

Dayah Education Model as the Basis for Character and Spirituality Development

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Abstract

This article discusses the role of the *Dayah* education model in Aceh in developing students' religious and social character, and its relevance as an educational institution grounded in Islamic values amid modernization. This study uses a qualitative-descriptive case study approach to explore in depth the role of *Dayah* education in character formation. Data was obtained from primary sources (in-depth interviews with teungku, students, and *Dayah* managers) and secondary sources (curriculum documents, diaries, and *kitab kuning*). Data collection techniques include participatory observation of learning activities, semi-structured interviews, and documentation studies. The data were analyzed thematically through coding, pattern identification, and interpretation to uncover the values of character education and *Dayah* adaptation strategies in the modern era. Triangulation of sources and methods is carried out to ensure the validity of the data. The study's findings show that the *Dayah* functions not only as a center for religious learning but also as a fortress in maintaining the Islamic identity and local culture of the Acehnese people. This research contributes to the literature on character-based Islamic education. It shows that *Dayah* has the potential to address the challenges of globalization by integrating modern practical skills. *Dayah* can serve as a relevant and sustainable model of education that maintains tradition while meeting the needs of the times.

Keywords

Character Development; *Dayah* Education; Islamic Identity

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1. INTRODUCTION

Dayah education plays an important role in maintaining the identity and Islamic culture of the Acehnese people. As an educational institution that teaches Islamic values and Acehnese culture that has taken root (Fauzan, 2021; Nurdin et al., 2020; Rahman, 2021; Subita et al., 2024), *Dayah* functions as a fortress of tradition and local identity in the midst of modernization and globalization (Astuti, 2017; Basyit, 2017). The *Dayah* education model emphasizes character development through the values of honesty, discipline, responsibility, and mutual respect (Ilyas et al., 2023; Rahman, 2021; Sanusi et al., 2021). It is an important foundation for building a society with noble ethics.



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However, major challenges arise from the influence of globalization and modernization, which bring values that are contrary to local culture and religion (Kusuijarti et al., 2015; Sahrasad et al., 2023). This phenomenon threatens the existence of the typical values of the *Dayah* (Fitryansyah, 2024; Zayadi, 2023), where the younger generation is increasingly moving away from traditional ethics and morals due to the influence of popular culture, social media, and modern lifestyles. On the other hand, the modern education system often ignores the aspect of spirituality, which is actually a power of *Dayah* through the deep integration of worship practices and Islamic values (Nasir et al., 2024; Wildan, 2022).

This research is important for three reasons. *First*, as an effort to maintain the identity of Acean, which is being threatened by the erosion of Islamic values and local culture due to globalization. *Second*, to develop an effective character education model by studying the success of *Dayah* in cultivating noble character. *Third*, this research is relevant to addressing the need for an education that integrates spirituality in the modern era, creating a balance between science and religious values. The research findings are expected to be a reference in developing a more holistic education system while preserving the noble values of the Acehnese people.

Based on the latest literature review, research on *Dayah* education in Aceh has developed in several main themes. Some recent studies, such as Nasir, explore digital transformation in *Dayah* learning (Nasir et al., 2024). Furthermore, Fakhrurrazi examines the role of *Dayah* in maintaining religious culture through habituation strategies and exemplary (Fakhrurrazi et al., 2021). Other research conducted by Mubarak focused on the contribution of *Dayah* in the implementation of Islamic Sharia (Mubarak et al., 2023), and Idris analyzes the humanist approach in the *Dayah* education system (Idris et al., 2024). However, these studies tend to be partial and do not offer a comprehensive framework that integrates aspects of modern character, spirituality, and adaptation into a single, complete educational model.

The novelty of this research lies in the development of an integrative model that connects the three critical dimensions of Dahah education. *First*, this model brings together a community-based approach to character education with the concept of contextualized spirituality excavated from *Dayah*'s empirical practice. *Second*, this research introduces the concept of filtered modernization, which considers not only the technical aspects of technological adaptation but also its impact on the formation of spiritual values. *Third*, this study develops a holistic policy framework to integrate the *Dayah* model into the national education system. With this multidimensional approach, the research not only fills gaps in the Islamic educational literature but also offers practical solutions for character development and spiritual education in the contemporary era.

