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Looking Inside Traditional Islamic Schools:
Concerns and Prospects of Learning Culture

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LOOKING INSIDE TRADITIONAL ISLAMIC SCHOOLS: CONCERNS AND PROSPECTS OF LEARNING CULTURE

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Abstract

Dayah is a designation for the traditional Islamic boarding school in Aceh, an institution that plays a crucial role in education, knowledge dissemination, and shaping religious identity in Aceh society. To produce well-rounded graduates, Dayahs must stay abreast of modern developments and cultivate a dynamic, inclusive academic culture. However, Dayahs have struggled to demonstrate such openness, leading to challenges to their relevance. This research employed qualitative methods to investigate the academic culture within the Dayah education system in Aceh, re-evaluate factors influencing its development, and outline future growth prospects. The study focused on three Dayahs: Ruhul Islam, Ruhul Falah, and Darul Maghfirah. The findings revealed that the academic culture in these institutions has been declining due to several factors: reliance on a traditional curriculum and teacher-centered instruction, generational transmission of outdated practices, and lack of contemporary organizational structure. These issues hinder learning, stifling the freedom to voice opinions, knowledge acquisition, and effective management. To improve the academic culture in Dayah, it is recommended to enhance engagement and communication with all stakeholders, implement a structured development plan, and improve the quality of human resources. By addressing these areas, Dayahs can foster a more dynamic and inclusive academic environment.

Keywords: *Academic Culture; Education System; Islamic Traditional School.*

A. Introduction

Dayah (the traditional Islamic boarding school) is a vital component of the Acehese culture; it has a long history with deep roots in the community's social, cultural, and religious life. *Dayah* is also the first and the oldest traditional Islamic educational organization responsible for implementing religious education in society (Ikhrum et al., 2023; Mastuhu, 1994; N. Usman et al., 2019). These schools have been employing the standard textbook (also known as the yellow book) in their instructional practices (Dhofier, 2011; J. Usman et al., 2021). Moreover, *Dayah* has been a vital element of society's efforts to preserve and cultivate an intellectual and spiritual spirit (Jamal D., 1993).

In addition, *Dayah* was founded to give solutions for a variety of religious issues and to instill values and religious traditions within a particular community (Basri et al., 2023). The objective of the *Dayah* is to teach students to be autonomous and observant of Allah's laws. In addition, it stated that *Dayah* as an educational institution has produced several scientists in every discipline within Islamic studies, including *Fiqh*, *Tauhid*, Arabic, and other Islamic sciences, who are obliged to impart an understanding of Islamic education to others as the *Dayah* itself continues to empower themselves (Das et al., 2016; Dhofier, 2011; N. Usman et al., 2019).

As an educational institution, *Dayah* was founded through the generosity of the Acehese community (Mujiburrahman et al., 2024). Since the introduction of Islam to Aceh, Muslim intellectuals have had a significant role in many aspects of Acehese culture (Sumanti et al., 2024). Haramayn, one of the most renowned thinkers in Islamic history, has infused Islamic education in Aceh with rich intellectual hues. Acehese wants a scholar to have served as a king's counselor in the past, instructed them in Islamic education, and become a policymaker in the kingdom (Suyanta et al., 2024). However, the characteristics of *Dayah* scholars in the past as thinkers and writers are no longer evident in the modern day. The scholar's role as "Imam" of the daily congregation has been supplanted by *Dayah* graduates. Due to their proficiency in the Arabic language, they can engage in religious activities such as doing "prayer" and several others.

In addition, many *Dayah* scholars have changed their children's formal schooling preferences. The majority of them today send their children to secondary public schools and state institutions rather than to an Islamic boarding school (*Dayah*). Therefore, according to (Sulaiman & Mansur, 2010), the development of *Dayah* is not promising due to incompetent management, systemic and structural problems, an unsatisfactory educational system, and a shortage of learning tools.

The development of academic culture

Academic culture is heavily influenced by surrounding cultures, such as those ingrained in the society where the institution is situated (Kaur & Noman, 2015; Sumanti et al., 2024). Additionally, the culture of educational practitioners influences how an educational system is implemented. When someone is deeply rooted in particular cultural norms, it is quite difficult for them to alter. This is because the cultural formation is a lengthy process (Kristiawan & Muhaimin, 2019).

