

Tabot Bengkulu as an Ecology of Da'wah Communication and Islamic Education: A Mixed-Methods Study from a Communication Science Perspective

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Abstract

The culture of Tabot Bengkulu is still rarely positioned analytically as a communication ecology that connects cultural da'wah, symbolic literacy, and Islamic learning based on living heritage. This study examined the influence of ritual communication and symbolic-cultural literacy on da'wah resonance and Islamic pedagogical engagement, and interpreted the way local actors understand Tabot as a space for Islamic communication. The research design used explanatory sequential mixed-methods with a survey of 384 respondents and qualitative deepening through 27 interviews, 5 focus group discussions (FGDs), 31 observation notes, and 57 visual-digital documents. Quantitative data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), while qualitative data were interpreted through reflexive thematic coding. The results showed that ritual communication salience had a strong effect on symbolic-cultural literacy ($\beta = .61$; $t = 14.83$), symbolic-cultural literacy strengthened da'wah resonance ($\beta = .42$; $t = 8.19$), and da'wah resonance was the most decisive predictor of Islamic pedagogical engagement ($\beta = .52$; $t = 10.91$). The model explained 45% of the variation in da'wah resonance and 49% of the variation in Islamic pedagogical engagement. Qualitative findings confirmed that the sound of the dol, procession, Tabot, Karbala narrative, and citizen participation formed an effective message architecture when accompanied by historical, ethical, and sensitive explanations of interpretive diversity. The contribution of this article lay in the formulation of a communication-pedagogical model that placed Tabot as a living heritage, a medium of da'wah, and a source of Islamic learning that required symbolic literacy so that it was not reduced to a visual attraction.

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INTRODUCTION

In a society increasingly shaped by festivals, digital screens, and the attention economy, religious-local traditions are no longer adequate to be treated as relics of the past; such traditions serve as a communication space that determines whether collective memory can still be a source of moral education (Hepp, 2020; Scolari, 2024; Kolodziejska et al., 2023). The Tabot culture of Bengkulu shows this position because it combines processions, symbols, dol music, Karbala grief narratives, and citizen involvement in one meaningful public event (Aviandy et al., 2025; Yan et al., 2024). Aviandy et al. (2025) showed that Tabot develops as a field of negotiation among ritual, identity, tourism, economic interests, and religious discourse. If the communication function of Tabot is not studied systematically, da'wah and Islamic education can lose the cultural apparatus that has actually worked in society. As a result, da'wah risks appearing as a normative discourse separate from collective experience, while Islamic education has the potential to lose local media capable of translating historical values, manners, solidarity, and moral courage into learning experiences. This tendency is important because modern living-heritage studies emphasize that the value of heritage is not only stored in objects or events, but also in the processes of meaning, participation, and transmission among actors (Bonacchi et al., 2023). Thus, Tabot should not only be understood as a cultural calendar, but rather as a symbolic infrastructure that links Islamic communication, da'wah, and pedagogy in the social field of Bengkulu. The urgency of this research lies in the need to ensure that the strengthening of tradition does not stop at ceremonial conservation, but moves toward a communicative understanding that protects the depth of meaning from the risk of commodification and simplification of messages (Zhang et al., 2024).

From a communication science perspective, public rituals can work as an arena for the production of meaning when symbols, bodies, sounds, spaces, and narratives are arranged into a shared experience that can be read socially (Yan et al., 2024). At the same time, theoretical problems arise when the study of da'wah still often places Islamic communication as verbal message delivery, rather than as a semiotic, participatory, and affective practice that takes place through local traditions (Froh & Robinson, 2023a). In the context of Bengkulu, the problem appears through the tug-of-war between Tabot as a rite, festival, regional identity, historical narrative, and creative economy space (Aviandy et al., 2025; Ulfa & Jalili, 2024). Aviandy et al. (2025) read this tug-of-war as a hidden framing that shows the competition of meaning among cultural actors, governments, economic actors, and religious communities. If these theoretical and contextual relationships are not examined, the development of Tabot-based da'wah can fall into two extremes: ignoring its educational potential or using it instrumentally without an ethic of interpretation. Both will disrupt the quality of Islamic

education because students only accept tradition as a spectacle or as an identity label, not as a social text that can be read reflectively. Recent religious education studies confirm that Islamic learning requires an approach that allows students to understand Islam as knowledge, experience, tradition, and an existential horizon (Christopher & Revell, 2024). By that logic, the question of how Tabot ritual communication relates to da'wah resonance and Islamic pedagogical engagement becomes increasingly urgent. The formulation of this research is built on the need to examine relationships among constructs while listening to the way local actors interpret the function of Tabot in religious and educational life.

Cutting-edge literature on intangible cultural heritage has moved from object-based conservation toward attention to the experience, authenticity, participation, and dynamics of cross-media communication (Ireland et al., 2025). Smith (2021) emphasized that emotional heritage shows how collective memory and sense of belonging influence public acceptance of heritage. Zhu (2024) reminded that heritage studies from non-Anglophone regions need to be read with epistemic sensitivity so that they do not simply follow Western categories. Li et al. (2023) showed that digital education of intangible cultural heritage requires cultural awareness so that technology does not break the connection between symbols and communities. Xie et al. (2025a) expanded the study of intangible heritage by showing that fashion communication, visuality, and diffusion of innovation can change the way destinations package heritage for the public. These findings are important, but their orientation is stronger toward destination marketing than toward the articulation of da'wah and Islamic education. Li et al. (2025) affirmed that the modernization of performance heritage can attract the younger generation when innovation remains legible as part of the tradition. However, that research has not sufficiently explained how local religious values are negotiated so as not to lose depth of meaning. Zhang et al. (2024) reviewed the alienation of heritage actors in intangible tourism and showed that authenticity can weaken when actors feel detached from the values they display. These findings direct this research on Tabot to a more specific issue: whether the citizens involved in Tabot experience its symbol as a da'wah message and a source of learning, or simply as a public ceremony. Bonacchi et al. (2023) emphasized the need to read heritage values reflexively because social media can make some values visible, but also make other values excluded from decision-making. The limitation of this body of studies lies in the lack of strong empirical testing of ritual communication pathways, symbolic literacy, da'wah resonance, and Islamic pedagogical engagement in one complete model.

The next gap arises from the literatures on digital religion and Islamic education, which are both evolving but are rarely integrated methodologically with living-heritage traditions (Larsson et al., 2024). Evolvi (2022) showed that digital mediation can enlarge certain religious articulations while changing the way religious authority and identity are negotiated. Oeldorf-Hirsch et al. (2024) showed that responses to problematic content on social media depend on the type of objection and public communication norms. Manca et al. (2024) affirmed that the communication strategies of

cultural institutions on Instagram determine how the value of collection, participation, and identity is perceived by the audience. Scolari (2024) read the change in media as the evolution of communication ecology so that traditions like Tabot need to be understood as messages that move across media. Danko et al. (2025) showed that religious institutions negotiate the legitimacy of digital media by considering established norms, hierarchies, and forms of religious life. These findings are relevant for Tabot because the legitimacy of cultural da'wah is not only determined by the message conveyed, but by who interprets it, how the rites are staged, and whether citizens feel involved. Kolodziejska et al. (2023) showed that religious communities can become media settlers who occupy new media spaces while bringing old conventions. However, the study focuses more on formal religious institutions, while Tabot moves through cultural communities, street spaces, family networks, local governments, and digital audiences (Aviandy et al., 2025; Khairuddin & Man, 2023). Putkonen et al. (2025) emphasized that Islamic education needs to navigate the relationship among traditions, Muslim existence, and learning experiences that are not only cognitive. However, Islamic education research has not paid enough attention to how local traditions can function as communication tools that produce symbolic literacy and da'wah resonance. Therefore, this study combines quantitative models and qualitative interpretation so that relationships among constructs can be tested while maintaining the cultural nuances through the voices of local actors.

