# Dayah MUDI Samalanga in Aceh: Teungku Authority, Sociocultural Religion, and the Popularity of an Islamic Education Center

**\*Fathayatul Husna[1], Lilis Sariyanti[2], Ainal Fitri[3], Mirza Adia Nova[4]**

[1-4]Universitas Teuku Umar, Aceh, Indonesia
*\*Correspondence: fathayatulhusna@utu.ac.id*

## Abstract

This study examines Dayah MUDI Samalanga as an Islamic education center within the sociocultural context of Aceh, focusing on *teungku* authority and the institution's contemporary popularity. While modernization and digital communication are often assumed to weaken traditional religious authority, this article argues that teungku authority persists and is rearticulated through institutional visibility, community engagement, and media practices. Employing a qualitative approach using virtual ethnography (netnography), the study analyzes publicly accessible institutional digital content—including the official website, social media platforms, and video-based channels—alongside relevant literature to trace how authority and institutional identity are narrated in online public spaces. The findings show that teungku authority remains a key source of legitimacy for Dayah MUDI, constructed through scholarly credibility, symbolic positioning, and continuity of religious traditions. The popularity of Dayah MUDI is shaped by the interaction of leadership authority, institutional branding, educational modernization (including the expansion of higher education initiatives), and sustained media visibility through social media and institutional broadcasting channels. Digital media therefore function not merely as communication tools but as arenas where religious authority and institutional identity are publicly reproduced and extended beyond local communities. This study contributes to discussions on religious authority, Islamic education, and digital mediation by demonstrating that dayah institutions actively negotiate continuity and change in contemporary socioreligious environments.

*Keywords: Teungku authority; Dayah MUDI; Islamic education; netnography; digital media*

## Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji Dayah MUDI Samalanga sebagai pusat pendidikan Islam dalam konteks sosiokultural Aceh, dengan menyoroti otoritas *teungku* serta popularitas institusi tersebut pada masa kini. Di tengah asumsi bahwa modernisasi dan komunikasi digital cenderung melemahkan otoritas keagamaan tradisional, artikel ini berargumen bahwa otoritas *teungku* tetap bertahan dan mengalami reartikulasi melalui visibilitas institusional, keterlibatan komunitas, serta praktik-praktik media. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui etnografi virtual (netnografi), penelitian ini menganalisis konten digital institusional yang

dapat diakses publik, meliputi situs web resmi, platform media sosial, dan kanal berbasis video, serta literatur relevan untuk menelusuri bagaimana otoritas dan identitas institusi dinarasikan dalam ruang publik daring. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa otoritas *teungku* tetap menjadi sumber legitimasi utama bagi Dayah MUDI, yang dibangun melalui kredibilitas keilmuan, peneguhan simbolik, dan kesinambungan tradisi keagamaan. Popularitas Dayah MUDI dibentuk oleh interaksi antara otoritas kepemimpinan, praktik branding institusional, modernisasi pendidikan (termasuk ekspansi inisiatif pendidikan tinggi), serta visibilitas media yang berkelanjutan melalui media sosial dan kanal penyiaran institusional. Media digital, karenanya, berfungsi bukan semata sebagai alat komunikasi, tetapi juga sebagai arena reproduksi otoritas keagamaan dan identitas institusi, sekaligus memperluas jangkauan pengaruhnya melampaui komunitas lokal. Studi ini berkontribusi pada diskusi tentang otoritas keagamaan, pendidikan Islam, dan mediasi digital dengan menunjukkan bahwa dayah secara aktif menegosiasikan kesinambungan dan perubahan dalam lingkungan sosioreligius kontemporer.