Incorporating cultural values into the learning process not only improves students' academic engagement but also promotes a stronger appreciation for cultural differences, encouraging social cohesion and understanding (Huda et al., 2024; Suyanta et al., 2024). It can foster an inclusive and dynamic learning environment that allows students to become compassionate, critical thinking who embrace tolerance towards a harmonious and united learning model by acknowledging the relevance of cultural values in education. It is widely understood that the basic tenet of education is transferring moral values, and not merely transfers of knowledge (Coşkun Keskin, 2012; Veugelers & de Kat, 2003).

In addition, emphasizes that the main purpose of Islamic education is to produce faithful and devoted Muslims who gain success not only in worldly matters but also in the hereafter (Wahab Syakhrani, 2020). States education is a process, in which an individual or a group of people attempts to grow and to search for a better life (Daradjat, 2008). For that reason, leader of traditional Islamic institutions has to create a comfortable learning process to accomplish the goal of education comprehensively, including laying the



basic foundation for humanity (Ma'arif, 2018). Ensuring the academic system is regular requires the implementation of the cultural aspect process systematically because the academic system will bind one educational aspect with others.

The authors separated academic culture typology into four categories, including cultures of offering opinion, learning, and organizational knowledge. In academic development, many typologies must be formed; "*Dayah*, the Islamic traditional school", is one of the locations for cultural development. *Dayah* is the oldest institution of Islam in Aceh. The principal objective of the *Dayah* institution is to serve as a center for Islamic education from elementary school through high school (Basri et al., 2023; Roche, 2012).

Dayah is where youngsters who have graduated from informal institutions such as *Meunasah/ Rangkang* or even Imam Gampong continue their education (Hasjimy, 2005). Academic culture refers to the scientific culture fostered in educational institutions such as secondary schools and Islamic residential schools. Implementing academic cultures in the boarding school becomes a crucial factor in enhancing students' knowledge and understanding.

Our research indicates several factors influence academic cultures at Islamic Traditional boarding schools: First, teacher-centered education as an academic culture has been assimilated into the Islamic boarding school. Second, the *Shafii* school of thinking is associated with the majority of conventional boarding schools. The primary courses taught include Theology (leaning toward "Asy'ary Mazhab-Asy'ary School of Thought"), Sufism of Al-perspective, Ghazali's, and "Jawo/ Arabic language".

The conventional textbook taught these concepts, and it was written by traditional scholars in the past. Therefore, the curriculum restrictions in *Dayah* have hindered students' ability to freely express their ideas and advance their knowledge (Ma'arif et al., 2023). In addition, traditional Islamic boarding schools, such as *Drah* and *Halaqah*, continue to use old teaching methods, rendering the learning experience passive and dull. In addition, the *Dayah* system is still seen as a top-down structure, as the *Dayah's* senior leadership oversees all systems and serves as the policymaker.

While *Dayah* has played a key part in Indonesian history, it does not appear to be progressing very well at the present times. The relevance

of education provided by *Dayah* in today's constantly changing world is a topic of both interest and controversy (Mujiburrahman et al., 2024). Understanding the existing learning culture in these institutions is critical for determining if they are appropriately preparing students for the modern-day demands and dynamics. Traditional Islamic schools like *Dayah* may encounter difficulties in adapting to modern educational approaches, ensuring inclusion, and serving students' different needs.

Identifying and tackling these difficulties is critical for these institutions' ongoing improvement. By looking into the learning culture of traditional Islamic schools, this study attempts to identify areas for improvement and highlight potential opportunities for positive change. Understanding how these institutions may adjust their techniques to promote creativity, innovation, and overall development will benefit both students and the greater Muslim community. By critically scrutinizing *Dayah's* learning culture, identifying areas where adjustments can be made to better address the demands of the modern world.

The findings of this study can help policymakers, educators, and stakeholders make informed decisions that will improve the educational experiences of students attending traditional Islamic schools like *Dayah* and contribute to the greater conversation on education and cultural preservation. This motivates our questions in the present work. To begin our research, we would consider developing the following research questions: What types of academic culture exist in the traditional Islamic boarding schools of *Dayah* in Aceh Besar District; and What components of the teaching tradition at this particular educational institution are improving and declining? What are the best strategies to revitalize the instructional process in the *Dayah*?