This study proposes that the Bengkulu Tabot culture functions as an architecture of ritual communication that can strengthen cultural da'wah and Islamic education when its symbols are read through adequate cultural literacy. The quantitative research question is: How does ritual communication salience affect symbolic-cultural literacy, da'wah resonance, and Islamic pedagogical engagement in Tabot Bengkulu participants? The qualitative research question is: How do cultural actors, dai, educators, and the younger generation interpret Tabot as a communicative feature for da'wah and Islamic education? The first contribution of this study is the development of a conceptual model that places ritual communication as an entry point for examining the relationship among heritage, da'wah, and Islamic learning. The second contribution is the provision of empirical instruments that operationalize ritual salience, symbolic-cultural literacy, da'wah resonance, and Islamic pedagogical engagement with measurable indicators. The third contribution lies in the merging of PLS-SEM findings and thematic findings so that numbers and narratives correct each other, not replace each other. The fourth contribution is the proposal of a cultural da'wah framework that does not reduce Tabot to a festival commodity, but places it as an ethical, inclusive, and reflective public learning space. Thus, this article enriches Islamic communication scholarship through a more local, empirical, and interdisciplinary path.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Tabot Culture, Living Heritage, and Ritual Communication

The study of cultural heritage is now shifting from the protection of artifacts to the understanding of how communities bring meaning to life through performance, memory, and everyday engagement (Ireland et al., 2025). Intangible cultural heritage is defined as the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills that communities recognize as part of their heritage and that are transmitted across generations (UNESCO, 2023; Ireland et al., 2025; Smith, 2021). In the context of Tabot, the definition helps to read the procession not as an object on display, but as a series of social actions that give shape to religious memory and local identity (Aviandy et al., 2025; Khairuddin & Man, 2023). The tradition of cultural representation in Hall's thought places meaning as a result of the articulation among signs, practices, and the reader's social positions so that it underpins the interpretation of symbols, narratives, and identities in this article (Hall, 2019; Zhu, 2024; Bonacchi et al., 2023). Indicators used to read living heritage in this study include transmission (UNESCO, 2023; Ireland et al., 2025; Smith, 2021), participation (Ireland et al., 2025), authenticity (Zhang et al., 2024), value visibility (Bonacchi et al., 2023), and place-keeping (Kavanagh et al., 2023). This set of indicators is chosen because Tabot works through bodies in procession, the sound of the dol that presents a collective atmosphere, and the Tabot symbol that binds the memory of the people to the history of Karbala (Aviandy et al., 2025; Yan et al., 2024). With this framework, Tabot can be placed as a social text that moves among rituals, festivals, education, tourism, and identity negotiations. The study demands caution because institutionalizing festivals can strengthen preservation, but it can also shift the emphasis from religious values toward visual consumption (Xie et al., 2025b).

The struggle between sacred values and the public stage makes Tabot ritual communication require interpretation as a process of mediation that occurs before, during, and after the procession (Aviandy et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2024). Aviandy et al. (2025) asserted that the Tabot narrative is shaped by the competition of interpretations among the Tabot Harmony Family community, government, economic actors, and the public. This interpretation shows that one symbol can carry several layers of meaning at once, ranging from religious grief, social solidarity, and regional identity to cultural promotion. Studies of ritualized experiences show that rituals exert psychological effects when participants experience co-presence, symbolic engagement, and collective affective energy (Yan et al., 2024). The indicators of ritual communication in this study were specified as co-presence (Yan et al., 2024), symbolic narratives (Bonacchi et al., 2023; Hall, 2019; Zhu, 2024), collective affect (Ireland et al., 2025; Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2021; Yan et al., 2024), ritual repetition (Kolodziejska et al., 2023), and public legibility (Bonacchi et al., 2023). The combination of these indicators makes ritual communication salience not only measured by the presence of residents, but also by the power of symbols to form attention, interpretation, and a sense of togetherness. The theory of mediatization, which emphasizes the formation of social reality through media and communication practices, underpins the way this article sees Tabot as a ritual event that simultaneously lives on the street stage and in digital circulation (Hepp, 2020; Scolari, 2024; Kolodziejska et al., 2023). Thus, Tabot as a

ritual communication can be the basis for da'wah when the shared experience activates moral memory, not just producing festival crowds. This theoretical position provides a basis for assessing whether visually powerful rituals are also powerful as a medium of Islamic learning.

2. Cultural Da'wah in Contemporary Communication Ecology

The study of cutting-edge da'wah moves from the logic of a single delivery to an ecology of religious communication that integrates institutions, communities, platforms, symbols, and audience experiences (Danko et al., 2025; Larsson et al., 2024). Cultural da'wah is defined in this article as the process of articulating Islamic values through language, artistic expression, local memory, community authority, and social practices that allow religious messages to be received without losing ethical precision or theological prudence (Froh & Robinson, 2023b; Aviandy et al., 2025). The definition places da'wah not only on religious discourse, but also on the ability of tradition to invite audiences to understand moral messages through experiences close to their lives. The framework of digital religion underpins the idea that religious practices are always negotiated through the materiality of the media, authority, community, and performance, so that Tabot's da'wah needs to be read as a communicative practice that goes beyond the formal pulpit (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021). Indicators of da'wah resonance in this study include clarity of moral messages (Froh & Robinson, 2023a), cultural proximity (Aviandy et al., 2025), credibility of sources (Danko et al., 2025), madhhab sensitivity (Aviandy et al., 2025; Khairuddin & Man, 2023), and reflective invitations (Putkonen et al., 2025). Each indicator is directed at Tabot's ability to make Islamic values legible without imposing historical reductions or ignoring the plurality of citizens' perceptions. Cultural da'wah becomes relevant because the Karbala narrative can be interpreted as a message of courage, loyalty, sacrifice, and resistance to injustice in a form that can be understood across generations (Aviandy et al., 2025; Froh & Robinson, 2023b). However, such relevance requires symbolic literacy so that messages are not trapped in historical romanticizations or unproductive identity controversies..

The high ritual communication salience increases the likelihood that the audience will notice the symbols, interpret the procession, and associate the emotional experience with the broader moral message (Yan et al., 2024). When local symbols are read reflexively, da'wah is more readily accepted because religious messages are present through cultural proximity, rather than through rigid institutional distances (Aviandy et al., 2025). Digital religious communication studies show that the resonance of religious messages increases when communication makes room for community identity, social crisis, and audience affective needs (Froh & Robinson, 2023b). This line of reasoning positions Hypothesis 1 as a test of the power of ritual experiences in shaping symbolic-cultural literacy.

H1: Ritual communication has a positive effect on the symbolic-cultural literacy of Tabot Bengkulu participants.

The interconnectedness between ritual experience, the ability to interpret symbols, and the reception of da'wah messages suggests that the direct path from ritual salience to da'wah resonance needs to be tested (Kolodziejska et al., 2023). Heritage modernization can strengthen the involvement of the younger generation if the traditional structure remains legible and not transformed into entertainment that is disconnected from values (Li et al., 2025). In the digital space, Muslim audiences interpret religious content through identity, platforms, and social contexts so that the power of public rites needs to be examined as a source of da'wah resonance (Larsson et al., 2024). This conceptual path leads Hypothesis 2 to assess the communicative force of rituals in strengthening da'wah resonance.

H2: Ritual communication salience has a positive effect on the da'wah resonance of Tabot Bengkulu participants.

3. Symbolic-Cultural Literacy and Experience-Based Islamic Education

Contemporary Islamic education shifts from an emphasis on memorization of materials to the ability of learners to understand religion as knowledge, ethical practices, and life horizons interpreted in a social context (Putkonen et al., 2025). Symbolic-cultural literacy is defined as the ability to recognize, interpret, evaluate, and relate cultural symbols to values, history, identity, and ethical actions relevant to community life (Bonacchi et al., 2023). This definition is important because learners do not merely need to know that Tabot has symbols, but need to understand how it works as a medium of Islamic memory and reflection. The idea of world-centred education underpins the understanding that education should lead the subject to meet the world responsibly so that Tabot's learning needs to connect learners with social, historical, and ethical realities that go beyond themselves (Biesta, 2022; Putkonen et al., 2025; Christopher & Revell, 2024). Symbolic-cultural literacy indicators in this study include symbolic understanding (Hall, 2019; Zhu, 2024; Bonacchi et al., 2023), historical contextualization (Aviandy et al., 2025), value reflection (Putkonen et al., 2025), plurality sensitivity (Christopher & Revell, 2024), and learning transfer (Alotaibi, 2025). These five indicators are used to measure whether engagement in Tabot can turn into the ability to read meaning, not just the experience of attending a festival. In Islamic education, literacy like this helps students understand the relationship between the narrative of sacrifice, social solidarity, public ethics, and the manners of respecting differences (Putkonen et al., 2025; Christopher & Revell, 2024). Therefore, Tabot-based learning needs to be designed as a dialogue between local traditions and Islamic value frameworks that are open to critical questions.

Symbolic-cultural literacy is expected to strengthen da'wah resonance because audiences who are able to interpret symbols tend to capture moral messages more deeply and do not stop at the visual form of the procession (Bonacchi et al., 2023). The study of Islam as educational knowledge confirms that the quality of religious learning depends on the way teachers transform traditions and texts into

knowledge that can be interpreted responsibly (Christopher & Revell, 2024). Research on higher-order thinking in Islamic education shows that religious learning becomes more meaningful when students are invited to analyze, evaluate, and relate values to life problems (Alotaibi, 2025). This series of evidence introduces Hypothesis 3 as an examination of the role of symbolic-cultural literacy in deepening da'wah resonance.