***Kata Kunci:*** *Otoritas Teungku; Dayah Mudi; Pendidikan Islam; Netnografi; Media Digital*

## A. Introduction

In Acehnese society, the term *teungku* commonly refers to a respected Islamic teacher and religious authority figure who occupies an important position in religious, educational, and social life. Within the Dayah (Acehnese Islamic boarding school) tradition, a *teungku* functions not only as an educator but also as a moral guide and symbolic reference for the community. Religious authority in this context is socially constructed through trajectories of knowledge transmission, institutional recognition, and cultural legitimacy.[1] In Aceh specifically, *teungku* authority is deeply embedded in local socioreligious structures, where charisma, blessing (*beureukat*, understood as spiritually derived benefit or grace), and sacred prestige (*keuramat*, referring to perceived sacred power or sanctity) operate as meaningful cultural categories shaping public perceptions of religious leadership.[2] At the same time, contemporary transformations have reshaped how religious authority is communicated and accessed. Religious figures who were once primarily encountered within traditional educational settings are now increasingly visible through digital media, enabling broader circulation of Islamic teachings beyond localized institutional boundaries.[3]

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[1] Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Menuju Milenium Baru* (Jakarta: Logos Wacana Ilmu, 1999); Zamakhsyari Dhofier, "Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Pandangan Hidup Kyai Dan Visinya Mengenai Masa Depan Indonesia" (Depok: LP3ES, 2011).

[2] Kamaruzzaman Bustamam Ahmad and Fitri Zulfidar Ibrahim, "The Family Background and Cultural Landscapes of Youth in Banda Aceh: An Ethnographic Account," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 6, no. 2 (December 31, 2022): 844, https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v6i2.12571; R. Michael Feener, "Islam in Visions of Aceh's Past (and Future)," in *Shariʿa and Social Engineering* (Oxford University PressOxford, 2013), 19–58, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199678846.003.0002.

[3] H Campbell, *Digital Religion*, ed. Heidi A. Campbell, Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds (Routledge, 2012), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203084861; Pauline Cheong, "Authority,"

*Teungku* authority is closely connected to the public reputation of particular dayah institutions. Studies on Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia have shown that leadership authority and charismatic legitimacy play a significant role in shaping institutional trust, educational continuity, and community engagement.[4] In many cases, the popularity of an Islamic educational institution is not solely determined by organizational management but also by the symbolic capital attached to its religious leaders.[5] In Aceh, dayah institutions historically function as centers of religious learning, social reproduction, and cultural identity, positioning *teungku* figures as central actors in maintaining religious traditions while responding to modern social dynamics (Feener, 2013; Bustamam-Ahmad, 2017).

One prominent example is Dayah MUDI (Ma'hadal Ulum Diniyah Islamiyah) in Samalanga, Bireuen Regency, Aceh. Dayah MUDI is widely recognized for its long-standing tradition of classical Islamic scholarship and its role in producing influential *teungku* across generations. Previous studies highlight that dayah networks in Aceh operate not only as educational systems but also as sociocultural institutions that sustain religious authority, communal trust, and identity formation.[6] Despite broader processes of modernization affecting Islamic education, Dayah MUDI is frequently described as maintaining core elements of the dayah tradition while simultaneously expanding its institutional presence through contemporary communication channels.

For many students (*santri*), studying at Dayah MUDI represents more than an educational trajectory; it constitutes a process of religious socialization and identity formation. The dayah environment, characterized by intensive daily routines, close teacher–student relationships, and strong communal bonds, contributes to the reproduction of religious norms and symbolic hierarchies.[7] These dynamics reinforce how Dayah MUDI is perceived as an influential Islamic education center within Aceh's socioreligious landscape.

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in *Digital Religion*, ed. Heidi Campbell (London: Routledge, 2013); James Hoesterey, *Rebranding Islam : Piety, Prosperity, and a Self-Help Guru* (California: Stanford University Press, 1962).

**4** Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren, Studi Tentang Pandangan Hidup Kiyai* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1994); Turmudi, *Struggling for the Umma: Changing Leadership Roles of Kiai in Jombang, East Java* (ANU E Press, 2007); Dhofier, "Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Pandangan Hidup Kyai Dan Visinya Mengenai Masa Depan Indonesia."

**5** Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 241–58; Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, "Imam Zarkasyi's Modernization of Pesantren in Indonesia (A Case Study of Darussalam Gontor)," *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 8, no. 1 (June 30, 2020): 161, https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v8i1.5760.