B. Method

This research was conducted by using the qualitative approach to obtain deep information regarding academic cultures in traditional Islamic schools; regarding how it helps improve the instructional process in the *Dayah*. Sixteen participants in this research were recruited, and they were those teaching at the Islamic traditional schools in Aceh Besar.



A purposive sampling technique was employed to recruit participants for the study. The participants included the leadership figures of three Islamic boarding schools, along with several teachers. Teachers were selected based on their teaching experience, with those having over five years of teaching experience being invited to participate. Additionally, one-hour semi-structured interviews were conducted with a number of students.

Table 1. Data Sources of Participants

No.	Data Sources	Participants
1.	The top management	3
2.	Teachers	8
3.	Students	5
	Total	16

The research was conducted at *Dayah Ruhul Islam*, *Dayah Ruhul Falah*, and *Dayah Darul Magfirah*. These Islamic boarding schools were selected for their urban status and comparable academic quality. Investigating how instructional processes at Islamic schools in urban environments are organized and planned is a crucial focus of this study. To report the key findings, references were made to several scholars, such as (Bryman & Buchanan, 2018; Creswell., 2017; Mel Silberman, 2018).

The data was analyzed using thematic analysis and coding techniques, adhering to Silberman's (2018) data analysis methods. Composite narrative was also employed, drawing on Willis's approach for presenting interview data (Walidin et al., 2015, 2023; Willis, 2019). Furthermore, pseudonyms were used to interpret and represent the participants' voices.

C. Result and Discussion

Interviews conducted with the management of the Islamic boarding schools revealed several significant findings related to the academic cultures within these institutions. The findings are considered reliable, valid, and significant due to the rigorous methodology employed, the representative sample size, and their overall contribution to the relevant field of study. This ensures the credibility of the study and highlights its implications for

practical applications in the future. Four main findings were thematically coded to represent the academic cultures of the Islamic traditional boarding schools: cultures of learning, cultures of giving opinions, organizational cultures, and knowledge development. These findings are elaborated in detail in the following sections.

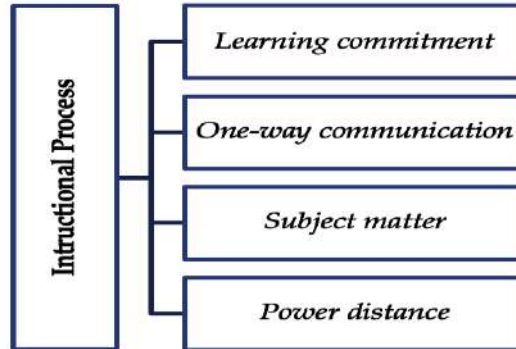


Figure 1. Instructional Process

1. Instructional Process of the *Dayah*

a. Learning commitment

The interviews uncovered important and intriguing insights into the learning cultures at the three traditional Islamic boarding schools. Participants consistently emphasized that the primary purpose of learning is not merely to obtain a diploma. Instead, students engage in the instructional process at traditional Islamic boarding schools with the primary aim of seeking knowledge, which is believed to lead to the blessings of God the Almighty. This is relevant to the work by (Anshari et al., 2023), suggesting that service learning is commonplace in Islamic boarding schools. Both teachers and students engage in the instructional process for the sake of knowledge attainment and to secure the blessing of the Almighty.

They consider seeking, preaching, and learning knowledge as obligatory and regarded as a virtuous act in Islam, and this is carefully put by one of our participants. In the *Dayah* system, the relationship between the teachers and their students resembles the relationship between parents and



their children (Asniar et al., 2018). The parents usually send their children to the *Dayah*, and they meet the *Dayah* leader, and they ask the *Dayah* leader to nurture their children with Islamic knowledge. "This practice psychologically influences the way the children perceive their being at the *Dayah*" (Syahrul, the *Dayah* teacher).

In addition, the teacher (*Tengku*) and students believed that teaching and learning at school are deeply rooted in Islamic teaching. For them, learning is highly emphasized and similar to the act of worshipping Allah. This conviction influences the motivation of students and teachers in the instructional process. Besides, learning at *Dayah* is not a transactional purpose, it means that there is no provision regarding salary payment for the teachers and the relationship between teachers and students is constructed very well (Yusuf et al., 2024).

