Leadership Communication and Organizational Culture: A Communicative Constitution of Organizations Perspective

Iman Sumarlan[1,*]

[1] Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
* iman.sumarlan@comm.uad.ac.id
* corresponding author

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of leadership communication in shaping organizational culture through the lens of the Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) theory. While previous studies often treat leadership and culture as separate organizational elements, this research positions communication as the core mechanism that constitutes both. The objective of this study is to examine how leaders' communicative practices—ranging from narrative construction to discursive interactions—actively create, maintain, and transform organizational culture. Employing a qualitative case study method, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis within a values-based organization. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify communicative patterns that reflect the enactment of leadership and the constitution of cultural values. The findings indicate that leadership communication does not merely reflect organizational culture but functions as its constitutive force, particularly through symbolic narratives, strategic language, and everyday interactions that reinforce shared meanings. Furthermore, the study reveals how organizational members co-author these cultural narratives through engagement with leadership discourse. The conclusion emphasizes the importance of viewing leadership as a communicative process that continuously shapes organizational reality. This study contributes to the development of communicative organizational theory and offers practical implications for leaders aiming to build strong, value-driven organizational cultures through intentional and inclusive communication.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, the study of organizational leadership has experienced a paradigmatic shift from structural and trait-based approaches toward more dynamic, interactional, and communicative frameworks. This transformation has emerged in response to increasingly complex, fluid, and networked organizational environments, in which leadership is no longer conceptualized merely as a top-down authority or set of individual competencies, but

as a relational and discursive process that unfolds through communication[1]. As organizations face intensifying pressures to adapt, innovate, and sustain internal cohesion, scholars and practitioners alike have turned their attention to the central role of leadership communication in shaping organizational meaning, guiding collective behavior, and constructing shared identity[2]. Within this broader discourse, organizational culture has emerged as a vital terrain where leadership communication plays a foundational, and arguably constitutive, role.

Organizational culture, understood as the collective system of beliefs, values, assumptions, symbols, and practices that inform the lived experience of organizational members, is not simply transmitted through policies, documents, or formal rituals[3]. Instead, it is continually constructed, contested, and reproduced through day-to-day communicative interactions. Leaders, as central agents in this communicative ecology, engage in symbolic actions, storytelling, value articulation, and meaning negotiation that directly influence how organizational culture takes form and evolves over time[4]. While conventional management literature often treats culture as an asset to be managed or a variable to be measured, recent advances in organizational communication suggest that culture is better understood as an emergent phenomenon that is enacted through discourse[5]. Leadership communication becomes not just a medium for conveying culture, but the very site where culture is performed and materialized [6].

This research is situated within the theoretical framework of the Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO), which posits that organizations do not preexist communication but are constituted by it [7]. Originating from the works of scholars such as James R. Taylor [8], François Cooren[9], and Robert D. McPhee[10], CCO theory shifts the analytic focus from organizations as static entities to organizations as communicative processes. In this view, organizational realities—including roles, structures, norms, and identities—are not given but continuously constructed through communicative events and

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[1] Ines Mergel, Noella Edelmann, and Nathalie Haug, 'Defining Digital Transformation: Results from Expert Interviews', *Government Information Quarterly*, 36.4 (2019), p. 101385, doi:10.1016/j.giq.2019.06.002.

[2] Jamilah Jamal and Hassan Abu Bakar, 'The Mediating Role of Charismatic Leadership Communication in a Crisis: A Malaysian Example', *International Journal of Business Communication*, 54.4 (2017), doi:10.1177/2329488415572782.

[3] Halvor Nordby, 'Communication and Organizational Culture', in *A Closer Look at Organizational Culture in Action* (IntechOpen, 2021), doi:10.5772/intechopen.92318.

[4] Valentin Konya, Leposava Grubic-Nesic, and Dejan Matic, 'The Influence of Leader-Member Communication on Organizational Commitment in a Central European Hospital', *Acta Polytechnica Hungarica*, 12.3 (2015).

[5] Lannes.H, 'Effect of Organizational Communication on Organizational Climate and Organizational Effectiveness', *Undergraduate Journal of Psychology*, 31.1 (2021).

[6] Joy Cherfan and Myria Allen, 'Preferred Leadership Communication Styles Across Cultures', *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 51.2 (2022), doi:10.1080/17475759.2021.1963306.