**6** M. Hasbi Amiruddin, *Menatap Masa Depan Dayah Di Aceh* (Banda Aceh: Yayasan Pena, 2008); R. Michael Feener, *Shariʿa and Social Engineering* (Oxford University PressOxford, 2013), https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199678846.001.0001.

**7** Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren, Studi Tentang Pandangan Hidup Kiyai*; Turmudi, *Struggling for the Umma: Changing Leadership Roles of Kiai in Jombang, East Java*.

Several studies have examined religious authority, Islamic educational leadership, and the transformation of pesantren/dayah institutions. Bustamam-Ahmad[8] notes that the terms *teungku* and *ustad* coexist in Aceh, reflecting shifts in religious discourse and educational practices. Other scholars argue that charismatic authority does not necessarily decline in modern contexts but may instead be reconfigured through new institutional and media environments.[9] However, limited attention has been given to how digital mediation contributes to the reproduction of *teungku* authority and to the broader popularity of dayah institutions.

Building on this literature, this article argues that *teungku* authority in Aceh is not simply diminishing but is being rearticulated through new media practices. What remains underexplored is how digital visibility—through websites and social media—interacts with traditional structures of religious legitimacy. Therefore, this study focuses on Dayah MUDI to examine the intersection between religious authority, institutional popularity, and digital mediation. The guiding questions are: (1) How is *teungku* authority constructed and displayed in Dayah MUDI? (2) How is the popularity of Dayah MUDI built and maintained as a contemporary Islamic education center? (3) How do *teungku* and dayah contribute to mobilizing Islamic education within the sociocultural context of Aceh, particularly through new media?

## B. Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach using virtual ethnography (netnography) to examine how *teungku* authority and Dayah MUDI's institutional popularity are represented and articulated in digital public spaces. Virtual ethnography is particularly suitable for investigating sociocultural meaning-making within online environments, especially in contexts where religious authority is increasingly mediated through digital communication platforms.[10] The research relies exclusively on publicly accessible institutional digital content and documents, without involving interviews or offline field interactions with informants.

Primary data were collected through systematic online observation of Dayah MUDI's official digital platforms, including its institutional website, social media accounts (such as Facebook and Instagram), and video-based materials disseminated through official channels. These platforms were treated as the study's online field site, where institutional narratives,

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[8] Bustamam Ahmad and Ibrahim, "The Family Background and Cultural Landscapes of Youth in Banda Aceh: An Ethnographic Account."

[9] Hoesterey, *Rebranding Islam : Piety, Prosperity, and a Self-Help Guru*; Campbell, *Digit. Relig.*

[10] Christine Hine, *Ethnography for the Internet* (Routledge, 2020), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003085348; R V Kozinets, *Netnography: Redefined* (SAGE Publications, 2015).

leadership visibility, and representations of religious authority are produced and circulated. Observation focused on materials that explicitly represent leadership visibility, institutional identity, educational activities, community engagement, and media outreach, and these materials were archived as a digital corpus for coding.

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis procedure. All collected materials were repeatedly read and reviewed to identify recurring patterns related to authority, popularity, institutional identity, modernization, and sociocultural engagement. Initial codes were generated and subsequently organized into broader interpretive themes, allowing patterns of representation to be systematically examined.[11] To enhance trustworthiness, the study applied source triangulation across multiple digital platforms and literature, alongside consistency checks during coding. By focusing on institutional digital communications, this approach enables the study to trace how authority, popularity, and community engagement are narrated and made visible in online public spaces.

## C. Results and Discussion

The discussion below is organized through a thematic reading of observed digital institutional narratives and supporting literature. Recurrent patterns were coded and consolidated into two thematic blocks: (1) the strengthening of Islam in Aceh and the authority of *teungku dayah* in Dayah MUDI, and (2) the popularity of Dayah MUDI through branding, learning modernization, and media engagement.