The arguments presented in this study focus on the role of *Dayah* education as an alternative model for shaping the character of the younger generation amid an increasingly powerful globalizing current. Although many previous studies have considered formal education in schools to be the only effective means of cultivating character, this hypothesis challenges that view, arguing that traditional education, such as *Dayah*, can offer a more holistic and integrated approach.

First, *Dayah* education integrates spiritual and moral values in the curriculum, which is often overlooked in the formal education system. This provides an understanding that good character is not only built through academic knowledge, but also through the strengthening of deep religious and ethical values. In this context, *Dayah* serves as a forum for harmonizing knowledge and spirituality, fostering a wiser and ethical person.

Second, this hypothesis suggests that character education in *Dayah* can serve as a bulwark against the negative influences of modernization, such as popular culture and social media, which are often not aligned with local values. By emphasizing education rooted in customs and communities, *Dayah* can create a more resilient generation that raises awareness of its cultural identity.

Finally, this argument also suggests that an educational approach focused on local and spiritual values can be adapted beyond Aceh, thereby providing an alternative for other educational institutions

in Indonesia to create a more sustainable education system. Thus, this study seeks to offer a new perspective that emphasizes the importance of traditional education for character formation in the modern era, in contrast to the prevailing narrative that prioritizes the formal education system as the only path to success.

This study aims to: (1) test the effectiveness of the *Dayah* education model in shaping the character of the younger generation compared to the formal education approach; (2) analyze the role of *Dayah* in maintaining local and spiritual values in the era of modernization; and (3) developing a framework for adapting the *Dayah* model to enrich the national character education system. Through these goals, this research is expected to make an academic contribution by offering an alternative perspective grounded in local wisdom to strengthen character amid globalization challenges.

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Somantri, 2005) to understand in depth the *Dayah* educational model, with a focus on character development and aspects of spirituality taught. This approach will help uncover the meanings, values, and experiences of students and educators in the *Dayah* environment that cannot be quantified. This study uses a case study design to analyze several representative *Dayah* in Aceh. Case studies allow for intensive exploration of the teaching methods, values, and practices used in *Dayah*. The research was conducted in several *Dayah* in Aceh that have traditional educational characteristics and focus on Islamic values. These locations were chosen to obtain data relevant to the local context: South Aceh, Bireun, and Pidie Jaya.

Data collection techniques included interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with *Ustadz*, students, and *Dayah* leaders to find out their experiences and views on character development and spirituality in *Dayah* education. In-depth interviews are conducted using semi-structured guidelines to remain focused while remaining flexible in gathering information. Then, the researcher conducted participatory observation by participating in daily activities in *Dayah*, including teaching and learning, recitations, and worship. These observations help researchers observe direct interactions and educational practices that support character development and spirituality. Furthermore, related documents, such as modules, syllabi, curricula, and diaries, are collected to gain a deeper understanding of the structure and content of education in *Dayah*. This documentation also helps identify the values explicitly taught in the learning materials. Data from interviews, observations, and documentation were analyzed using thematic analysis. This process involves identifying key themes related to character development and spirituality in the *Dayah* educational model.

This study uses thematic analysis to analyze qualitative data obtained from interviews, participatory observations, and document studies. The analysis process begins with data transcription and familiarization, followed by inductive coding to identify patterns related to character development and spirituality. Furthermore, the codes are grouped into themes representing the values, methods, and practices of education in *Dayah*. Meanwhile, the validation of findings is carried out through triangulation of sources (interviews, observations, documents).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

Development of Customary Dayah in Aceh

The traditional Islamic-based education model in Aceh has undergone significant development since its inception, especially after the establishment of Zawiyah Cot Kala on the East Coast of Aceh.