H3: Symbolic-cultural literacy has a positive effect on the da'wah resonance of Tabot Bengkulu participants.

The ability to interpret symbols is also thought to encourage Islamic pedagogical engagement because learners can relate cultural experiences to classroom questions, discussions, and reflections (Putkonen et al., 2025). Dialogic pedagogy shows that learning engagement increases when students' experiences are used as material for meaningful conversations, not merely as additional illustrations (Barak et al., 2024). The quality of classroom dialogue is shaped by the willingness to ask questions, the exchange of reasons, and the management of common meaning so that the Tabot tradition can become pedagogical material if it is designed dialogically (Rapanta et al., 2023). This pedagogical link positions Hypothesis 4 as a test of the direct relationship between symbolic-cultural literacy and Islamic learning engagement.

H4: Symbolic-cultural literacy has a positive effect on the Islamic pedagogical engagement of Tabot Bengkulu participants.

4. The Resonance of Da'wah and Islamic Pedagogical Involvement

Islamic pedagogical engagement now needs to be read as a relationship among attention, dialogue, reflection, and willingness of students to connect religious knowledge with their social experiences (Alotaibi, 2025). Islamic pedagogical engagement is defined as the cognitive, affective, dialogic, and practical participation of students in understanding Islamic values through meaningful and responsible learning experiences (Putkonen et al., 2025). This definition shifts the focus from formal attendance in the classroom to the quality of students' encounters with Islamic values that they understand, discuss, and practice. Dialogical learning theory underpins the understanding that knowledge is formed through the exchange of reasons, responses, and co-construction of meaning, so that Tabot-based Islamic learning needs to open a space for directed interpretation (Barak et al., 2024). Indicators of Islamic pedagogical engagement include cognitive attention (Alotaibi, 2025), affective response (Putkonen et al., 2025), classroom dialogue (Barak et al., 2024), ethical reflection (Saada, 2021), and social practice (Biesta, 2022; Putkonen et al., 2025; Christopher & Revell, 2024). These indicators place Islamic education as a process that demands understanding, affective appreciation, dialogue, judgment, and action. Tabot can fill this space because its tradition presents

learning materials that are historical, aesthetic, social, and religious (Aviandy et al., 2025; Putkonen et al., 2025). However, Tabot can only be a powerful teaching material if its da'wah resonance is not sloganistic, but rather fosters critical questions about sacrifice, justice, solidarity, and public manners.

Da'wah resonance is expected to be a bridge to pedagogical engagement because messages that feel morally close are easier to process as a learning experience (Froh & Robinson, 2023b). Studies of Islamic education show that the relationship among tradition, students' existence, and learning is strengthened when religious values are not only explained, but also experienced and dialogued (Putkonen et al., 2025). Research on critical Islamic education confirms that religious learning requires space to connect normative values with social responsibility, not just the reproduction of knowledge (Saada, 2021). This connectedness makes Hypothesis 5 a test of the communicative force of da'wah resonance in driving Islamic pedagogical engagement.

H5: Da'wah resonance has a positive effect on the Islamic pedagogical engagement of Tabot Bengkulu participants.

The five hypotheses do not exhaust the complexity of Tabot, but provide an empirical map that can be tested together with qualitative data. Quantification provides direction on the strength of inter-construct relationships, while qualitative data provide context on how symbols, messages, and learning experiences are understood by actors. The research model is at the intersection of ritual communication, cultural da'wah, symbolic literacy, and experiential Islamic education. The relationship is visualized in a conceptual model before the method section to clarify the hypothesis structure to be empirically tested.

Figure 1 maps the conceptual relationship between ritual communication salience, symbolic-cultural literacy, da'wah resonance, and Islamic pedagogical engagement; each line is coded H1 to H5 according to the corresponding hypothesis that has been formulated.

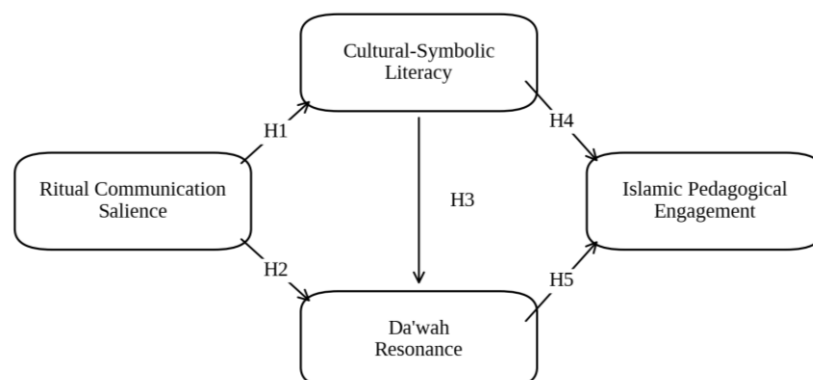


Fig 1. Conceptual model of research

Figure 1 places ritual communication as the starting point because the experience of the procession becomes a source of attention, affect, and initial orientation to the meaning of Tabot. Symbolic-cultural literacy is placed after ritual salience because the ability to interpret symbols is a requirement for visual-auditory experiences to transform into historical and ethical understanding. Da'wah resonance connects symbolic literacy with Islamic pedagogical engagement because messages that feel close, credible, and reflective are easier to bring to the classroom. The H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5 codes clarify the position of each relationship being tested. The model maintains a focus on core relationships without ruling out the possibility of other social factors outside the model. This clarity of structure helps the reader see that quantitative testing and qualitative interpretation work on the same construct. Thus, Figure 1 serves as a bridge between theoretical arguments, hypotheses, and empirical analysis strategies.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design because relationships among constructs needed to be tested quantitatively first, then clarified through qualitative interpretation of local actors' experiences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023; Thelwall & Nevill, 2021; Ahmed, 2024). The first stage was in the form of a survey of participants who had followed, watched, or interacted with Tabot Bengkulu content in the last two years (Aviandy et al., 2025; Larsson et al., 2024). The second stage consisted of interviews, observations, focus group discussions (FGDs), and visual-digital document analysis to explain why certain quantitative pathways were strong or weak. Thelwall and Nevill (2021) showed that interviews, case studies, focus groups, and ethnography remain important because qualitative data are able to capture contexts that are not adequately explained by numbers. This design was chosen because Tabot was a communicative and cultural phenomenon so it required a measure of relationship and depth of interpretation. Data integration was carried out in the interpretation phase through a joint display that brought together the results of PLS-SEM with qualitative themes (Thelwall & Nevill, 2021; Ahmed, 2024). This approach allowed the study to examine whether statistical relationships were in line with actors' narratives or opened up new tensions that needed to be explained. Thus, the method served not only as a technical procedure, but as a strategy for maintaining a balance between empirical precision and contextual depth.

The quantitative population of the study was Bengkulu residents and Tabot digital audiences who were at least 17 years old and had direct or indirect experience with the Tabot series. The sampling technique used purposive-accidental sampling because the formal sample framework of Tabot participants was not fully available and the population was spread across both physical and digital spaces. The number of respondents analyzed was 384 people after 17 responses were excluded due to incomplete answers, straight answer patterns, or an overly short completion time. The sufficiency of the sample was considered through the maximum number of arrows on the structural

model, the expected effect size, and the bootstrapping requirements of the PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2022; Guenther et al., 2025; Ringle et al., 2023). The qualitative section involved 37 participants who were recruited purposively taking into account their experience, social position, and ability to provide in-depth information about Tabot. Qualitative participants consisted of administrators or members of Tabot families, dai, Islamic Religious Education teachers, lecturers, the younger generation, cultural activists, and representatives of activity managers. Recruitment was stopped when the main themes had recurred and there was no new substantive information that changed the analytical category (Ahmed, 2024; Braun & Clarke, 2021). Table 1 presents a map of participants and data sources so that the relationship between data collection strategies and analysis needs is clear.

Table 1. The Participant Profiles, Data Sources, and Analytical Functions of Each Source in The Mixed-Methods Design.

