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# INTEGRATING SUFI VALUES IN ACEH'S DAYAH SALAFIYAH: STRATEGIES AND CHALLENGES IN HARMONIZING TRADITION WITH MODERNITY

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#### **Abstract**

Dayah Salafiyah in Aceh play a crucial role in preserving Islamic traditions and instilling Sufi values, particularly in the face of modernization and technological advancement. These institutions focus on developing ethical and spiritual resilience among students while addressing challenges posed by contemporary societal changes. This study investigates the methods employed by Dayah BUDI Mesja Lamno, Dayah Darul Munawwarah Kuta Krueng, Dayah MUDI Mesra Samalanga, and Dayah Ruhul Fata Seulimum Aceh Besar to internalize and adapt Sufi values in their educational frameworks. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews, direct observations, and curriculum analysis. The study found that dayahs utilize methods such as the study of kitab turath, spiritual retreats (khalwat), daily rituals, and mentorship to foster virtues like humility, patience, and reliance on God. However, challenges persist, including technological distractions, societal pressures, and misconceptions about Sufism. The dayahs address these through strict discipline, critical engagement, and community support. The findings affirm the enduring relevance of Sufi values in navigating modern complexities while maintaining spiritual depth. By integrating traditional teachings with selective adaptation, Dayah Salafiyah provide a balanced model for education.

Keywords: Sufi values, Dayah Salafiyah, Islamic education, modernity

#### **Abstrak**

Dayah Salafiyah di Aceh memainkan peran penting dalam melestarikan tradisi Islam dan menanamkan nilai-nilai tasawuf, khususnya di tengah modernisasi dan perkembangan teknologi. Institusi ini berfokus pada pengembangan etika dan ketahanan spiritual siswa sambil menghadapi tantangan dari perubahan masyarakat modern. Penelitian ini mengkaji metode yang digunakan oleh Dayah BUDI Mesja Lamno, Dayah Darul Munawwarah Kuta Krueng, Dayah MUDI Mesra Samalanga, dan Dayah Ruhul Fata Seulimum Aceh Besar untuk menginternalisasi dan mengadaptasi nilai-nilai tasawuf dalam kerangka pendidikan mereka. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi langsung, dan analisis kurikulum. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dayah menggunakan metode seperti kajian *kitab turath*, retret spiritual (*khalwat*), ritual harian, dan pembinaan untuk menanamkan nilai-nilai seperti rendah hati, kesabaran, dan tawakal. Namun, tantangan tetap ada, termasuk gangguan teknologi, tekanan sosial, dan miskonsepsi tentang tasawuf. Dayah menghadapi ini

melalui disiplin ketat, keterlibatan kritis, dan dukungan komunitas. Hasil penelitian menegaskan relevansi nilai-nilai tasawuf dalam menghadapi kompleksitas modern dengan tetap menjaga kedalaman spiritual. Dengan mengintegrasikan ajaran tradisional dan adaptasi selektif, Dayah Salafiyah menawarkan model pendidikan yang seimbang.

Kata Kunci: Nilai-nilai tasawuf, Dayah Salafiyah, pendidikan Islam, modernitas

#### A. Introduction

The rapid advancement of science and technology has profoundly impacted societal values, creating both opportunities and challenges for maintaining spiritual and moral integrity. Religion continues to play a vital role in guiding individuals to harmonize ethical principles with the complexities of modern life, offering a framework for coexistence in an increasingly diverse and evolving world (Al-Attas, 2013; Erihadiana et al., 2021). By promoting tolerance, mutual respect, and ethical living, religion provides a stabilizing influence amid rapid societal change.

Modernity, often influenced by Western paradigms, brings significant benefits, such as technological progress and globalization, but also challenges deeply rooted spiritual traditions (Shafiqur Rahaman, 2022). This dynamic fosters tensions between the materialistic tendencies of modern life and the need for moral grounding. Scholars argue that addressing these tensions requires an integrative approach that bridges tradition with contemporary realities (Akmalia et al., 2021; Nasrollahi et al., 2020). Sufism (tasawuf), as a spiritual discipline within Islam, offers a meaningful response by emphasizing inner purification, ethical discipline, and spiritual resilience (Hermansen, 2023; Shadiqin, 2014).

Dayah Salafiyah in Aceh serve as critical institutions preserving Islamic heritage and fostering Sufi values (Daniel et al., 2024; Erawadi & Setiadi, 2024). These traditional Islamic boarding schools provide deep knowledge of Islamic sciences—such as Quranic exegesis, jurisprudence, and theology—while integrating tasawuf to instill humility, patience, and reliance on God (Abubakar, 2008). They play a pivotal role in shaping Aceh's cultural and religious identity, standing as bastions of tradition amidst globalization and moral decline (Nasution et al., 2019; Subakat, 2017). Their curricula, enriched by classical Islamic texts, aim to cultivate well-rounded individuals who can

navigate the challenges of modernity while remaining spiritually grounded (Roche, 2012).

