousing a wave of Islamic revival globally that was also felt in Indonesia. The echoes of the revolution emerged in various ways, for example through the warm reception by young Indonesian activists against Iranian Muslim scholars such as Murtadha Muthahari and Ali Syari'ati who became new intellectual weapons to fight against the global system and ideology (Kuntowijoyo 1993). This discourse developed during the 1980s in domestic campuses such as the University of Indonesia (UI) and the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB) (Latief 2008; Assegaf 2012; Zulkifli 2013), which gave birth to a generation of campus activists who were familiar with Shia thought.

On the other hand, some Indonesian students studied *hawza 'ilmiyya* in Qum, Iran, which became more massive after the 1979 Revolution. The Iranian government is increasingly actively sending more Indonesian students, in collaboration with institutions such as YAPI Bangil (Zulkifli 2013). Together with activist groups in Indonesia, Qum alumni became the main actors in the dissemination of Shia literature and thought in Indonesia by playing different but complementary roles (Latif 2008). If the campus group articulates Shia thought in the language of modern intellectuals, Qum alumni bring a more classical or traditional *hawza* scientific tradition.

In the 1980s and 1990s, this intellectual energy began to manifest in the form of the establishment of foundations and educational institutions. A foundation is a legally recognized institution based on relatively loose conditions, namely a number of people form the foundation's executive board, prepare money as basic capital, and include the foundation's address (Zulkifli 2013). As of 1997, there are estimated 25 Shia foundations in Jakarta, and nationally it is estimated that there are around 40 foundations, such as the Mulla Sadra Foundation (Bogor), the al-Hadi Islamic Boarding School (Pekalongan), the Al-Jawad Foundation (Bandung), the Fatimah Foundation (Jakarta), and the Muthahhari Foundation (Bandung) (Assegaf 2012). In this phase, most Shia foundations use neutral terms such as AhlulBayt to mark their group, as a strategic way of avoiding suspicion while building similarities with Sunni Islam (Latief 2008). Various religious discussions, taklim assemblies, and foundations that study Islam from the perspective of AhlulBayt develop with three main orientations, namely the deepening of religious teachings, the identification of individuals who accept Shia teachings, and the mapping of the potential of the Shia community in Indonesia. In 2003, data collection showed around 300 active and inactive foundations (Hidayat 2026). In addition, there are also a number of modern Shia religious institutions and schools that were established and managed by the Indonesian Shia community or formed by external parties, such as from Iran and non-Iran (Asadi 2021).

Entering the reform era, the Shia community saw a golden opportunity to take advantage of the momentum of freedom of expression and redefine identity to be more open (Zulkifli 2017). The public space that gives rise to new religious movements becomes a context for the Shia community to exist as a legitimate entity through the establishment of two community organizations (CSOs), namely IJABI and ABI. In this context, it can be explained that institutionalization entered the second stage to become more complex, from previously only foundations or educational institutions, to mass organizations. That is, the Shia movement became more hierarchical and bureaucratic; formally structured and led by professionals (Staggenborg 2013). By becoming a mass organization, the Shia movement is increasingly institutionalized in the political and social system because it has a stronger bargaining position than foundations in interacting with the government. Because of this, the ideas of movements incorporated into organizations become more conservative or follow mainstream practices (Staggenborg 2013). Another important factor that encouraged the second phase of institutionalization was the support of mainstream Islamic organizations, Nahdatul Ulama' (NU) and Muhammadiyah, which showed a moderate attitude towards Shia. This support paves the way for dialogue and cooperation, which also complements the state's official recognition of Shia identity, practices, and activities (Zulkifli 2017).

Initially, IJABI was established on July 1, 2000 in Bandung, West Java, led by Jalaluddin Rahmat as part of the Indonesian Shia intellectuals (Syarif 2018). These organizations take part in public activities and interact moderately with various Islamic organizations and existing communities, in addition to spreading and practicing Islamic teachings that favor the mustad'afin (oppressed). IJABI also formulated a vision as a non-political and non-sectarian organization, which means prioritizing ethics and noble behavior (morals) rather than rigid adherence to the aspect of fiqh. As of 2017, IJABI has 200 branches in 32 provinces from all regions of Indonesia (Zulkifli 2017). The establishment of this organization is also a response to the need to unite Ahlulbayt lovers, which carries an inclusive approach by not requiring

membership limited to Shia only, but open to anyone who loves Ahlulbayt. Therefore, it is permissible for all adherents of the sect, both Shia and Sunni, to become members of IJABI, because its main mission is to accommodate the spirit of brotherhood and tolerance in Islam. Theologically, IJABI members oversee various Shia sects, namely, Imamiyah, Zaidiyah, and Ismailiyah (Rosyidi 2014 in Syarif 2018).

