



MORAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SALAFI DAYAH EDUCATION IN ACEH

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Abstract

This study examines the role of *Dayah* (Islamic traditional educational institutions) in shaping the moral character of the Muslim community in Aceh. *Dayah* plays a significant role in developing the character and morals of society through an educational approach based on religious values. This research aims to analyze the concept of moral development implemented in *Salafi Dayah*, the methods used, and their impact on the character formation of students (*santri*). The research methodology employed is a qualitative approach with data collection techniques including observation, interviews, and literature review. The findings indicate that *Salafi Dayah* in Aceh utilize a learning approach based on classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), moral mentoring, and strict supervision in the daily lives of students to instill strong morals. Moral development in *Salafi Dayah* focuses not only on intellectual aspects but also on spirituality, ethics, and profound Islamic values. Consequently, *Salafi Dayah* contribute significantly to creating a generation with noble character, capable of facing moral challenges in the modern era.

Keywords: *Salafi Dayah*, Islamic Education, Moral Development, Student Character, Aceh.

INTRODUCTION

Amid the rapid social and cultural transformations affecting Aceh, the preservation and cultivation of moral values among the younger generation have become increasingly important. Traditional Islamic boarding schools, known as *dayahs*, play a crucial role in shaping the moral fabric of Acehnese youth. In particular, *Salafi dayahs*, which adhere to a strict interpretation of Islam based on the teachings of the Salaf al-Salih, emphasize moral integrity, religious devotion, and ethical behavior (Greg Fealy, 2008)

This study examines the role of *Salafi dayah* education in fostering moral development among Acehnese youth, focusing on the educational methods, challenges, and broader societal impacts. The implementation of Sharia law under Aceh's Special Autonomy Law further underscores the significance of moral education in the province (Buehler, 2016). *Salafi dayahs* offer a unique perspective on the influence of Islamic education on moral development, especially when compared to other forms of Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. Despite their prominence, there is a notable lack of comprehensive research on the specific impact of these institutions on moral development in the Acehnese context. (Marhamah, 2018).

The establishment of *Salafi dayahs* in Aceh can be traced back to Islamic reform movements aimed at purifying religious practices from local innovations (*bid'ah*) that were perceived as deviating from the true teachings of Islam. (Sofanudin et al., 2023). These institutions have played a significant role in promoting an Islam that is scripturally grounded and resistant to syncretic practices. The historical significance of *Salafi dayahs* lies in their continued influence on efforts to restore the 'pure' teachings of Islam, as understood by early Islamic scholars.(Azyumardi, 2019).

Salafi dayahs focus on teaching students to strictly adhere to the Qur'an and Hadith, instilling core values such as honesty, modesty, and discipline (Khurshid, 2015). A distinctive feature of Salafi education is the emphasis on the study of classical Islamic texts, or *kitab kuning*, which form the foundation of students' understanding of Islamic law, theology, and ethics. This approach aims not only to impart religious knowledge but to cultivate individuals who embody these values in their daily lives. The holistic nature of *Salafi dayah* education serves as a counterpoint to the perceived moral decline associated with modernity (Ridwan et al., 2023).

Globalization and digital media exposure have introduced values that sometimes conflict with the traditional norms of Acehnese society, raising concerns over the moral decline among youth . Increasingly prevalent behaviors such as substance abuse and premarital relationships underscore the importance of institutions like *Salafi dayahs* in providing structured moral education that counters these influences. (Mujiburrahman et al., 2018)

The integration of Sharia law into Aceh's legal framework has heightened the importance of religious education in shaping societal norms. *Salafi dayahs*, with their strict adherence to Islamic teachings, play a central role in promoting compliance with these laws and contribute significantly to the moral and religious education of the community. (Rahman, 2022). This alignment with the legal system enhances the authority and influence of dayahs within Acehnese society. (Lukens-Bull, n.d.)

Pedagogical methods in *Salafi dayahs* primarily involve rote memorization of religious texts, including *kitab kuning*, and close mentorship from teachers (*teungku*), fostering a deep understanding of Islamic jurisprudence and moral conduct(Raihani, 2012). While this traditional approach effectively instills religious knowledge and moral discipline, it has been criticized for not promoting critical thinking or adequately addressing contemporary societal issues. This limitation may hinder students' ability to engage with the challenges posed by modern life.

Salafi dayahs face several criticisms, particularly their reluctance to incorporate modern subjects into the curriculum, which may limit students' opportunities in broader professional and academic contexts. (Van Bruinessen, 2011). Furthermore, the strict disciplinary codes enforced by these institutions can sometimes lead to negative psychological effects on students who struggle to conform to the rigid standards (Nilan, 2009). These criticisms highlight the need for reform that balances traditional values with the practical demands of modern society.

Salafi dayahs play a significant role in preserving Aceh's Islamic identity, reinforcing societal expectations for moral conduct (Feener, 2014). However, balancing the preservation of traditional values with the evolving aspirations of Acehnese youth presents an ongoing challenge (Kloos, 2017). As Aceh continues to navigate its unique position within Indonesia, the tension between maintaining strict religious adherence and adapting to broader societal changes remains a pressing issue.

Salafi dayahs differ from other Islamic educational institutions in Aceh, such as the more syncretic *pesantren*, in their strict adherence to the Salafi interpretation of Islam (Adib et al., 2018). This distinction is crucial in understanding the varying impacts of different Islamic educational systems on moral development (Syaiful sagala, 2013). The emphasis on scriptural purity and rejection of local customs not rooted in the Qur'an and Hadith distinguishes *Salafi dayahs* as a unique force in the region.

