

THE ROLE OF SAMIJAN SONTOK IN THE DYNAMICS OF MUHAMMADIYAH EDUCATION

Muhammad Armin¹, St. Warda Hanafie Das², Raya Mangsi³, H. M. Nasir S⁴

¹²³⁴Universitas Muhammadiyah Parepare; Indonesia

Correspondence Email; armin10031968@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study examines the dynamics of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke by tracing its early developmental history, the role of Samijan Sonto, and the impact of his contributions on the sustainability of Muhammadiyah education. The research employs a qualitative approach with a historical case study design. The data consist of oral accounts obtained from interviews with individuals who have knowledge of the development of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke, as well as documentary data in the form of organizational and school documents, photographs, and other relevant historical records. Data were collected through heuristic procedures by identifying, locating, and collecting relevant historical sources, complemented by interviews and observations. The sources were then examined through source criticism and interpreted to reconstruct the development of Muhammadiyah education and the role of Samijan Sonto within its local social context. The findings indicate that Muhammadiyah education in Merauke evolved from religious and educational activities pioneered by local figures into more organized educational institutions. These dynamics were significantly bolstered by Samijan Sonto's involvement in the establishment, management, and development of schools, as well as in strengthening ties between Muhammadiyah, schools, and the community. His role is also evident in resource mobilization, the reinforcement of religious and social values, and adaptation to the diverse conditions of Merauke society. His legacy endures through the continued operation of educational institutions, expanded access to education, strengthened school-community relations, and the transmission of Muhammadiyah values. These findings underscore that the development of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke resulted from the interplay of reformist ideas, local leadership, institutional structures, and social change.

Keywords

History of Education, Merauke, Muhammadiyah Education, Samijan Sonto, Social Change.



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INTRODUCTION

The social and geographical context of Merauke is an important part of understanding the development of Muhammadiyah education in the region. Merauke is located in the eastern part of Indonesia, with diverse community characteristics in terms of social, cultural, and religious backgrounds (Hairat, 2020). In this study, these conditions are not only understood based on previous studies. Still, they are also traced through field data obtained from interviews with informants knowledgeable about the development of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke, observations of the environment and Muhammadiyah's educational activities, as well as archival documentation, photos, and relevant institutional documents. The results of the field search show that the development of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke occurs gradually through the involvement of local figures, community support, and the adjustment of educational institutions to the local community's social conditions. The field findings form the basis for research analyzing the dynamics of Muhammadiyah education and the position of Samijan Sonto as a local actor in the development process.

The early history of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke also shows that the process of institutionalizing education did not take place in easy conditions (Setiawan, 2021). The results of Armin's research show that the initial development of Islamic education in Merauke began with recitation activities, which later evolved into an institutional form, with Teuku Bujang Salim as one of the important figures in the early phase (Armin, 2026). The limitations of facilities, educators, learning facilities, and institutional support require the leaders to build public trust while creating a social base for the sustainability of education. Muhammadiyah education in this context not only serves to spread Islamic values but also to shape the social, intellectual, and religious space of the Merauke community (Agustyawati et al., 2022).

The trip facilitated research into Samijan Sonto's important position as a local actor in the development of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke. His role can be seen not only in his formal position in the organization, but mainly in his involvement in pioneering, managing, maintaining, and developing Muhammadiyah educational institutions. Armin found that Samijan Sonto played a role in connecting organizations, schools, and communities so that Muhammadiyah education could survive in diverse social conditions. The trail was also related to the provision of resources, including the family's involvement in providing land for the development of Muhammadiyah

schools, so that his contribution had both social and material dimensions. This study uses the theory of social change as the main foundation for understanding these dynamics. Soemardjan and Soemardi explain social change as changes in social institutions that affect social systems, including values, attitudes, and behavior patterns of society (Soemardjan & Soemardi, 1974). This view can be used to see Muhammadiyah education as an institution that does not stand alone, but is related to social, political, economic, cultural, and religious changes in the community. Armin pointed out that the development of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke is the result of the interaction between the idea of renewal, community needs, socio-cultural conditions, and the capacity of local actors, so that the theory of social change is relevant to explain the relationship between institutional change and societal change (Muhammadiyah, 2015);(Armin, 2026).