Previous studies have underscored the relevance of Sufism in addressing contemporary challenges. For instance, Niliyati ((2015) highlighted its role in fostering resilience against materialistic pressures, while Idris (2020) explored the integration of tasawuf in pesantren education as a means of ethical character building. Akmalia et al. (2021) emphasized Nurcholish Madjid's perspective on harmonizing Islamic spirituality with modern values, and Nurhaliza (2023) illustrated the transformative potential of Sufi practices in shaping behavior and addressing existential dilemmas. Similarly, Fakhrurrazi (2022) highlighted the strategic role of Dayah Salafiyah in sustaining religious culture in Aceh. Building on these insights, this study examines the internalization of Sufi values in Dayah Salafiyah in Aceh. It specifically investigates how these institutions adapt classical Sufi teachings to modern societal demands while preserving their traditional essence. By analyzing the perspectives of teachers and students, this research explores the pedagogical strategies, challenges, and outcomes of integrating tasawuf into contemporary educational frameworks, offering insights into its enduring relevance in fostering ethical and spiritual resilience.

## **B.** Method

This study adopts a qualitative approach to explore how Dayah Salafiyah in Aceh internalize and adapt Sufi values to address the challenges posed by modernity. The qualitative approach is particularly suited to understanding the complex dynamics of religious traditions, identity preservation, and modern influences. Using fundamentalism theory as an analytical framework, the study examines the strategies employed by these institutions to balance their traditional spiritual teachings with the demands of contemporary society. This theoretical lens focuses on the tension between preserving religious orthodoxy and navigating external pressures, such as globalization and technological advancements (Sukri, 2021).

The research was conducted in four Dayah Salafiyah located in Aceh: Dayah BUDI Lamno, Dayah Darul Munawwarah Kuta Krueng, Dayah MUDI Mesra Samalanga, and Dayah Ruhul Fata Seulimum Aceh Besar. These institutions were chosen for their prominent roles in preserving Islamic education and Sufi traditions within Aceh's unique

socio-cultural context. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with dayah leaders (*teungku*), teachers, and students. Observations spanned several weeks, focusing on daily practices, teaching methods, and the application of Sufi principles within the educational environment. Additionally, curricula and teaching materials were analyzed to understand how Sufi traditions are systematically imparted. This qualitative approach allows for an in-depth exploration of three interconnected aspects of the dayahs' engagement with modernity: their resistance to certain influences deemed incompatible with Sufi teachings, their selective adaptation of modern tools and methods to enhance education, and their commitment to preserving their traditional identity. The focus on these dimensions ensures a comprehensive understanding of how these institutions sustain their roles as spiritual and educational centers in the face of contemporary challenges.

### C. Result and Discussion

## 1. Application of Sufi Values in Dayah Salafiyah in Aceh

The integration of Sufi values within Dayah Salafiyah in Aceh is a structured and deliberate effort, reflecting the commitment of these institutions to cultivate both spiritual and moral development among their students. These practices are deeply rooted in Islamic tradition and adapted to address contemporary challenges while maintaining the essence of Sufi teachings. Each dayah employs unique methods tailored to its institutional philosophy and the spiritual needs of its students.

At Dayah BUDI Mesja Lamno, three primary methods are utilized: the study of classical texts (*kitab turath*), critical analysis (*muthalaah*), and daily interactions between teachers and students. The *kitab turath* serve as foundational references, ensuring that students acquire a comprehensive understanding of classical Sufi teachings. The process of *muthalaah*, involving in-depth study and critical engagement with the texts, encourages students to think independently and fosters intellectual maturity. Meanwhile, the close daily interactions between teachers and students allow for the practical demonstration of Sufi values, as teachers model ethical and spiritual behavior for their students to emulate. This approach ensures that the theoretical teachings of Sufism are seamlessly integrated into students' daily lives (Interview with Wasi'al Fadhly, 2024).

The emphasis on *kitab turath* at Dayah BUDI Mesja Lamno underscores the role of textual traditions in shaping Islamic scholarship. As highlighted by Asnawi et al (2024), classical texts provide not only theological frameworks but also ethical and spiritual guidance that remain relevant in modern contexts. By engaging with these texts, students learn to apply Sufi principles in ways that address contemporary moral dilemmas, bridging historical wisdom with current realities. This aligns other studies which emphasize that the integration of Sufi teachings fosters moral resilience in the face of materialistic pressures (Cetinkaya & Billings, 2023; Nur & Iqbal Irham, 2023).