Entering July 27, 2010, the next Shia organization called ABI was also established which was formed by a number of figures such as Umar Shahab who came from the alumni of Qum. A number of elements of the Shia community agreed to hold the Indonesian Ahlulbait National Gathering Forum (Silatnas ABI) from 2004 to 2010 driven by three main entities, namely *asatidz*, foundations or taklim councils, and activists (including donors and sympathizers) (Hidayat 2026). The collaboration between these three elements became the main foundation for the birth of ABI as part of the institutionalization of the Shia community. As of 2025, ABI has 29 provincial Regional Leadership Councils (DPW) and 149 Regional Leadership Councils (DPD) in districts/cities throughout Indonesia (Ahlulbait Indonesia 2025c). This mass organization has the foundation of Shia *Istna Asyariah* or Shia Imamiyah thought which believes in 12 Imams as a continuation of prophetic missions, from Ali bin Abi Talib to Muhammad Al-Mahdi who is believed to be experiencing a period of superstition (Reza 2020). ABI was established on the basis of love and community ties that reflect divine values as taught by the Prophet and his AhlulBayt, and was formed to serve the Indonesian people, especially Muslims, and to be at the forefront of maintaining unity and unity. Some of the reasons that drive the process are the need for a systematic *da'wah* mechanism so that Shia teachings reach the wider community correctly, the need to manage internal solidity in the midst of external stigma and suspicion, and the demand for demographic and sociological mapping of the Shia community as the basis for compiling a long-term education and cadre system (Hidayat 2026).

Actually, there was the first mass organization established by the Shia community in Indonesia in the 1990s, namely the Ahlulbayt Council in Indonesia (MAHDI) which was founded in Jakarta by Ahmad Baraqbah as the Head of the Al-Hadi Islamic Boarding School in Pekalongan (Reza 2020). In addition to executive leadership, MAHDI has 14 advisory boards (trustees) consisting of figures such as Jalaluddin Rakhmat, Umar Shahab, and other prominent Shiite figures. However, MAHDI did not function properly and almost all of its programs failed because they had no legal status as a socio-religious organization and were not recognized by the Ministry of Interior, but were only recognized as foundations. The dissolution of these mass organizations (Zulkifli 2013) was influenced by their failure to unite the followers of Indonesian Shia and coordinate all Shia foundations under the umbrella of the MAHDI, plus a number of key figures who resigned. This is due to the lack of agreement among the various factions within the Shia community about how organizations and ideologies should be run and determined. Another reason is the socio-political situation during the New Order era that gave little space for minority religious groups to express their identity, such as the difficulty of obtaining legal status from the state as mass organizations, as well as threats from people who still have sentiments against Shia.

In the next development, the Shia community succeeded in establishing official mass organizations as explained earlier, namely IJABI and ABI. Each of these CSOs has many representatives at the regional and regional levels from various parts of Indonesia. In addition, the existence of these two large Shia organizations marks the diversification of representation

within the Shia community, which shows that institutionalization can also give birth to internal pluralism. The difference between the two mass organizations is that IJABI is considered not to emphasize their loyalty to Wilayatul Faqih, different from ABI which in religious terms follows Wilayatul Faqih (Reza 2020). However, these differences do not create an acute dichotomy, considering that IJABI and ABI continue to synergize and work together to strengthen the Shia community in Indonesia (Ahlulbait Indonesia 2024).