Community and parental support play a vital role in the success of *Salafi dayahs*. Many parents choose these institutions for their children, believing that they provide a stronger foundation in Islamic knowledge and moral values compared to secular schools. Community support, often in the form of donations and volunteer efforts, is crucial to the operational sustainability of these institutions.

While substantial research exists on Islamic education in Indonesia, studies focusing specifically on the role of *Salafi dayahs* in moral development are limited. This study seeks to address this gap by offering an in-depth analysis of the role of *Salafi dayahs* in shaping the moral character of Acehnese youth and examining the challenges and opportunities faced by these institutions in contemporary society.

METHOD RESEARCH

1. Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative research approach, using a descriptive-analytical method to understand the influence of *Salafi dayahs* on the moral development of students. Data collection includes in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis to capture the complexities of moral education in these institutions. (John W Creswell, 2009)

2. Research Sites and Participants

Research is conducted at several prominent *Salafi dayahs* in Aceh, selected based on their reputation and influence. Participants include dayah administrators, teachers (*teungku*), students (*santri*). A purposive sampling technique is used to select individuals who provide relevant and insightful information on educational practices and their impact on moral development.

3. Data Collection Methods

Interviews; Conducted with dayah administrators, teachers, and parents to gain insights into their perspectives on the role of *Salafi dayah* education in moral development. Observations; Direct observations of day-to-day activities and teaching methods provide context for understanding the educational environment.

Document Analysis: Analysis of curricula and student records to understand the formal structure of moral education provided.

4. Data Analysis

Data are analyzed thematically, identifying key themes related to moral development, educational methods, and challenges. Coding and pattern identification are used to interpret findings within the broader context of existing literature.

5. Validity and Reliability

The study employs triangulation to ensure validity and reliability, comparing data from multiple sources and methods. Member checking is used to verify the accuracy of findings with participant.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

1. Role of Salafi dayahs in Moral Development.

Salafi *dayahs* play a significant role in shaping the moral character of students by emphasizing strict adherence to Islamic teachings, particularly through the study of *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts). Based on interviews, 60% of students expressed a high level of satisfaction with the moral education they received, citing it as instrumental in reinforcing their religious devotion and ethical behavior.

2. Educational Methods

The primary method of moral instruction in Salafi *dayahs* involves rote memorization of religious texts and strict moral discipline. While 55% of students found this method to be highly effective in imparting religious knowledge and fostering good behavior, 25% reported that the reliance on memorization made the learning process less engaging, particularly in addressing contemporary societal issues.

3. Challenges Faced

Salafi *dayahs* face several challenges, including financial constraints, societal misconceptions regarding their conservative methods, and difficulties integrating traditional education with modern demands. About 40% of students indicated that the strict discipline in *dayah* environments could be overwhelming at times, making it difficult to adapt to the rigid system. In parallel, 60% of the teaching staff recognized the need for curriculum reform to better align with the challenges of modern life.

4. Impact on Student Behavior

Graduates from Salafi *dayahs* generally demonstrate high levels of religious observance and strong ethical conduct. In interviews, 70% of students reported that the moral education they received had a profound impact on their daily lives, particularly in terms of discipline, honesty, and adherence to religious practices. However, some teachers acknowledged that graduates often struggle to integrate into modern professional environments due to a lack of exposure to contemporary knowledge and skills.

5. Community Perception and Support

Community perception of Salafi *dayahs* remains positive, with many parents choosing these institutions for their children due to their reputation for instilling strong religious foundations. Nonetheless, 60% of teachers expressed concerns about the lack of integration between religious education and modern subjects, emphasizing the need to prepare students for life outside the *dayah*.

Discussion

The findings from interviews and direct observation indicate that *Salafi dayahs* continue to play a crucial role in moral development among Acehese youth. The use of the *kitab kuning* as the foundation for moral instruction has proven effective in instilling ethical values and discipline. However, some students and teachers noted that the rigid and traditional nature of the curriculum can sometimes limit critical thinking and engagement with contemporary issues.

The strict disciplinary system employed in these *dayahs* is recognized as both a strength and a potential limitation. While 78% of students acknowledged the positive influence of this discipline on their lives, 40% expressed that the intensity of the rules could hinder personal growth and adaptability. Teachers are also aware of this challenge, with 60% of them supporting the idea of revising the curriculum to make it more relevant to the needs of modern society.

Furthermore, community support for *Salafi dayahs* remains robust, as these institutions are seen as key in maintaining the moral fabric of society. However, both teachers and students acknowledge that integrating modern subjects, such as science and technology, into the curriculum is crucial for ensuring that *dayah* graduates are well-prepared to face the realities of contemporary life. Incorporating such subjects would help students not only maintain strong moral foundations but also develop the skills necessary for future professional success.

In conclusion, while *Salafi dayahs* have been highly successful in fostering religious devotion and moral integrity, their continued relevance in an increasingly modernized world depends on their ability to adapt. There is growing recognition from both students and teachers that reform is necessary, particularly in the integration of modern educational subjects. This reform would help ensure that students are not only morally grounded but also equipped to navigate the complexities of the modern world.

The findings suggest that while *Salafi dayahs* are effective in promoting moral development, there is a clear need for curriculum reform to better prepare students for contemporary challenges. Incorporating modern subjects could enhance the relevance of *dayah* education without undermining its moral objectives. Additionally, increased support from the government and community is essential to address resource constraints. A more flexible approach to moral education, accommodating individual needs while upholding Islamic principles, may prove more effective in achieving desired outcomes.

CONSLUSION

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