THE CULTURE OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN DAYAH: A HOLISTIC-INTEGRATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Globally, there is a recognized need to develop resilient, culture-based educational models that effectively integrate traditional values with modern challenges. This study aimed to analyze the relationship between cultural elements and the educational system in Acehnese *dayah* (traditional Islamic boarding schools) by employing a holistic-integrative approach. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis at two major *dayah* in Aceh: Dayah Babussalam Al-Hanafiyyah and Dayah MUDI Mesra Samalanga. Findings reveal that the *dayah* educational system is intricately linked to seven cultural elements (e.g., knowledge, social organization, religion), forming a unique educational ecosystem. Key mechanisms, including the halaqah method, the use of classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), and spiritual arts (*zikir*), facilitate the transmission of religious, social, and spiritual identity. This system both preserves classical Islamic values and demonstrates gradual adaptation to modernity. Islamic education in Acehnese *dayah* represents a resilient, culture-based learning model that successfully cultivates religious understanding alongside social and spiritual identity. This research offers a robust reference for contextual development of Islamic education, showing how traditional models can be strengthened by integrating local culture while effectively responding to modernization without abandoning their foundational roots.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Dayah Culture, Holistic-Integrative Approach

INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization and rapid digital transformation, faith-based educational institutions globally face a critical dilemma: the imperative to preserve tradition and local values while simultaneously responding to the demands of modernity, curriculum reform, and technological integration. Bibliometric studies show that Islamic religious schools are a growing focus in global scholarship, specifically concerning pedagogy, governance, and cultural adaptation (Hussin et al., 2024). Case studies further reveal significant tensions in international schools as they negotiate between maintaining their faith-based identity and adapting to global standards (Gamal, 2020). In Indonesia, this tension is manifest in leadership studies, which demonstrate that pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) adopt transformational approaches to enhance student quality and character (Alawiyah et al., 2023), while others integrate religious and general curricula to modernize their educational offerings (Wahdi et al., 2023).

The *pesantren* stands as one of the most prominent Islamic educational institutions in the Indonesian archipelago, known by regional variants such as *surau* in Padang, *pondok* in Java, and dayah in Aceh. The *dayah* derives its name from the Arabic word *zawiyah* ("corner"), referring to the classical halaqah (circle study method) in which the *Tengku* (teacher) instructs students using classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*) (Amirudin, 2010; Ziemek, 1983). This institution is deeply integrated within community life and heavily influenced by local culture, allowing *dayah* to serve as a vital cultural and social institution alongside its religious function (Astuti, 2024). While these schools are essential for strengthening national resilience, religious moderation, and

cultural cohesion in the modern era (Majid & Nurwahidin, 2023), their complex nature, requiring modernization through digital innovation (Ansori et al., 2022) while preserving tradition, makes them ideal subjects for holistic analysis.

Research on Islamic education and *pesantren/dayah* has been extensive, both internationally and locally. International scholarship emphasizes that Islamic schools are institutions actively negotiating with globalization, focusing on aspects like governance and pedagogy (Hussin et al., 2024; Gamal, 2020). At the national level, studies confirm modernization trends, including the adoption of transformational leadership (Alawiyah et al., 2023), the integration of general and religious curricula (Wahdi et al., 2023), and the necessity of digital innovation (Ansori et al., 2022). Locally, in Aceh, studies have demonstrated curriculum modernization, identifying significant adaptations in teaching strategies and evaluation systems (Badruddin & Riza, 2024), while post-conflict research revealed more profound institutional and social identity shifts (Hasanuddin, 2023).

Although previous research has provided valuable insights into curriculum adaptation, leadership, and institutional resilience, these studies have generally approached *dayah* education in a fragmented manner, focusing only on specific components such as pedagogy or curriculum reform. There remains a significant lack of research that holistically examines *dayah* education across all cultural elements. Specifically, few studies have applied a comprehensive, cultural-anthropological perspective that integrates the seven cultural elements proposed by Koentjaraningrat (1986): knowledge systems, language, social organization, livelihood systems, economic systems, religion, and the arts. This lack of integrative analysis is critical because *dayah* are not merely educational institutions but are integral cultural entities that shape social identity and community cohesion in Aceh.