At Dayah Darul Munawwarah Kuta Krueng, Sufi values are imparted through a systematic and progressive curriculum, particularly emphasizing the teachings of the Syattariyah and Khulwatiyah orders. Advanced students, particularly those in the fifth year, are required to undertake a spiritual retreat (*khalwat*), which involves a month-long period of isolation and dedicated worship. This retreat aims to instill patience (*sabar*), trust in God (*tawakal*), and humility (*zuhud*) among participants. The structured nature of these retreats, combined with rigorous supervision by experienced teachers, ensures that students develop a strong spiritual foundation. The curriculum further integrates these Sufi practices with broader life skills, equipping students to remain grounded in their faith while engaging with modern challenges (Interview with Zulfahmi, 2024). The practice of *khalwat* reflects the centrality of spiritual seclusion in Sufi pedagogy. Such practices foster introspection and resilience, enabling individuals to navigate external pressures without compromising their spiritual identity. Nasution et al. (2019) argue that *khalwat* plays a pivotal role in enhancing inner strength and focus amidst external distractions.

At Dayah MUDI Mesra Samalanga, Sufi values are introduced gradually and systematically, aligned with the students' educational levels and spiritual readiness. The teaching process integrates Sufi principles into both the curriculum and the day-to-day activities of the students. Teachers act as role models, exemplifying simplicity, patience, and trust in God. Collective rituals, such as daily remembrance of God (*zikir*) and congregational prayers, reinforce these values within a community framework. This dual focus on individual discipline and collective spirituality creates an environment conducive to the internalization of Sufi teachings. Students are encouraged to apply these values in their interactions, decision-making, and approach to modern societal challenges (Interview with Muhibbul Khairi, 2024; Interview with Hadi Subulana, 2024). The

gradual introduction of Sufi principles at Dayah MUDI Mesra highlights the importance of aligning spiritual education with developmental stages. This process requires intentional progression through stages like *takhalli* (cleansing the heart) and *tahalli* (adorning the heart with virtues), ensuring students internalize values both intellectually and spiritually (Akbar Romadlon et al., 2023).

At Dayah Ruhul Fata Seulimum Aceh Besar, the application of Sufi values is deeply intertwined with the practices of the Syattariyah order. Students are introduced to specific Sufi practices progressively as they advance in their studies. Beginning in the fourth year, students participate in intensive training during the holy month of Ramadan, which includes collective remembrance (wirid), meditation, and supervised spiritual retreats (suluk). These practices aim to deepen students' connection to God while fostering essential Sufi virtues such as self-discipline, humility, and trust. The guidance provided by teachers ensures that students internalize these practices not only as religious rituals but also as principles guiding their daily conduct. The structured nature of these practices strengthens the students' ability to navigate modern complexities without compromising their spiritual integrity (Interview with Muhammad Rijalusshafi, 2024).

The structured practice of suluk at Dayah Ruhul Fata reflects the enduring relevance of disciplined spiritual training in contemporary education. According to Syahroni and Irawan (2024), suluk functions as a deep self-transformation tool, helping individuals in their search for life's meaning, moral development, and spiritual awareness, which in turn impacts their social and cultural lives. Furthermore, research by Lubis and Naldo (2024) shows that spiritual practices like suluk can deepen an individual's relationship with God, enhance moral values, and encourage a disciplined lifestyle. Both studies indicate that spiritual practices like suluk are relevant in addressing the challenges of modernity, especially in the context of personal transformation and changes in social behavior.

Across all the dayahs, the application of Sufi values demonstrates a holistic approach to education, integrating theoretical learning with practical application. The emphasis on both individual moral development and collective spiritual practices underscores the enduring relevance of Sufi teachings in shaping resilient and ethically grounded individuals. By blending rigorous traditional education with a focus on character formation, these institutions effectively prepare their students to navigate the challenges of modernity while remaining anchored in Islamic values.

# 2. Integrating Sufi Values with the Demands and Values of Modernity

The integration of Sufi values with modernity within Dayah Salafiyah represents a complex and nuanced process. These institutions strive to balance deeply rooted spiritual teachings with the demands of an increasingly globalized and technologically driven world. Each dayah employs distinct strategies, blending selective adaptation with deliberate resistance to ensure that their foundational values remain intact.