[7] Robert D. McPhee and Pamela Zaug, 'The Communicative Constitution of Organizations: A Framework for Explanation', in *Building Theories of Organization: The Constitutive Role of Communication* (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), pp. 21–47, doi:10.4324/9780203891025.

[8] Mathieu Chaput and Joëlle Basque, 'AFTERWORD: The Emergence of the Communicative Constitution of Organization and the Montréal School: An Interview with James R. Taylor', *The Routledge Handbook of the Communicative Constitution of Organization*, 2022, doi:10.4324/9781003224914-39.

[9] François Cooren, *Interacting and Organizing: Analyses of a Management Meeting*, Interacting and Organizing: Analyses of a Management Meeting, 2013, doi:10.4324/9780203810736.

[10] Robert D. McPhee, 'Agency and the Four Flows', *Management Communication Quarterly*, 29.3 (2015), pp. 487–92, doi:10.1177/0893318915584826.

discursive practices. Applied to the context of leadership and culture, CCO theory invites a reconceptualization of leadership not merely as the act of directing or influencing others, but as the performative practice of enacting the organization through communication. Culture, accordingly, becomes the discursive residue of repeated communicative enactments that instantiate the organization's values and worldview.

Despite the rich potential of the CCO perspective to deepen our understanding of leadership and culture, empirical research that integrates these domains remains limited[11]. Much of the existing literature on leadership communication tends to adopt either a functionalist perspective—viewing communication as a tool to achieve predetermined outcomes—or a psychological one, emphasizing the traits and styles of individual leaders. While these approaches offer valuable insights, they often underappreciate the constitutive role of discourse and overlook the intersubjective and negotiated nature of organizational life. Conversely, studies grounded in cultural anthropology or critical management often explore power and symbolism but may lack a robust communicative framework to explain how these elements are continually (re)produced through interaction. By drawing upon CCO theory, this study seeks to bridge these gaps and offer an integrated lens to examine how leadership communication constitutes organizational culture as a lived and evolving reality.

The urgency of this inquiry is amplified by contemporary organizational challenges marked by rapid technological change, cultural diversity, and generational shifts in the workplace[12]. In such contexts, leaders are increasingly called upon not only to manage resources or implement strategy, but to cultivate meaning, build trust, and foster a coherent cultural identity amid uncertainty. The COVID-19 pandemic and the widespread adoption of remote and hybrid work models have further underscored the importance of intentional and inclusive communication in sustaining organizational culture across physical and digital spaces. Moreover, the rise of stakeholder capitalism and purpose-driven enterprises places renewed emphasis on values-based leadership and ethical communication practices. These developments necessitate a deeper understanding of how communication operates as a foundational mechanism through which leaders co-create culture in practice, rather than as an afterthought to strategic planning or change management.

This study thus aims to explore the communicative practices through which organizational leaders constitute, negotiate, and maintain organizational culture. Specifically, it investigates how leaders use language, narrative, symbols, and interactions to perform and embody cultural values, and how these performances are received, interpreted, and sometimes challenged by organizational members. Anchored in a qualitative case study design, this research focuses on a values-based organization where culture is explicitly emphasized as a core strategic and ethical priority. Through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and discourse analysis, the study captures the situated and nuanced ways in which leadership communication enacts cultural meaning. Rather than treating leadership as an independent variable or culture as an organizational artifact, the study treats both as emergent and interdependent communicative constructions.

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[11] Marcos Dieste, Philipp C. Sauer, and Guido Orzes, 'Organizational Tensions in Industry 4.0 Implementation: A Paradox Theory Approach', *International Journal of Production Economics*, 251.October 2021 (2022), p. 108532, doi:10.1016/j.ijpe.2022.108532.

[12] Johanna Mossberg and others, 'Managerial and Organizational Challenges Encountered in the Development of Sustainable Technology: Analysis of Swedish Biorefinery Pilot and Demonstration Plants', *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 276 (2020), doi:10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.124150.