The development of institutionalization does not stop at the stage of the formation of parent organizations, but continues until the third stage which is marked by the establishment of autonomous institutions or organizational wings in the field of youth and women, considering that previously these two segments had not been seen in the formation of the Shia community. Under the auspices of ABI, an autonomous institution was born that focuses on age segmentation, namely Pandu ABI as a youth organization for members aged 16-30 years. Initially, there were 14 departments within the structure of the ABI Central Management Board (DPP), one of which was the youth and sports department. This department has indeed been designed to develop into a more independent entity for the sake of sustainability, work effectiveness, and program focus (Hidayat 2026; Fatah 2026). As a step to prepare for an autonomous institution, the youth and sports department of DPP ABI held a youth activity called National Youth Camp (NYC) which was held at Mekarsari Tourism Park, Cileungsi, West Java on June 21-23, 2013. The agenda gathered 300 youth participants and Ahlulbayt-loving women from 15 provinces throughout Indonesia, and became the starting point for mapping and consolidating the potential of Shia youth nationally. Through the meeting, 15 regional coordinators were inaugurated—with each province having two representatives—who are expected to form Pandu Ahlulbait (changed to Pandu Ahlulbayit Indonesia/ABI as of 2025) in their respective regions.

Youth camp activities were chosen because the format is popularly used nationally and relatively safe socio-politically, adapts to the character of the younger generation and has a tendency to emphasize togetherness between participants (Hidayat 2026; Fatah 2026). External institutions such as the Scouts and the Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) are also involved in the implementation of NYC. It can be said that NYC was an initial strategy of institutionalization that created organic collective momentum, and was then formalized into a structure. The three-year gap between the establishment of ABI in 2010 and the implementation of NYC was due to the fact that ABI was only active in 2012, and organizational energy was absorbed in handling the Sampang conflict, so that the main focus at that time was community consolidation and advocacy (Hidayat 2026; Fatah 2026). After the situation was more stable and a model of youth organizing was found, Pandu was declared. This shows that institutionalization is a contextual and adaptive process of seeking forms.

Pandu Ahlulbait then began the legalization process by annotating the results of the First National Conference, as stated in Notary Deed Number 05, dated December 18, 2015. On February 2, 2018, the Registered Certificate (SKT) from the Ministry of Home Affairs (Kemendagri) was officially received by the Pandu management, so that it has been officially registered in the state as a youth organization. In the same year, Pandu was also registered as one of the youth organizations that was ready to receive guidance from the Ministry of Youth and Sports (Kemenpora). This is considering that Pandu is in the youth segment, according to the law that requires youth community organizations to have administrators and members aged

between 16 and 30 years. The name Pandu itself comes from the scouting tradition before the term Scout which has historical value for the nation's struggle. Pandu is positioned as a forum for regeneration for the younger generation of Shia, as well as a medium of contribution to maintaining the integrity and future of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia/NKRI (Hidayat 2026; Fatah 2026; Ryan 2026; Mujib 2026). Currently, Pandu has four departments covering youth and students, arts and culture, organization and regeneration, as well as media, public relations, and R&D.

In addition, there is also an autonomous institution called ABI Responsive, a foundation under the auspices of ABI that was established in 2021 and focuses on humanitarian actions, disasters, and nature conservation, which is entirely driven by youth. Like Pandu, DPP ABI also has a special department engaged in the social sector, which has been prepared to become a special institution (Fatah 2026; Hidayat 2026) which became a Responsive ABI. This autonomous institution is a transformation of the Covid-19 Task Force (Satgas) team called ABI Responsive Covid (ARC) in 2021 to deal with the pandemic problem that had outbreakd in Indonesia (Ahlulbait Indonesia 2021). In IJABI itself, there is also a youth wing called IJABI Muda. Unlike Pandu and ABI Responsive, IJABI Muda remains a special department in the IJABI's structure.

Among women, IJABI has a women's division called Fathimiyyah. Although within the structure of IJABI, the Fathimiyyah has its own structural council, which includes the education division, the da'wah and media division, the organizational and cadre division, the da'wah and intellectual division, the research institute division, the benchmarking and organizational network division, the women's empowerment division, and the economic division (Inayatussahara 2023: 56). Fathimiyyah is the women's department of IJABI that fosters women's spirituality, intellect, and social concern, based on the teachings of AhlulBayt and the example of Sayyidah Fatimah (Fathimiyyah 2024). As for ABI, it has an autonomous institution specifically for women and children called Muslimah ABI. Muslim women have a number of departments, covering the fields of organization and R&D; social, economic, cultural, and legal; education, women, families, and children; regeneration, and public relations. The goal of this mass organization is to create a community of women followers of AhlulBayt who have awareness and active participation in the family and society, as stated in the organization's vision (Hayati 2026).

