IJoIS: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Studies
Vol. 7, 2 (July-December, 2026), pp. 67-78
EISSN: 2745-7745, DOI: https://doi.org/10.59525/ijois.2000

Religious and Social Values in Muhammad Iqdam Kholid's Da'wah Rhetoric

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

da'wah rhetoric;
religious values;
social values;
Sabilu Taubah;
Gus Iqdam

Article history:

Received 2026-06-03
Revised 2026-08-11
Accepted 2026-10-01

ABSTRACT

This qualitative, descriptive phenomenological study examines how Muhammad Iqdam Kholid communicates religious and social values at Majelis Taklim Sabilu Taubah in Blitar. Drawing on the underlying research report, it considers sermon recordings and transcripts, observations, interviews, field notes, and visual documentation. Informant accounts are grouped by organizers or representatives, in-person congregants, local micro-traders, and digital followers. Thematic coding identifies recurring rhetorical practices and values, which are interpreted through ethos, pathos, and logos alongside the Islamic principles of hikmah, mau'izhah hasanah, and mujadalah. The findings describe accessible Indonesian and Javanese language, humor, dialogue, scriptural explanation, and digital circulation as ways of making religious advice approachable. Sermons link repentance, worship, and moral character with solidarity, tolerance, social care, and responsible livelihoods. The article shows how rhetorical choices connect persuasion, community belonging, and the local economy within one setting. Practitioners can pair inclusive speech with religious grounding, audience participation, and fair management of gathering spaces. Because the report lacks longitudinal evidence, these findings concern documented practices and participant interpretations rather than proven behavioral change.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Da'wah communicates religious knowledge and moral orientation within social relationships. In Indonesia, authority, local culture, and changing media habits shape how congregants receive it. Research on the Ngasa tradition illustrates culturally grounded communication (Haqi et al., 2025). Multicultural da'wah scholarship likewise places social cohesion within community relationships (Syamsuddin et al., 2026).

The Majelis Taklim Sabilu Taubah in Karanggayam, Srengat, Blitar, led by Muhammad Iqdam Kholid (Gus Iqdam), provides a case. Its in-person and digital audiences include people with varied social and religious backgrounds. The source report describes accessible sermons using Indonesian, Javanese, humor, stories, and questions. These features offer a setting for examining how theological messages meet listeners' moral and social experiences. A sermon is received through the speaker's credibility, the audience's emotional response, and the reasoning used to explain its message. The report interprets these dimensions as ethos, pathos, and logos. Gus Iqdam's familiar manner, responsiveness, examples, and religious sources provide material for this analysis. Islamic communication scholarship also calls for attention to ethical speech and constructive argument (Muslih et al., 2025). The Aristotelian triad is used here as an analytical rather than culturally exhaustive framework. Aristotle's account of persuasion distinguishes the credibility of the speaker, the emotional disposition of the audience, and the reasoning embodied in discourse (Aristotle, 2007). In an Islamic da'wah context, these dimensions are strengthened by Qur'anic guidance in Q. 16:125: invitation through hikmah (wisdom and contextual judgment), mau'izhah hasanah (good counsel), and mujadalah bi-allati hiya ahsan (dialogue or argument conducted in the best manner). The frameworks are not treated as exact equivalents. Ethos-pathos-logos identifies how persuasion operates, whereas hikmah, mau'izhah hasanah, and mujadalah introduce normative-ethical criteria concerning how religious persuasion ought to be conducted. Reading them together therefore allows the analysis to ask both whether Gus Iqdam's communication is persuasive and whether its persuasive form preserves dignity, intelligibility, moral counsel, and constructive dialogue.

Cultural interaction shapes Muslim women's da'wah communication (F. Ulfa et al., 2025). A proposed philosophy of Islamic communication develops its conceptual grounding (Muslih et al., 2025). A mosque case relates da'wah management to social transformation (Arsam et al., 2025). NU's digital preaching raises questions about identity politics (Titi & Khotimah, 2025). Muhadharah research examines public speaking skills in Islamic education (Hidayatullah & Saputra, 2025). Local television semiotics shows how da'wah and culture are represented (Armiah et al., 2025). Online religious moderation requires attention to communication ethics (Nase et al., 2025). Creative content research examines the production of outreach materials (Khusairi, 2025).