Research on Muhammadiyah education over the last five years has paid considerable attention to the dynamics, updates, and contributions of Muhammadiyah in the field of education. Marsudi and Zayadi show that Muhammadiyah developed into a progressive movement that encouraged the renewal of Islamic education and socio-religious change (Marsudi & Zayadi, 2021). In line with that, Damayanti et al. (2021) present Muhammadiyah as one of the Islamic education movements that play a role in the development of education in Indonesia. Sutarno's study shows that Muhammadiyah education has shifted from an education initially pioneered individually by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan to a movement managed collectively through the Muhammadiyah organization (Sutarno, 2022). Meanwhile, Kug emphasized the importance of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's thinking as the basis for the renewal of Muhammadiyah's Islamic education (Kug, 2022). The findings show that previous studies tend to place Muhammadiyah, educational ideology, and founding figures as the center of discussion.

The next study examined the development of Muhammadiyah education from the perspectives of history and organizational dynamics. Husna explained that the development of Muhammadiyah education over time is inseparable from the spirit of *tajdid*, which combines religious education with general knowledge (Husna et al., 2023). Suyatno showed that Muhammadiyah education in the second century faced new challenges in the form of information technology development, globalization, internationalization, and humanitarian issues, so that contextual educational reform was needed (Suyatno, 2023). In the local context, Samsiadi found that the development of Muhammadiyah in Berau began in 1933 with the arrival of two cadres who later

became important figures in the organization's development and in the establishment of various Muhammadiyah educational institutions. These findings show that the development of Muhammadiyah education outside Java has a historical process and local characteristics that differ from those of Muhammadiyah in the centers of its movement in Java (Samsiadi, 2023).

More recent research strengthens the findings regarding the dynamics and spread of Muhammadiyah education. Sudarmi identified four periods in the development of Muhammadiyah Islamic education: pioneering, development, institutionalization, and transformation (Sudarmin et al., 2024). These changes are influenced by political policies, socio-cultural changes, technological developments, and Muhammadiyah's educational thinking. Datuk and Arifin pointed out that Muhammadiyah also makes an important contribution to education in East Nusa Tenggara by establishing schools and developing various charitable initiatives to meet the needs of the local community (Datuk & Arifin, 2024). Meanwhile, the intellectual development of Muhammadiyah in the early 21st century is related to the educational backgrounds of Islamic boarding schools, the national education system, and universities (Hidayatullah, 2012). These studies show that Muhammadiyah education continues to develop, both at the organizational level and within local communities.

Other research shows that the development of Muhammadiyah education is also related to Muhammadiyah's position as a national educational organization and the institution's ability to respond to community needs. Hamami pointed out that Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama have thousands of educational institutions and are one of the important pillars of national education in Indonesia. The findings confirm that Muhammadiyah education developed as part of a socio-religious movement with a broad institutional reach (Hamami, 2021). Suparmun found that Muhammadiyah education functions as a medium for internalizing progressive Islamic values through textbooks used in secondary education (Suparmun et al., 2021). Meanwhile, Pribadi and Asriany showed that the presence of Christian students at Muhammadiyah universities can be understood from a pluralistic educational perspective and an openness to diversity (Pribadi & Asriany, 2021). The three studies show that Muhammadiyah education is not only about the transfer of religious knowledge but also about the formation of values, institutional identity, and social relations in diverse societies.