Based on the dynamics that have been explained earlier, there are two consequences from the institutionalization process to the formation of CSOs. The first is the creation of a sense of collective security, considering that before the existence of organizations, displaying Shia identity in public spaces was something scary and full of risks, so many chose to do taqiyah (hiding their identity). However, with legal and state-recognized organizations, Shia adherents such as youth and women (Ryanta 2026; Mujib 2026; Hayati 2026) feels more confident to appear open. In other words, institutionalization succeeds in transforming what was previously an individual anxiety into a legitimized collective force, through the existence of the organization as an established interest group (Staggenborg 2013). The shift in pattern from private to public through this organization also paved the way for the emergence of identity politics that affirmed the position of Shia among other civil society organizations, characterized their system of meaning and framework, making it easier to identify themselves among other groups (Zulkifli 2017; Syarif 2018). Another consequence is the transformation of identity in

the theological aspect (Syarif 2018), which is open to Shia and Sunni for IJABI, and limited to Shia Imamiyah for ABI.

Second, institutionalization also has consequences for the professionalization and bureaucratization of the movement which is an inevitable consequence of the formalization of the structure. Movements that were previously spontaneous and fluid, turned into submission to the procedures, rules, and mechanisms that prevail within the organization. Within the framework of institutionalization theory, institutions tend to adopt norms and models that are considered rational to gain cognitive, normative, and regulative legitimacy (Scott 2014). Referring to the formation of formal organizations, such as Pandu ABI, which is legally formally registered in the state, is an attempt to adopt rationalized myths about how religious communities should exist in Indonesia. This means that the belief that a legitimate and recognized existence is only possible if the Shia community has a formal, legal, and structured form of organization, so that it can gain legitimacy from the state, other mass organizations, and the public. With official recognition by the government, the Shia community has received legal protection from the government as a legitimate civil society organization, and with this status, they can develop their organizations, to fight—among other things—against discrimination (Syarif 2018).

Characteristics of the New Wave of the Shia Community

This section will outline the characteristics that marked the birth of a new wave of Shia in Indonesia, a phase that showed significant dynamics and transformations as the process of institutionalization took place. There are at least four main characteristics that distinguish this new wave from previous generations. First, a shift from leadership centered on figures towards a more structured organizational system. Second, the expansion of da'wah orientation that penetrates contemporary social issues, third, the use of digital technology and social media, fourth, the emergence of a new generation of youth and women who actively shape the face of the Shia community in Indonesia to be more inclusive and participatory

First, the shift from a centrist figure to a bureaucratic system. For example, before the existence of the Pandu ABI mass organization (Mujib 2026; Ryanta 2026), the young generation of Shia in Indonesia in general tends to live in fragmentation considering that youth associations take place partially which are generally divided into alumni associations of certain institutions such as YAPI, based on regional ties, separate associations between sayyid (have a lineage of the Prophet) and non-sayyid or based on certain circle of friends. This means that there is no national network that unites them from various backgrounds. This fragmentation can be said to be based on the limitations of the figure-based movement model that characterized the previous waves of Shia community formation. The exclusivity that emerged from these various associations made the small knots between the younger generation of Shia have no relationship with each other.

At the beginning of the formation of Pandu, this movement even initially relied heavily on the personal preferences of certain individuals who held important positions in the organization (Mujib 2026). Referring to the initial phase of Pandu management for the 2013-2018 period, the tendency for the implementation of the program is determined by the organization's leaders is still occurring. However, after the Extraordinary National Conference (Munaslub) in 2020, when the Articles of Association/Bylaws (AD/ART) were refined, the organizational direction lines were clarified, and the implementation of the national work

program, Pandu transformed into a bureaucratic system. This means that decisions no longer depend on individuals, but on formal forum mechanisms. Likewise, monthly meetings refer to the Annual Work Plan and Budget (RKAT), evaluations based on targets, outputs, and outcomes, as well as integrated cadre levels. This system ensures the sustainability of movements, so that the wheels of the organization continue to rotate despite the change of leadership. In other words, individual actions are formalized into established routines that significantly affect interactions and operations within the institution. In the framework of the organization as an institution, it can also be seen that the motive of the institution is productive and the process that regulates the institution is imitative, i.e. imitating other organizations, adopting formal routines (Rahal et al. 2025).