To address this gap, the present study aims to provide a holistic-integrative cultural analysis of the educational system in Acehnese *dayah*. Specifically, this research will employ Koentjaraningrat's cultural framework to comprehensively examine the relationship between the educational system (knowledge systems) and the other six cultural elements that define the *dayah* environment. By analyzing how these elements operate, collaborate, and interact to shape the distinct *dayah* culture, this study seeks to enrich the scholarly discourse on Islamic education by situating Acehnese *dayah* within both local cultural contexts and global academic debates on tradition and modernity.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative, descriptive-interpretive approach to analyze the cultural system within Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), specifically focusing on the context of Acehnese *dayah*. The research was conducted at two prominent and highly influential *dayah* institutions in Aceh Province: Dayah Babussalam Al-Hanafiyyah in Matangkuli, North Aceh Regency, and Dayah Ma'had Ulum Diniyyah Mesjid Raya (MUDI MESRA Samalanga) in Bireuen Regency. Dayah Babussalam Al-Hanafiyyah serves as the largest *dayah* in North Aceh, hosting over 2,000 residential students (*santri*) and offering formal religious education (PDF) up to the advanced (*'ulyā*) level, alongside a specialized Ma'had Aly program in Tafsir. MUDI MESRA is widely recognized as a major educational reference institution, noted for successfully integrating modern educational structures by transforming its religious higher education unit into Universitas Islam Al-Aziziyah (Unissai) while maintaining traditional mu'ādalah-equivalent religious education and its own Ma'had Aly program.

The data sources included interviews with dayah leaders, teachers (*Teungku*), and students (*santri*). Primary data collection was achieved through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and the analysis of institutional documents. The collected qualitative data were systematically processed and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman

(Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014), which involves the sequential steps of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. To frame the analysis of the *dayah* as a cultural system, the following theoretical framework was utilized, emphasizing the holistic and interconnected nature of the institution:
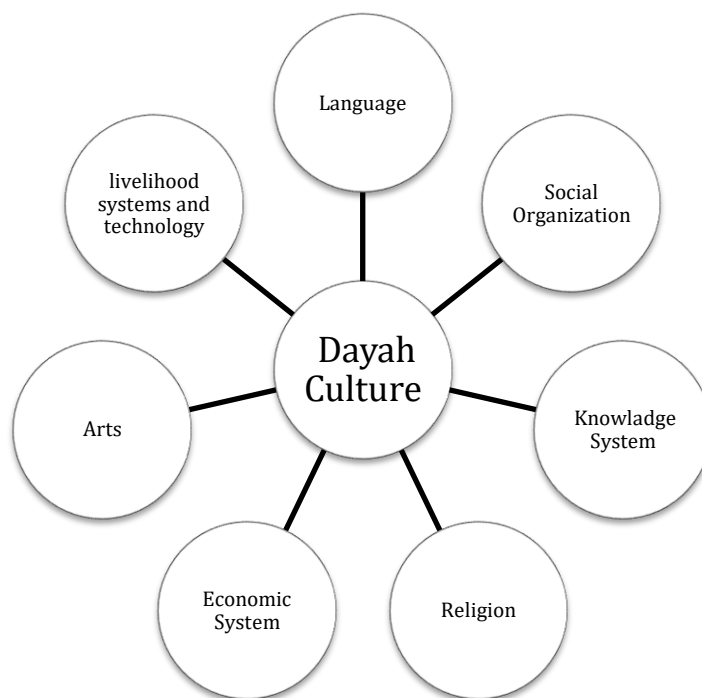

Figure 1: Framework of Dayah Culture

The subsequent analysis employed Koentjaraningrat's anthropological framework of culture (Koentjaraningrat, 1986) as the primary theoretical lens. This framework identifies seven fundamental, interrelated cultural elements: (1) knowledge systems (which include education), (2) language, (3) social organization, (4) livelihood systems and technology, (5) economic systems, (6) religion, and (7) the arts. By applying this holistic-integrative perspective, the study interpreted *dayah* education as a broad cultural phenomenon. This allowed for the analysis of how the core pedagogical practice (knowledge transmission) interacts with other cultural components, such as the use of local language, the social structure within the *dayah*, and artistic expressions like *zikir*, thereby revealing how the *dayah* not only preserves Islamic traditions but also adapts to contemporary challenges while remaining rooted in its local Acehnese culture.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Culture and Its Elements