The study in the next period examined the dimensions of reform and institutional development in Muhammadiyah's education. Maimori found that Muhammadiyah contributed to

the renewal of Islamic education in Indonesia by shifting educational patterns from traditional to more modern, integrative ones (Maimori & others, 2022). Sormin pointed out that Muhammadiyah's educational reform was carried out through innovations in the development of the education system and responses to the needs of the times (Sormin & others, 2022), while Tang emphasized Muhammadiyah's concrete actions to address the problem of national education (Tang, 2022). In 2023, Mahesa showed that Muhammadiyah is a movement to reform Islamic education by modernizing it through the integration of religious education and general knowledge. Afriandi also showed that Muhammadiyah education has developed from recitation activities to more modern educational institutions spread across various regions of Indonesia (Mahesa & others, 2023). These findings strengthen the view that the development of Muhammadiyah education is a process of sustainable institutional renewal (Afriandi et al., 2023).

The 2024–2025 research further shows that the dynamics of Muhammadiyah's education are related to institutional quality, leadership, adaptation, and local contexts. Pahlevi et al. (2024), through historical studies, show that Muhammadiyah's contribution to Indonesian education develops from socio-religious movements to the strengthening of various educational institutions (Pahlevi et al., 2024). Nasril found that Muhammadiyah educational institutions are also engaged with national education policies and have educational aspirations aligned with the organization's vision (Nasril et al., 2024). Kusuma pointed out that improvements in the quality of Muhammadiyah schools are influenced by the institution's management strategy and the supporting and inhibiting factors at the school level (Kusuma et al., 2024). Wekke through a study in Barru, South Sulawesi, showed how Muhammadiyah develops and manages higher education in the regional context (Wekke et al., 2024). By 2025, Ariadin et al. show Muhammadiyah's contribution to Islamic education in Asahan through institutional development, curriculum integration, and human resource management (Ariadin et al., 2025). (Samsudin et al., 2025) added that leadership, curriculum, and service quality are interrelated elements in the development of Muhammadiyah schools. Meanwhile, Jatmiko et al. (2025) show that Muhammadiyah schools face a complex relationship among philanthropic values, institutional inequalities, regulations, and the demands of modern education. These studies show that the development of Muhammadiyah education is influenced not only by its organizational structure but also by leadership, resources, institutional quality, policies, and the ability to adapt to societal conditions.

Although previous research has provided an overview of the renewal, dynamics, and expansion of Muhammadiyah education, there is still room for further study in areas that have not been extensively researched. First, some studies still adopt a macro perspective, treating Muhammadiyah as an educational organization or movement, so the dynamics of education at the local level are not described in depth. Second, research on figures focuses more on K.H. Ahmad Dahlan or Muhammadiyah intellectuals in general. In contrast, the role of local figures as actors who initiate, develop, and maintain Muhammadiyah education has not been widely placed as the main focus. Third, although Samsiadi's research in Berau and Datuk and Arifin (2024) in East Nusa Tenggara has shown the development of Muhammadiyah education outside Java, the study of local history by linking the role of figures (Samsiadi, 2023), the development of educational institutions, and the social conditions of the community in the research area studied in this study are still limited.

Based on this gap, this research offers novelty by reconstructing the dynamics of Muhammadiyah education from the perspective of local history by tracing the role of local figures and actors as an important part of the development process of Muhammadiyah education. This research not only describes the existence of Muhammadiyah educational institutions but also analyzes their development processes, the roles of the actors involved, and their relationship to the local community's social conditions. Thus, this research is expected to expand the study of the history of Muhammadiyah education from a macro perspective to a micro-local study that shows how the Muhammadiyah education movement grows, adapts, and develops through the role of actors and social context in the research area.

The research gap is an important basis for this research. Previous studies tend to portray Muhammadiyah as an organization, a renewal movement, or an educational institution. At the same time, the relationship between local history, social change, and agency of figures in the development of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke has not received adequate attention. This research fills this gap by positioning Samijan Sonto as a local actor who helps bridge the values and goals of the Muhammadiyah movement with the concrete needs of the people of Merauke. The novelty of the research lies in the effort to bring together the perspective of social change with the perspective of agency in reading the history of Muhammadiyah education, so that the development of the institution is not only understood through the organizational structure, but also through the actions, examples, social networks, and contributions of the figures involved in it.