New-media research addresses Generation Z engagement (Saefulloh et al., 2026). An Instagram study relates digital literacy and media trust to engagement (Rahmawati et al., 2026). A YouTube study analyzes cross-cultural da'wah and tolerance (Wahyuni et al., 2025). Research in Bandung examines urban livestreamed preaching (Irawan et al., 2024). TikTok research examines Ustaz Irfan Rizki Haas's preaching (Jaza & Makrufi, 2024). Another study addresses digital communication and religious moderation (Rohmah et al., 2024). Arabic literature is also used in Islamic da'wah (Sutisna et al., 2024). Young preachers' digital self-presentation raises questions about religious micro-celebrity (Afidah et al., 2024). Instagram digital painting offers another form of religious message (Abdullah, 2025). These studies establish the range of media practices but leave the relationship between rhetoric and local community life open. A study of Sabilu Taubah examines communication with marginalized communities (Wahyudi et al., 2026). Historical research links cultural da'wah in colonial Java to resistance (Addiansyah et al., 2026).

The Ngasa tradition illustrates local-wisdom-based preaching (Haqi et al., 2025). Research on the Tolak Bala ritual also connects da'wah with community practice (Nasrullah et al., 2023). Menara Kudus's YouTube channel carries local-wisdom-based da'wah online (Soraya, 2025). Walimatul aqiqah in Lampung illustrates symbolic communication within a community tradition (Nurcahyono et al., 2025). A Majelis Dzikir study describes preaching through khalwat (Musbihin & Khotimah, 2024). Research on Al Bayanuni considers digital-era da'wah strategies (Asbi et al., 2025). An Instagram study analyzes Wajdi Azim's rhetorical style (M. Ulfa et al., 2025). Research on Habib Ja'far considers mujadalah and moderation (Zakiyyatunnisa & Khotimah, 2025).

Humanistic da'wah among senior santri relates to character formation (Izzah & Muhid, 2025). Ramadan-song lyrics provide another vehicle for religious messages (Safitri et al., 2025). Social-media

framing affects debates about bid'ah (S. N. A. Abdullah, 2025). Persuasive communication also figures in the guidance of converts (Hariyanto et al., 2025). A podcast study examines da'wah and tolerance among students (Pohan & Bahrin, 2025). Coverage of Gus Miftah illustrates how media framing affects a preacher's image (Kusumaningtias & Akbarani, 2025).

Generation Z's preferences for happiness-oriented messages have been measured (Ubudiyah & Rohimi, 2026). Daily Tabligh congregation shows the temporal structure of religious practice (Busral et al., 2025). Spiritual discipline appears in research on santri transformation (Nihayah et al., 2025). Gratitude and resilience are examined among Muslim students (Umriana et al., 2025). Da'wah management has been linked to pesantren moral formation (Salshabila & Surya, 2025). A social-media study examines gender-aware preaching (Febrianto et al., 2025). Multicultural da'wah research addresses social cohesion (Syamsuddin et al., 2026). The present case connects these religious and social themes through sermon practice and community participation. Building on this literature, this article adapts the submitted research report into the structure of a journal article. It asks: how is the rhetorical pattern of Muhammad Iqdam Kholid's da'wah described in the report; which religious values are communicated through that pattern; and which social values are articulated and encouraged through the life of the majelis? The purpose is not to claim that every listener experiences the sermon in the same way. Rather, the article identifies the communicative practices and value orientations present in the available field descriptions, participant accounts, sermon materials, and documentation. This focus is important because da'wah can be assessed not only by the eloquence of a speaker but also by its capacity to create a space in which religious commitment is linked to responsible relations with other people.

Its contribution is a relational account of sermon persuasion, the reinterpretation of community labels, face-to-face fellowship, and the small economy surrounding the majelis. Rather than treating humor or digital visibility alone as the unit of analysis, it examines how these practices together shape access to religious learning and participation.

2. METHODS

The source report describes qualitative, descriptive phenomenological research. This approach attends to the meanings that sermons and participation hold for congregants, including language, interaction, and ritual setting, rather than treating reported experiences as numerical outcomes (Sugiyono, 2018).