The theoretical foundation for this study is based on Koentjaraningrat's (1986) definition of culture, which views culture broadly as all aspects related to the use of human intellect (*budhi*). Culture is conceptualized as manifesting in three inseparable forms. First, culture, as an ideational system (or cultural system), encompasses shared ideas, values, norms, and regulations (locally known as *adat*). Second, culture as a social system refers to the patterned human activities and behaviors that are observable and repeated within a community. Third, culture as material artifacts comprises the tangible objects produced by human creativity (e.g., buildings, monuments). These three forms are intrinsically linked: ideas generate behaviors,

which result in artifacts, and these artifacts, in turn, influence subsequent thoughts and actions, creating new cultural patterns over time.

Koentjaraningrat further identifies seven key elements that constitute culture, which are reflected across these three forms: (1) language, (2) knowledge systems (which includes the educational structure of the *dayah*), (3) social organization, (4) livelihood systems and technology, (5) economic systems, (6) religion, and (7) the arts. All seven elements are interdependent and collectively form the "Cultural Framework" that guides this research's holistic-integrative analysis of the *dayah* system.
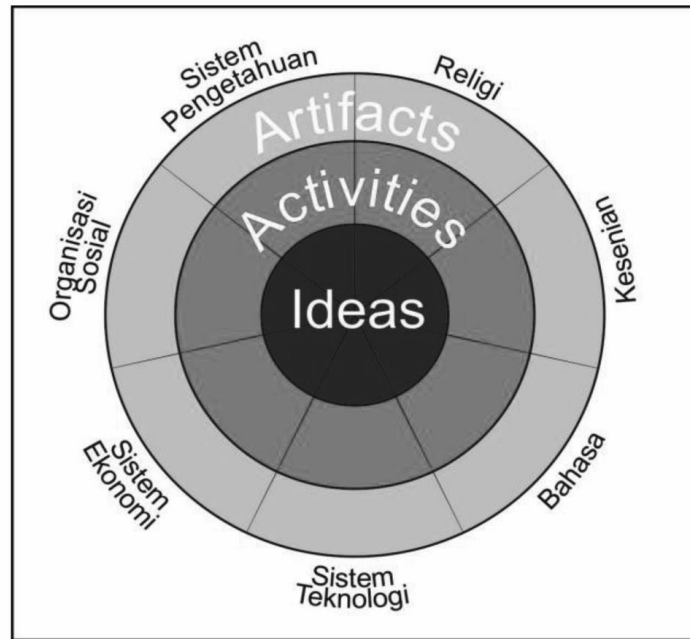

Figure 2. The Cultural Framework According to Koentjaraningrat

Figure 2 illustrates that culture is structured universally, with the ideational core (ideas/norms) as the innermost layer, dictating the behavioral culture (activities/social patterns) in the middle, and culminating in the material culture (artifacts) as the outermost manifestation. It is evident that each of the seven cultural elements (Religion, Art, Language, Technology System, Economic System, Social Organization, Knowledge System) is simultaneously expressed through these three layers. For the purpose of this study, the knowledge system, representing the formal and informal education within the *dayah*, is analyzed not in isolation, but as an integrated component that interacts with, and is influenced by, the other six cultural elements to form a universal and cohesive *dayah* culture.

Historical and Cultural Context of Acehnese Dayah

The institution of the *dayah* stands as an integral and long-established component of Acehnese cultural and religious life, with historical documentation tracing its significance back to the Dutch colonial period. Anthropologist C. Snouck Hurgronje, in his extensive research on Acehnese society, specifically documented this Islamic educational system, using the local term rangkang to refer to the traditional boarding schools specializing in religious instruction (Hurgronje, 1997). Long before colonization, *dayah* provided a well-established system where students, known as *santri*, often migrated from distant villages (*gampông*) in a practice locally

called meudagang, a commitment to extended migration solely in pursuit of religious knowledge until achieving the esteemed title of Teungku (religious scholar).