### 1. Dayah MUDI Samalanga: The Strengthening of Islam in Aceh and the Authority of Teungku Dayah

Aceh is known as the only region that has the privilege of legitimizing Islamic law. Everyday activities in Aceh are commonly expected to align with the applicable Islamic sharia framework. Aceh first received the legitimacy right to govern its territory independently in 2002 [12] Reflecting on historical experiences, Aceh also endured prolonged political conflict. The Free Aceh Movement (GAM) conflict left a deep impression on Acehnese society and shaped social memory. Beyond political consequences, this history is relevant for

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[11] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Toward Good Practice in Thematic Analysis: Avoiding Common Problems and Be(Com)Ing a Knowing Researcher," *International Journal of Transgender Health* 24, no. 1 (January 25, 2023): 1–6, https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2022.2129597.

[12] Khairul Hasni, "Qanun Jinayat And Sharia Police: A New Violence In The Context Of Gender In Aceh Indonesia," *Musãwa Jurnal Studi Gender Dan Islam* 19, no. 2 (March 10, 2021): 187–203, https://doi.org/10.14421/musawa.2020.192-187-203; Hamdani H, "Penegakan Syariat Islam Di Aceh Dalam Perspektif HAM," *REUSAM: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum* 7, no. 2 (November 15, 2019): 15, https://doi.org/10.29103/reusam.v7i2.2245.

understanding the sociocultural configuration of Islamic institutions in Aceh, particularly Islamic education, which remains a key site for preserving religious identity and social order.

Historical records show that the emergence of Islam in Aceh was marked by the entry of Arab traders.[13] Islam expanded and developed to the East in the ninth century and was marked by the establishment of the Peureulak kingdom.[14] Another important point for the entry and development of Islam in Aceh is Samudera Pasai in the thirteenth century. The implementation of Islamic sharia law since then developed not only in social life but also in the realm of law, including private and criminal law.[15] This was strengthened during the Darussalam kingdom, where Islam became the main reference for managing community activities in Aceh, including education, law, economics, social life, and culture.[16] From the Acehnese perspective, Islamic law applies across lines of life because it contains both social and sacred dimensions.[17] In this socioreligious landscape, the strengthening of Islam is not merely an abstract narrative; it becomes a cultural foundation that supports the legitimacy of Islamic education institutions, especially dayah, and the authority attached to religious leaders.

The historical strengthening of Islam was also reinforced during the colonial era. Islamic leaders in Aceh framed colonial intervention not only as political domination but as a threat that could disrupt Islamic life and education.[18] For many, colonialism was perceived as a mission that endangered Islamic law and harmed Islamic education in Aceh, which encouraged religiously grounded resistance narratives.[19] In this setting, dayah institutions were not only places for learning but also sites where religious resilience and community discipline were sustained.

During the colonial period, restrictions and closures of access to Islamic learning further highlighted the importance of dayah. Islamic education in Aceh is widely recognized through

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[13] S Bahri, "Konsep Implementasi Syari'at Islam Di Aceh," *Kanun Jurnal Ilmu Hukum* 15, no. 2 (2013): 314, https://jurnal.usk.ac.id/kanun/article/view/6174.

[14] Misri A Muchsin, "KESULTANAN PEUREULAK DAN DISKURSUS TITIK NOL PERADABAN ISLAM NUSANTARA," *Journal of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Societies* 2, no. 2 (February 12, 2019): 218, https://doi.org/10.30821/jcims.v2i2.3154.

[15] Syamsul Bahri, "Pelaksanaan Syari'at Islam Di Aceh Sebagai Bagian Wilayah Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia," *Jurnal Dinamika Hukum* 12, no. 2 (May 15, 2012), https://doi.org/10.20884/1.jdh.2012.12.2.62.

[16] Bahri; Bahri, "Konsep Implementasi Syari'at Islam Di Aceh."

[17] N R Yunus, "Penerapan Syariat Islam Terhadap Peraturan Daerah Dalam Sistem Hukum Nasional Indonesia," *Jurnal Studia Islamika* 12, no. 2 (2015): 278.