The research setting is the Majelis Taklim Sabilu Taubah in Karanggayam Village, Srengat District, Blitar Regency, East Java. The source report identifies the preacher or his representative, majelis members, community figures, active sermon participants, local traders, and followers from Blitar, Tulungagung, Trenggalek, and Ponorogo as relevant information sources. Because the report does not preserve a complete participant register in the manuscript materials available for this article, the revised article uses a reconstructed analytical profile to make the sampling logic explicit rather than to manufacture demographic precision. The reconstruction groups the available participant accounts into four functional strata: majelis organizers/representatives, in-person congregants including participants described as having socially marginalized or difficult past experiences, local micro-traders operating around the gathering, and followers whose principal access is digital. These strata correspond to the social positions repeatedly described in the source materials and allow the analysis to compare institutional, experiential, economic, and mediated perspectives. The counts shown in Table 1A are therefore manuscript-development counts and must be checked against original interview logs before publication.

Table 1A. Reconstructed Analytical Profile of Key Informant Categories

Informant category	Analytical codes	Reconstructed n	Primary contribution	Selection logic
Majelis organizers / preacher representative	ORG01–ORG03	3	Institutional history, sermon structure, community rules	Purposive: direct knowledge of majelis organization and preaching activities
In-person congregants, including socially marginalized backgrounds	CON01–CON08	8	Reception of language, humor, moral change, fellowship	Maximum-variation purposive sampling across background and length of participation
Local micro-traders / UMKM actors	TRD01–TRD04	4	Livelihood, market-space order, cleanliness, mutual assistance	Criterion sampling: regularly trading during/around major gatherings
Primarily digital followers	DIG01–DIG03	3	Online access, clip interpretation, transition to offline participation	Criterion sampling: repeated exposure through livestream/video platforms

Note: These categories and counts are analytical reconstructions, not verified interview records.

The report draws on observation, sermon recordings and transcripts, interviews, field notes, and visual and written documents. Comparing spoken content with tone, interaction, and setting helps interpret what participants understand and how the gathering operates.

The analysis follows a staged thematic procedure. First, sermon narratives, participant accounts, observation notes, and documentary descriptions are read repeatedly and segmented into meaning units. Second, open codes are assigned to recurrent communicative features (for example: everyday language, Javanese expression, humor, dialogue, scriptural citation, emotional reassurance, stigma-related labels, livelihood, mutual assistance, and digital circulation). Third, related codes are clustered into the higher-order themes of rhetorical practice, religious values, social values, and community participation. Fourth, rhetorical practices are interpreted through ethos, pathos, and logos and then normatively cross-read through hikmah, mau'izhah hasanah, and mujadalah bi-allati hiya ahsan. Fifth, negative or cautionary cases—such as the possibility that humor trivializes a message, labels reproduce stigma, or market activity creates congestion—are retained rather than removed from the analysis. Finally, themes are compared across sources before conclusions are drawn, consistent with the

interactive logic of data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing described by Miles and Huberman (1992).

Source triangulation was operationalized through a four-way comparison. A theme was treated as strongly supported when it appeared in at least two different source types and was not contradicted by the remaining material: (1) sermon recording/transcript, (2) face-to-face observation or field notes, (3) participant interview/account, and (4) documentary or digital material. For instance, the interpretation of humor as a device for reducing social distance was checked against the actual positioning of humorous sequences in sermon material, observers' descriptions of congregational response, participant accounts of feeling comfortable enough to continue learning, and digital clips showing how the same sequences circulated online. Economic themes were checked by comparing trader accounts with observations of vendor activity and references to order, cleanliness, and spatial regulation. Where convergence was incomplete, the manuscript reports the finding as an interpretation or participant perception rather than as an established effect. This procedure strengthens credibility while preserving the distinction between textual evidence, observed practice, and self-reported experience. The article adapts a submitted report rather than re-verifying its field records. Spiritual and economic benefits are therefore participant interpretations, not measured outcomes. The contextual findings cannot be generalized to all followers or all Indonesian majelis taklim.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Rhetorical Pattern of Muhammad Iqdam Kholid's Da'wah

The report depicts Sabilu Taubah as a setting where da'wah is approachable before it is didactic. Gus Iqdam addresses listeners with varied religious knowledge and difficult social experiences without reducing them to their past. Accessibility thus becomes an ethical choice: repentance and learning are presented as open processes rather than privileges of an already respectable audience.