While the exact origin and differentiation between the terms dayah and *rangkang* remain subjects of discussion, both terms, along with the contemporary term balee or balee beut, signify places of Islamic instruction in Aceh. In modern usage, however, the term dayah is typically reserved for large-scale, formal Islamic institutions that feature multiple levels of study, house a significant number of residential students, and utilize the traditional kitab kuning (classical Islamic texts) in their curricula. Conversely, *rangkang* and *balee* often refer to smaller, less formal settings focused primarily on Qur'anic recitation or weekly religious lectures for adults. This institutional distinction highlights the structural hierarchy within Acehnese religious education.

Within the national context, the *dayah* in Aceh is recognized as a foundational pillar of Islamic education in Indonesia, with a historical legacy predating the formation of the Indonesian state (Zulkhairi, 2021). Its central role in transmitting Islamic knowledge and religious values over generations makes it a critical cultural and educational model. This discussion will proceed using a cultural elements framework to precisely depict the components and interrelationships that form the integrated culture of traditional Islamic education within the dayah, while maintaining dayah as the primary term for the institution, generally known as *pesantren* elsewhere in Indonesia.

The Educational System of Acehnese Dayah

The educational system at both Dayah Mudi Mesra and Dayah Babussalam Al-Hanafiyyah is deeply rooted in the religious ideal of tafaqqahu fiddin, the dedicated pursuit of understanding and internalizing Islamic knowledge. This objective is achieved through a curriculum structured around three core Islamic disciplines: *Ilmu Tauhid* (theology), *Ilmu Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), and *Ilmu Tasawuf* (Islamic ethics/Sufism). While *fiqh* often receives the most emphasis, all three are taught concurrently and integrated holistically into the students' daily religious life. The entire seven-year program is built upon a sequence of classical Islamic books (*kitab kuning*), with student progression contingent upon performance and the teacher's approval following specific examinations. Alongside these core subjects, students master *'ulum al-alah* (auxiliary sciences) such as *Nahwu* (syntax), *Sharf* (morphology), and *Balaghah* (rhetoric), which are essential tools for accurately interpreting the classical texts.

The depth of the curriculum is evident in the specific classical texts employed. For instance, Tauhid advances through texts such as Aqidatul Islamiyyah and Kifayatul Awam; Fiqh uses a comprehensive series from Safinatun Naja to advanced texts such as *I'anatut Thalibin* and *Tahrir*; and Tasawuf utilizes books such as *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* and *Ihya Ulumuddin*. The auxiliary sciences follow similarly structured series, with Nahwu progressing from *Al-'Awamil* to *Ibn 'Aqil*, and Ushul al-Fiqh covering texts like *al-Waraqat* and *Jam' al-Jawami'*. The primary instructional strategy remains the traditional halaqah system (known in other regions as *bandongan* or *wetonan*), where the teacher (*Tengku*) reads, translates, and elaborates on the Arabic texts while students attentively annotate their own copies (Masduki, 2019). While historically passive, both *dayah* have gradually incorporated more active discussion and questioning to encourage critical competence, influenced by contemporary Islamic pedagogy (Balsiger, 2024).

The social organization within the *dayah* is strictly maintained, with separate dormitories (*bilék*) and teaching spaces for male (*santri*) and female (*santriwati*) students. The teaching staff is typically composed of graduates of the institution itself, ensuring cultural and pedagogical continuity. Teachers are generally referred to as Tengku, while the head of the *dayah* holds esteemed titles such as Abu, Abi, Abon, Abati, or Waled (e.g., "Abu Mudi" at MUDI Mesra and "*Waled*" at Babussalam Al-Hanafiyyah). Teaching schedules are determined collectively, centered around night classes held after the Maghrib or Isha prayers, supplemented by morning

and afternoon sessions. Despite the structured system, both *dayah* acknowledge a significant dropout rate, often around the third year, attributable to internal factors such as a lack of motivation and external pressures such as economic hardship.

At a minimum, a *dayah* complex consists of a mosque or prayer hall (*mushalla*), a learning hall (*balai*), and dormitories (*bilék*). However, both Dayah Mudi Mesra and Dayah Babussalam Al-Hanafiyyah have developed extensive infrastructure that moves beyond these basics, incorporating support facilities such as libraries, cooperatives, and sports amenities. Crucially, many advanced *dayah* provide vocational training (e.g., agriculture, carpentry, tailoring) through on-site initiatives. This expansion of facilities demonstrates a commitment to holistic student development and provides practical skills alongside the deep religious education, reflecting an adaptation toward contemporary livelihood needs.