The significance of this research lies in its effort to expand the study of the history of Islamic education to the Eastern Indonesia region, especially Merauke, as well as to document the contributions of local figures to the development of Muhammadiyah education. Theoretically, this research enriches the study of social change by showing that the transformation of educational institutions occurs through the relationship between social structure and actors' actions. Practically, this research can serve as a reference for Muhammadiyah in maintaining the movement's values, strengthening local historical documentation, and developing education that adapts to the character of the local community. This research aims to analyze the history of the establishment and early development of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke, examine the dynamics of Muhammadiyah education during the involvement and leadership of Samijan Sonto, and explain the impact of its role on the sustainability and development of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke in the context of social changes in society.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach and a case study method to understand in depth the dynamics of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke, South Papua, as well as the role of Samijan Sonto in its development. The research was conducted within the educational and institutional environment of Muhammadiyah in Merauke. The informants were selected purposively, including Samijan Sonto's family, Muhammadiyah leaders and cadres, teachers, community leaders, and other parties who have knowledge and experience related to the development of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke. The research data was collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The interviews were used to obtain information and testimonies regarding Samijan Sonto's involvement in the development of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke, including his role in the establishment and management of educational institutions, the development of educational and youth activities, relations with the community, and the support of educational resources. Informants were purposively selected for their knowledge and experience of the history of Muhammadiyah education development in Merauke. Observations were used to obtain an overview of the institutional conditions and educational activities of Muhammadiyah. In contrast, documentation was used to obtain and examine written and visual sources, including organizational archives, school documents, photographs, and historical records, that were relevant to the development of Muhammadiyah education and to Samijan Sonto's involvement.

Data analysis is carried out using historical methods through heuristic stages, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The heuristic stage is carried out by tracing, identifying, and collecting sources related to the history of Muhammadiyah education's development in Merauke and the role of Samijan Sonto. These sources include oral statements from interviews, observational findings, documents, photographs, organizational archives, and historical records obtained during the research. The source criticism stage involves examining the suitability and credibility of information obtained from each source and comparing it with the documents and observation results. The interpretation stage involves connecting the verified facts to understand the institutional development of Muhammadiyah education, resource mobilization, non-formal and youth education activities, relations with the community, adaptation to the socio-cultural conditions of Merauke, and the role of Samijan Sonto in the process. The historiographic stage is carried out by compiling the results of interpretation chronologically and analytically so that a reconstruction of the dynamics of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke and Samijan Sonto's contribution in it is formed. The validity of the data is strengthened through triangulation of sources and techniques by comparing information from interviews, observations, and documentation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The results of the study show that Samijan Sonto's involvement in the development of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke is not only related to the establishment and management of educational institutions, but also includes resource mobilization, development of non-formal education and youth, relations with the community, and adjustment of educational activities to local socio-cultural conditions. The findings were obtained through interviews with informants who were involved in the development of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke, observation of the conditions and educational activities of Muhammadiyah, and tracing of documentation, including organizational archives, school documents, photographs, and relevant historical records. Data from these various sources were then compared and interpreted using historical methods to identify the form of Samijan Sonto's involvement and the development of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke. Based on the data collection and interpretation, eight forms of educational dynamics related to Samijan Sonto's involvement were identified, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Role of Samijan Sonto in the Dynamics of Muhammadiyah Education in Merauke