The central research questions guiding this inquiry are: (1) How do leaders communicate organizational values and identity in everyday interactions? (2) What communicative practices are involved in the constitution and reinforcement of organizational culture? (3) How do organizational members co-construct or resist these cultural narratives through their engagement with leadership discourse? These questions are designed to illuminate the discursive dynamics that underlie the relationship between leadership and culture and to contribute to theoretical, methodological, and practical conversations in the field of organizational communication.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to both theory and practice. Theoretically, it extends the application of CCO theory to the domain of leadership and culture, offering empirical evidence on how communicative practices enact and sustain organizational realities. Methodologically, it advances the use of qualitative and interpretive approaches—such as discourse analysis and ethnographic observation—to uncover the micro-level communicative processes that often elude traditional survey-based studies. Practically, it provides insights for organizational leaders, communication professionals, and change agents seeking to foster inclusive, values-aligned cultures in increasingly complex and pluralistic environments. By understanding leadership as a communicative process, organizations can move beyond transactional models and cultivate deeper, more authentic engagement with their members.

In sum, this study reframes leadership and organizational culture not as static entities to be described or measured, but as ongoing, discursively constituted processes. It challenges conventional assumptions that separate communication from action, form from substance, and leaders from followers. By foregrounding the constitutive power of language and interaction, the research highlights the role of leadership communication as a vital force in building, sustaining, and transforming organizational culture. The following sections elaborate the theoretical foundations, research methodology, empirical findings, and implications of this communicative approach to leadership and culture.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Leadership Communication

Leadership communication is widely recognized as a critical function within organizational life, not only for coordinating action but also for constructing meaning, fostering engagement, and shaping cultural identity [13]. It is broadly defined as the symbolic and strategic process through which leaders influence others by creating shared understanding, articulating visions, and directing collective behavior (Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014). Unlike managerial communication, which often focuses on efficiency and control, leadership communication is inherently dialogic, sense-making, and values-driven.

Several typologies of leadership communication have been developed in the literature. A prominent distinction is made between transformational and transactional leadership styles [14]. Transformational leaders use inspirational messages and visionary rhetoric to motivate followers and reshape organizational culture. They emphasize personal growth,

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[13] Noel Criscione-Naylor and Petar Dobrev, 'A New Perspective on Fostering Organic Diversity Within Organizations', *Journal of Business Diversity*, 23.4 (2023), pp. 37–49, doi:10.33423/jbd.v23i4.6736.

[14] Galit Klein, 'Transformational and Transactional Leadership, Organizational Support and Environmental Competition Intensity as Antecedents of Intrapreneurial Behaviors', *European Research on Management and Business Economics*, 29.2 (2023), doi:10.1016/j.iedeen.2023.100215.

innovation, and long-term goals. In contrast, transactional leaders rely on structured exchanges, using clear communication of tasks, goals, and rewards to maintain operational stability. Another influential framework is authentic leadership, which focuses on self-awareness, transparency, and relational integrity (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). In this model, communication is grounded in personal values and ethical consistency, fostering trust and credibility among followers.

These models—though distinct—converge on the premise that communication is the medium through which leadership is enacted. In values-based organizations such as Muhammadiyah, leadership communication often merges transformational and authentic elements. Leaders communicate through religious narratives, moral appeals, and participatory dialogue to articulate visions like Islam Berkemajuan (Progressive Islam), thereby linking theological principles with organizational development.

2.2. Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is a foundational concept in organizational studies, defined as the shared system of beliefs, values, symbols, and norms that guide behavior within a group. According to Schein[15], culture comprises three interrelated levels: artifacts (visible expressions such as logos and rituals), espoused values (formal declarations of mission and ethics), and underlying assumptions (deep-seated beliefs about reality, truth, and human nature). These cultural layers collectively shape how members interpret actions, communicate expectations, and relate to their organizational identity.

Culture is not a static or fixed attribute; it is continuously created and re-created through interaction. While leadership plays a central role in setting cultural direction, it is the ongoing communication among members that embeds and sustains these values. Cultural formation occurs through onboarding processes, storytelling, symbolic acts, rituals, and informal interactions. As McCollom et. al[16] note, culture is transmitted through language, practices, and ceremonies that carry symbolic significance.

In contemporary organizations, particularly those navigating change and complexity, culture also becomes a strategic resource. Leaders may intentionally reshape culture to align with evolving visions or external pressures. In Muhammadiyah, the cultural narrative of Islam Berkemajuan serves this function: promoting a religious identity that is simultaneously grounded in Islamic tradition and responsive to science, education, and social justice. This highlights the performative nature of culture—it is not only what an organization "has" but also what it "does" through communication.