Social Organization and Institutional Structure

The social organization within the *dayah* is fundamentally shaped by the interactions between the dayah leader (Abu), the teachers (Tengku), and the students (santri), giving rise to a robust, expanding kinship system. This network extends from the immediate social unit to include extended relatives, ensuring the educational system consistently upholds Salafi values through innovative management (Basori et al., 2023). Dayah institutions primarily follow two models of ownership: the first is individually owned by a *Tengku*, built on private land, with operational costs covered by student fees, the community, and occasional government support. The second model is foundation-owned (*yayasan*), established by a prominent community figure; in this case, all assets belong to the foundation, which bears responsibility for construction and development, often supported by the local community and alumni (Hakim, 2021). The economic resilience of the *dayah* largely depends on this community-based independence and active social participation.

The leadership structure is hierarchical, with the Abu holding the highest authority. However, in foundation-owned *dayah*, significant decisions, particularly those related to development, require deliberation with the foundation board. Directly below the Abu, a General Chairman (*Ketua Umum*) is appointed to coordinate all institutional activities, assisted by a Secretary responsible for administration. Large institutions like MUDI Mesra and Dayah Babussalam Al-Hanafiyyah further organize their daily operations into specialized divisions, including Teaching, Dormitory Affairs, Security, and Public Relations. The appointments of the General Chairman and these division heads are finalized through collective decision-making involving the dayah leadership and the council of teachers, ensuring institutional governance is both centralized under the religious leader and consultative in practice.

Economic System and Livelihoods in Dayah

The economic system within the *dayah* (Islamic boarding schools) is characterized by a reliance on traditional livelihoods and a strong dependence on communal support rather than robust institutional revenue. Unlike formal schools, *dayah* leaders and teachers generally do not receive regular salaries, operating instead on a voluntary basis, viewing their service as charitable donations (*ṣadaqah jāriyah*). This is feasible because many instructors already possess external sources of income, such as farming, trade, or employment as civil servants or formal school teachers. Consequently, the primary economic activities supporting the community, both leaders and surrounding residents, are often based on agriculture, livestock farming, and small-scale trade.

While the *dayah* operates largely on a principle of voluntary service, there has been a recent move toward government support. Through the Aceh Office of Dayah Education, *dayah* institutions undergo verification and accreditation (Type A, B, or C) to receive provincial

support, including monthly stipends for registered teachers. However, these government payments often fall short of general wage standards, and many dedicated instructors at prominent *dayah* like MUDI Mesra and Dayah Babussalam Al-Hanafiyyah have yet to consistently receive them. This financial gap reinforces the need for external income sources.

The financial strain also extends to the students (*santri*). While students from affluent families receive remittances, those from lower-income backgrounds must engage in various forms of paid work to fulfill their daily needs. These work-related activities often involve manual labor, such as working as construction laborers, assisting market traders, or participating in agricultural activities (rice fields), thereby reflecting the broader reliance of the *dayah* community on traditional and localized livelihood systems.

Technology and Modernization in Dayah

The technological system within traditional *dayah* (Islamic boarding schools) remains predominantly cautious, largely categorized as traditional due to concerns over the potential adverse effects of digital media on students' ethical conduct and the established educational system (Adrianda & Tisa, 2024). Historically, learning activities were conducted with minimal facilities, often in an open hall (balai) equipped with only the most basic amenities, such as a whiteboard and markers. Despite the broader influence of digital transformation, this institutional caution reflects a commitment to preserving the focused ethical environment of the *dayah*.

Nevertheless, over the past few decades, prominent institutions like Dayah MUDI Mesra and Dayah Babussalam Al-Hanafiyyah have demonstrated a gradual technological advancement in specific learning contexts. These *dayah* have begun integrating modern tools, including television screens for instructional purposes and Wi-Fi facilities. Crucially, the use of computers and laptops is permitted among students in the Ma'had Aly (higher Islamic education programs). This measured adoption enables advanced students to access online resources for classical Islamic texts (*kutub turāth*), strategically leveraging technology to support in-depth academic studies without fully compromising the institution's commitment to its traditional, value-centered educational system.