Data source	Quantity	Involvement criteria	Analytical function
Participant surveys	384	Age ≥ 17 years; Have witnessed a Tabot procession or Tabot digital content	Testing the PLS-SEM model
In-depth interviews	27	Keluarga Kerukunan Tabot (KKT), dai, educators, cultural activists, youth, activity managers	Interpreting the message, legitimacy, and meaning of education
Focus group discussions	5 groups/32 participants	Youth, teachers, and cultural communities who actively follow Tabot	Examine consensus, differences, and collective language
Field observations	31 notes	Processions, cultural stages, educational spaces, and audience interaction	Interpreting symbolic performance, participation, and ritual atmosphere
Visual-digital documents	57 units	Posters, social media posts, short videos, booklets, and event news	Assessing public framing and message translation

Table 1 shows a data design that combines quantitative breadth and qualitative depth. The survey involved 384 respondents so that relationships among constructs could be tested through the PLS-SEM model with an adequate response base. Qualitative data were obtained from 27 in-depth interviews, 5 targeted group discussions involving 32 participants, 31 observational notes, and 57 visual-digital documents. This composition brings together the voices of the Tabot community, educators, dai, youth, activity managers, and public media trails. The source of visual-digital documents was important because Tabot not only took place in the procession space, but also circulated through social media and promotional materials. The data structure prevents quantitative

results from being read as a single answer independent of history and local actors. Qualitative data were used to explain why ritual salience, symbolic literacy, and da'wah resonance had a certain relationship. Thus, Table 1 emphasizes the balance between the scope of the respondents and the depth of interpretation.

The quantitative instrument was developed as a five-level reflective scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Guenther et al., 2025; Sarstedt et al., 2021). Items were arranged through conceptual adaptations of ritual communication literature, heritage values, digital religion, and dialogical Islamic education (Yan et al., 2024). The adaptation was carried out through three steps, namely indicator mapping, item writing according to the context of Tabot, and expert review involving two communication experts, two Islamic education experts, and one Bengkulu cultural expert. The content validity test yielded an Aiken index between .82 and .94, which indicated the items' conformity with the indicators (Ahmed, 2024; Guenther et al., 2025). A preliminary trial of 62 respondents showed a corrected item-total correlation from .48 to .76 and an initial Cronbach alpha from .81 to .88 (Sarstedt et al., 2021; Guenther et al., 2025). After diction improvements, the final instrument consisted of 20 items representing the four main constructs. Table 2 presents the blueprint of the quantitative instrument and shows that each indicator has sufficient items to represent the construct. The writing of indicators was made concise so that each indicator could be immediately accompanied by relevant citations.

Table 2 shows the blueprint of the quantitative instruments used to test the relationships among constructs in the PLS-SEM model.

Table 2. Blueprints of Quantitative Instruments

Construct	Cited indicators	Item code	Examples of item substance	Scale
Ritual communication salience	Co-presence (Yan et al., 2024); symbolic narrative (Hall, 2019; Zhu, 2024; Bonacchi et al., 2023); collective affect (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2021; Yan et al., 2024; Ireland et al., 2025); ritual repetition (Kolodziejska et al., 2023); public legibility (Bonacchi et al., 2023)	RCS1-RCS5	The power of the procession, the sound of the dol, and the symbol of Tabot in focusing on the moral message	1-5
Symbolic-cultural literacy	Comprehension of symbols (Hall, 2019; Zhu, 2024; Bonacchi et al., 2023); historical contextualization	CSL1-CSL5	Ability to interpret the Tabot symbol as Islamic history,	1-5

	(Aviandy et al., 2025); value reflection (Putkonen et al., 2025); plurality sensitivity (Christopher & Revell, 2024); learning transfer (Alotaibi, 2025)		values, and learning materials	
Da'wah resonance	Clarity of moral messages (Froh & Robinson, 2023a); cultural proximity (Aviandy et al., 2025); source credibility (Danko et al., 2025); madhhab sensitivity (Larsson et al., 2024); reflective invitation (Putkonen et al., 2025)	DR1-DR5	The proximity, feasibility, and mobility of Tabot's message as a cultural da'wah	1-5
Islamic pedagogical engagement	Cognitive attention (Alotaibi, 2025); affective response (Putkonen et al., 2025); classroom dialogue (Barak et al., 2024); ethical reflection (Saada, 2021); social practices (Biesta, 2022; Putkonen et al., 2025; Christopher & Revell, 2024)	IPE1-IPE5	Learning engagement, discussion, reflection, and social action after understanding Tabot	1-5

Table 2 shows that four constructs are operationalized through 20 reflective items with five indicators on each construct. Ritual communication salience includes co-presence, symbolic narrative, collective affect, ritual repetition, and public legibility as a measure of the intensity of the procession experience. Symbolic-cultural literacy focuses on the understanding of symbols, historical contextualization, value reflection, plurality sensibility, and learning transfer. Da'wah resonance assesses the clarity of moral messages, cultural proximity, credibility of sources, sensitivity of madhhab, and reflective invitations. Islamic pedagogical engagement measures cognitive attention, affective responses, classroom dialogue, ethical reflection, and social practice. Each indicator is formulated as a concise phrase so that references can be placed directly next to the indicator without piling up citations on a single set of ideas. This blueprint clarifies the relationship between theories, indicators, items, and statistical analysis. Thus, Table 2 becomes the operational basis for the evaluation of the measurement model and hypothesis testing.

The qualitative instrument was structured as a flexible semi-structured guideline for participants to describe their experiences, memories, and judgments about Tabot (Ahmed, 2024; Braun & Clarke, 2021). Interview questions were directed at the meaning of symbols, experiences of participating in

processions, perceptions of da'wah messages, possible integration into Islamic learning, and the tension among sacredness, tourism, and digitalization. Observation was carried out by recording the participants' interactions, symbolic forms, stage arrangements, audience responses, and moments when religious messages appeared or were even excluded. The analysis of visual-digital documents included the way texts, images, hashtags, short videos, and posters framed Tabot as a culture, da'wah, tourism, or regional identity. The trustworthiness of qualitative data was maintained through source triangulation, limited member reflection, audit trails, and inter-researcher code discussions (Ahmed, 2024). Credibility was strengthened by comparing interview claims with observations and documents, while dependability was maintained through records of analytical decisions (Stahl & King, 2020) (Ahmed, 2024; Braun & Clarke, 2021). Transferability was maintained by adequate contextual descriptions, not by claims of statistical generalization (Ahmed, 2024; Braun & Clarke, 2021). Table 3 maps a qualitative blueprint that systematically links focuses, indicators, data sources, and analytical outputs.

Table 3 presents a blueprint of qualitative instruments used to explore the meaning of Tabot as a feature of da'wah and Islamic education.

Table 3. Blueprints of Qualitative Instruments

Qualitative focus	Key indicators	Data source	Analysis output
The Meaning of the Symbol	Karbala narrative (Aviandy et al., 2025); dol (Yan et al., 2024); Tabot (Aviandy et al., 2025; Yan et al., 2024); symbolic tombs (Hall, 2019; Zhu, 2024; Bonacchi et al., 2023)	Interviews, observations, documents	Ritual message architecture theme
Da'wah resonance	Moral messages (Froh & Robinson, 2023a); cultural proximity (Aviandy et al., 2025); interpretive authority (Danko et al., 2025); madhhab sensitivity (Larsson et al., 2024)	Interviews, FGDs, documents	The theme of non-impositive cultural da'wah
Islamic Education	Teaching materials (Christopher & Revell, 2024); classroom dialogue (Barak et al., 2024); value reflection (Putkonen et al., 2025); learning experience (Biesta, 2022) (Putkonen et al., 2025; Christopher & Revell, 2024)	Teachers, lecturers, students, observation	Experiential pedagogy theme
Negotiation and risk	Commodification (Zhang et al., 2024); conflict of interpretation	KKT, government,	Theme of institutional tension

(Larsson et al., 2024); digital youth, media
simplification (Bonacchi et al., documents
2023); tourism interests (Xie et al.,
2025a)

Table 3 shows that the qualitative guidelines are directed at four complementary areas of meaning. The area of the meaning of the Tabot symbol traces the narrative of Karbala, dol, Tabot, procession, and symbolic tomb to keep the analysis close to the form of the rite. The area of da'wah resonance examines moral messages, cultural proximity, interpretive authority, and madhhab sensitivity as elements that determine the acceptance of messages. The area of Islamic education connects Tabot with teaching materials, classroom dialogue, reflection on values, and learning experiences. The area of negotiation and risk includes commodification, interpretation conflicts, digital simplification, and tourism interests as factors that can change the depth of meaning. This mapping makes the qualitative instrument not stop at a list of common questions. Each focus is directed at explaining quantitative constructs while also opening up the possibilities of themes that are not captured by scale. Thus, Table 3 strengthens the integration between qualitative research questions, data collection strategies, and thematic analysis.