The next characteristic is related to the change in da'wah orientation which becomes multi-issue and involved in social activities. If we look at the previous generation that tended to focus on deepening religious teachings and rituals through the taklim assembly to educational institutions, the new wave of the Shia community shows a broader orientation. For example, Pandu ABI is engaged in internal and external issues which include discussions on tolerance, interfaith dialogue, defense of Palestine, strengthening human resources through general education tutoring, religious studies, and regeneration (Ryanta 2026; Mujib 2026). The same is true for ABI Muslimah, which focuses on children's education, economic empowerment, and legal assistance for women (Hayati 2026). This multi-issue orientation can be seen as an effort to build social legitimacy in the eyes of the public, while responding to the challenges of the times

Next, the use of technology, especially social media, has also become a new characteristic of the new wave of the Shia community. The existence of social media is considered an identity affirmation space and organizational storefront, which can be used for various strategic purposes, such as a means of clarifying stigma to the publication of organizational programs. For example, Pandu ABI makes the concept of *tabyin jihad* (clarification jihad) as the main basis for the use of social media (Ryanta 2026; Mujib 2026) which was officially introduced by Ayatollah Imam Ali Khamenei as a scholar who can issue fatwas to be used as a reference. The directive from the Shiite religious authorities is considered an urgent and important task to confront the distortion of facts against the Islamic Republic of Iran and Islamic teachings, especially from the media. This form of jihad includes scientific, research, and educational efforts in the media landscape that aim to increase public awareness by countering the insinuations of the enemy who produce various kinds of fabrications of news, opinions, and others, in order to distort facts and spread lies (Rostami 2014: 11). In this context, organizational social media is positioned as a serious, planned, and responsible da'wah tool

The last characteristic is the birth of a new generation that contributes to the formation of the Shia community, namely youth and women, as a representation of the diversification of mass organizations such as IJABI and ABI. The emergence of this generation was influenced by the process of institutionalization that formally opened up a space for structured participation for two important segments that were previously less visible in the Indonesian Shia community. Their presence marks a shift from a movement dominated by intellectuals or clerics, to a more inclusive and mass-based movement.

Factors Driving Shia Institutionalization

The birth of formal organizations such as Pandu ABI among the Indonesian Shia community can be read as an institutional response to a series of external pressures and internal needs. As a minority group that often faces stigma, discrimination, and persecution, the Shia community needs a legal forum that functions protectively, as well as being able to standardize discourse, reproduce cadres, and achieve legitimacy in the eyes of the state and the wider community. At least, there are four main factors that drive the institutionalization process (Ryanta 2026; Hayati 2026; Hidayat 2026; Fatah 2026; Mujib 2026), namely protective or protective factors, standardization factors, reproductive factors, and legitimacy factors. These four factors work simultaneously, which makes autonomous institutions or organizational wings that accommodate the young generation and women a strategic instrument for the sustainability and strengthening of the Shia community in the midst of Indonesia's pluralistic socio-political landscape.

First, the need to protect minority communities that face stigma and persecution, so that the existence of formal organizations serves as a legal umbrella. With legal status in the eyes of the state, the community has a position to deal with the state and other actors more equally. The community has official representation because it has a relationship with the state through Kesbangpol, and has a legal assistance mechanism and advocacy facilities in case of rights violations. In this context, it is understood that institutions are formed and operate in response to pressure from an external environment that is completely unsafe, given the stigma, discrimination, and persecution of the Shia community in Indonesia. Because it has legal-formal legitimacy, the organization becomes a subject that has recognized rights and obligations.

Second, formalization factors along with formal structures within organizations provide a mechanism to align the actions of various actors, standardize outputs and outcomes, and ensure consistency. If informal networking tends to make each group present a different version of Shia, potentially creating polarization, and clarification of stigma becomes uncoordinated, the existence of organizations is useful for clarifying various information about Shia in a uniform and coordinated manner. This is due to the one-vote explanation in the form of guidelines or official statements such as the ABI Manifesto, White Paper, and other documents. The process of standardizing discourse and behavior in the organization is part of the creation of a formal routine (Rahal et al. 2025) that binds members, so that representatives of organizations such as Pandu ABI have an official attitude that can be conveyed to external parties, for example in interfaith forums or public dialogues. This organizational standardization also plays a role in instilling understanding according to standards, including faith, fiqh, and socio-religious awareness, in order to build the quality of members comprehensively. In this context, the organization also functions as a standardized knowledge production machine, considering that not all Shia youth have a uniform understanding of its teachings.