The birth of several educational *Dayahs* in Aceh is inseparable from the contributions of the *Da'wah* Force or the Zawiyah Peureulak scholars (Usman et al., 2024). These scholars played an important role in spreading Islamic teachings throughout the Aceh region during the Islamic period of Peureulak (922-946 AD) (Ajis, 2021; Bustamam-Ahmad, 2017; Muchsin, 2019; Phonna, 2023; Usman et al., 2024), Samudra Pasai (1270-1326 AD) (Arifia et al., 2023; Aulia Rahman, Usman, Madhan Anis, Husaini Ibrahim, 2024; Inagurasi, 2017; Syaputri et al., 2023; Yuzaili, 2018), until the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam (Haykal, 2022). During the reigns of Sultan Ali Mughayat Shah (1589-1602 AD) and Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607-1636 AD), *Dayah*-based education, characterized by the traditional Islamic education system, reached its peak. This makes the *Dayah* education model in Aceh not only famous in the Aceh area but also spread to Southeast Asia (Buto & Hafifuddin, 2020; Raya, 2021; Syafieh et al., 2022).

However, during the reign of Sultan Muhammad Daud Shah (1874-1897), the beginning of the ups and downs of this traditional Islamic education center was marked. This condition resulted from the prolonged war since 1873, which was not declared to end until 1903. This prolonged conflict resulted in great damage in Aceh, including the destruction of many *Dayah*, as a result of the Dutch colonial policy implemented in the Aceh region (Amiruddin & Ernita, 2017; Hasjmy, 1978).

After Sultan Alaiddin Muhammad Daud Syah and several guerrilla leaders were captured by the Dutch, the clerics in Aceh adopted a new strategy. Some of them reported to the Dutch commander and initiated a plan to rebuild the conventional *Dayah*-daayahs, which still retained the characteristics of traditional Acehnese Islamic education. Meanwhile, some other clerics continue to lead guerrilla warfare in the forests of Aceh. Ali Hasjmy mentioned that "... The clerics who led the guerrilla war negotiated and deliberated. In the deliberations, it was decided that some of them were allowed to report for the task of reopening educational places, while others continued the war." (Hasjmy, 1978).

In 1904, after the war began to subside, initiatives to renovate and rebuild the *Dayah* reappeared. The scholars took quick steps to renovate the rangkang (building where teaching and learning) had been damaged during the war, as well as to build a new *Dayah*. *Dayah* was founded on the initiative of a scholar (*Teungku* or *Teungku Chik*) (Hanafiah, 2018) Usually, after he migrated to deepen his knowledge, which in Acehnese is called *Jak Trading*. The current educational model emphasizes more conventional approaches and diligent and continuous learning." During this period, the local community, from the gampong and mukim levels to the nanggroe level, also provided financial and social support for the development of *Dayah*.

Some of the famous *Dayah* that were established or renovated in this period include *Dayah Lam Birah*, *Dayah Tanoh Abay*, *Dayah La Nyong*, *Dayah Lam U*, *Dayah Kreung Kale*, *Dayah Lam Krak*, *Dayah Lampoh Raya*, *Dayah Tiro Pidie*, *Dayah Masjid Raya Samalanga*, *Dayah Pulo Kiton*, *Dayah Rumpet* on the West Coast of Aceh, and *Chik Di Rundeng* (Sufi & Wibowo, 2009).

Between 1918 and 1930, the development of *Dayah* and *Rangkang* spread across various parts of Aceh. Some of them are *Dayah Lhok Bubon*, *Dayah Jram*, *Dayah Daya*, *Dayah Bitay*, *Dayah Cala*, *Dayah Montasiek*, *Dayah Piyeung*, *Dayah Lam Ara*, *Dayah Seulimeum*, *Dayah Lam Sie*, *Dayah Keunalau*, *Dayah Lam Tamot*, *Dayah Peudaya*, *Dayah Garot*, *Dayah Samalanga*, *Dayah Pante Geulima*, *Dayah Blang Bladeh*, *Dayah Jeurat Manyang*, *Dayah Iboih*, *Dayah Cot Meurak*, *Dayah Pulo Kiton*, and *Dayah Simpang Ulim* (Hasjmy, 1978).