Quantitative data were analyzed using PLS-SEM because the research model was predictively oriented, contained reflective constructs, and aimed to assess the strength of inter-construct relationships in complex social contexts (Ringle et al., 2023). The evaluation of the measurement model included outer loading, Cronbach alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted, and heterotrait-monotrait ratio (Sarstedt et al., 2021). The evaluation of the structural model included the path coefficient, bootstrapping t value of 5,000 subsamples, p-value, f-square, R-square, Q-square, and standardized root mean square residual (Hair et al., 2022; Guenther et al., 2025; Ringle et al., 2023). Items were retained if the loading was within an adequate range and the construct still met convergent reliability and validity (Guenther et al., 2025). Qualitative data were analyzed through repeated reading, initial coding, code merging, theme development, negative evidence checking, and thematic narrative writing. Data integration was carried out after the quantitative and qualitative results had been analyzed separately. Research ethics were maintained through participant consent, code anonymization, opt-out, and avoidance of questions that provoked sectarian conflict. All data were stored with limited access and participant quotes were displayed without personal identity.

RESULTS

1. Quantitative Results: Measurement Model and Structural Model

Descriptive analysis showed that participants rated all major constructs highly, with a mean of 4.08 to 4.21 on a scale of five. Ritual communication salience obtained the highest average, indicating

that the Tabot procession still had the power of collective attention and affection for respondents. Symbolic-cultural literacy was slightly lower, so attendance at the rite was not always followed by the ability to read symbols in depth. Da'wah resonance showed a high average, but the variation in answers indicated a difference in the level of acceptance of Tabot's moral message. Islamic pedagogical engagement was also high, especially on items related to the willingness to discuss and use Tabot as material for class reflection. This pattern supported the research's proposition that Tabot had a strong communicative capacity, but that capacity needed to be translated through symbolic literacy. Table 4 presents the results of the measurement model as a basis for checking the reliability and validity of the construct before the structural model is interpreted. The quality of the measurement was placed as an analytical prerequisite because relationships among constructs are only meaningful when the indicators are proven to be stable and valid. Table 4 presents a summary of the PLS-SEM measurement model for all reflective constructs.

Table 4. Results of the PLS-SEM Measurement Model Assessment for Reflective Constructs

Construct	Loading item	Alpha	CR	AVE	Highest HTMT
RCS	.742; .801; .823; .776; .814	.858	.894	.629	.684
CSL	.751; .786; .811; .829; .797	.865	.902	.647	.663
DR	.768; .832; .846; .802; .789	.875	.907	.662	.684
IPE	.741; .793; .821; .836; .805	.864	.900	.642	.651

Table 4 shows that the measurement model had adequate statistical quality for all reflective constructs. Item loadings were in the range of .741 to .846, so each item contributed strongly to its construct. The alpha value ranged from .858 to .875, while composite reliability ranged between .894 and .907. The average variance extracted ranged from .629 to .662, which indicates adequate convergent validity. The highest HTMT of .684 indicated that discriminant validity among constructs was maintained. The da'wah resonance construct had the highest AVE, which was .662, so its items were the most consistent in representing the closeness and strength of the da'wah message. The ritual communication salience construct had the highest loading on RCS3, at .823, which related to the power of the procession symbol in concentrating attention on the moral message. Thus, Table 4 provides a sufficiently solid basis for the measurement model to proceed to the structural model.

The structural model showed that all hypotheses were statistically supported at a significance level of $p < .001$. The strongest path emerged in the influence of ritual communication salience on symbolic-cultural literacy, which means that ritual experience became the entry point to the ability to read symbols. The da'wah resonance path to Islamic pedagogical engagement was also strong, so that the quality of receiving moral messages was an important factor in driving learning. The R-square of symbolic-cultural literacy, .37, indicated a moderate explanatory power, while the R-square of da'wah resonance, .45, indicated that ritual salience and symbolic literacy together explained almost half of the variation in da'wah resonance. The R-square of Islamic pedagogical engagement, .49, showed that symbolic literacy and da'wah resonance had a strong contribution to learning engagement. An SRMR value of .058 indicated an acceptable model fit for predictive purposes. Table 5 presents the results of the hypothesis test, effect size, and core predictive indicators. The numbers in the table were the basis for integration with the qualitative findings in the next section.

Table 5. Results of the PLS-SEM Structural Model Assessment and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Pathway	β	t	P	f ²	Verdict
H1	RCS -> CSL	.61	14.83	<.001	.59	Supported
H2	RCS -> DR	.29	5.74	<.001	.12	Supported
H3	CSL -> DR	.42	8.19	<.001	.27	Supported
H4	CSL -> IPE	.24	4.67	<.001	.09	Supported
H5	DR -> IPE	.52	10.91	<.001	.36	Supported

Table 5 shows that all hypotheses were supported by a significance of $p < .001$ and a positive path coefficient. H1 had the largest coefficient, which was $\beta = .61$ with $t = 14.83$, so that ritual communication salience was the main predictor of symbolic-cultural literacy. H5 also showed a strong relationship with $\beta = .52$ and $t = 10.91$, which meant that da'wah resonance strongly determined Islamic pedagogical engagement. H3 had a value of $\beta = .42$ and confirmed that symbolic-cultural literacy deepened the acceptance of da'wah messages. H2 remained significant with $\beta = .29$, although the effect size was smaller than that of H1 and H5. H4 was significant with $\beta = .24$ and $f^2 = .09$, so symbolic-cultural literacy made a moderate direct contribution to Islamic pedagogical engagement. The combination of these numbers showed that Tabot was most effective as a source of learning when ritual experiences were processed into symbolic literacy and then into da'wah resonance. Thus, Table 5 provides a coherent quantitative basis for reading alongside qualitative findings.

Figure 2 presents a PLS-SEM result model with a visual pattern that is parallel to Figure 1, but the hypothesis code is replaced by a path coefficient and each construct is equipped with five outer loading values.

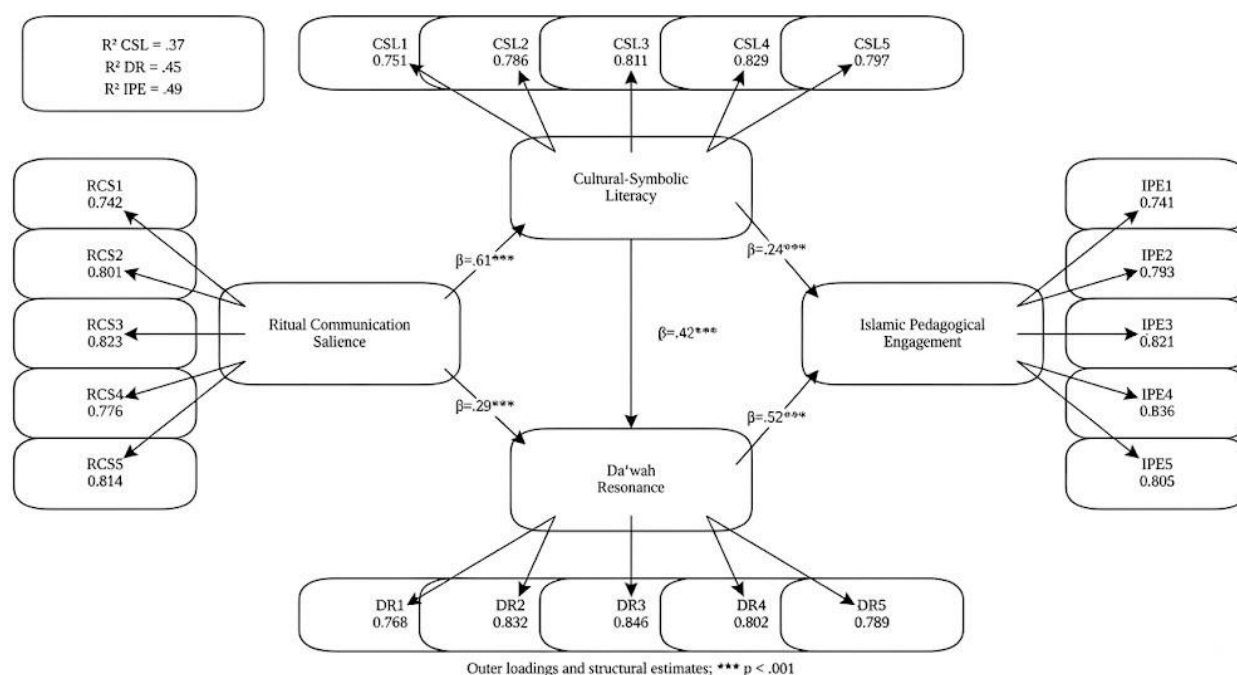


Fig 2. Outer loading model and path coefficients

Figure 2 shows that all items had an outer loading above .741 and all path coefficients moved in a positive direction. The RCS path to CSL had a value of $\beta = .61$, which confirms the dominant position of ritual experiences in building symbolic-cultural literacy. The DR path to IPE had a value of $\beta = .52$, so that a close and meaningful da'wah message was strongly related to Islamic pedagogical engagement. The CSL path to DR had a value of $\beta = .42$ and showed that the ability to interpret symbols deepened the acceptance of da'wah messages. The highest loading was found for DR3, at .846, while the lowest loading was at IPE1 at .741 and still exceeded the reflective measurement feasibility limit. The placement of five items around each construct showed that all variables were consistently measured by an equal number of items. Thus, Figure 2 complements Table 4 and Table 5 because it combines the quality of measurements as well as the strength of structural relationships in a single visual.