2.3. The Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO)

The Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) theory presents a paradigm shift in organizational thinking by asserting that communication is not merely a tool within organizations—it is the very process by which organizations come into being. Rather than viewing organizations as pre-existing structures into which communication is inserted, CCO conceptualizes organizations as constituted, sustained, and transformed through communicative practices[17].

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[15] Edgar H. Schein, 'Organizational Culture and Leadership, Third Edition', *Published by Jossey-Bass*, 7.San Francisco,CA (2004).

[16] Marion McCollom, Harrison M. Trice, and Janice M. Beyer, 'The Cultures of Work Organizations', *The Academy of Management Review*, 19.4 (1994), doi:10.2307/258750.

[17] Linda L. Putnam and Anne Maydan Nicotera, *Building Theories of Organization: The Constitutive Role of Communication, Building Theories of Organization: The Constitutive Role of Communication*, 2008, doi:10.4324/9780203891025.

Two influential strands of the CCO approach are the Montreal School and the Four Flows Model. The Montreal School, initiated by James R. Taylor and colleagues, focuses on the recursive interaction between text and conversation—where conversations produce texts (e.g., documents, decisions), and those texts in turn shape future interactions. This dynamic helps explain how informal interactions eventually become formal structures that stabilize organizational practices.

The Four Flows Model, proposed by McPhee and Zaug[18], identifies four communicative flows that constitute organizations:

a) Membership negotiation – how individuals become and remain organizational members through communication (e.g., socialization, onboarding).

b) Self-structuring – how organizational procedures, roles, and hierarchies are established and maintained.

c) Activity coordination – how members communicate to accomplish work and adjust practices.

d) Institutional positioning – how the organization situates itself within the broader environment (e.g., stakeholders, partners, the public).

These flows are not isolated processes but are interdependent and overlapping. The CCO perspective enables a dynamic and relational view of organizing, especially useful for analyzing how values and identities are enacted in practice. In organizations like Muhammadiyah, where ideology and mission are central, the Four Flows offer a powerful lens to understand how theological discourse becomes organizational structure, and vice versa.

2.4. Related Studies

An expanding body of research has applied the CCO framework to explore leadership, communication, and culture in diverse organizational contexts. Fairhurst and Cooren[19] argue that leadership itself is communicatively constituted, emerging through discourse practices such as framing, storytelling, and sensegiving. Rather than being a static role or trait, leadership is enacted through language that organizes meaning, mobilizes identity, and guides behavior.

McPhee and Iverson[20] extended the Four Flows model to nonprofit and community-based organizations, showing how membership negotiation is vital in cultivating belonging and shared purpose. Their research emphasized that communicative processes in such contexts are often informal, narrative-driven, and deeply embedded in communal values—elements highly relevant to faith-based institutions like Muhammadiyah.

Within the Indonesian context, communication scholarship has begun to explore how religious organizations use discourse to shape internal cohesion and external legitimacy[21].,

[18] Robert D McPhee and Pamela Zaug, 'The Communicative Constitution of Organizations', *Building Theories of Organization: The Constitutive Role of Communication*, 10.1–2 (2009), p. 21.

[19] Gail T Fairhurst and Linda L Putnam, 'Organizational Discourse Analysis', *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Communication*, 2011, 2014.

[20] Robert D. McPhee and Joel Iverson, 'Agents of Constitution in Communidad: Constitutive Processes of Communication in Organizations', in *Building Theories of Organization: The Constitutive Role of Communication*, 2008, doi:10.4324/9780203891025.

[21] Iman Sumarlan and Ibrahim T.I.Ukka, 'Public Relations to Foster Organization's Values and Identity: The Case of Muhammadiyah', *Komunikator*, 16.2 (2024), pp. 146–59, doi:10.18196/jkm.23747.

for example, found that dakwah organizations on university campuses communicate Islamic values through both structured forums and digital platforms, resulting in culturally embedded yet adaptable forms of organization. However, few studies have directly applied the CCO framework to large-scale religious movements such as Muhammadiyah. This research therefore fills a critical gap by applying a communicative lens to understand how leadership and culture are co-constituted through discourse in a major Islamic organization.