No.	Educational Developments During Samijan Sonto's Involvement	Samijan Sonto's Role	Impact on Muhammadiyah Education
1	Strengthening educational institutions	Participated in establishing and managing Muhammadiyah schools and supported the provision of land for educational purposes.	Muhammadiyah educational institutions were established and continued to operate in Merauke.
2	Mobilizing resources	Mobilized support from family and the community and provided some of the material resources needed for education.	Initial needs for land and resources were met, supporting the continuity of educational institutions.
3	Developing nonformal education and youth programs	Developed religious education, youth development activities, and Tapak Suci programs.	Muhammadiyah education expanded beyond formal schools to include religious education, character development, discipline, and youth development.
4	Adapting to local social and cultural conditions	Built relationships with diverse community groups and adapted educational activities to conditions in Merauke.	Social acceptance of Muhammadiyah education and activities increased within the diverse community.
5	Expanding access to education	Encouraged educational initiatives to reach communities beyond the city center.	Muhammadiyah education expanded to communities farther from urban areas.
6	Strengthening ties between education and the community	Built connections among schools, the organization, families, and the community.	Education served as a means of learning, character formation, and community empowerment.
7	Passing on the values of service and dedication	Instilled and upheld the values of service, exemplary conduct, discipline, independence, and social responsibility.	These values continued to shape educational priorities and institutional practices.
8	Developing an adaptive approach to education	Connected Muhammadiyah values with the needs and circumstances of the local community.	Muhammadiyah education developed by adapting to the needs of the Merauke community.

Source: Research data, interview results, observations, and documentation, processed by researchers (2026).

Based on Table 1, the dynamics of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke during Samijan Sonto's involvement are evident in institutional strengthening, resource mobilization, the development of non-formal education and youth, and adaptation to the community's socio-cultural conditions. This role is then sustainable through expanding access to education, strengthening the relationship between educational institutions and the community, upholding the value of struggle, and developing an educational orientation that is adaptive to local needs.

First, the strengthening of educational institutions is evident in Samijan Sonto's involvement in the pioneering and management of Muhammadiyah schools in Merauke. The development of educational institutions at that time was also supported by the availability of land, some of which was donated by the Samijan Sonto family. This condition shows the existence of material support that was part of the initial process of developing Muhammadiyah education.

Second, resource mobilization is evident in the involvement of families and communities in supporting educational needs. These resources include land, social support, and community involvement in the sustainability of educational activities. This support is part of the institutional development process, during which facilities, infrastructure, educators, and financing remain limited.

Third, Muhammadiyah education during Samijan Sonto's involvement did not take place only through formal education. Religious education activities, fostering the younger generation, and Tapak Suci are also part of educational activities. These forms of activities show the existence of an educational space related to the formation of religiosity, discipline, character, and youth.

Fourth, the development of education takes place simultaneously with adjustments to the social and cultural conditions of the people of Merauke. Samijan Sonto builds communication with various community groups so that communities with diverse backgrounds can accept Muhammadiyah's educational and da'wah activities. These adjustments are part of the development of Muhammadiyah education at the local level.

Fifth, the development of Muhammadiyah education can also be seen from the expansion of access to education to areas outside the city center. The presence of SD Kreatif Muhammadiyah Anumbob demonstrates the availability of basic education services for the community in the area. This shows that the development of Muhammadiyah education does not occur only in urban areas.

Sixth, the relationship between educational institutions and the community is part of the development of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke. Schools, organizations, families, and

communities are related in supporting the sustainability of education. In its development, education is not only related to academic activities, but also to the formation of religiosity, discipline, independence, social responsibility, and life in a plural society.

Seventh, Samijan Sonto's involvement left behind the values of struggle related to service, example, independence, discipline, and social responsibility. These values are part of the legacy still evident in the orientation of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke.

Eighth, the dynamics of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke show an educational orientation that adapts to the needs of the community. These developments show the connection between the values of the Muhammadiyah movement, the role of local figures, community support, and the socio-cultural conditions of Merauke. Thus, the research data show that the development of Muhammadiyah education occurs through institutional processes as well as through the community's social involvement.