The leader of *Dayah* and the teacher become role models in the student's lives. Al-Quran (the Muslims' holy book); *hadith* (the prophetic tradition) and *Kitab Kuning* (the traditional textbook) are the priority learning materials in the instructional process. They believe that the Qur'an, repeatedly stresses the importance of knowledge and learning as Allah commands humankind to pursue education. A participant in this study further explains that:

I understand that seeking knowledge is obligatory for all Muslim men and women. Islam itself values those who are knowledgeable and are positioned higher than those who are not; for that, I urge myself that the intention of seeking knowledge should go beyond worldly intention (Subhan, the student).

Another important finding uncovered in our fieldwork is the application of reward and punishment to appreciate achievement and discourage failure. All five students believed that punishment would bring positive things to their lives and become a protector from hellfire. This is in line with the findings of (Moberly et al., 2005), suggesting that rewards and punishments encourage students' learning motivation.

Therefore, in recruiting appropriate teachers, there are many things to consider, especially regarding their attributes, such as honesty, righteousness, intelligence, perseverance in worship, and high dedication. For them, learning can extend the development of moral values and help their character development while improving spirituality at the same time. Muslims are



urged to pursue knowledge that will help them grow as individuals, cultivating values such as humility, compassion, patience, and thankfulness. On this front, a participant admits that:

I believe that studying in the boarding school gives me more than I expected; the school does not only transfer knowledge, but it helps shape my attitude, I become more knowledgeable and also more faithful toward my religion (Rahmat, the student).

The teachers who are teaching traditional learning sources are required to gain professional competence, such as the ability to recite these sources, written in Arabic or Latin-Arabic. Teachers in Islamic traditional education must have a solid command of Arabic literacy to effectively teach Islamic materials such as the Quran, Hadith (Prophetic traditions), and classical Islamic literature. It is important to note that teachers should always engage in professional development to ensure their teaching competence (Lassig, 2015).

Proficiency in Arabic enables them to deliver precise explanations, translations, and interpretations of these learning resources, allowing students to have a greater grasp of Islamic doctrines. In addition, teachers in Islamic traditional education should have a thorough understanding of Islamic sciences such as theology (*Aqidah*), jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), Islamic history (*Tarikh*), and biographies of Prophets and scholars (*Sirah*) (Abdullah, 2022). Zarkasy exemplifies that:

We have a bigger burden being the teacher at the Islamic boarding school. The society expects us to be more knowledgeable in many disciplines. People see us as knowing many things across our expertise. For that reason, I would suggest that all teachers at Islamic boarding schools should equip themselves with many expertise as possible (Zarkasy, the teacher).

Unlike in the modern version of Islamic boarding schools where general subjects like English, Mathematics, and Physics for instance are adopted, the traditional Islamic schools like *Dayah*, the curriculum used only contains Islamic knowledge. There is no space given for students to learn other general subjects. The traditional boarding school does not plan the instructional process ahead of time. Furthermore, the structure of curriculums still uses traditional methods, and they are not systematically well organized

as well as needed in the field. Abduh laments this phenomenon in the following statement.

We understand that the content of the Dayah curriculum is limited to Islamic knowledge only. Most of the Dayahs restrict themselves from offering general subjects. We neither have the learning guidelines nor the fixed curriculum.

To add more concern on this matter, most of the time, the priority between learning materials only focuses on basic Islamic subjects like jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), Sufism (*Tasawuf*), and Arabic syntax and grammar (*Nahwu* and *Saraf*) with emphasis placed more on reading and writing assignment. Students only focus on reading the traditional textbook that has been taught by teachers (*Tengku*) without reading or learning other books (*Kitab*) that are written by other scholars. In his words, the teacher stated:

Most traditional Islamic boarding schools still firmly hold their curriculum, and in most cases, most of them use specially chosen textbooks to learn Islamic knowledge. Students are exposed to most traditional textbooks and thus they lack exposure to modern printed books (Ahmad, the teacher).

b. One-way communication is commonplace

In these traditional Islamic institutions, it is uncommon for students to express their ideas throughout the instructional process. Students must take great precautions when expressing their opinions so as not to offend their instructors. After getting teachers' approval, students may express their opinions and pose questions (*Tengku*). Students refrain from breaking the law because they believe they will be punished not just in this world, but also in the next (Nasir et al., 2022). The most essential components of the teaching and learning process at *Dayah* are obedience and regard for the instructor (*Tengku*). This is pertinent to one of the remarks made by a member of the *Dayah's* top management, namely, that "one of the primary goals of our education is to encourage kids to respect their teachers".