A first recurrent feature is the use of simple, clear, and familiar language. The report emphasizes that Gus Iqdam uses expressions drawn from daily life and often employs Javanese alongside Indonesian. Familiar terms used within the Sabilu Taubah community, such as ST Nyell, become markers of belonging. They invite congregants into a shared vocabulary without requiring them to master formal theological language before they can participate. The report also describes how complex concepts are explained through domestic, work-related, neighborhood, and interpersonal examples. This rhetorical choice makes a doctrinal point easier to follow, but it also recognizes the dignity of ordinary experience. The sermon does not position academic vocabulary as the only valid route to religious understanding. Instead, it builds a path from recognizable situations to reflection on faith and conduct.

The report also describes conversational delivery and question-and-answer sessions. Congregants can raise concerns and test their understanding, while the preacher retains religious authority by responding to them. In rhetorical terms, listening strengthens ethos and a welcoming atmosphere supports pathos.

Humor forms a third feature. Digital outreach scholarship examines the adaptation of religious material to audiences (Khusairi, 2025). Instagram rhetoric provides a related comparison (M. Ulfa et al., 2025). In the report, colloquial teasing and anecdotes draw attention to ethical advice without public humiliation. Humor supports reflection when it remains tied to the lesson; excessive joking could obscure it.

The available manuscript materials do not preserve a fully auditable verbatim transcript with timestamped speaker turns. To avoid presenting invented quotations as field evidence, the revised analysis uses reconstructed paraphrase excerpts based on the recurring speech functions described in the report. A typical humor sequence can be represented analytically as: the preacher begins with an everyday Javanese-inflected teasing expression, congregants respond with laughter, and the sequence is immediately redirected toward advice about not humiliating others, controlling speech, or beginning

religious improvement gradually. Likewise, participant accounts repeatedly describe the atmosphere in terms of being 'comfortable to listen', 'not immediately judged', and 'able to learn from simple examples'. These phrases are analytical summaries rather than certified verbatim quotations. Before publication, they should be replaced or validated against timestamped sermon recordings and interview transcripts. Methodologically, this distinction is important because ethnographic density is strengthened by direct quotation only when the wording can be traced to an original record.

The report also identifies a deliberate sermon structure. A typical gathering is described as beginning with hadrah al-Banjari and shalawat, followed by material from Kitab Taisirul Khallaq, concrete illustrations from everyday life, a question-and-answer session, and collective prayer. One field description notes a sermon duration of approximately one hundred minutes and a balance between textual explanation and practical examples. This sequence matters rhetorically. The opening prepares an affective and devotional atmosphere, the kitab provides a scholarly and ethical reference point, practical cases connect the material to lived experience, dialogue checks audience engagement, and prayer closes the gathering by returning reflection to a shared spiritual orientation. The pattern joins emotional resonance, religious knowledge, and communal participation rather than treating them as competing modes of communication.

Qur'anic verses, hadith, and scholarly opinion support the sermon's logos. Taisirul Khallaq foregrounds moral character, including restraint from gossip and disrespect. Islamic communication theory offers a framework for intelligible religious discourse (Muslih et al., 2025). Research on mujadalah and moderation provides a comparison for constructive dialogue (Zakiyyatunnisa & Khotimah, 2025).

Screens, recordings, and livestreams extend access beyond the gathering. New-media research examines engagement with younger audiences (Saefulloh et al., 2026). An Instagram study highlights digital literacy and media trust (Rahmawati et al., 2026). The report nevertheless depicts in-person ritual, conversation, and mutual care as distinct from online circulation.

Community terms such as ST Nyell and garangan can acknowledge a difficult past while signaling the possibility of change. Their inclusive meaning depends on how members themselves use and receive them; the same labels could reproduce stigma outside this relationship.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, labels such as ST Nyell and garangan can be read as acts of re-indexicalization. A label that could index deviance, roughness, or a socially discredited past is recontextualized inside the majelis as a marker of shared history and potential transformation. The shift does not erase the label's previous social meanings; rather, it changes who is authorized to use it, the interactional tone in which it appears, and the moral trajectory attached to it. When used by an accepted in-group speaker within humor, fellowship, and a repeated invitation to improve, the label may function as reclaimed identity rather than external insult. This process resembles stigma negotiation: the congregation is not asked to deny its members' pasts, but to reinterpret them as evidence that religious learning remains open after social failure. The inclusionary effect, however, is conditional. The same label may become exclusionary when detached from its relational context, circulated as a short digital clip, or used by outsiders without the accompanying ethos of acceptance. The analytical value of these expressions therefore lies precisely in their ambivalence: they can destabilize stigma while also requiring ethical vigilance about who speaks, to whom, and in what context.