Linguistic Culture and Language of Instruction

The linguistic culture at Dayah Mudi Mesra and Dayah Babussalam Al-Hanafiyyah is deeply rooted in the local community, with Acehnese serving as the primary language of communication among students and, among teachers, often the chosen language of instruction. While the core texts studied are in Arabic, the actual language used for translation and explanation is typically a blend of Acehnese and Indonesian. A critical finding is that despite studying sophisticated Arabic texts, many students and teachers at both institutions lack effective communicative proficiency in Arabic. This discrepancy exists because Arabic instruction in the *dayah* is heavily oriented toward grammar (*qawāʿid*), with the primary objective being the ability to read and comprehend classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), rather than fostering modern literacy skills or conversational fluency (Heri, 2023; Yusuf, 2025).

This *qawāʿid*-based approach has resulted in the development of a unique, highly specialized linguistic system within the *dayah*. Teachers use specific grammatical symbols or indicators when translating Arabic texts to help students recognize the underlying structure. For instance, in a *jumlah ismiyyah* (nominal sentence like "هذا أحمد"), the translation might be rendered as "*bermula ini, itu Ahmad*," where the archaic Malay word "*bermula*" ("verily") flags the subject (*mubtadaʾ*), and "itu" ("that is") flags the predicate (*khabar*). Similarly, in a *jumlah fi'liyyah* (verbal sentence like "قام محمد"), the translation "has stood by Muhammad" uses "*oleh*" ("by") to mark the doer (*fāʿil*). This symbolic, *qawāʿid*-based translation system (which often resembles archaic

Malay) is nearly unintelligible to outsiders, requiring the teacher to not only translate the text but also provide a comprehensive, conceptual explanation. This unique method emphasizes textual mastery over oral communication, defining the distinctive linguistic culture of the Acehnese *dayah*.

Religiosity and Spiritual Cultivation in Dayah

As deeply revered Islamic educational institutions ranking second only to the mosque in Acehnese society, the dayahs play a vital role in shaping the religious and social fabric of the community. Institutions like Dayah MUDI Mesra and Dayah Babussalam Al-Hanafiyyah serve as agents of change, implementing an applied educational model that fosters both knowledge and the practical application of faith (*tafaqquh fiddin*). Religiosity in the *dayah* context transcends mere ritual expression; it is cultivated through consistent habitual practices and exemplary behavior within a community grounded in transcendental values (Zahro, 2020). This hands-on model requires every student (*santri*) to participate in congregational prayers (*ṣalāh berjamaʿah*) for all five daily prayers, followed by structured dhikr sessions and closing supplications. The *dayah* further provides structured ritual education as part of a mystical transmission process (*ijāzah mistik*) (Ayubi & Masruri, 2024), ensuring that religious theory is immediately translated into daily, embodied practice.

The spiritual development of the *santri* is further enhanced by the teaching and practice of ṭarīqah (Sufi paths). The practice of ṭarīqah is adopted by these *dayah* to instill essential character traits such as humility (*tawāḍuʿ*) and modesty. This commitment to Sufi disciplines, which aims to foster inner discipline and an acute awareness of the Divine presence in everyday life (Hasnan & Fadillah, 2023), leads *santri* to generally exhibit positive attributes like mutual respect, simplicity, critical thinking, and discipline (Zulkhairi, 2023). The most prominent Sufi order practiced is the Naqshbandiyyah, popularized by the influential scholar Abuya Muda Wali Al-Khalidi, whose founding of Dayah Darussalam in Labuhan Haji established the network to which nearly all current Acehnese *dayah* trace their affiliation.

The practice of ṭarīqah varies in its institutional implementation: in some *dayah*, it is mandatory for all students and open to the public, while in others, it remains optional and primarily practiced by senior students. Regardless of the specific order (which may also include Syattariyyah or Shamadiyyah), the spiritual dimension ensures that education in the *dayah* does not solely emphasize academic content but critically prioritizes emotional, ethical, and spiritual development.