2. Qualitative Results: Tabot as an Architecture of Da'wah Message and Islamic Education

The qualitative analysis yielded four main themes that explained the strong patterns in the structural model. The ritual-message architecture theme suggested that the symbols, dol sounds, processions, and memories of Karbala organized collective attention. The theme of cultural da'wah showed that Tabot's message worked through moral closeness and cultural language, not through

coercive communicative pressure. The theme of experiential pedagogy emphasized that Tabot became a learning resource when teachers and dai helped students interpret symbols historically, ethically, and dialogically. The theme of negotiation of meaning showed the tension among sacredness, tourism, digitalization, and sectarian sensitivity. Table 6 summarizes the relationships among themes, subthemes, dominant sources, and analytical meaning. The mapping made it clear that qualitative findings did not stand as additional illustrations, but as social explanations for statistical relationships. Thus, the qualitative results provided interpretive depth to the way Tabot worked as a medium of da'wah and Islamic education. Table 6 summarizes the themes, subthemes, dominant data sources, and analytical meanings of the qualitative results.

Table 6. Thematic Mapping of Qualitative Findings: Themes, Subthemes, Data Sources, and Analytical Meanings

Theme	Subtheme	Dominant source	Analytical meaning
Ritual message architecture	Symbols, dol sounds, processions and memories of Karbala	KKT interviews; Procession Observation	Ritual salience arises because the visual-auditory element binds collective attention
Cultural da'wah	Moral invitation, public manners, and solidarity	Dai; event documents; Youth FGD	Da'wah resonance is strong when the message does not feel patronizing
Experiential pedagogy	Local teaching materials, classroom dialogue, value reflection	Islamic Religious Education teachers; lecturers; Students	Pedagogical engagement increases when symbols are translated into learning questions
Negotiation of meaning	Tourism, digitalization, and sectarian sensitivity	Government; KKT; social media content	Tabot needs to be managed so that it is not reduced to a spectacle

Table 6 shows that the four themes moved from the symbolic dimension to the institutional dimension. The theme of message architecture explained the salient power of ritual communication as symbols, sounds, and procession spaces formed a collective attention. The theme of cultural da'wah explains that da'wah resonance does not only depend on the content of the message, but also on the way the message was present through traditions that are close to the citizens. The theme of experiential pedagogy showed that symbolic literacy was related to pedagogical engagement when symbols were translated into learning questions. The theme of negotiation of meaning added a critical dimension because Tabot could be understood as a rite, festival, regional identity, or tourism agenda.

The four themes showed that Tabot worked through the language of symbols, sounds, space, history, and social authority. The inter-thematic linkage explained why the results of PLS-SEM needed to be read together with local actors' experiences. Thus, Table 6 becomes an interpretive map that connects model statistics with the field narrative.

a. Ritual message architecture

The architectural theme of the ritual message shows that the meaning of Tabot emerged from the connection between the symbols staged, the actors interpreting them, and the audience experiencing the procession. Its communicative power does not rest on a single element, but on the confluence of dol sounds, the form of the Tabot, the order of rites, the street space, and social authority. This pattern explains why the quantitative results placed ritual salience as a very powerful path to symbolic-cultural literacy. Some participants saw Tabot as a source of Islamic learning, while others saw it primarily as a regional festival. The difference was not an anomaly, but a sign that Tabot was an arena of meaning that continued to be negotiated. In the context of da'wah and education, this kind of arena demands a communication strategy that maintains theological depth, cultural language, and public participation. The following data were selected from interviews, observations, and documents to keep the variety of sources legible. Each excerpt shows the repetitive patterns as well as the tensions that are most relevant to the research question.

Interviews with Tabot's administrators placed the procession as a message structure that could not be separated from the sequence of rites.

When the dol has sounded and the Tabot starts moving, people do not only see the decorations. They remember the story of sacrifice, remember their families, and feel part of Bengkulu. (W-KKT-04)

The data confirmed that sound and motion functioned as triggers for collective memory, not just a procession accessory.

An interview with a young man showed how visual elements directed attention to meanings that were not necessarily received through ordinary lectures.

I originally came because it was crowded, but after explaining the meaning of Tabot and Karbala, I felt that the symbols were like a lesson in courage and loyalty. (W-PMD-09)

This young man's statement marked a shift from visual appeal to the early ability to read symbols religiously and historically.

Observation notes on the night of the procession showed symbolic order in public spaces.

When the dol is played, the crowd moves to the beat; children, teenagers, and the elderly focus their gaze on the slow-moving Tabot in the middle of the road. (O-12)

The observational record reinforces the finding that co-presence and collective affection are formed through the rhythm of shared space.

Other observation records captured the encounter between ritual and residents' spontaneous explanations.

An old man explained to two teenagers that the Tabot was not just an ornamental tower, but a sign of memory of the sorrow and steadfastness of the Prophet's family. (O-18)

These data indicate that informal education can emerge spontaneously when older residents explain the meaning of symbols to the younger generation.

Visual documents in the form of activity posters showed an emphasis on regional symbols and identities.

The official poster placed the image of a Tabot at the center of the composition, while the small text mentioned cultural heritage and Muharram as the time marker of the event. (D-07)

The document findings showed the dominance of visual identity that was not always balanced by an adequate explanation of values.

The short video document showed how the symbol was circulated in the language of social media.

The 32-second video features dol sounds, processions, and cheers from the audience, but the text narration only mentions the festivities. (D-21)

This video data confirmed the opportunity to expand the message as well as the risk of narrowing the meaning when social media only highlighted the festivities.

b. Cultural da'wah

The theme of cultural da'wah showed that Tabot gained communicative power when its moral message was conveyed through a familiar cultural language, not patronizing, and still maintaining theological sensitivity. This interpretation explained why da'wah resonance was not only determined by the existence of the symbol, but also by the way it was described and by whom it was interpreted. Local actors tended to accept Tabot as a gateway to da'wah when the values highlighted are patience, courage, loyalty, solidarity, and public manners. However, that resonance can be weakened when historical explanations and moral messages are sidelined by entertainment or tourism promotions. Qualitative data placed dai, teachers, guides, booklets, and social media uploads as both actors and communication media. The involvement of many actors shows that cultural da'wah requires narrative coordination, not just the repetition of events. Therefore, Tabot becomes effective as a da'wah when cultural language works together with historical clarification and madhhab prudence. The following excerpt shows how the da'wah message is received, enriched, or even narrowed in the practice of public communication.

Interviews with local dai emphasized that Tabot can be da'wah when moral messages are conveyed in language that does not divide residents.

I see that Tabot can be a door to da'wah if what is taken is the value of patience, faithfulness, and courage to defend the truth, not the debate of the sect. (W-DI-03)

The statement shows a da'wah strategy that emphasizes universal moral values without erasing theological sensitivity.

Interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers showed how Tabot was used as a local example.

If students learn Muharram only from books, they quickly forget. But when the lesson is connected to Tabot, they have images, sounds, and experiences to talk about. (W-GPAI-06)

This teacher's data explained why da'wah resonance could move toward learning engagement when tradition was associated with student experiences.

Observations in the cultural explanation session showed the language of da'wah that worked through reflective narratives.

The guide mentioned Tabot as an invitation to remember sacrifice and maintain brotherhood, and then some visitors nodded while recording the explanation. (O-22)

These observation records show that the da'wah message is received more strongly when religious values are linked to a close social narrative.

Observations in the stage area showed that da'wah could be weakened when the moral message was defeated by entertainment.

In the night sessions, the sound of popular music was more dominant than the explanation of Tabot's meaning, and some visitors left the area before the historical narrative was complete. (O-27)

This stage data marks a communication condition that can weaken da'wah resonance when entertainment shifts the historical narrative.

The activity booklet document provided a more educational example of framing.

The booklet wrote that Tabot contained lessons about sacrifice, solidarity, and respect for the Prophet's family. (D-11)

The booklet document provides initial material that can be developed into a more complete cultural da'wah tool.