Overall, the development of *Dayah* in Aceh is the result of the ongoing efforts of scholars and local communities to sustain traditional Islamic education. The development of traditional *Dayah* in Aceh is presented in more detail in Table 1.

Table 1. The Development of Traditional *Dayah* in Aceh in the 17th and 19th Centuries AD.

Dia	Name <i>Dayah</i>	Leaders	Location	Year
1	<i>Dayah</i> Grass	Tgk. Muhd. Joseph	Kuala Daya-West Aceh	1607-1636
2	A Taste of Abey	Sheikh Idrus Bayan	Tanoh Abey-Aceh Besar	1823-1836
3	<i>Dayah</i> Lam Diran	Tgk. Muhd. Sa'ad	Lam Krak-Aceh Besar	1836-1876
4	Ulee <i>Dayah</i> Milk	Tgk. Sheikh Abbas	Kuta Karang-Aceh Besar	1857-1870
5	<i>Dayah</i> Kreung Kale	Tgk. Hajj Hanafiah	Kreung Kale-Aceh Besar	1870-1876
6	<i>Dayah</i> Lam Birah	Tgk. Haji Ja'far	Lam Jabat-Aceh Besar	1760-1781
7	<i>Dayah</i> Lam U	Shaykh Umar bin Auf	Lam U Sagi XXII mukim (Aceh Besar)	1870-1874
8	Lam Ming Ming	Shaykh Abdus Salam	Lam Nyong-Aceh Besar	1870-1874
9	Five Days of Panther	S. S. S.	Stuttgart Stuart Stuart	1870-1874
10	A Taste of the Blang	Shaykh Abdullah	Samalanga-North Aceh	1857-1870
11	<i>Dayah</i> Tiro	Chik Muhd. Amen	View Request	1879-1897

Source: Potpourri Revolution from Aceh (Hasjmy, 1978).

Dayah Education Model in Character Development

The *Dayah* education model in Aceh plays an important role in shaping students' religious character and social ethics. In contrast to the formal education system, *Dayah* emphasizes a deep understanding of Islamic values through the study of the yellow book, a collection of classical religious teachings. Through a curriculum that emphasizes the sciences of Tawheed, Fiqih, *Tafsir*, Hadith, and Sufism, *Dayah* education not only aims to increase students' religious knowledge but also to instill a strong moral character. The formation of character in a *Dayah* occurs through a holistic approach that includes the development of spiritual attitudes, discipline, and obedience to Islamic values inherited from generation to generation. As an educational institution rooted in tradition, *Dayah* maintains the ethical values that guide the lives of the people of Aceh. This subchapter will discuss in detail how the *Dayah* education model in Aceh serves as a means of character development, moral values, and personality formation grounded in Islamic teachings.

a. *Dayah* Darussalam Labuhan Haji, South Aceh

Dayah Darussalam in Labuhan Haji, South Aceh, is one of the traditional educational institutions that still adheres to a curriculum based on classical books or yellow books. This curriculum covers various religious disciplines that play an important role in shaping students' religious character and ethics, including the science of Tawheed, *Tafsir*, Hadith, *Fiqh*, *Tasawwuf*, and *Nahwu*. In the science of Tawheed, students learn through the books *Aqidah al-Islamiyah* and *Dusuki*, which help them form strong beliefs and a deep understanding of faith. The science of *Tafsir* is taught through the books *Tafsir Jalalain* and *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, which invite students to explore the meanings of the Qur'an's verses and the moral values they convey. For knowledge of Hadith, the books *Matan Arba'in* and the *Saniyah* Council serve as a basis for understanding Islamic ethics. Meanwhile, in the field of fiqh, the books of *Matan Taqrib*, *Bajuri*, *I'natuttalibin*, and *Al-Mahalli* are the main references for students, providing guidelines on religious law. Meanwhile, in the field of Sufism, the books *Tafsir Akhlak*, *Muraqi U'budiyah*, and *Ihya Ulumuddin* are taught, which guide students in developing spirituality and morals.