In sum, the literature provides a rich foundation for investigating the communicative dimensions of leadership and culture. Yet, there remains a need for further empirical studies that examine these dynamics in ideologically driven and culturally complex organizations. By situating this research within the CCO framework, and focusing on the case of Muhammadiyah's Progressive Islam narrative, this study contributes both to theoretical development and to a deeper understanding of how communication constitutes not only coordination—but identity, authority, and shared meaning.were drawn.

3. Research Method

This study adopts a qualitative case study design focused on Muhammadiyah; a major Islamic organization based in Yogyakarta. Guided by the Communicative Constitution of Organization (CCO) theory, specifically the Four Flows model, the research examines how leadership communication contributes to the formation and reinforcement of organizational culture. The Four Flows—membership negotiation, reflexive self-structuring, activity coordination, and institutional positioning—serve as analytical lenses throughout the study.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis[22]. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select 15–20 informants, including leaders, staff, and organizational members involved in communication and decision-making. Semi-structured interviews explored how leadership communicates organizational values, establishes structures, coordinates activities, and engages external actors. Observations were conducted during internal meetings and public events, focusing on symbolic interactions and discursive practices. Complementary document analysis of official texts—such as constitutions, strategic plans, and newsletters—provided contextual grounding and insights into formal communication.

Thematic analysis using coding techniques was applied to all data sources. Open coding was followed by theme development based on the Four Flows framework. NVivo software assisted in organizing and interpreting the data[23]. Patterns were identified regarding how leadership discourse constructs membership identities, internal structures, and cultural values. Ethical procedures were strictly followed. Informed consent was obtained, participant anonymity was protected, and data were securely stored. Triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents ensured validity, while member checking confirmed interpretive accuracy. These methodological steps ensured credibility and trustworthiness, enabling a comprehensive understanding of how leadership communication discursively constitutes organizational culture within the Muhammadiyah context.

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[22] Isabel Ruiz-Mora, Gisela Goncalves, and Ian Somerville, *Organizational and Strategic Communication Research: Global Trends*, ed. by Thomas William, 1st edn (LabCom.IFP, 2019).

[23] David B. Allsop and others, 'Qualitative Methods with Nvivo Software: A Practical Guide for Analyzing Qualitative Data', *Psych*, 4.2 (2022), doi:10.3390/psych4020013.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. The Leadership Communication in Practice

In the context of the Muhammadiyah Central Board in Yogyakarta, leadership communication is manifested as an inspirational and participatory practice. Leaders emphasize a persuasive approach, where messages are conveyed through religious narratives that resonate with the organization's values. Findings indicate that the concept of *Islam Berkemajuan* (Progressive Islam) serves as the central framework in every leadership communication act[24]. This phrase is consistently repeated in speeches, sermons, and internal publications to reinforce a progressive organizational vision.

One informant from the Central Board explained, "Our leaders always align religious messages with contemporary challenges. For instance, in meetings, the chairman often affirms, *'Through Islam Berkemajuan, we embrace modern values for the benefit of the ummah'* (Interview, 2024). This statement illustrates a communication style that harmonizes Islamic teachings with intellectual development. Furthermore, this communication style is dialogical, where leaders actively involve members in strategic discussions. As another informant noted, "*When discussing new programs, the chairman always invites members' input so that decisions reflect the spirit of Islam Berkemajuan*" (Interview, 2024).

Digital media is also utilized to disseminate leadership messages. The Central Board frequently produces social media content and electronic bulletins that emphasize the Progressive Islam narrative. One staff member stated, "*We publish articles and videos about moderate Islam and science so that Muhammadiyah's values reach younger audiences*" (Interview, 2024). These communication channels serve to transmit vision consistently. Overall, Muhammadiyah's leadership communication demonstrates a structured and intentional pattern, where key messages about rationality, moderation, and progress are regularly reiterated. This shows that leadership communication in Muhammadiyah is not only informative but also normative—internalizing the values of Progressive Islam into organizational life.

Digital communication and symbolic interaction play a significant role in Muhammadiyah's leadership approach[25]. Leaders often use culturally embedded gestures and rituals—such as leading congregational prayers before meetings or referencing historical milestones in Muhammadiyah's development—to communicate alignment with both spiritual values and organizational mission. These performative acts are not merely ceremonial; they subtly reinforce authority and build collective identity rooted in shared history and moral purpose. Observations from organizational events reveal that these moments serve as a tacit affirmation of the leader's role as both a moral guide and strategic visionary.