Discussion

Institutional Strengthening and Mobilization of Educational Resources

The results of the study show that Samijan Sonto's role in the dynamics of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke is evident in his involvement in pioneering and managing schools, as well as in supporting the provision of educational resources. Some of the land used for the school's benefit comes from the Samijan Sonto family. These findings show that early education development is determined not only by Muhammadiyah's organizational structure but also by the involvement of actors, families, and the community in providing the necessary resources. Thus, the process of institutionalizing Muhammadiyah education in Merauke occurs through the interplay between figures' actions and community social support.

These findings can be dialogized from the perspective of social change, as articulated by Soemardjan and Soemardi, who view social change as changes in social institutions that affect social systems, values, attitudes, and patterns of community behavior (Soemardjan & Soemardi, 1974). In the context of this study, the development of Muhammadiyah educational institutions constitutes a form of institutional change carried out by local actors. These changes occur not only through the expansion of organizational structures but also through actors' ability to mobilize resources and build community support. In other words, educational institutional changes in the context of Merauke show the relationship between social structure and individual actions.

The findings are in line with Samsiadi, who shows that the development of Muhammadiyah in Berau, as an area outside Java, is related to the presence of cadres who then play a role in the development of various educational institutions (Samsiadi, 2023). The research shows that the development of Muhammadiyah education in the regions is inseparable from the contribution of actors who develop the movement in the local context. Samsiadi (2023). The findings of this research are also related to Sudarmin, who shows that the development of Muhammadiyah education takes place through the phases of pioneering, development, institutionalization, and transformation, which are influenced by socio-cultural conditions and other factors (Sudarmin et al., 2024).

The similarity between this research and the two studies lies in the importance of local actors and contexts in the development of Muhammadiyah education. The difference is that this study pays closer attention to the relationships among personalities, family support, resource mobilization, and the process of institutionalizing education in Merauke. The author argues that these findings show the importance of positioning local actors as a link between Muhammadiyah's organizational structure and the community's educational needs. Therefore, the development of Muhammadiyah educational institutions in the regions is not only a process of organizational expansion but also a social process driven by actors' ability to organize resources.

Non-Formal Education, Youth and Value Formation

The study's results show that Samijan Sonto's role in Muhammadiyah education is not limited to formal education. His involvement is also related to religious education, the development of the younger generation, and youth activities such as Tapak Suci. This condition shows that Muhammadiyah education at that time took place through various educational spaces, including schools, community development activities, and the younger generation. Education thus has a broader function, namely to form the religiosity, discipline, character, and social involvement of the younger generation.

These findings can be understood through the perspective of social movements that place collective activities, social networks, and member involvement as important elements in the sustainability of a movement. In the context of Muhammadiyah education, religious and youth activities are not only educational activities, but also a space for the formation of social networks and the sustainability of organizational values. The involvement of the younger generation in these activities helps sustain the values of education and service through intergenerational social relations.

This finding is related to Niam and Arifin's research, which shows that the intellectual development of Muhammadiyah in the early 21st century is related to the educational path of Islamic boarding schools, national schools, and higher education, which then contributes to the intellectual development and movement of Muhammadiyah ;(Syukri, 2021)(Niam & Arifin, 2025). Meanwhile, Sudarmin's research shows that the dynamics of Muhammadiyah's education unfold through processes that are not only related to formal educational institutions but also to social changes and the development of movements (Sudarmin et al., 2024).

The similarity of this research with previous research lies in the view that Muhammadiyah education has a broader function than formal learning. The difference lies in its historical and local context. This research shows that non-formal education and youth in Merauke are part of the social strategy in building the sustainability of the education movement at the local level. The author views non-formal education and youth in this context not just as school support activities but as mechanisms to build cadres, maintain values, and strengthen Muhammadiyah's social network.

Adaptation of Education to the Socio-Cultural Conditions of Merauke

The results of the study show that the development of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke takes place through adjustments to the social and cultural conditions of the community. Samijan Sonto builds communication with various community groups so that Muhammadiyah's educational and da'wah activities gain social acceptance. The findings show that the development of Muhammadiyah education does not follow a uniform institutional pattern but rather involves adjustments to the characteristics of the local community.

