



Islamic Education and Vulnerable Groups Advocacy in *Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam*, West Aceh

**M. Ikhwan¹✉, Eka Srimulyani², Sehat Ihsan Shadiqin³,
Tabrani ZA⁴, M. Agus Wahyudi⁵, Adriansyah NZ⁶**

¹ STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh, Indonesia,

^{1, 2,3,4} Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, Indonesia

⁵ Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Mas Said Surakarta, Indonesia,

⁶ Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, Indonesia

Correspondence Email: m.ikhwan@staindirundeng.ac.id

Received: 05-04-2025

Revised: 21-12-2025

Accepted: 20-01-2026

Abstract

This article presents a comprehensive examination of the impact of Islamic education on vulnerable groups, particularly women and children, at Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam in West Aceh. The primary objective of this study is to explore how Islamic education functions as both a source of religious knowledge and a transformative force that empowers women and supports the development of children within the dayah environment. This research employs a qualitative, ethnographic approach. The study collects data through prolonged observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The data were analyzed using the iceberg analysis model throughout the research process, enabling the researchers to uncover observable practices and deeper structural and cultural patterns. The analytical process concludes with a synthesis phase to ensure that the conclusions accurately represent the overall findings. The results indicate that Islamic education at Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam extends beyond doctrinal instruction; it actively catalyzes social transformation by strengthening women's capacities, increasing their participation in community life, and fostering a sense of agency. For children, Islamic education promotes balanced intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual growth. The study also emphasizes that Islamic education advocacy plays a crucial role in shaping future educational orientations and policy frameworks, particularly in contexts with similar socio-cultural characteristics. The implications of this research extend beyond West Aceh and offer valuable insights for education policymakers, Islamic education practitioners, and stakeholders seeking to adopt or adapt similar community-based educational models.

Keywords: Education, Vulnerable Groups Advocacy, Women and Children, Dayah.

Abstrak

Artikel ini menyajikan kajian komprehensif mengenai dampak pendidikan Islam terhadap kelompok rentan, khususnya perempuan dan anak-anak, di Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam, Aceh Barat. Tujuan utama penelitian ini adalah untuk menelaah bagaimana pendidikan Islam berfungsi sebagai sumber pengetahuan keagamaan, dan kekuatan transformatif yang memberdayakan perempuan dan mendukung perkembangan anak-anak dalam lingkungan dayah. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dan pendekatan etnografi, penelitian ini mengumpulkan data melalui observasi berkepanjangan, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Data yang diperoleh dianalisis menggunakan model iceberg analysis sepanjang proses penelitian, sehingga memungkinkan peneliti

mengungkap praktik-praktik yang tampak maupun pola struktural dan kultural yang lebih mendalam. Proses analitis diakhiri dengan tahap sintesis untuk memastikan bahwa kesimpulan yang dihasilkan benar-benar merepresentasikan temuan secara keseluruhan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan Islam di Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam tidak terbatas pada pengajaran doktrinal; ia berperan aktif sebagai katalis transformasi sosial melalui penguatan kapasitas perempuan, peningkatan partisipasi mereka dalam kehidupan masyarakat, serta pembentukan rasa keberdayaan. Bagi anak-anak, pendidikan Islam mendorong pertumbuhan intelektual, emosional, moral, dan spiritual secara seimbang. Penelitian ini juga menegaskan bahwa advokasi pendidikan Islam memiliki peran penting dalam membentuk orientasi pendidikan dan kerangka kebijakan di masa depan, khususnya pada konteks dengan karakteristik sosial-budaya yang serupa. Implikasi penelitian ini melampaui wilayah Aceh Barat dan memberikan wawasan berharga bagi para pembuat kebijakan pendidikan, praktisi pendidikan Islam, dan pemangku kepentingan yang ingin mengadopsi atau mengadaptasi model pendidikan berbasis komunitas yang serupa.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan, Advokasi Kelompok Rentan, Wanita dan Anak-anak, Dayah.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, home to the world's largest Muslim population, has experienced significant development in Islamic education (Daulay & Tobroni, 2017). This progress is reflected in the growing number of educational institutions, from madrasah *ibtidaiyah* to higher education, as well as non-formal institutions such as Islamic boarding schools (*dayah*) in Aceh (Apologia et al., 2024; Baihaqi et al., 2023; Muslim, 2022; Rahmatullah et al., 2024). Ideally, the advancement of Islamic education should contribute to fulfilling women's and children's rights to education, as human rights protection is a shared responsibility of the state, society, and institutions (Hartinah et al., 2025; Kertamukti et al., 2025; Mareta, 2016; Wonuola et al., 2025). Islamic education is therefore expected not only to educate but also to advocate for vulnerable groups by promoting values such as nonviolence, tolerance, human rights, gender equality, democracy, and justice (Pohl, 2006; Tabrani ZA et al., 2024). However, these rights remain insufficiently protected, particularly in Aceh. Data from the Aceh Office of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (2024) recorded 575 cases of violence and sexual abuse against women and children by mid-2023, with a steady increase from 905 cases in 2020, 924 in 2021, and 1,029 in 2022. In 2023, cases were dominated by violence against children (333 cases), followed by violence against women (242 cases).