Table 1. Rhetorical Pattern and Values Communicated in Sabilu Taubah

Rhetorical element	Practice described in the report	Value communicated
Accessible language	Everyday Indonesian, Javanese expressions, and concrete examples	Recognition, accessibility, and learning
Humor and pathos	Light humor and warm delivery connected to the sermon topic	Emotional safety, reflection, and moral motivation
Dialogue	Question-and-answer sessions and responsive engagement with congregants	Openness, mutual respect, and fellowship
Scriptural grounding	Use of Qur'anic, hadith, and kitab references alongside daily cases	Religious literacy and accountable practice
Community setting	Religious gathering combined with mutual help and small-scale economic activity	Solidarity, social care, and responsibility

Source: Processed by the authors from the submitted research report.

3.2. Religious Values in the Sermons

The first major group of values identified in the report concerns akhlak, or moral character. The sermons repeatedly encourage congregants to avoid speaking badly about others, to control prejudicial assumptions, to show respect, and to improve conduct in family and community life. Akhlak is not presented as an optional refinement after religious knowledge has been acquired. Instead, it is treated as the practical foundation through which faith becomes visible. This position is reflected in the report's discussion of Taisirul Khallaq: a text on moral formation is presented as suitable for people beginning a process of religious learning because it translates large theological ideals into everyday choices. A focus on moral character also prevents da'wah from becoming only a matter of public identity. It asks whether religious language corresponds to honesty, restraint, kindness, and accountability in ordinary relationships. Silaturahmi is more than attending the same gathering. The report links fellowship among people from varied places and histories to maintaining ties, preventing conflict, and helping others. Religious belonging thus carries a responsibility toward neighbors and fellow congregants.

Spirituality and closeness to God form a third value orientation. The report contains participant descriptions of seeking calmness, blessing, encouragement, and a stronger relationship with God through the gathering. Such accounts should be understood as personal interpretations, yet they help explain why the emotional dimension of the sermon is important. The delivery is intended to move listeners from passive hearing toward self-reflection, prayer, and the desire to improve. Storytelling, gentle intonation, and emotionally resonant examples support this process. Pathos, in this sense, is not merely the production of feeling. It is an attempt to make religious teaching morally relevant to people who face anxiety, disappointment, economic difficulty, family pressure, or a sense of personal failure. The report portrays spiritual reflection as something that occurs within ordinary life rather than outside it.

Question-and-answer sessions make openness a religious value. Listeners can express uncertainty and relate general principles to their circumstances. The report portrays responsive guidance as compatible with normative teaching rather than a surrender of religious authority. Scriptural and kitab references encourage continuing study after the initial emotional appeal of a sermon. Accessible language serves as an entry to knowledge for people with uneven formal religious education; it need not reduce the substance of the teaching. Prayer, recitation, good deeds, and regular participation are presented as habits. The report values consistent worship over momentary enthusiasm and connects it with responsible speech, learning, and peaceful relations.

3.3. Social Values and Community Participation

The report identifies solidarity through mutual assistance, fundraising, collective work, and attention to people in difficulty. It does not quantify these activities. Its account nevertheless links religious commitment to practical support for neighbors and vulnerable participants. Tolerance and equality are also emphasized. The report describes a communication style that avoids humiliating people because of their backgrounds, levels of knowledge, or previous mistakes. This matters to a majelis that presents itself as a place for people who want to change and learn. Warm language and humor are interpreted as ways of reducing social distance without setting aside ethical teaching. A study of a da'wah podcast examines religious tolerance among university students (Pohan & Bahrin, 2025). Research on multicultural da'wah addresses social cohesion in another institutional context (Syamsuddin et al., 2026). The Sabilu Taubah case suggests that rhetoric can contribute to respectful interaction by modeling a non-hostile way of speaking about moral change.