Arabic is also taught using the books *Awamel* and *Al-Jarumiyyah* as the basis for *Nahwu*, which not only improves language skills but also teaches discipline and perseverance in learning. The *Dayah* curriculum has not undergone significant changes since the time of Sheikh Abuya Muda Wali Al-Khalidi, demonstrating a strong tradition of Islamic education. In the early stages, the students learned

the basics of Arabic through the books of *Dhammun (ṣaraf)* and *Matan Jurumiyyah (nahwu)*. After mastering the basics of the language, the students continue to a higher level by studying fiqh (youṣūl fiqh), monotheism, tasawwuf, and complementary sciences such as *tafsir* and hadith. Teaching at *Dayah Darussalam* is also divided into three sessions—morning, noon, and night—with different materials for each. The morning begins with the book of *Iqrār* (confession of sins) to *Qirādh* (the law of profit sharing), the day is focused on the law of will until the end of volume III, while the evening is filled with the study of the book of *Farāid* (the law of inheritance).

Dayah Darussalam also has many scholars who are its teachers, such as Abuya Syaikh Tgk. H. Mawardi Waly, Abu Tumin, Abdul Aziz, Tgk. Abdullah Tanah Mirah, Abu Azras Kampar Riau, and Abu Daud Zamzami. These scholars play an important role in maintaining the traditional education model that is the hallmark of this *Dayah*, ensuring that Islamic values remain strong in students' lives. With this yellow-book-based curriculum, *Dayah Darussalam* not only enriches students' religious knowledge but also plays a significant role in shaping their character and spirituality. Through a consistent approach, the students are guided to become individuals with noble character, discipline, and steadfastness in holding the teachings of Islam.

b. *Dayah Al Madinatuddiniyah Babussalam*, Bireuen

Dayah Al-Madinatuddiniyah Babussalam in Blang Bladeh has an educational model structured into three levels: elementary (*Ibtidaiyah*), intermediate (*Tsanawiyah*), and advanced (*Alaiyah*), each aligned with its respective learning curriculum. At the basic level, or *Ibtidaiyah*, which is equivalent to *meunasah*, students are taught fiqh and *nahwu* subjects to form a basic understanding of Arabic law and grammar. At the *Tsanawiyah* level, which is equivalent to a barge, students study fiqh, *nahwu*, and monotheism to deepen religious knowledge and build a deeper understanding of the basics of faith. Furthermore, at the *Alaiyah* level, which is equivalent to *Dayah Manyang*, the subjects taught include monotheism and fiqh, which further emphasize mastery of the Islamic faith and law as the basis of student life.

The curriculum of *Dayah Al-Madinatuddiniyah Babussalam* is designed in accordance with its vision and mission: to produce a generation of scholars who are firm in the practice of Islamic teachings, spread religious knowledge, and serve the community sincerely. The mission of this *Dayah* includes organizing education based on Islamic teachings sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as educating students, the next generation, who are madhab Imam Shafi'i and adhere to the faith of *Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah*. This *Dayah* also aims to instill sincerity in the practice and dissemination of Islamic religious knowledge, and to form students into firm individuals who maintain Islamic *ukhuwah* and are ready to convey *amar makruf nahi munkar* in daily life.

The educational model at *Dayah Al-Madinatuddiniyah Babussalam* focuses on the development of religious character and student integrity. Through a structured learning system, this *Dayah* not only teaches religious knowledge but also forms character in accordance with Islamic values. Thus, students are expected to grow into individuals who are not only knowledgeable about religion but also committed to practicing Islamic teachings in community life with a sincere attitude.

c. *Dayah Darul Manawwarah Kuta Kreung*, Pidie Jaya

Dayah Darul Munawwarah Kuta Kreung has a long history as an Islamic educational institution that focuses on character and moral development through a curriculum based on the classic book, or the yellow book. Initially, the education system at *Dayah Darul Munawwarah* consisted of only four levels, namely *Ibtidaiyah*, *Tsanawiyah*, *Aliyah*, and *Ma'Ahad Ali*. However, in this study, the focus is only on the *Tajhizi* level, which is equivalent to basic education or *Ibtidaiyah*. The *Tajhizi* level has a curriculum that focuses on the basics of religious sciences, including Fiqih, *Nahwu*, *Sharaf*, Sufism, *Tawheed*, *Tajweed*, Al-Qur'an, *Khat/Imlak*, and Arabic. Each of these learning materials is designed to shape students' character and religious morals, with the main goal of making them into individuals with noble character and integrity in living community life.