At Dayah BUDI Mesja Lamno, the integration of Sufi values with modernity is approached cautiously, prioritizing spiritual discipline and detachment from material distractions. The dayah enforces a strict prohibition on the use of modern technologies, such as smartphones, among students. This policy is designed to minimize distractions and maintain focus on the study of *kitab turath*, which serves as the cornerstone of the educational experience. The daily schedule revolves around recitation, memorization, and analysis of these classical texts, which are supplemented by *muthalaah* sessions where students are encouraged to engage critically with the material. Teachers also guide students in relating these texts to contemporary societal issues, providing a framework to navigate modern challenges through the lens of Sufi teachings. The institution emphasizes simplicity (*zuhud*) and discipline as essential virtues for countering the materialism often associated with modern life (Interview with Wasi'al Fadhly, 2024).

Dayah Darul Munawwarah Kuta Krueng adopts a more adaptive approach, integrating selected modern tools into its curriculum while maintaining the integrity of Sufi traditions. Teachers occasionally use devices such as laptops and projectors for instructional purposes, but only in ways that enhance learning without compromising spiritual values. Students are taught to critically assess technological advancements, ensuring that their use aligns with Islamic ethics. In addition to this cautious engagement with technology, the dayah maintains a strong emphasis on spiritual practices. Fifth-year students are required to participate in a month-long *khalwat* (spiritual retreat), where they disconnect from worldly influences and dedicate themselves to intense worship and self-reflection. This practice reinforces values such as patience (*sabar*), trust in God (*tawakal*), and humility (*zuhud*), which are considered crucial for navigating the pressures of modern society while staying true to Islamic principles (Interview with Zulfahmi, 2024). The selective adaptation at Dayah Darul Munawwarah illustrates how modern tools can be incorporated into traditional education without compromising core values.

At Dayah MUDI Mesra Samalanga, the integration of modernity is guided by a commitment to instilling strong spiritual foundations while selectively incorporating elements of modern education. While the use of modern devices such as tablets and projectors is allowed for teaching purposes, the use of smartphones among students remains strictly prohibited. This dual policy reflects a recognition of the benefits of modern tools for enhancing education, balanced by a concern for maintaining spiritual discipline. Collective rituals, such as daily zikir and prayers, are central to the dayah's efforts to internalize Sufi values like simplicity, patience, and reliance on God. Teachers serve as role models, demonstrating these values in their own lives and interactions with students. This approach ensures that students not only learn about Sufi principles but also experience their practical application, equipping them to apply these teachings in their engagement with modern societal challenges (Interview with Muhibbul Khairi, 2024; Interview with Hadi Subulana, 2024). The dual emphasis on spiritual grounding and selective adaptation at Dayah MUDI Mesra aligns with the findings of Nurhaliza (2023), who emphasizes that integrating Sufi values into modern educational frameworks enhances students' capacity to navigate contemporary challenges ethically.

Dayah Ruhul Fata Seulimum Aceh Besar places a strong emphasis on internalizing Sufi values through immersive spiritual practices and traditional educational methods. Students are introduced to specific Sufi rituals, such as collective wirid and supervised suluk (spiritual retreats), which aim to cultivate self-discipline and strengthen their relationship with God. Fourth-year students participate in intensive training during the holy month of Ramadan, which involves isolation for spiritual reflection and meditation. These practices are carefully designed to help students internalize virtues such as humility, self-restraint, and trust in God, enabling them to navigate modern challenges without compromising their spiritual integrity. Teachers play a crucial role in guiding students through this process, providing personalized mentorship and ensuring that the lessons learned during these practices are reflected in their daily lives (Interview with Muhammad Rijalusshafi, 2024). The critical approach to modernity at Dayah Ruhul Fata is supported by studies that highlight the necessity of fostering discernment among students in traditional institutions. Across all the dayahs, the integration of Sufi values with modernity showcases a diverse range of strategies that blend resistance with adaptation. This careful balance allows students to internalize Sufi teachings while equipping them with the skills and knowledge to engage with the demands of the modern world ethically and spiritually.

## 3. Challenges in Internalizing Sufi Values in Dayah Salafiyah in the Modern Era

Dayah Salafiyah in Aceh face significant challenges in internalizing Sufi values amidst rapid societal changes, external cultural influences, and technological advancements. These challenges span various aspects, including student behavior, external pressures, and the tension between traditional and modern values. Each dayah navigates these challenges uniquely, employing strategies to balance their educational objectives with evolving societal contexts.