In addition, the process of learning at *Dayah* has several shortages and weaknesses such as students' lack of critical thinking, in which they are not trained to rebut their teachers. In addition, traditional Islamic education emphasizes memorization of religious literature such as the Quran and



Hadith which may inadvertently encourage mechanic learning rather than deeper knowledge and critical thinking, while critical thinking is so much more important to develop in students, for example, emphasize the need to improve student's critical thinking, and the skill will benefit students in many ways (Enciso et al., 2019; Idris et al., 2018; Sasmita et al., 2023).

This type of teaching also places a strong emphasis on knowledge transmission from teacher to student. This strategy may prevent pupils from questioning or challenging the given information. As a result, this may limit students' exposure to alternative perspectives and critical analysis of various ideas, impairing their capacity to think critically about a variety of issues. A participant confesses that:

One of the old-fashioned ways of teaching in Islamic boarding schools is limited spaces available for students to be expressive; giving their ideas freely. This is because of several practices, such as the belief that not giving opinions in class is an indication of respect for teachers (Zainal, the teacher).

Due to this problem, some students find it difficult to ask questions and voice their opinions. Furthermore, while the teacher (*Tengku*) is teaching and preaching, students act properly when discussing and expressing their opinions, and there are no arguments whatsoever.

Typically, students simply nod to indicate comprehension. The *Dayah* truly employs the process of discussion (*Musyawah*) or *Bahts Al Masa'il* (Abidin, 2023). As for the deficiency of offering opinions in *Dayah*, there is still only one-way communication, the process of transmitting knowledge from the teacher to the students through the teacher's reading and translation of the book, while students just listen and record the structure (*I'rab*) literally. In addition, the memorizing aspect is applied to assist students in learning content in the form of *nadham* so that they can memorize Arabic texts and Arabic grammar. Furthermore, students are prevented from expressing their opinions in front of their lecturers.

c. Subject matters, beyond worldly purposes

There are three aspects of cultural development knowledge in *Dayahas* worshiped aspect is to give faith and monotheism, *Tabligh* is to



disseminate knowledge, and devotion to realize social activities. The orientation of knowledge is more focused on Islamic jurisprudence, Arabic grammar, hadith, and Qur'an (Sati, 2023), and in the learning process, students believe that everything that has been taught by teachers is the truth. Self-evaluation system is implemented at *Dayah* to be more objective in the evaluation process (Mawardi & Ruhayah, 2022).

The teacher encourages pupils to impart their expertise upon graduation and as alumni of *Dayah*. Students are responsible for disseminating their knowledge to society as Muslim clerics or teachers, establishing their boarding schools in their respective localities (Mawardi & Ruhayah, 2022; Sirojuddin et al., 2022). The primary textbook utilized in conventional boarding schools is known as the yellow book (Arrohmatan et al., 2023).

There is no course outline when using a textbook; chapters are taught individually. In addition, there is a deficiency in the growth of knowledge at *Dayah*, as follows: students only learn the knowledge that has been taught to them, they do not develop knowledge from different viewpoints, and they only focus on the yellow book (*Kitab Kuning*). Students exclusively read and study the yellow book. The learning process is unidirectional (Baharudin et al., 2023; Husaini Zuhri & Huda, 2024). These traditional Islamic institutions as observed in the study continue to use conventional methods such as lectures and rote memorization, whereas active learning techniques are uncommon.

d. Big power distance

Out of the observation, our research also found that *Dayah's* organizational culture is in the sole control of its teachers. The teacher serves as a role model for the students and is also the institution's founder, manager, advisor, and leader. The *Dayah* top leadership relies on the charismatic top leader. In the management of the *Dayah* organization, a sense of brotherhood and mutual aid were ingrained as basic ideals. The organization in *Dayah* was simple, effective, and autonomous (Musaddad, 2021).