[18] Asnil Aidah Ritonga, "Pertumbuhan Dan Perkembangan Institusi Pendidikan Awal Di Indonesia: Pesantren, Surau Dan Dayah," *Tazkiya: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 1 (2017): 1–22, https://jurnaltarbiyah.uinsu.ac.id/index.php/tazkiya/article/view/147.

[19] Nurlaila Nurlaila and Zulihafnani Zulihafnani, "Pengaruh Fatwa Ulama Dayah Dalam Masyarakat Aceh," *Substantia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 21, no. 2 (October 31, 2019): 93, https://doi.org/10.22373/substantia.v21i2.3742.

the dayah system.[20] The dayah education system forms an important element and a differentiator from other educational systems, including the presence of clerics (*teungku*) as teachers, students (*murid*) as learners, and the classical Islamic texts (*kitab*) tradition as a core learning resource.[21] Islamic education in Aceh is also historically linked with institutional layers such as *balee* and *meunasah* that support community-based religious learning.[22] Within this educational ecology, dayah becomes a key center for producing religious knowledge and leadership continuity, while *teungku* authority is embedded in cultural expectations of moral guidance and communal trust.

In the post-independence period, Dayah MUDI grew rapidly and became widely recognized. Dayah MUDI is located in Samalanga, Bireuen Regency, and its institutional development is often connected with Aceh's broader religious history and the continuity of Islamic scholarship networks (Profil Dayah MUDI Mesra, 2018). The growth of Dayah MUDI is also linked to leadership continuity, which reinforces the institutional image of legitimacy and scholarly authority. At this point, the discussion moves from macro-context to an institutional case: Dayah MUDI is not presented as an isolated educational facility but as an institution shaped by Aceh's religious history and cultural expectations about Islamic authority.

Within Acehnese society, the term *teungku* functions as a title for someone who is considered highly knowledgeable in Islamic scholarship and respected within communal decision-making.[23] *Teungku* authority in a dayah is not only formal; it is socially recognized through long-standing educational practice, moral exemplarity, and symbolic legitimacy. This authority is further described through culturally meaningful categories—*keuramat*, *beureukat*, and *teumeureuka* (a culturally embedded notion referring to moral consequence or misfortune associated with disobedience)—which act as mechanisms that strengthen obedience, discipline, and legitimacy.[24] In this reading, these categories should not be treated as merely

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[20] Abdul Hadi, "Eksistensi Lembaga Pendidikan Dayah Dalam Ekskalasi Politik Bangsa," *Al-Ijtima`i: International Journal of Government and Social ScienceIMA'I: International Journal of Government and Social Science* 2, no. 2 (2017), https://garuda.kemdiktisaintek.go.id/documents/detail/1477121; Abdul Hadi, "The Internalization of Local Wisdom Value in Dayah Educational Institution," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 5, no. 2 (May 27, 2017): 189, https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v5i2.128.

[21] Marzuki Marzuki, "Sejarah Dan Perubahan Pesantren Di Aceh," *Millah* 11, no. 1 (August 20, 2011): 221–33, https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol11.iss1.art11.

[22] Marhamah, "Pendidikan Dayah Dan Perkembangannya Di Aceh," *At-Ta'dib: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Agama Islam* 10, no. 1 (2018): 71–92, https://ejournal.staindirundeng.ac.id/index.php/tadib/article/download/117/78/.

[23] Kamaruzzaman Bustamam Ahmad, "A Current Portrait of Islamic Education in Aceh," *Islamika Indonesiana* 1, no. 1 (April 2, 2014): 1–16, https://doi.org/10.15575/isin.v1i1.1.

[24] Mohd. Nasir, Syamsul Rizal, and Wali Al-Khalidi, "STUDENTS' RESISTANCE TO TENGKU DAYAH'S AUTHORITY," *JURNAL TARBIYAH* 29, no. 1 (June 30, 2022): 78, https://doi.org/10.30829/tar.v29i1.1364.

rhetorical claims; they function as sociocultural resources through which authority is maintained within dayah life.