Diagram 1: Violence Against Women in Aceh as of January 2023

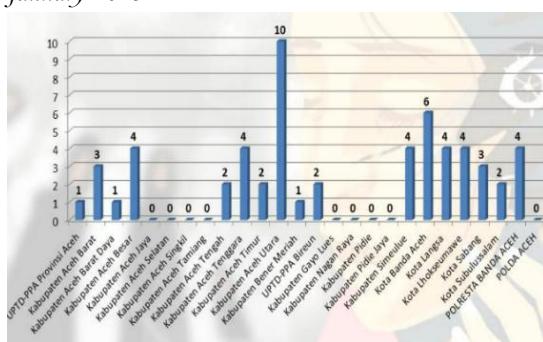
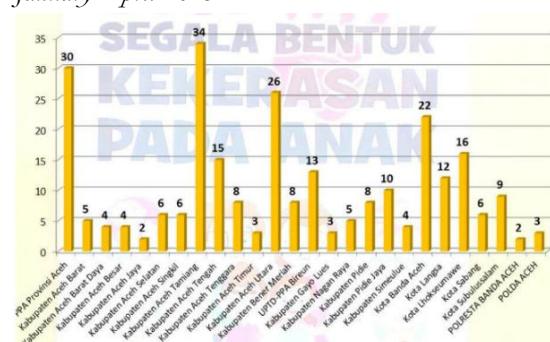


Diagram 2: Violence Against Children in Aceh January-April 2023



Source: Aceh Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Office (DP3A)

From the data presented above, it can be understood that violence against women and children in Aceh is still very high, so it is important to voice the efforts of Islamic Education in responding to this. If observed, Islamic education has been developed in various orientations, such as Eco-Pesantren, which teaches environmental values, environmentally friendly practices, and sustainability concepts to students (Diavano, 2022). Other Islamic boarding schools, such as Trensains, focus on technology education and digital skills to prepare students for technological developments (Azaki Khoirudin et al., 2022; Fikri et al., 2025; Wahid et al., 2023). Several other Islamic boarding schools, such as the Raudhatul Huffaz Islamic Boarding School in Sorong, focus on entrepreneurship, teaching students how to start and manage businesses with business ethics (Suardi Wekke, 2012). Al-Muayyad Windan Student Islamic Boarding School in Sukoharjo develops agricultural skills through the *Santri Sahabat Bumi* program (*Kontribusi Santri Dalam Menjaga Lingkungan Hidup*, n.d.). Meanwhile, the Al-Muhtada Research Islamic Boarding School in Semarang focuses on research, in collaboration with higher education research institutions (Prasetyo & Ayon, 2021; *Tentang Pesantren - Pesantren Riset Al-Muhtada*, n.d.).

This is where the urgency of this research lies, because no one dares to advocate for human rights issues through education as Dayah Diniyah Darussalam did in West Aceh. From the observations and documentation, the Islamic Education institution can be referred to as the Humanitarian Islamic Boarding School (*Dayah HAM*), especially related to the issue of women and children. This dayah teaches the values of human rights, peace, tolerance, and respect for diversity, as well as providing protection and fulfillment of rights to women and children (Arrahmah, 2022; Rachmawati, 2022). The educational institution seeks to build a deeper understanding of the importance of respecting the rights and dignity of each individual. Indicators that can be observed include the tradition of learning and teaching that already exists in the Islamic Education environment, while advocating for human rights for women and children (Mustikamah et al., 2025). This institution is present at the same time as an antithesis to the fact that education as everyone's right is still difficult for some people, especially women, and children as a vulnerable group.