Social media uploaded documents showed the form of da'wah that was still short and visual.

The Instagram post featured the sentence Let's preserve Tabot's legacy with morals and brotherhood, but did not explain its historical context. (D-34)

The upload shows that digital messages need narrative context so that they do not stop as short slogans.

c. Experiential pedagogy

The theme of experiential pedagogy showed that Tabot became a source of learning when cultural experiences were processed into questions, discussions, reflection on values, and directed social practices. This interpretation clarifies why the relationship between symbolic literacy and pedagogical engagement is not enough to be built through attendance at the procession. Teachers and

lecturers needed to turn the Tabot symbol into a learning problem that allowed students to weigh history, Islamic values, ethics of difference, and the risk of commodification. Student data showed that local experiences made lessons easier to imagine and closer to everyday life. Classroom observations show that digital content can be an entry point for dialogue if teachers direct it critically. The learning documents also showed that Tabot can be placed in the material of local Islamic history, tolerance, and social morals. Thus, experiential pedagogy does not stop at cultural visits, but moves toward measurable symbolic literacy. The following excerpt illustrates how local experiences translate into learning engagement.

Interviews with Islamic education lecturers emphasized that Tabot can be a teaching material if teachers prepare reflective questions.

The important thing is not to get students to watch Tabot only, but to ask them questions: what value is visible, who interprets it, and what are the risks. (W-DPAI-02)

This lecturer's statement emphasized the need for a critical, dialogical, and pedagogical design that extends beyond watching the procession.

Interviews with students showed that local experiences could spark a livelier understanding.

I understand better when the lessons are related to the events I saw myself, because I can imagine the atmosphere. (W-SIS-07)

The student data reinforced the link between local experiences, symbolic literacy, and more vibrant learning engagement.

Observations of class discussions showed how teachers turned Tabot into learning questions.

The teacher asked students to distinguish among cultural symbols, Islamic values, and tourist interests; the discussion came to life when students gave examples from Tabot's TikTok upload. (O-KLS-03)

This class note showed that students' digital experiences can be used as an entrance to pedagogical dialogue.

Observation of the study group showed an ethical reflection.

One group wrote that Tabot taught courage, but they also asked how to keep traditions from offending other groups. (O-KLS-05)

The study group data showed the emergence of plurality reasoning when students associated tradition with the ethics of difference.

The lesson plan document displayed curriculum integration opportunities.

The teacher's learning design placed Tabot as a case study on local Islamic history, tolerance, and social morals. (D-42)

The learning plan shows a concrete form of Tabot's integration into the classroom without letting go of the historical context and social morals.

The student worksheet document showed reflection items that could develop symbolic literacy.

The worksheet asked students to write down the meanings of dol, procession, and moral messages that could be applied in school. (D-45)

The worksheet demonstrates that symbolic literacy indicators can be translated into measurable learning activities.

Negotiation of meaning

The theme of negotiation of meaning showed that Tabot did not operate within a single interpretive space because it was present at the same time as a rite, regional identity, tourist calendar, digital content, and da'wah material. This pattern is important to explain why strong ritual salience does not automatically guarantee the depth of symbolic literacy. Some actors emphasized the value of prayer, grief, and history; other actors emphasized the excitement, tourist attraction, and visual image. Such tension should not be read as a failure of tradition, but as a communication situation that needs to be managed with a curation of meaning. The sensitivity of the madhhab also emerged as an area that demanded careful language so that Tabot was not understood narrowly. Observational data showed that ethical corrections often took place informally among citizens. Promotional documents and social media comments showed that the public still needed richer explanations. The following excerpt shows how preservation, tourism, digitalization, and da'wah negotiate with each other in Tabot's social space.

Interviews with cultural activists revealed the tension between preservation and the tourism stage.

If Tabot is too pursued as a tourist event, people can forget that there is prayer, history, and sorrow in it. (W-BDY-05)

This statement by cultural activists marked the risk of commodification that needs to be controlled through the curation of meaning and design of public communication.

Interviews with the event-management representatives emphasized the need for sensitive language.

We have to explain Tabot as the culture of Bengkulu and the moral values of Islam, but we are still careful because people have different interpretations of the madhhab. (W-PGL-02)

The manager's statement showed that cultural da'wah requires communication diplomacy in a diverse interpretation space.

Observation of tourist areas showed how religious meaning could compete with visual consumption.

Many visitors took pictures with the Tabot, but few read the explanation board placed on the side of the stage. (O-30)

This observation note explained why symbolic literacy needs to be designed consciously, not considered to emerge automatically from the tourist experience.

Observations in residents' conversations showed an informal correction of meaning.

A mother reprimanded her son not to ride the Tabot property because he was considered disrespectful to the event symbol. (O-31)

The interaction of these citizens showed that the community maintained the ethical boundaries of tradition through daily social correction.

Government promotional documents highlighted aspects of the tourist calendar.

The promotional material mentioned Tabot as the flagship agenda, but the explanation of history and Islamic values only appeared in one short paragraph. (D-52)

This promotional document showed the dominance of tourism framing over educational framing that should explain the value of history and Islam.

Social media comment documents showed a debate of public perception.

Some comments praised the festivities of Tabot, while others asked for an explanation so that the tradition would not be misunderstood as a practice of a particular sect. (D-56)

The digital commentary showed the need for information moderation based on public literacy so that Tabot is not misunderstood narrowly.

d. Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

Data integration showed that quantitative and qualitative results reinforced each other, especially on the path from ritual communication salience to symbolic-cultural literacy. The coefficient $\beta = .61$ in H1 was qualitatively explained through data on the sound of the dol, procession movement, the form of the Tabot, and the regularity of the space that focused the collective attention. The da'wah resonance path to Islamic pedagogical engagement of $\beta = .52$ was clarified by teacher and student data stating that the value of Tabot was easier to understand when it was associated with local experience. The CSL path to DR of $\beta = .42$ suggested that symbolic literacy deepened the acceptance of moral messages, and interview data showed that historical explanations were an important element in the process. On the other hand, the smaller H4 pathway, i.e. $\beta = .24$, indicates that symbolic literacy is not enough to become learning engagement without relevant da'wah resonance. The findings on the dominance of tourism promotions and short videos explained why some audiences understood Tabot visually but had not yet achieved value reflection. Table 7 presents a joint display that brings together the main numbers of PLS-SEM with qualitative themes. Thus, data integration confirms that the statistical power of the model gains a social foothold through local actors' experiences.

Table 7 presents a joint display that brings together the findings of PLS-SEM with qualitative themes.

Table 7. Joint Display of PLS-SEM Findings and Qualitative Themes: An Integrated Explanation of Tabot's Da'wah and Pedagogical Processes

Quantitative findings	Related themes	qualitative	Integrative explanation	Implications
H1 $\beta=.61$; RCS -> CSL	Ritual architecture	message	Symbols, dol sounds, and processions focus attention and open up symbolic interpretations	Da'wah needs to start from the explanation of symbols, not just lectures
H3 $\beta=.42$; CSL -> DR	Cultural da'wah		Symbol literacy makes the message of sacrifice, courage, and solidarity more acceptable	Educators need to provide historical and ethical narratives
H5 $\beta=.52$; DR -> IPE	Experiential pedagogy		Culturally close da'wah message encourages class discussion and reflection on values	Tabot can be a dialogical local teaching material
Lower risk $\beta=.24$	H4 Negotiation of meaning		Symbol literacy is not enough if tourism framing trumps educational messages	Need for information curation and critical learning design

Table 7 shows that the strength of H1 was supported by qualitative evidence of symbols, dol sounds, and processions that bound collective attention. H3 was explained by the ability of symbolic literacy to transform the procession into a more acceptable message of sacrifice, courage, and solidarity. H5 showed that da'wah resonance was the most decisive pedagogical path because culturally close messages encouraged class discussion and reflection. The smaller H4 signaled that symbolic literacy needed to be accompanied by relevant da'wah communication in order to turn into learning engagement. Qualitative data on tourism promotions and short-form uploads explained why literacy did not always result in deep learning. The integrative implication was that da'wah and Tabot-based education did not simply display symbols, but had to include explanations of history, ethics, and plurality of interpretations. The numbers $\beta = .61$, $\beta = .42$, $\beta = .52$, and $\beta = .24$ showed a pedagogical sequence that moved from ritual experience to literacy, resonance, and engagement. Thus, Table 7 shows the consistency between the statistical model and the field narrative.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to examine the influence of ritual communication salience, symbolic-cultural literacy, and da'wah resonance on Islamic pedagogical engagement and to interpret the meaning of Tabot as a feature of da'wah communication and Islamic education. The first finding showed that ritual communication salience is a strong predictor of symbolic-cultural literacy. These findings are in line with studies of ritualized experience that place rituals as shared experiences that activate attention, affection, and social attachment. Yan et al. (2024) affirmed that heritage rites can generate engagement when participants experience symbolic energy and co-presence. Ireland et al. (2025) also showed that everyday heritage works through practices that are close to community experiences.