Art and Spiritual Culture in Dayah

Dayah MUDI Mesra and Dayah Babussalam Al-Hanafiyyah actively foster artistic expression through the creative works of both students and teachers, integrating devotion with aesthetic expression. The most prominent art forms are centered on rhythmic religious chanting, primarily Zikir Dalāʾil al-Khayrāt and Zikir Maulid. Zikir Dalāʾil al-Khayrāt involves the melodious recitation of the *Dalāʾil al-Khayrāt*, a classical text dedicated to reciting blessings (*ṣalawāt*) upon the Prophet Muhammad. This chanting represents a form of spiritual art that nurtures the soul and acts as an effective educational tool for the students (Labib, 2020).

Similarly, Zikir Maulid involves the performance of the *Barzanji* text along with various other *ṣalawāt* (such as *Ṣalawāt Badr* and *Ṣalawāt Nāriyya*), all set to captivating melodies and rhythms. Beyond these forms, the *dayah* also cultivates the art of Tilāwat al-Qurʾān, which is the melodic and rhythmic intonation of Qur'anic recitation. These practices emphasize the integration of devotion and art, serving as key mechanisms for conveying religious meaning and nurturing the students' spiritual and emotional development. The institutions frequently

showcase these artistic skills in local and regional competitions, solidifying the *dayah's* role as a vibrant center for both religious education and cultural-artistic development.

The Centrality of Education in Shaping Dayah Culture

Education serves as the fundamental component and the very foundation upon which the entire culture of the *dayah* (Acehnese *pesantren*) is built. The *rūḥ* (spirit) of the *dayah* is intrinsically linked to its educational mission of tafaqqahu fiddin (deep understanding of the faith). Without this educational function, the institution would lose its defining character. The Islamic educational culture within the *dayah* represents a synthesis of spiritual, moral, and social values, which are institutionalized through traditional systems such as ḥalaqah (study circles) and sorogan (individualized learning) (Setyawan & Haryono, 2022). However, the *dayah* is more than just a site of teaching; its educational mission is enriched and completed by its strong, reciprocal interdependence with all other socio-cultural elements of the institution.

The educational function of the *dayah* is inseparable from its social organization. The learning process is embedded within a structured system managed internally by the community. Educational leadership, headed by the Abu as the highest authority, coordinates all programs in conjunction with the general chairperson, administrative secretaries, operational heads, and the council of teachers. This clear hierarchical and operational structure demonstrates the strong link between social organization and the consistent delivery of the curriculum. Similarly, the economic system, while focused on traditional livelihoods and voluntary service, is essential for the sustainability and effectiveness of the educational mission. A well-managed, community-supported economic foundation allows for the longevity of the educational programs, while successful educational activities can, in turn, foster a robust, self-sustaining economy within the *dayah* environment.

The influence of language and technology directly impacts pedagogical effectiveness. Language is indisputably central, serving as both the medium of instruction and a subject of study. The use of Acehnese in teaching facilitates student comprehension, often supplemented by Indonesian, underscoring its vital pedagogical function. Beyond spoken language, the *dayah* employs a specialized *bahasa kitab* (a symbolic linguistic practice used to translate classical Arabic texts), making language both the tool and the object of educational engagement. In terms of technology, infrastructure in the *dayah* is traditionally oriented, but modernization is evident. Technological upgrades, such as concrete learning halls, operational vehicles, and plumbing networks powered by electric pumps, directly enhance the quality and efficiency of the educational process, supporting the continued operation of the school.

The element of religion is the core outcome of the educational process. The religious life within the *dayah* is fundamentally shaped by the application of knowledge acquired through education. The cultivation of religiosity and high moral character represents one of the core objectives of *dayah* education. The *dayah* environment serves as a model of a religious community for the wider public, where structured and sustained religious practices, such as *dhikr* and *ṭarīqah*, are rare elsewhere. This educational tradition molds the *santri* into individuals of high spiritual and moral caliber. Finally, art and culture are deeply integrated with education through spiritual art forms like Zikir Dalāʾil al-Khayrāt and Zikir Maulid. These practices are not mere cultural expressions; they require educational engagement for understanding, and they carry profound pedagogical significance, serving as a means of moral instruction and character formation.