Third, reproductive factors which are one of the main functions of the formal structure, which is to create reproductive mechanisms without depending on the individual. A centric figure model that tends to depend on the character or move independently can cause the movement to weaken if the figure no longer exists or loses influence. Therefore, the segmentation of youth and women who are involved in the ABI Scout / Young IJABI and

Fathimiyyah/Muslimah ABI is prepared as a joint forum that expands the participation base for regeneration based on systems and rules through gradual regeneration, in order to ensure that everything that is considered important by the organization can be transmitted systematically and sustainably. From an institutionalized perspective, the regeneration system can be understood as a formal routine embedded in an impersonal structure (Rahal et al. 2025), so that it is able to reproduce a certain type of subject desired. Borrowing the view of Staggenborg (2013), that institutionalization allows the movement to "survive and remobilize" when environmental events create a boost for new campaigns, the cadre regeneration system ensures that there is a cadre stock that is ready to be mobilized without the need to build strength from scratch.

Fourth, the legitimacy factor because the main motive for the formation of organizations such as Pandu ABI or Muslimah ABI is based on the reason that the youth and generation of Shia women in Indonesia appear as part of the nation's strength and have an official forum to contribute to the country (Hidayat 2026; Fatah 2026). Just as IJABI can take a more open role in carrying out social and religious activities due to the legality of the state (Syarif 2018), Pandu, which has the status of an autonomous institution and formal legality, can be recognized as a youth organization that can accommodate the aspirations of youth, run various programs, and interact officially with the state. This is an example of isomorphism (Rahal et al. 2025), when an organization adjusts to the requirements of the state to gain recognition and the rights that come with it.

In a sociological sense, legitimacy is understood as acceptance by important actors in the organizational environment, which is so important for minority communities that are often stigmatized. In addition to obtaining recognition of existence, formal legitimacy makes the Shia community members of the organization have similar rights and obligations to mainstream organizations. For example, Pandu ABI carrying out the legalization process, such as notarizing the results of the National Congress, obtaining SKT from the Ministry of Home Affairs, and being registered with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, is a legitimacy ritual that must be passed to be recognized as a legitimate organization in the eyes of the state. The obligation to report to the Kesbangpol marks a radical transformation of the position of the Shia community before the state, as they have a formal obligation that marks recognition. Formal legitimacy also opens up access to resources and connections to those in power (Pettinicchio 2012), given that organizations can participate in state forums, submit proposals, and establish partnerships with government institutions.

CONCLUSION

This article concludes that the transformation of the Shia community in Indonesia from a figure-centered model to an institutionalized form represented a strategic response to a changing socio-political environment to ensure the sustainability of the movement. Reliance on individual scholars or intellectual authorities proved insufficient due to structural limitations in addressing stigma, external pressures, internal cohesion, and the need to organize *da'wah* within a democratic and digitally evolving context. Institutionalization through formal organizations enabled the systematization of *da'wah*, the standardization of religious understanding, and the establishment of legitimate collective representation before the state and society, emerging through a gradual process from informal networks to formal and legally

recognized structures. Moreover, institutionalization supported the long-term formalization, reproduction, legitimacy, and protection of the Shia community, while fostering collective security, expanding participation among youth and women, and broadening *da'wah* to address relevant social issues. This shift ultimately marked the emergence of a new wave of Indonesian Shia characterized by organized, inclusive, and sustainable socio-religious practices, with institutions functioning as key mechanisms for survival, negotiation, and civic contribution. Future research could further explore comparative perspectives across regions or examine how digital platforms are reshaping institutional authority and *da'wah* practices within minority religious movements.