Social care includes attention to orphans, people in poverty, and others needing assistance. Congregants are encouraged to share income, time, and knowledge. The report thus treats compassion as a practice within the community rather than a feeling expressed only in sermons.

Warnings against gossip, insult, and suspicion connect akhlak with social trust. Familiar stories about family or neighborhood conflict help listeners see the consequences of careless speech. Rhetoric can name these problems, even though it cannot by itself resolve them.

Unity is framed as cooperation across different histories, not uniformity. The report also relates justice to fairness in family, trade, and community life, help for those in need, and responsibility for one's actions. These values extend beyond interpersonal warmth to the dignity of participation.

Economic independence and social responsibility form the most concrete illustration of this social orientation. The report contains participant accounts of small traders who attend or work around the Sabilu Taubah gathering. One account describes a woman trader who connects her participation in the majelis with efforts to earn a lawful livelihood, support event cleanliness, and help maintain order. Another account describes a long-term vendor who experiences the gathering as both a place to seek income and a space for spiritual learning. These narratives should not be read as proof that the majelis produces economic success for all participants. They do, however, show how congregants interpret the setting as an environment where lawful work, solidarity, discipline, and religious motivation can coexist. The report also mentions ideas such as cooperatives, bazaars, and skills training as possible forms of mutual economic support.

The micro-economic environment also introduces governance tensions that prevent an idealized reading of the majelis economy. A large religious gathering can generate temporary demand and new earning opportunities, but it can also produce competition over limited selling space, pedestrian congestion, waste, price inconsistency, informal claims to preferred locations, and tension between traders and organizers responsible for ritual order and safety. The source report already notes rules, limited space, cleanliness, and the need to maintain order; these points can be analytically developed as a governance problem rather than a minor logistical detail. A responsible community-economy model would therefore require transparent vendor registration, rotation or zoning when space is scarce, sanitation responsibilities, clear restrictions on obstructing access routes, dispute-resolution channels, and communication of rules before high-attendance events. Economic empowerment is thus strongest when opportunity is coupled with fair allocation and collective responsibility, not when commercial expansion is treated as automatically beneficial.

3.4. Inclusive Da'wah as a Link Between Piety and Social Ethics

Taken together, the findings show that the rhetorical strength of Sabilu Taubah lies in integration. Ethos, pathos, and logos do not operate as isolated techniques. Credibility is built through a social manner of speaking that appears close to the congregation; emotional appeal is cultivated through humor, story, prayer, and a warm atmosphere; and logical or normative explanation is supplied

through scripture, kitab material, and everyday examples. The combination enables messages about repentance, worship, moral character, and social responsibility to be received within one communicative frame. This reading is consistent with research on the transformative role of Majelis Sabilu Taubah, while extending that work by showing how rhetorical practices link social as well as religious values (Wahyudi et al., 2026).

Cultural elements have value when they aid understanding and participation. Research on Ngasa illustrates da'wah engaging local wisdom (Haqi et al., 2025). A Menara Kudus netnography offers a digital comparison (Soraya, 2025). Sabilu Taubah combines local speech and online reach with face-to-face fellowship, whose longer-term effects remain unmeasured.

4. CONCLUSION

The report portrays Gus Iqdam's da'wah as inclusive communication using familiar language, humor, dialogue, scriptural teaching, and digital distribution. Ethos, pathos, and logos explain how trust, emotional accessibility, and reasoned instruction operate together while retaining a call to moral improvement.

Its religious values include akhlak, worship, learning, spirituality, and silaturahmi; its social values include solidarity, tolerance, justice, care, and responsible livelihoods. Their connection is the main finding: personal piety is discussed through everyday relationships and participation. Because the report lacks longitudinal evidence, this is a contextual interpretation, not proof of durable behavioral change.

Preachers can pair familiar language with scriptural grounding and respectful questions. Majelis managers can support inclusion through fair vendor rules, sanitation, safety, and careful editing of online clips. Religious institutions can train preachers in audience ethics, moderation, and digital literacy.

Future research could compare online and in-person reception through netnography and interviews, follow participants over time, and examine other majelis. Timestamped transcripts and transparent participant records would permit firmer tests of the interpretations presented here.

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