The Islamic traditional school's organizational culture is deficient due to its reliance on the top leader and the leader of *Dayah's* decision-

making authority over all matters (Sutomo et al., 2024). There is no job description in the organizational structure of *Dayah* (Mujiburrahman et al., 2024). In addition, the *Dayah* organization's working program is not carried out in detail, and there are no defined regulations for organizing leadership. Currently, the succession of leadership is based on a procedure of descent.

2. Areas of Improvement

Considering the various concerns surrounding the instructional processes within the *Dayah*, this research focuses on identifying strategies to reform or transform their learning cultures to better align with contemporary educational needs and challenges. The findings highlight three key strategies that emerged from the data. First, fostering open-mindedness, which involves encouraging students, teachers, and administrators to embrace new ideas, methodologies, and perspectives while remaining rooted in traditional values. This strategy is crucial for bridging the gap between traditional and modern approaches to education.

Second, implementing structured transformation, which entails systematically redesigning the instructional processes and organizational structures within the *Dayah*. This includes integrating modern educational tools and technologies, revising curricula to include relevant contemporary subjects, and ensuring that the transformation process aligns with the core values and principles of the *Dayah* system.

Finally, emphasizing empowerment at all levels of the educational ecosystem. This involves providing teachers with professional development opportunities, encouraging students to actively participate in their learning process, and equipping them with critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Empowerment also extends to fostering a sense of agency among all stakeholders to drive continuous improvement and innovation within the *Dayah* system.

These strategies are interrelated and aim to create a more dynamic, adaptable, and holistic learning culture within the *Dayah*, ensuring its relevance and sustainability in an ever-evolving educational landscape.



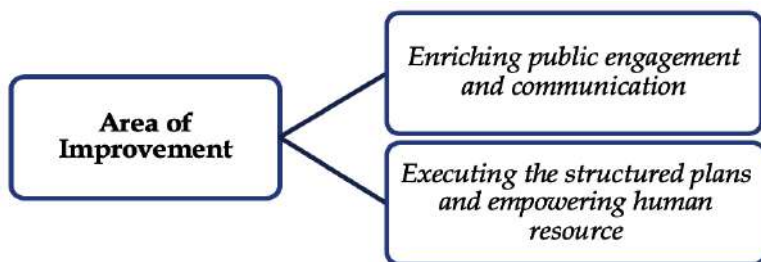


Figure 2. Area of improvement

a. Enriching public engagement and communication

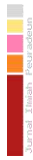
Although there has been a long history of public engagement in the *Dayah*, in recent times, this spirit gradually faded away. We found in our study that most figures in Islamic boarding schools believe that they have to be more open-minded. In this sense, the Islamic school leadership suggests that to produce effective instruction, Islamic boarding schools should collaborate with many related parties. For example, one of the leaders of the *Dayah* suggests that in the process of education, the *Dayah* should engage with various institutions; the government and non-government institution as well to win their commitment. Tgk Syahrul, for example, states:

We realize that the Dayah should enrich a wider audience. The institution should be more open-minded and allow themselves to engage with various institutions. Our engagement with the various institutions, allows us to be more open-minded and thus encourages us to be more progressing.

This suggests that the Islamic boarding school in a way should transform their system to be more inclusive rather than exclusive. It is important to note in today's contemporary workforce, collaboration with multiple practices is much more recommended. In addition to broader public engagement at the local level, *Dayah* also has the potential to contribute to the global discourse on Islamic education. The results of this study indicate that the *Dayah* educational model, with its emphasis on spiritual and moral values, can be an inspiration for educational systems in various countries, especially in integrating tradition and modernity harmoniously.

Based on the findings that reveal various challenges and potential developments in the academic culture of *Dayah*, there is an opportunity to position this traditional educational model as a significant contribution to the global discourse on Islamic education. Education in *Dayah*, which emphasizes the values of spirituality, moral integrity, and discipline, can serve as an inspiration for developing Islamic education curricula in various countries facing modernization challenges without losing their cultural and religious identities (Ismail et al., 2024). As highlighted by Kristiawan and Muhaimin, strengthening local cultural aspects in education can foster stronger social cohesion and build cross-cultural understanding (Kristiawan & Muhaimin, 2019). Moreover, the value-based educational approach implemented in *Dayah* aligns with the perspective of Veugelers and de Kat, who emphasize the importance of transferring moral values in creating a harmonious global society (Veugelers & de Kat, 2003). Thus, transforming the educational system in *Dayah* can become an innovative model relevant in the international context, particularly for countries with Muslim-majority populations seeking to integrate tradition and modernity. To achieve this, the involvement of *Dayah* in global educational forums and collaboration with international institutions will be a strategic step to expand its global impact (Mujiburrahman et al., 2024; Tabrani ZA et al., 2021).