These findings can be dialogized with Soemardjan and Soemardi's theories of social change. Social change occurs when changes in social institutions are related to changes in social systems, values, attitudes, and patterns of behavior in society. In this study, Muhammadiyah educational institutions are not only recipients of social environmental influence but also participants in the process of social change. The adjustment of education to the socio-cultural conditions of Merauke shows a reciprocal relationship between educational institutions and the community (Soemardjan & Soemardi, 1974).

This finding is in line with Sudarmin, who shows that socio-cultural changes are among the factors affecting the dynamics of Muhammadiyah education (Sudarmin et al., 2024). The findings are also related to Samsiadi, which documents the development of Muhammadiyah in the context

of the Berau region, an area outside the center of Muhammadiyah's development in Java (Samsiadi, 2023).

However, this study places a different emphasis, as the socio-cultural context is not only positioned as an external factor affecting the development of education. In the case of Merauke, local conditions become a space where actors make adjustments, build communication, and gain public acceptance. The author views that adaptability is part of the sustainability strategy of Muhammadiyah education in the regions. The adaptation does not mean eliminating the identity of Muhammadiyah, but connecting the value of the movement with the needs and characteristics of the local community.

Expanding Access to Education and Strengthening Relationships with the Community

The results of the study show that the dynamics of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke can also be seen from efforts to expand access to education to areas outside the city center. The existence of SD Kreatif Muhammadiyah Anumbob shows an educational orientation that reaches people in areas farther from the urban center. These findings show that the development of Muhammadiyah education is not only related to institutional growth, but also to efforts to provide educational services to the community.

From a social change perspective, the expansion of access to education indicates that educational institutions are undergoing functional development to meet society's needs. Education is not only a place of learning, but also a space for interaction between schools, families, organizations, and society. These relationships enable education to serve a broader social function, including character formation and community empowerment.

The findings are similar to Samsiadi's research, which shows that the development of Muhammadiyah in Berau is also linked to the development of educational institutions, serving as a form of expansion of the Muhammadiyah educational movement outside Java (Samsiadi, 2023). This study expands on these findings by showing that the expansion of access to education in Merauke is also related to the social relationship between educational institutions and the community.

These relationships can be understood through the perspective of social capital. Trust, social networks, relationships among community members, and mutual support can be resources that sustain an institution. In the context of Merauke, the relationships among figures, families, organizations, schools, and the community show that the sustainability of education does not depend solely on material resources. The author views that social capital is one of the elements that

allows educational institutions to gain acceptance and maintain their existence in the context of a diverse society.

Thus, the expansion of access to education in this study can not only be read as an indicator of increasing the reach of educational institutions. Furthermore, the expansion shows a change in the orientation of Muhammadiyah education from strengthening institutions to educational services that are more responsive to the needs of the local community.

Inheritance of Values and Sustainability of the Role of Samijan Sonto

The results of the study show that Samijan Sonto's role leaves a trace that is not only institutional but also related to the values of service, example, discipline, independence, and social responsibility. These values are part of the legacy that contributes to the sustainability of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke. Thus, the contribution of figures is evident not only in the existence of institutions that bear the figure's name, but also in the social values and practices that endure after the figure is no longer in the leadership structure.

These findings can be dialogized with the perspective of social capital that places trust, networks, and shared values as social resources. In the context of this research, the example and trust built by Samijan Sonto is part of social capital that supports the sustainability of educational activities. The role of figures not only results in changes during their leadership period, but also shapes values that the next generation can pass on.

This finding is related to Niam and Arifin (2025), who show that the development of Muhammadiyah also takes place through education and intellectual formation, thereby contributing to the sustainability of the movement (Niam & Arifin, 2025). However, this study reveals another dimension: the sustainability of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke is also shaped by the legacy of the values of struggle and the example set by local figures.