The tone and rhetoric of Muhammadiyah's leadership communication consistently reflect humility, moral clarity, and ethical responsibility. Rather than asserting authority through command, leaders position themselves as facilitators of collective growth and stewards of the organization's intellectual and spiritual trajectory. This communicative

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[24] Central Board of Muhammadiyah, *A Treatise on Progressive Islam*, 1st edn (Muhammadiyah, 2023), ɪ.

[25] Rasyid Ezha Maulana and Iman Sumarlan, 'Digital Da'wah Communication of the Muhammadiyah Central Leadership Tablighi Council Using YouTube Account', *Symposium of Literature, Culture, and Communication (SYLECTION) 2022*, 3.1 (2023), p. 707, doi:10.12928/sylection.v3i1.14072.

posture fosters a participatory ethos, encouraging open dialogue across hierarchical levels. As a result, members perceive leadership not as distant or bureaucratic, but as accessible and accountable. Such relational dynamics enhance trust and legitimacy, strengthening the organization's capacity to navigate change while remaining anchored in its core values.

This leadership communication model also embraces reflexivity, wherein leaders routinely evaluate the efficacy and alignment of their messages with the evolving aspirations of the organization and its members. Feedback loops are institutionalized through structured listening sessions, online forums, and thematic surveys, allowing the leadership to remain attuned to grassroots concerns while refining strategic direction. This reflexive dimension of communication underscores the commitment to mutual understanding and demonstrates that communication is not unidirectional but constitutes an iterative process of meaning negotiation. The adaptive responsiveness displayed by Muhammadiyah's leadership reinforces the perception that Progressive Islam is not only a guiding philosophy but a living discourse continuously shaped by collective engagement.

Communication practices in Muhammadiyah demonstrate a clear sensitivity to intergenerational dynamics. Recognizing the diversity of age groups and educational backgrounds within the organization, leaders tailor their messaging to resonate with both senior members rooted in traditional Islamic scholarship and younger members more attuned to digital culture and global discourse. For example, sermons delivered at national assembly's often combine classical Arabic references with contemporary social issues, while digital campaigns emphasize themes such as environmental stewardship, gender equity, and technological literacy—all framed within the ethical scope of *Islam Berkemajuan*. This strategic hybridity allows Muhammadiyah's leadership to unify its constituency while acknowledging their distinct communicative expectations and social imaginaries.

The leadership's capacity to maintain coherence across various organizational tiers—ranging from the central board to regional branches—demonstrates a high degree of communicative consistency. This coherence is achieved not through rigid uniformity, but through the principled repetition of core messages and values, particularly those linked to reformist Islamic thought and civic responsibility. Local leaders often emulate central communication patterns while contextualizing them within their respective communities. This decentralized yet coordinated approach to leadership communication enables Muhammadiyah to sustain cultural integration while remaining responsive to regional nuances. It confirms that communication is not merely a support function in Muhammadiyah's leadership model, but the principal mechanism through which alignment, adaptability, and cultural coherence are maintained.

4.2. Constituting Culture through Communicative Interaction

The cultural fabric of Muhammadiyah is not inherited or imposed but constructed through ongoing communicative practices that give meaning to collective values and norms. Organizational culture emerges not only from formal texts or leadership directives but from the repeated interactions, shared stories, and symbolic acts performed by both leaders and members. In the context of Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Progressive Islam is not merely a slogan—it is a lived discourse, reproduced through meetings, educational programs, internal documents, and everyday conversations. This communicative constitution aligns with the CCO view that organizations are continuously formed through language and discourse.

Ritualized events such as weekly *pengajian* (Islamic study gatherings), leadership training, and annual assemblies serve as key arenas where cultural meaning is socially reinforced[26]. In these settings, leaders often articulate Muhammadiyah's mission using narratives that bridge Islamic values with contemporary societal challenges. One recurring pattern observed is the use of Quranic references paired with modern concepts such as social justice, technological advancement, or environmental sustainability. These combinations normalize the integration of faith and rational progress, effectively embedding Progressive Islam into the organization's symbolic repertoire.

Language choice also plays a significant role in cultural enactment. The consistent use of terms such as "ijtihad," "*tajdid*," and "*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*" in organizational communication reflects an intentional orientation toward reform, renewal, and ethical action. Internal publications and member training materials frame these terms not only theologically but also as operational principles for daily conduct and strategic planning. For instance, in member orientation programs, facilitators explain "ijtihad" not just as personal reflection, but as a collective ethic for solving community problems using reasoned Islamic thinking. Through such discursive framing, cultural norms become internalized and practiced.