In its implementation, the education system in *Dayah Darul Munawwarah* is rooted in the traditional education pattern in Aceh, which has existed since the time of the Aceh kingdom, the Dutch colonial period, the Japanese occupation, and the beginning of Indonesian independence. As a center for character development, this *Dayah* plays an important role in shaping students' attitudes to become individuals with noble character, in accordance with the traditional values of the Acehnese people. In the early stages of education, students are introduced to basic teachings such as reciting the Qur'an, *Fiqih*, *Tauhid*, and *Jawi* (Islamic books written in Malay Arabic). This educational model aims to form a religious and moral character that equips students to address the challenges of the times.

The education system in *Dayah Darul Munawwarah* also continues to develop, from the level of *Tajhiziyah/Ibtidaiyah* to *Ma'had Aly* or *Dayah Manyang*, which is equivalent to higher education in Islam. At this level, students are taught more in-depth religious knowledge through classical texts, in addition to gaining general knowledge and practical skills relevant to the demands of the times. *Dayah Darul Munawwarah* employs various learning models, namely traditional, modern, and integrated. The traditional model emphasizes the teaching of the classic books of the *madhhab Shafi'i* using the *halaqah* method, in which the teacher or *teungku* holds the highest authority in the learning process. The modern model combines the teaching of classical texts with general science and uses a classroom system similar to that of a formal school. The integrated model emphasizes memorization of the Qur'an and Hadith, which are in high demand among parents and students.

From 1964 to 1976, under the leadership of Tgk H. Usman Bin Ali, *Dayah Darul Munawwarah* grew rapidly, with many branches spreading throughout Aceh and even to Java. The increase in the number of branches reflects *Dayah*'s positive influence in shaping students' character and producing graduates who can make moral and intellectual contributions to society. With this character-based education system, *Dayah Darul Munawwarah* has produced a generation of students who not only possess strong religious knowledge but are also committed to practicing Islamic teachings with a sincere attitude, enabling them to serve as agents of dignified social change.

The Relationship of Acehnese Local Values with Dayah Education

The local Acehnese culture strongly influences the educational model in *Dayah*, which is firmly embedded in the curriculum and learning practices at the *Dayah* institution. The strong tradition of the Acehnese people in maintaining religious teachings and social norms has also shaped the educational system in *Dayah*, making it a means of instilling religious and local cultural values. Local values such as cooperation, respect for parents, and religious constancy serve as guidelines for learning activities in *Dayah*. In the *Dayah* education system, students are not only required to master religious knowledge, but also required to apply social ethics rooted in Acehnese culture.

By integrating local culture, education in *Dayah* is not only a center for religious learning but also a center for strengthening Aceh's unique cultural identity. The teaching of the yellow book, or *Jawoe* book, in Malay-Jawi is a way to strengthen local culture, allowing the *sanytri* to understand religious teachings in the context of Acehnese culture. In addition, the approach in *Dayah* teaching is based on the principles of respecting teachers (*teungku*) and maintaining a close relationship between students and the community, thereby strengthening social ties and fostering a sense of responsibility toward the community. In this environment, students are not only educated to be knowledgeable individuals but also to care about the environment and society.

These local Acehnese values enrich the process of character formation and students' spirituality in *Dayah*, guiding them to grow into individuals who are firm in their religion, virtuous, and ready to play an active role in society. Thus, *Dayah* not only functions as an educational institution but also as a guardian and successor of Aceh's cultural heritage and morality, which are firmly rooted in Islam. The formation of character in the *Dayah*, enriched by local values, makes an important contribution to the preservation of Aceh's cultural identity amid social changes and the challenges of modernity.