The author views that the concept of educational heritage in this context needs to be understood more broadly. Educational heritage is not only in the form of school buildings, land, organizations, or institutional structures, but also in the form of values and patterns of social relations that allow institutions to maintain a service orientation. Therefore, the sustainability of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke is a structural as well as a cultural process.

Synthesis of Samijan Sonto's Role in the Dynamics of Muhammadiyah Education in Merauke

Based on the dialogue between the findings of previous research, theory, and research, the dynamics of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke can be understood through the relationship

between four main elements, namely actors, institutions, social resources, and local contexts. Actors provide the driving force for change; institutions provide structures for the sustainability of education; social and material resources provide support for the development of institutions, while the local context determines the form of education's adaptation to the community's needs.

These findings strengthen Sudarmin's argument, which shows that Muhammadiyah education undergoes a dynamic evolution from the pioneering stage to transformation and is influenced by socio-cultural changes (Sudarmin et al., 2024). The findings of this study add a micro-local dimension by showing that institutional change takes place through the actions of actors who mobilize resources, build social relationships, and adapt to the local community. This finding is also in line with Samsiadi (2023) regarding the importance of actors in the development of Muhammadiyah in areas outside Java.

However, this study shows that the role of local actors cannot be separated from the structure and conditions of society. Samijan Sonto is not the only factor that determines the development of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke because it is the result of the collective work of various parties. The role of figures is important because it is able to connect the values of the Muhammadiyah movement with family resources, organizations, communities, and local educational needs.

Based on these findings, the author argues that the dynamics of Muhammadiyah education in areas outside Java need to be understood through an approach that combines the perspective of institutions and actors' agencies. The institutional perspective explains the existence of organizations, schools, and educational structures, while the agency perspective explains how figures and communities move, maintain, and adapt the institution to local conditions. The combination of these two perspectives provides a more complete understanding of the development of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke.

Thus, the main contribution of this research lies in positioning local actors as a link between the Muhammadiyah movement and the context of the Merauke community. Samijan Sonto's role is not only related to the pioneering of educational institutions, but also to the mobilization of resources, the development of the younger generation, the development of social relations, adaptation to community conditions, the expansion of access to education, and the inheritance of the value of struggle. These findings show that the history of Muhammadiyah education in the

regions is not enough to be written from the perspective of central organizational policies, but also needs to pay attention to the experiences, actions, social networks, and contributions of local figures.

In the end, Samijan Sonto's legacy can be understood in two forms. Structurally, the legacy lies in the pioneering and strengthening of educational institutions and resources. Culturally, the legacy is related to the values of service, example, discipline, independence, and social responsibility. The author views the two forms of heritage as complementary because the sustainability of Muhammadiyah education is determined not only by the existence of the institution but also by the next generation's ability to maintain the values, social networks, and devotion orientation that have been built in its historical process.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the dynamics of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke is a process that takes place gradually through the meeting between the idea of Muhammadiyah reform, the needs of the community, the local socio-cultural conditions, and the role of local actors. In the early stages, Muhammadiyah education grew from religious and educational activities pioneered by figures who had concerns about community development. Its development then moved towards the formation and strengthening of educational institutions as part of the da'wah and community empowerment movement.

In this process, Samijan Sonto has an important role as one of the local actors involved in the establishment, management, and development of Muhammadiyah education in Merauke. His contribution is not only related to institutional aspects, but also includes the use of resources, strengthening relations with the community, and efforts to adapt education to the diverse conditions of the people of Merauke. This role shows that the sustainability of Muhammadiyah education is determined not solely by the organizational structure but also by the example, commitment, ability to build trust, and involvement of local figures. The traces of Samijan Sonto's contribution are still reflected in the sustainability of educational institutions, the expansion of access to education, the strengthening of school and community relations, and the inheritance of religious, social, and national values. Thus, Muhammadiyah education in Merauke can be understood as part of the process of social change that continues to develop through the continuity of values and the ability to adapt to the local context.

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