*Teungku* authority is also portrayed as extending beyond pedagogical space into broader social regulation. This point is reflected in publicly available institutional narratives and documented accounts circulated through Dayah MUDI-related digital materials, which portray *teungku* leadership as guidance not only for religious learning but also for community moral order and everyday social decisions. This reinforces the argument that *teungku* authority operates as a sociocultural mechanism that stabilizes community trust in the dayah.

At the institutional level, the authority of Abu MUDI is described not only as religious mastery but also as leadership that supports institutional development. The expansion of learning opportunities and the establishment of higher education pathways (such as IAI Al-Aziziyah Samalanga) can be seen as part of a leadership strategy that responds to contemporary educational needs while maintaining religious legitimacy.[25] This aligns with arguments that charismatic and visionary leadership can contribute to institutional development and strengthen organizational direction within Islamic education settings.[26] In this way, *teungku* authority appears as both symbolic legitimacy and institutional governance capacity.

## 2. The Popularity of Dayah MUDI: Branding, Learning Modernization, and the Role of the Media

*Teungku* authority appears closely intertwined with the popularity and public image of Dayah MUDI. *Teungku* leadership at Dayah MUDI is described as orienting the dayah not only toward education but also toward wider social roles, which contributes to the formation of a positive institutional image. The discussion frames this popularity through the concept of branding and public relations practices. In this context, branding is associated with public relations programs (*humas*, public relations functions within Indonesian institutional contexts) that connect institutions with the public and maintain institutional reputation. In strengthening branding, key elements emphasized include fostering harmonious relations with the community, building two-way communication, listening to public aspirations, and translating policies effectively. These principles are linked to the argument that Dayah MUDI strengthens its relationship with the community, thereby reinforcing positive institutional recognition.

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[25] Nadlifah Nadlifah, Zainal Arifin, and Sri Rahmi, "Charismatic-Visionary Leadership of Teungku in Developing The Role of Dayah Mudi Mesra Samalanga, Bireun, Aceh," *Cendekia: Jurnal Kependidikan Dan Kemasyarakatan* 18, no. 1 (June 22, 2020): 139–54, https://doi.org/10.21154/cendekia.v1i1.1899.

[26] A Zahid, "Sensualitas Media Sosial Di Era Globalisasi (Kajian Sosiologi Media McLuhan Sebagai Analisis Media Masa Kini)," *Jurnal Sosiologi USK (Media Pemikiran & Aplikasi)* 13, no. 1 (August 6, 2019): 1–15, https://doi.org/10.24815/jsu.v13i1.13030.

Functionally, this institutional communication is not limited to a single actor; it involves leaders, teachers, students, and alumni networks who participate in public recitations and social-religious activities, even if formal organizational structures of public relations are not fully institutionalized. [27]

Beyond branding, dayah popularity is situated within a longer historical role of Islamic education in Aceh. Prior to independence, dayah functioned as institutions that educated communities in Islamic teachings; during the colonial period, dayah also supported social mobilization and resistance through religious narratives. However, dayah management was also shaped by broader social conditions beyond education alone, particularly under colonial pressures and conflict.[28] These historical notes remain important because they provide continuity: dayah popularity is not constructed in a vacuum but is grounded in long-term sociocultural roles that the community recognizes.

Contemporary educational change is also presented as a key part of modernization. Technology increasingly becomes intertwined with learning practices, producing both supportive and critical responses. The expansion of webinars and virtual learning practices in recent years illustrates broader shifts in knowledge delivery beyond physical spaces. Against this background, the establishment of IAI Al-Aziziyah Samalanga is presented as Dayah MUDI's response to contemporary educational challenges, including those framed in VUCA terms. This is interpreted as an effort to open Islamic education access at the undergraduate level while still maintaining dayah identity and traditional learning continuity.