Another key mechanism in the cultural constitution is storytelling. Leaders and senior members frequently share historical anecdotes about Muhammadiyah's founding figures and milestone moments. These stories serve to anchor organizational values in an emotional and moral context, linking past struggles with present missions. A commonly told narrative involves K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's challenge to reform religious education in the early 20th century—often recounted to inspire courage, innovation, and devotion. These stories function as "cultural scripts" that shape how members interpret their roles and responsibilities in line with Muhammadiyah's evolving identity.

Communicative interaction in Muhammadiyah is deeply participatory. Culture is not unilaterally imposed from the top but negotiated through collective discussion and member engagement. Members are encouraged to question, propose ideas, and reinterpret values in light of their local contexts. This dialogic structure fosters a culture that is not only coherent but adaptive. It ensures that Progressive Islam remains a dynamic principle—continuously reconstituted through everyday discourse rather than rigidly defined. In this way, Muhammadiyah's organizational culture exemplifies a communicatively enacted system: grounded in shared beliefs, but always open to reinterpretation and contextualization.

4.3. Relevance of Findings to the CCO Framework

The empirical findings from the Muhammadiyah case provide substantial support for the Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) framework, particularly McPhee and Zaug's Four Flows model. The model identifies four key communicative flows that constitute organizations: membership negotiation, self-structuring, activity coordination, and institutional positioning. Each of these flows was observed in the leadership communication and cultural practices of Muhammadiyah, affirming the theory's applicability to religious-based civil society organizations. Moreover, the integration of a strong ideological narrative—Progressive Islam—into these flows offers a context-specific refinement to the model that highlights the importance of value-laden discourse.

The first flow, membership negotiation, was evident in the structured onboarding processes and narrative-driven orientation of new members. Prospective members of

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[26] Muhammadiyah, *Guidelines for the Implementation of Muhammadiyah Cadre Development*, ed. by Arif Budiman, *Guidelines*, 1st edn (Muhammadiyah, 2016).

Muhammadiyah do not merely fill out registration forms; they are inducted through training sessions, reading materials, and dialogues that align personal identity with organizational values. Leaders and senior members emphasize the philosophical underpinnings of Progressive Islam during these sessions, presenting membership as a moral and intellectual commitment. Through these interactions, membership is communicatively constituted—not as a legal status, but as an active engagement with the organization's mission.

The second flow, self-structuring, appeared in the way leaders formalize organizational roles and procedures through communication. Strategic planning meetings, policy formulation, and leadership elections are all infused with deliberate discussions about Muhammadiyah's identity and long-term direction. These conversations are not merely administrative; they embed values such as transparency, accountability, and renewal (*tajdid*) into the organizational fabric. The result is a governance structure that is discursively constructed and reinforced through consistent communication practices, aligning internal systems with cultural expectations.

The third flow, activity coordination, was prominently observed in the daily operations of Muhammadiyah. Coordination is not limited to task assignment; it involves aligning operational decisions with ethical and religious considerations. For example, decisions about educational content, healthcare programs, or disaster relief initiatives are framed within the broader narrative of serving the ummah through rational, science-based Islamic values. Communication in this flow is pragmatic yet value-driven—reflecting an institutional commitment to coherence between speech and action.

The fourth flow, institutional positioning, is where Muhammadiyah's leadership communication stands out most clearly. Through public statements, interfaith dialogues, academic partnerships, and media outreach, Muhammadiyah consistently positions itself as the embodiment of Progressive Islam in Indonesia. This external communication is not just about visibility; it's about claiming a distinct ideological space within the national and global religious discourse. By aligning itself with both Islamic reformism and modern societal values, Muhammadiyah constructs a dual legitimacy—spiritual and sociopolitical—that enhances its public standing and moral authority. These dynamics affirm that institutional positioning, as theorized in CCO, is a constitutive force shaped by strategic and value-based communication.