The Role of Dayah Education in Acehnese Society

Dayah education plays a crucial role in Acehnese society as a fortress in maintaining Islamic and community identity amid rapid changes in the times. *Dayah*, as a traditional educational institution rooted in Islamic culture and teachings, not only functions as a center for religious learning but also as a guardian of moral and social values that underpin the lives of the people of Aceh. Through her curriculum based on the yellow book, *Dayah* focuses on teaching religious sciences such as monotheism, *fiqh*, *tafsir*, and *Sufism*, which not only strengthen students' understanding of Islamic teachings but also foster strong character and social ethics.

Amid modernization that brings new values, *Dayah* is the center that maintains the stability of the Acehnese people's religious identity. Students fostered in *Dayah* are encouraged to apply religious values in their daily lives, including in their social relationships and attitudes towards the environment. This makes *Dayah* not only play a role in forming a person with a noble character, but also in maintaining social and cultural values that have long been characteristic of Acehnese society.

In addition, *Dayah* functions as a center of community empowerment, where religious knowledge is combined with life skills, forming students into a generation ready to face the challenges of the times without losing their cultural and religious roots. *Dayah* graduates are not only expected to become scholars or religious leaders, but also to be individuals with a sense of social responsibility, who care for the community, and who can become leaders in society. Thus, *Dayah* plays an important role in strengthening the Islamic identity and community of the Acehnese people amid the challenges of the times, making it an institution that not only educates but also maintains and reinforces their identity within the framework of Islamic values.

Discussion

This research reveals that *Dayah* education in Aceh has successfully developed a unique character education model by integrating three key elements: Islamic values, local culture, and adaptation to modernization. Analysis through Lickona's theory of character education shows that *Dayah* not only applies the principle of individual character formation, but also develops it in a more holistic form through a dormitory-based communal education system (Pike et al., 2021). This community-based character education mechanism creates an intensive value ecosystem in which moral formation occurs through daily interactions in a controlled environment for 24 hours.

The findings of the research also reveal the ability of *Dayah* to contextualize Islamic values with the social reality of Aceh, as explained through the lens of Freire's critical education theory (Shih, 2018). *Dayah* developed a model of liberation education rooted in tradition, which criticized social issues and equipped students with practical skills to face global challenges. An interesting aspect is the filtered modernization pattern adopted by *Dayah*, in which *Dayah* institutions integrate modern technology, such as social media for *da'wah*, while still maintaining the yellow book as the core of the curriculum.

At the spiritual level, the research identified a unique concept: "contextualized spirituality". Traditional religious practices, such as the recitation of the yellow book and *dhikr*, not only serve as rituals but also provide students with a source of mental resilience as they face the challenges of the digital era. This hybridization of traditional and modern values produces graduates with a deep understanding of religion and the ability to adapt to the demands of the times without losing their cultural identity.

The findings of this study make an important theoretical contribution by: (1) enriching the theory of character education through the concept of community-based character formation, (2) developing critical education theory in the context of local Islam, and (3) offering a "filtered modernization" model as a new framework for integrating tradition and technological advancement. The novelty of the research lies in deconstructing the assumption that traditional educational institutions are static, while offering educational models relevant to various cultural contexts in Indonesia.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that *Dayah* education in Aceh has proven to be a unique and effective model of character education. The three main findings of this study are: (1) a dormitory-based communal education system that creates an ecosystem of character formation intensively 24 hours, (2) the ability to contextualize Islamic values with the social reality of Aceh through an empowering educational approach, and (3) a selective adaptation pattern to modernization by maintaining core values while adopting modern technology and skills. These findings not only achieve the research's purpose of uncovering the uniqueness of the *Dayah* education model but also demonstrate the relevance of *Dayah* education in the era of globalization.

More specifically, this study revealed that *Dayah*'s strength in Aceh lies in its ability to balance the resilience of traditional values with adaptation to changing times. *Dayah* not only serves as a fortress for the preservation of Aceh's Islamic identity and culture, but also develops into an educational institution that is responsive to the challenges of globalization. The findings of "contextualized spirituality" and "filtered modernization" are important contributions to this research, which offer a new perspective on how value-based education can remain relevant amid the rapid flow of social and technological change.

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