The findings demonstrate that the Acehnese *dayah* operates as a fully integrated cultural system, in which the Knowledge System (Education) is not an independent function but is dynamically shaped and reinforced by the other six cultural elements, thereby fulfilling the holistic model proposed by Koentjaraningrat (1986). The central goal of *tafaqquhu fiddin* is simultaneously enacted across the three forms of culture: as an Ideational System (values and

norms), a Social System (patterned behaviors), and a Material Culture (artifacts and infrastructure). The educational process is intrinsically tied to the Social Organization: the strict hierarchy under the Abu and the consultative structure (General Chairman, division heads) ensure that pedagogical decisions are consistent with the communal and religious authority, thereby reinforcing the traditional Salafi values taught in the classrooms.

A particularly powerful example of cultural interdependence is found in the nexus of Linguistic Culture, Knowledge Systems, and Social Organization. The *dayah's* specialized *qawāʿid*-based translation system (Linguistic Culture), characterized by the use of archaic markers (*bermula, oleh*), is directly instrumental to the Knowledge System, as its primary goal is not conversational fluency but the mastery of the *kitab kuning.* This specialized language system, which is unintelligible to outsiders, acts as a cultural gatekeeper (Cameron & Galloway, 2025.) It reinforces the knowledge hierarchy within the Social Organization by signifying the learned status of the Tengku and differentiating the highly educated *santri* from the general public. Thus, the deliberate instructional approach to Arabic (Knowledge System) ensures the preservation of the unique linguistic tradition (Linguistic Culture) that sustains the authority structure (Social Organization) (Maghfurin et al., 2025).

The analysis reveals that weaknesses in one element are compensated by the strength of others, demonstrating the system's cultural resilience. The Economic System is inherently weak, characterized by voluntary service from teachers and leaders, operating on the principle of *ṣadaqah jāriyah* rather than robust salaries. This economic fragility is compensated by the profound strength of the Religiosity element and the resulting close-knit Social Organization (Negash Tesema, M. 2025). The commitment to the spiritual mission motivates teachers to serve voluntarily, while the kinship network and reliance on community support and foundation ownership compensate for the lack of stable institutional funding (Hakim, 2021). Furthermore, the Livelihood System reflects this reality: students from lower-income backgrounds engaging in manual labor (construction, farming) ensure their presence and the dayah's demographic diversity, directly supporting the educational goals even without full financial privileges (Wang, S., & Xie, M., 2025).

Finally, the Art and Culture element is fully synthesized with the Religiosity and Knowledge Systems to achieve the affective and moral outcomes of education. Spiritual art forms such as Zikir Dalāʾil al-Khayrāt and the practice of ṭarīqah (Naqshbandiyyah) are not treated as peripheral activities; they are integrated pedagogical tools (Escala et al., 2025). They fulfill the educational mission by providing the hands-on application of knowledge and serving as the mystical transmission process (*ijāzah mistik*) (Ayubi & Masruri, 2024). This Religious-Artistic Synthesis cultivates internal discipline (*tawāḍuʿ*) and emotional development, directly supporting the curriculum's emphasis on ethics (*Ilmu Tasawuf*) (Goode., 2025). In this way, the *dayah* effectively uses communal artistic performance (Social System/Art) to generate high moral and spiritual caliber (Product/Religiosity), confirming its successful operation as a deeply integrated cultural entity (de las Mercedes Martínez, A. 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study employed a holistic-integrative cultural framework to demonstrate that Islamic education in Acehnese *dayah* is a highly resilient and deeply integrated system, rather than a mere collection of educational activities. By analyzing the dynamic interplay of the seven cultural elements, including Knowledge, Social Organization, Religiosity, and Linguistic Culture, the research confirms that the *dayah* successfully synthesizes traditional religious learning (*kitab kuning* and *halaqah*) with modern imperatives (technological adaptation in *Ma'had Aly*). The system's longevity and strength are rooted in its compensatory mechanisms: the spiritual commitment of the teaching staff and the robust kinship structure (*Social Organization*) mitigate

the institutional fragility of the Economic System. Consequently, the Acehnese *dayah* offers a valuable reference for the contextual development of Islamic education globally, providing a model for institutions seeking to preserve foundational cultural and spiritual values while strategically navigating the pressures of modernization.

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