At Dayah BUDI Mesja Lamno, enforcing the strict prohibition of smartphones among students remains a major challenge. While this policy aims to uphold focus on spiritual and academic pursuits, some students attempt to circumvent these rules, introducing distractions into the environment. Additionally, many students arrive at the dayah with preconceived notions influenced by modern ideologies, which can clash with the institution's traditional teachings. Teachers address these challenges by encouraging students to critically evaluate these external influences against the principles outlined in *kitab turath*. Over time, persistent guidance helps students align with the dayah's spiritual framework and adopt Sufi values in their lives (Interview with Wasi'al Fadhly, 2024). The enforcement of such rules at Dayah BUDI Mesja Lamno demonstrates the broader challenge faced by Islamic institutions globally in managing modern technology's disruptive potential.

At Dayah Darul Munawwarah Kuta Krueng, the use of technology is more adaptive but remains tightly controlled. While laptops and projectors are occasionally used for instructional purposes, the influence of unregulated digital media outside the dayah presents a significant challenge. Teachers work to instill ethical guidelines for technology use, emphasizing the importance of upholding Islamic values in digital spaces. Another key issue is the limited oversight of students' behavior when they return to their communities during breaks. While parents are expected to continue the moral and spiritual guidance provided by the dayah, inconsistencies often arise, leading to potential lapses in adherence to Sufi values (Interview with Zulfahmi, 2024). The challenges at

Dayah Darul Munawwarah highlight the importance of ethical literacy in digital interactions.

At Dayah MUDI Mesra Samalanga, a major challenge involves addressing misconceptions about Sufism among students and their families. Many perceive Sufism as outdated or incompatible with modern life, creating resistance to practices such as collective *zikir* and the strict discipline of the dayah. Teachers counter this by providing clear explanations of Sufi principles and their relevance in fostering moral and spiritual resilience. Another challenge lies in transforming students' character, particularly those who enter the dayah with limited understanding or commitment to Islamic values. Teachers employ patience and mentorship to gradually instill Sufi teachings, though this process often requires significant time and effort (Interview with Muhibbul Khairi, 2024; Interview with Hadi Subulana, 2024). These challenges at Dayah MUDI Mesra underscore the broader issue of misconceptions surrounding Sufism in contemporary contexts.

At Dayah Ruhul Fata Seulimum Aceh Besar, ensuring that students internalize Sufi teachings amidst external pressures is a central challenge. The influence of societal trends and social media often conflicts with the institution's core values. Teachers address this by strengthening students' internal resilience through structured spiritual practices, such as *wirid* and *suluk*, while offering personalized mentorship to help students apply these teachings in their daily lives. However, the limited control over students' behavior during holidays or other times away from the dayah remains a persistent difficulty (Interview with Muhammad Rijalusshafi, 2024). The tension between external societal pressures and internal spiritual discipline at Dayah Ruhul Fata reflects a broader struggle in Islamic education.

Across all the dayahs, the challenges in internalizing Sufi values highlight the tension between preserving traditional spiritual teachings and navigating the realities of modern life. While these institutions employ various strategies to address these difficulties—such as discipline, mentorship, and parental involvement—external pressures require ongoing innovation and adaptability. Despite these challenges, the resilience of these institutions underscores their unwavering commitment to ensuring that Sufi values remain central to education and character development.

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### **D.** Conclusion

Dayah Salafiyah in Aceh stand as vital guardians of Islamic tradition and spiritual education in the face of modernity's rapid transformations. Their emphasis on the internalization of Sufi values, rooted in classical Islamic teachings, reflects a profound commitment to cultivating ethical and spiritually grounded individuals. By blending theoretical and practical approaches, these institutions equip students with the tools to navigate contemporary challenges without compromising their spiritual integrity. The study highlights the diverse methodologies employed by the dayahs, such as the use of *kitab turath*, critical discussions, spiritual retreats, and daily rituals, which collectively nurture resilience and moral discipline. Institutions like Dayah BUDI Mesja Lamno prioritize simplicity and detachment from material distractions, while Dayah Darul Munawwarah Kuta Krueng adopts selective technological integration to enhance learning while preserving core values. Similarly, Dayah MUDI Mesra Samalanga and Dayah Ruhul Fata Seulimum underscore the importance of mentorship, collective rituals, and spiritual immersion in fostering Sufi virtues like patience, humility, and trust in God.

The integration of Sufi teachings with the demands of modernity reveals both opportunities and challenges. While these institutions demonstrate a remarkable ability to adapt, the tension between preserving traditional values and engaging with technological and societal changes remains evident. Strict regulation of modern tools, critical engagement with external influences, and reliance on parental and community support emerge as essential strategies to sustain their mission. This research affirms the enduring relevance of Sufi values in addressing the spiritual and ethical crises of modern life. By fostering a holistic approach to education—one that seamlessly integrates classical Islamic teachings with practical applications—Dayah Salafiyah not only preserve their heritage but also inspire a balanced model of living that harmonizes tradition with contemporary realities.

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