Bonacchi et al. (2023) showed that heritage values become legible when researchers and communities pay attention to the visibility and invisibility of values. Aviandy et al. (2025) corroborated the Tabot context by showing the existence of a hidden framing that makes this tradition never socially neutral. Giliberto and Labadi (2021) added that heritage has development potential when managed holistically and participatively. The alignment with the literature confirms that ritual experiences can be the entry point to literacy, but literacy still requires an adequate explanatory narrative.

A contrasting side of these findings emerges when compared to studies that emphasize the risks of commodification, modernization, and alienation in the management of intangible heritage. Zhang et al. (2024) showed that heritage actors can experience alienation when traditional values are separated from tourism performance. Xie et al. (2025a) emphasized that fashion heritage communication is capable of expanding the market, but popular logic can change the way the public reads the value of tradition. Li et al. (2025) showed that the modernization of performance heritage attracts the younger generation if innovation remains legible as part of the tradition. Xie et al. (2025b) showed that fashioning heritage requires a balance between innovation, symbolic continuity, and cultural credibility. The difference in this research lies in the context of Tabot, which is not only facing the commodification of tourism, but also confronting the sensitivity of Islamic narratives and the position of the madhhab. Therefore, high salience of rituals cannot be automatically interpreted as the preservation of meaning, because a crowded procession can still lose depth if the narrative of da'wah and education is not curated. These contextual reasons explain why symbolic literacy is a key variable in the model, rather than simply a side effect of festival engagement.

The second finding suggested that symbolic-cultural literacy strengthened da'wah resonance and contributed directly to Islamic pedagogical engagement. Christopher and Revell (2024) emphasized that Islamic teaching requires the management of Islam as educational knowledge that is not simplified into stereotypes or lists of facts. Putkonen et al. (2025) showed that Islamic education needs to navigate the relationship among tradition, existence, and educational goals. Alotaibi (2025) showed that Islamic education teachers play an important role in developing higher-level thinking skills. Barak et al. (2024) emphasized that dialogical pedagogy develops when teachers and students construct meaning interactively. Rapanta et al. (2023) corroborated that the quality of classroom dialogue is influenced by reason, response, and management of shared meaning. This similarity shows that Tabot can be a powerful teaching material if its symbols are transformed into a learning problem, not just a cultural information material. Thus, symbolic-cultural literacy becomes a conceptual mediator that connects local experiences with critical and reflective Islamic learning.

However, the results of this study are not entirely the same as some of the literature that emphasizes religious learning as the formation of formal knowledge in the classroom. Saada (2021) places critical Islamic education in the framework of more explicit normative and civic reflection. Biesta (2022), Putkonen et al. (2025), and Christopher and Revell (2024) emphasize students' encounter with the world as the basis of education that does not always have to come from local ritual

traditions. Stahl and King (2020) paid attention to the clarity of trustworthiness criteria, while this study adds the need for cultural sensitivity to educational interpretation. Creswell and Plano Clark (2023) emphasized method integration as a design strategy, while Tabot's context shows that integration is also a matter of interpretation ethics. This difference arises because Tabot does not operate in formal classrooms only, but in street spaces, families, social media, tourism calendars, and collective memories. Therefore, Tabot-based Islamic education needs to be understood as a cross-spatial pedagogy that requires teachers, dai, cultural communities, and information curators. This explains why the direct path of symbolic literacy to pedagogical engagement is smaller than the resonant path of da'wah to pedagogical engagement.

The third finding showed that da'wah resonance was the strongest predictor of Islamic pedagogical engagement. Froh and Robinson (2023a) developed a model of digital religious communication that shows the relationship among communication, religious meaning, and social resilience. Froh and Robinson (2023b) reinforced the model empirically by showing that religious expression in public communication can facilitate social responses. Danko et al. (2025) showed that the legitimacy of religious media is determined by negotiations between institutional norms and communication practices. Kolodziejska et al. (2023) asserted that religious communities can occupy new media while bringing in old conventions. Campbell and Tsuria (2021) (Danko et al., 2025; Kolodziejska et al., 2023) placed religious practices within networks of media, materiality, authority, and community. The similarities with these studies show that Tabot's da'wah works when its moral message is considered legitimate, close, and relevant by the audience. In this context, da'wah resonance is not only an emotional effect, but a communication process that enables Islamic values to be discussed in the local language (Froh & Robinson, 2023b; Putkonen et al., 2025).

On the other hand, these findings differ from digital religion studies that focus more on online platforms and algorithmic interactions. Larsson et al. (2024) showed the breadth of Muslim studies and social media focusing on the online Islamic environment. Neubaum and Oeldorf-Hirsch (2023) (Larsson et al., 2024; Danko et al., 2025) emphasize that algorithmic awareness influences the attitudes and behaviors of social media users. Johnson et al. (2023) showed that religious minority youth form self-presentation through social media. Schmuck et al. (2022) showed the risk of victimization of hate speech for young people in the digital space. This difference in research arises because Tabot shows the trajectory of communication that begins with physical rites and is then circulated to the digital space, not the other way around (Aviandy et al., 2025; Larsson et al., 2024). This makes the da'wah strategy not only built through platform optimization, but must pay attention to the origin of symbols, community authority, and the ethics of representation. In other words, social media can expand Tabot's reach, but da'wah resonance remains highly dependent on the depth of the narrative that lives in the community.

The novelty of this research lies in the formulation of a communication-pedagogical model that connects ritual salience, symbolic-cultural literacy, da'wah resonance, and Islamic pedagogical

engagement in the context of Tabot Bengkulu. Different from heritage studies that emphasize tourism, this study places living heritage as a medium of da'wah and Islamic education that is tested quantitatively and explained qualitatively. Different from the study of digital da'wah centered on platforms, this study shows that the physical ritual space can be a center for message production that then moves to the digital space. In contrast to Islamic education studies that focus a lot on formal classes, this study shows that local cultural experiences can be learning materials when equipped with symbolic literacy. The theoretical implication is that da'wah communication needs to be understood as a symbolic mediation work that connects rites, identity, and learning. The practical implication is that local governments, the Tabot community, dai, and educators need to develop interpretive materials that explain the Tabot symbol historically, ethically, and sensitively to differences. The pedagogical implication is that Islamic Religious Education teachers can use Tabot as a case study to discuss Muharram, sacrifice, social morals, tolerance, and cultural literacy. The limitations of the research lie in the cross-sectional design, the specific context of Bengkulu, and digital documents that are still limited to public materials, so future research needs to use longitudinal designs, longer digital ethnography, and comparisons with similar traditions in other regions.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Bengkulu Tabot culture has strong potential as a medium for da'wah communication and Islamic education because its ritual salience builds symbolic-cultural literacy, strengthens da'wah resonance, and encourages Islamic pedagogical engagement. The quantitative research question is answered through five pathways, all of which are supported at $p < .001$, with the strongest association being ritual communication salience toward symbolic-cultural literacy ($\beta = .61$; $t = 14.83$) and da'wah resonance toward Islamic pedagogical engagement ($\beta = .52$; $t = 10.91$). Symbolic-cultural literacy also strengthens da'wah resonance ($\beta = .42$; $t = 8.19$), while the direct influence of symbolic-cultural literacy on Islamic pedagogical engagement is more moderate ($\beta = .24$; $t = 4.67$). The model explains 45% of the variation in da'wah resonance and 49% of the variation in Islamic pedagogical engagement, so Tabot is most meaningful for Islamic education when the procession is translated into understanding of symbols, moral messages, classroom dialogue, and ethical reflection. The qualitative research question is answered through four themes that position Tabot as an architecture of ritual messages, cultural da'wah, experiential pedagogy, and an arena of meaning negotiation. Qualitative data show that the sound of the dol, the form of Tabot, the procession, the Karbala narrative, and the participation of residents form a collective message that can be a source of da'wah when explained in sensitive and non-impositive language. The main risk that needs to be controlled is not just the loss of tradition, but the simplification of meaning when the promotion of tourism and digital content is more prominent than educational narratives. Future research needs to test this model longitudinally, compare Tabot with other Muharram traditions in

Indonesia, develop Tabot-based learning modules, and assess the effectiveness of cultural da'wah interventions in different age groups.

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