The analysis also highlights learning models that illustrate negotiated modernization. Two learning models are described: a fully dayah-based pathway and a mixed pathway combining formal schooling in the morning and dayah recitation at night.[29] These models show that modernization is not necessarily an abandonment of tradition but an adaptive strategy that responds to diverse social expectations. Modernization efforts can create tension, including fears that establishing higher education would weaken dayah identity.[30] However, the narrative argues that identity loss did not occur because Dayah MUDI maintained its distinctive dayah

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[27] S Kholil, I Zulkarnain, and S Bahri, "The Existence of Public Relation in Constructing Image in Dayah MUDI MESRA Samalanga Bireuen, Aceh, Indonesia," *IOSR-JHSS: Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 23, no. 1 (2018): 1.

[28] Marzuki, "Sejarah Dan Perubahan Pesantren Di Aceh."

[29] Marzuki.

[30] Marzuki; Tabrani ZA et al., "Parameter Transformasi Kurikulum Dayah Salafiyah Di Aceh," *Tazkir : Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial Dan Keislaman* 7, no. 1 (June 30, 2021): 91–110, https://doi.org/10.24952/tazkir.v7i1.4218.

tradition while expanding educational opportunities, supported by the continuity of religious legitimacy attached to the dayah and its leadership.[31]

The identity dimension is made explicit through Communication Theory of Identity and Identity Negotiation Theory.[32] In this framing, Dayah MUDI's development illustrates how identity is negotiated between institutional tradition and contemporary cultural demands. The dayah is portrayed as combining classical dayah concepts with the needs of the times while seeking to maintain the "purity" of traditional dayah identity. This identity negotiation clarifies why modernization and popularity can coexist: modernization can increase public access and visibility, while identity continuity sustains legitimacy and trust.

Finally, the role of media is emphasized as a key infrastructure for expanding networks and disseminating Islamic teachings. Dayah MUDI's use of social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, alongside YouTube and the emergence of MUDI TV, broadens da'wah and educational outreach. In line with the "global village" concept popularized by McLuhan and cited via Zahid,[33] media facilitates the circulation of religious messages beyond local boundaries and strengthens audience connectivity. In this context, media functions not only as a communication tool but as a mechanism that amplifies institutional visibility, supports branding efforts, and extends the reach of Islamic education dissemination to wider publics.

## D. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Dayah MUDI Samalanga functions as a significant Islamic education center whose institutional legitimacy is closely connected to the sociocultural context of Aceh. The historical strengthening of Islam in Aceh, together with the enduring role of dayah institutions, has produced a social environment in which religious authority continues to occupy a central position. Within this setting, Dayah MUDI's institutional presence is sustained not only by its educational functions but also by broader sociocultural structures that reinforce its relevance within Acehnese society.

The findings indicate that *teungku* authority remains a key mechanism shaping the legitimacy of Dayah MUDI. Authority is constructed through scholarly recognition, moral leadership, and culturally embedded symbolic meanings that regulate obedience, discipline,

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[31] Ahmad, "A Current Portrait of Islamic Education in Aceh."

[32] S W Littlejohn and K A Foss, *Theories of Human Communication* (Sage Publications, 2008); Nur Rohim Yunus, "Penerapan Syariat Islam Terhadap Peraturan Daerah Dalam Sistem Hukum Nasional Indonesi," *HUNAFA: Jurnal Studia Islamika* 12, no. 2 (January 22, 2016): 253, https://doi.org/10.24239/jsi.v12i2.394.253-279.

[33] Zahid, "Sensualitas Media Sosial Di Era Globalisasi (Kajian Sosiologi Media McLuhan Sebagai Analisis Media Masa Kini)."

and community trust. At the institutional level, leadership authority is also reflected in governance practices and educational development, illustrating that religious authority persists while institutional structures adapt to contemporary educational demands.

Furthermore, the popularity of Dayah MUDI emerges as a sociocultural phenomenon shaped by the interaction between leadership legitimacy, institutional communication practices, educational modernization, and sustained media visibility. Modernization processes are negotiated in ways that accommodate social change without dissolving dayah identity, while media engagement expands institutional outreach and strengthens public recognition. Overall, this case highlights that dayah institutions are not passive recipients of modernization but active actors negotiating continuity and transformation within contemporary socioreligious environments.

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