Building upon this, the transformation of *Dayah* into a globally relevant educational model also requires a deliberate effort to integrate universal educational principles with local wisdom. This alignment can serve as a bridge for fostering mutual understanding between diverse educational systems worldwide. Scholars like Mujiburrahman et al. have emphasized the importance of state intervention in supporting traditional educational institutions to remain competitive while preserving their core identity. In this regard, *Dayah* could act as a living example of how traditional Islamic education can adapt to global standards without compromising its foundational values (Mujiburrahman et al., 2024). Furthermore, collaboration with international institutions can provide opportunities for knowledge exchange, enabling *Dayah* educators and students to engage in contemporary



global issues, such as peacebuilding, interfaith dialogue, and sustainable development. As suggested by Tabrani ZA et al., nurturing leadership qualities rooted in spiritual and ethical principles can further enhance *Dayah's* contributions to shaping global educational discourses. By positioning itself as a hub for both traditional and progressive Islamic education, *Dayah* has the potential to influence not only the Muslim world but also the broader global community seeking moral and ethical guidance in education.

b. Executing structured plans and empowering human resource

Human resources development in Islamic boarding institutions can be accomplished by fostering an academic culture, beginning with openness to differences, and perspectives when expressing opinions, and inclusive curricula. In addition, there are numerous strategies for promoting academic culture at the *Dayah* that strengthen its human resources, such as the following:

Improving infrastructure and the quality of educational services, optimizing the function of the Dayah organization as a vehicle for the development of student's cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills, and developing a mutually respectful attitude and upholding academic freedom by eradicating excessive fanaticism from the Islamic boarding school to the point where it is exceedingly difficult to receive input from outside the Islamic boarding school.

Our findings show similarities in the instructional process and areas of improvement emphasized in these three *Dayah*. No extreme differences were found as these *Dayahs* were established following similar philosophical foundations.

To further enhance human resource development in Islamic boarding institutions like *Dayah*, it is essential to incorporate innovative teaching methodologies and integrate digital learning tools alongside traditional practices. This approach aligns with findings by Mujiburrahman et al., who emphasized the importance of modernizing educational systems to adapt to contemporary challenges while maintaining core values (Mujiburrahman et al., 2024). Furthermore, the inclusion of intercultural and interfaith education



can foster global perspectives among students, preparing them to engage in international dialogues on education and religious tolerance (Kaur & Noman, 2015). As Abdullah suggested, creating a balance between religious and secular knowledge enables students to become not only devout individuals but also active contributors to societal development (Abdullah, 2022). By fostering collaboration with local and international educational institutions, *Dayah* can optimize the transfer of knowledge and skills, thereby enhancing its reputation as a center for excellence in Islamic education. This strategy would not only address internal issues but also position *Dayah* as a model for other Islamic educational institutions globally, ensuring its sustainability and broader impact.

D. Conclusion

This article discusses two main topics: the instructional processes that take place in *dayah* and the areas of improvement applied in *dayah*. Our study identified four instructional atmospheres: commitment to learning, one-way communication, understanding of subject matter beyond mundane things, and significant power distances. These atmospheric conditions were found in all areas being studied. These factors negatively impact the learning process, limiting freedom of expression, knowledge acquisition, and effective management.

To enhance the academic culture in *Dayah* and ensure the production of well-rounded graduates, it is essential to foster better communication and engagement with all stakeholders, including students, teachers, administrators, and the community. Developing and executing a comprehensive plan to modernize the curriculum, teaching methods, and organizational structure is also crucial.

Additionally, investing in the professional development of educators and administrative staff will ensure they are equipped with contemporary educational practices and management skills. By implementing these measures, *Dayah* can create a more dynamic and inclusive academic environment, thereby securing its role in education and religious identity formation.



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