REFERENCES

- Ahlulbait Indonesia. (2021). ABI responsive COVID helps the community fight COVID. Retrieved March 5, 2026, from <https://ahlulbaitindonesia.or.id/news/wawancara/abi-responsif-covid-bantu-masyarakat-lawan-covid/>
- Ahlulbait Indonesia. (2024). ABI-IBAKI gathering: Strengthening the Shia community. Retrieved March 5, 2026, from <https://ahlulbaitindonesia.or.id/kegiatan/abi/silaturahmi-abi-ijabi-pererat-komunitas-syiah/>
- Ahlulbait Indonesia. (2025a). ABI responsive: Spreading the wings of humanity from social to nature conservation. Retrieved March 5, 2026, from <https://ahlulbaitindonesia.or.id/kegiatan/abi/abi-responsif-membentangkan-sayap-kemanusiaan-dari-sosial-hingga-konservasi-alam/>
- Ahlulbait Indonesia. (2025b). ABI Muslimah: Building Indonesian Ahlulbayt women for the mission of the ummah and nationality. Retrieved March 5, 2026, from <https://www.ahlulbaitindonesia.or.id/berita/berita-khusus/kegiatan-abi/muslimah-abi-membangun-perempuan-ahlulbait-indonesia-untuk-misi-keumatan-dan-kebangsaan/>
- Ahlulbait Indonesia. (2025c). DPP ABI audience to the Ministry of Home Affairs: Strengthen national commitment and establish strategic partnerships. Retrieved March 5, 2026, from <https://ahlulbaitindonesia.or.id/kegiatan/abi/dpp-abi-audiensi-ke-kemendagri-perkuat-komitmen-kebangsaan-dan-jalin-kemitraan-strategis/>
- Asadi, M. J. (2021). The bases for the formation and growth of Shiism from the past to the present in Indonesia. *Kom*, 10(3), 19–38.
- Assegaf, U. F. (2012). *The rise of Shi'ism in contemporary Indonesia: Orientation and affiliation* (Doctoral dissertation, Australian National University).
- Fathimiyyah. (2024). *Fathimiyyah*. Retrieved March 5, 2026, from <https://fathimiyyah.org/>
- Halimatusa'diyah, I. (2013). Being Shi'ite women in Indonesia's Sunni-populated community: Roles and relations among themselves and with others. *South East Asia Research*, 21(1), 131–150.
- Illiyyen, R. (2024). *Minority political participation: A study of members of the religious youth organization of the DKI Ahlulbait guide* (Bachelor's thesis, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta).
- Indonesian Ahlulbait Guide. (2025). *Articles of association and bylaws (AD/ART) of AhlulBayt Indonesia*.
- Inayatussahara, N. A. (2023). *Negotiating religious identity of Shi'i women in Indonesia: Between resilience and resistance* (Master's thesis, Universitas Islam Internasional

- Indonesia).
- Kuntowijoyo. (1993). *Paradigma Islam: Interpretasi untuk aksi*. Mizan.
- Latief, H. (2008). The identity of Shi'a sympathizers in contemporary Indonesia. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 2(2), 300–335.
- Pettinicchio, D. (2012). Institutional activism: Reconsidering the insider/outsider dichotomy. *Sociology Compass*, 6(6), 499–510.
- Rahal, L., & Vadeboncoeur, J. A. (2025). Institutional theory. *EBSCO Research Starters*.
- Rostami, A. (2024). The role of Iran's revolutionary guards in the media sphere: Propaganda, strategies and narrative power. *Journal for Iranian Studies*, 8(20), 7–21.
- Scott, W. R. (2005). Institutional theory: Contributing to a theoretical research program. In *Great minds in management: The process of theory development* (pp. 460–484).
- Staggenborg, S. (2013). Institutionalization of social movements. In *The Wiley-Blackwell encyclopedia of social and political movements* (pp. 1723–1730).
- Suaedy, A., & Siradj, S. A. (2026). Sunni–Shi'a relations in post-reformasi Indonesia: Political identity and religion. In *Islam, conflict, and political transformation in Southeast Asia* (p. 71).
- Syarif, D. (2018). Contrasting trajectories of Shi'a emergence in post-New Order Indonesia. *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies*, 11(1), 99–116.
- Yusuf, K., & Situmorang, H. (2024). Tracing the history of Shia in Indonesia: History, perceptions, and contemporary challenges. *At-Turots: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 460–472.
- Zulkifli. (2013). *The struggle of the Shi'is in Indonesia*. ANU Press.
- Zulkifli, M. Z. (2017). Shi'i identity and nationalism in Indonesia's reformasi. In *Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Social and Political Sciences (ICSPS 2017)* (pp. 239–242). Atlantis Press.