4.4. Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings from this study contribute significantly to the theoretical refinement of the Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) framework, particularly by extending its application to a religious and ideologically oriented organization. While much of the existing CCO literature focuses on corporate or governmental entities, this study demonstrates that the constitution of organization through communication also applies powerfully in faith-based, value-driven contexts. In Muhammadiyah, communication does not simply serve coordination or control; it actively constructs a moral universe in which members orient their roles, actions, and identities. The discourse of Progressive Islam functions as a central symbolic system that shapes not only organizational decisions but also the underlying assumptions of what the organization stands for.

A key theoretical insight is the interplay between spiritual narratives and organizational discourse. While the Four Flows model provides a structural map of communication processes, the Muhammadiyah case shows that meaning-making in such organizations is deeply rooted in ideological and theological content. This suggests that communicative flows are not ideologically neutral; they are often embedded in narratives that carry emotional, historical, and ethical weight. Thus, future applications of CCO may benefit from

incorporating the role of values and beliefs—not merely as background assumptions, but as active agents in the constitution of organizational life.

Practically, the study offers a set of actionable insights for organizational leaders, particularly in non-profit, civil society, and religious institutions. First, leadership communication should be consciously aligned with the core values of the organization. Muhammadiyah's leaders consistently frame their messages through the lens of Progressive Islam, ensuring coherence between speech and institutional identity. This kind of value-anchored messaging not only strengthens internal alignment but also enhances external legitimacy.

Second, organizations would benefit from cultivating dialogic structures that allow culture to be co-created rather than imposed. Muhammadiyah's participatory communication style—where members are invited to contribute to strategic discussions—fosters a sense of ownership and cultural resilience. This is especially important in environments that face rapid social or technological change, where static cultural definitions may become obsolete. By allowing for ongoing reinterpretation and contextual adaptation, organizations maintain cultural relevance while staying rooted in foundational principles.

Finally, the integration of strategic media and digital platforms into leadership communication is a practical imperative. Muhammadiyah's use of social media to disseminate its values illustrates how modern communication tools can extend cultural formation beyond formal settings. Leaders must recognize that organizational culture is no longer confined to physical meetings or printed materials; it is continuously negotiated in digital spaces. By shaping discourse in both physical and virtual arenas, organizations can foster a more holistic and sustained cultural identity. Overall, the Muhammadiyah case affirms that communicative leadership, when grounded in a clear ethical vision, can serve as a powerful mechanism for cultural coherence, adaptability, and public engagement.

Table 1. Summary of Interview Participants and Key Themes

Code	Position/Role	Organizational Level	Main Communication Themes	Quoted Insight
P1	Chairman of Central Board	Strategic Leadership	Visionary discourse, Progressive Islam narrative	"Through Islam Berkemajuan, we embrace modern values for the benefit of the ummah."
P2	Board Member (Education Division)	Mid-level Leadership	Dialogic leadership, participatory planning	"New programs are always discussed together to reflect our shared values."
P3	Administrative Officer	Operational Staff	Digital communication, youth engagement	"We publish videos and articles on moderate Islam and science for young audiences."
P4	Branch Coordinator	Local Implementation	Symbolic rituals, consistency across branches	"We follow the same key messages from the center but adapt them for our community."
P5	Youth Member	Grassroots/Member	Cultural interpretation, intergenerational discourse	"Progressive Islam for me means faith that's open to technology and new ideas."

5. Conclusion

This study has examined how leadership communication within the Muhammadiyah Central Board in Yogyakarta functions as a constitutive force in shaping organizational culture, particularly through the discourse of *Islam Berkemajuan* (Progressive Islam). By adopting the Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) framework—especially the Four Flows model—the research reveals that communication is not merely instrumental, but foundational in constructing and sustaining the organization's identity, values, and operational logic.

The findings demonstrate that Muhammadiyah's leaders engage in intentional, value-oriented communication practices that are dialogical, participatory, and symbolically rich. Through speeches, rituals, digital media, and strategic documentation, leaders embed cultural norms and articulate a vision that harmonizes Islamic principles with scientific progress, social justice, and national development. These communicative practices not only influence how members perceive their roles but also continuously recreate the organization's collective identity in both internal and public contexts.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study extends the CCO model by emphasizing the role of ideological and theological narratives in shaping communicative flows. It challenges the presumed neutrality of organizational discourse and argues for the inclusion of belief systems as active elements in organizational constitution. Practically, the study underscores the importance of narrative coherence, member participation, and digital engagement in sustaining a resilient and adaptive organizational culture.

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