From the observations of the researcher during the initial observation of the planned research site and several searches in *the online* media, it can be said that access to education for vulnerable groups is almost forcibly amputated, both by the community and their immediate families, due to the fate of those who have become victims of the perpetrators' injustice. They are expelled from their residences, socially punished, drop out of school, and so on. A series of sadness felt by the victims is proof that the hope and reality of advocating for human rights guarantees are still far from being realized. On the other hand, in the urgency of advocating for the human rights of women and children, many educational institutions are neglected when dealing with this difficult problem, even though it is essential, some are even involved in being part of the atrocities as perpetrators (Ramadhan, 2023). In the name of morality and humanity, this situation should not happen, therefore, Islamic education must be in line with the spirit of progress of the times, such as paying attention to the fulfillment and protection of human rights as part of human civilization itself (Harlen, 2022).

Human rights are basic rights inherent in every individual that cannot be bought, cannot be inherited, and cannot be revoked, including in the context of education. Good education goes beyond just providing religious knowledge, but also respects, protects, and fulfills the rights of individuals as a whole human being (Bajaj, 2011). In this context, Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam in West Aceh seeks to save the fate of the women and children who are victims and has made the *dayah* a place of learning as well as a safe home for them (Dewi Merdeka, 2020). Although several previous studies have examined issues related to gender and Islamic educational institutions, such as (Kloos, 2016), work on Female Islamic Authority in Aceh, (Husin, 2013) research on Gender and Power in Indonesian Islam, and (Srimulyani, 2016), study on Tengku Inong within Acehnese Islamic boarding schools, significant gaps remain in the existing scholarship. These earlier studies primarily focus on gender roles, women's religious authority, and the socio-historical presence of women in Islamic educational contexts. However, they do not explore in depth, nor do they directly address, the mechanisms of advocacy for women's and children's rights that operate within the *dayah* or pesantren environment. Specifically, none of these scholars examines how Islamic boarding schools engage in structured advocacy through curriculum development, leadership training, community engagement, and child-protection practices.

METHOD

This study was conducted in Aceh Province, specifically in West Aceh Regency, Kawai XVI District, at an Islamic educational institution known as Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam. Data collection began with direct observation to gain an in-depth understanding of the events related to this research. Jorgensen describes this as "...*direct observation is the primary method of gathering information.*" (Prus & Jorgensen, 1990). Following the observations, in-depth interviews were conducted with informants in a semi-structured manner, allowing flexibility to explore the research subject freely (Burhan, 2012). As an outsider entering the community, the researcher prioritized identifying key informants. Spradley outlines two essential criteria for selecting key informants: first, individuals who are native to the community and possess extensive experience and understanding; second, those who can provide analysis and interpretation from the perspective of local concepts (folk theory) (Spradley, 2007). In this context, the key informants comprised the leadership of Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam, selected students deemed knowledgeable in providing explanations, as well as activists and observers of women's and children's rights in Aceh who are familiar with the institution's activities.

Furthermore, this study incorporates a literature review as an integral part of the research. The researcher continuously engaged with relevant documents, including books, journals, and other related sources, both before and during fieldwork, particularly concerning the development of the research theme. The final stage of the study involved rigorous, meticulous, and cautious data analysis. In this research, data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and data verification were conducted simultaneously (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Data analysis commenced during the research process, requiring the researcher to be astute, creative, and sensitive in selecting and filtering relevant information. The analytical model employed is the iceberg analysis, which is considered effective in capturing both observable and hidden aspects of the investigated facts, particularly those related to this study.

RESULTS

The New Face of Indonesian *Pesantren*

Advocacy for women and children has become the new face of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, especially in Aceh. For centuries, women and children have often been marginalized in their access and role in this education system. Islamic boarding schools, as one of the oldest Islamic educational institutions, initially focused more on education for men. At the same time, women and children were often in a lower position or even marginalized. However, in recent decades, significant changes have shown increased attention to the education of women and children in Islamic boarding schools. This is inseparable from the influence of the Islamic feminist movement and the global awareness of the importance of education for all genders as a human right (Badran, 2009; Ikhwan et al., 2024; Mir-Hosseini, 2006). In Indonesia, this change is increasingly evident with more and more Islamic boarding schools starting to pay more attention to the education of women and children, including Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam in West Aceh.

Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam represents a pesantren that has developed educational programs expanding access for women and children while aligning curricula and teaching methods with their specific needs. These initiatives form part of broader efforts to reduce gender inequality in education and strengthen women's roles within Muslim communities (Srimulyani, 2007). Educational advocacy in Islamic boarding schools is a systematic, community-based process involving ulama, community leaders, and civil society to ensure equal access to quality education for all, particularly women and children (Bullock et al., 2000). At Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam, this advocacy is reflected in the implementation of an inclusive curriculum that integrates religious education with life skills, literacy, and gender equality training (Malihah et al., 2023), aiming to empower women and children to participate actively in social, economic, and political life (Fauzi & Zebua, 2020). Additionally, the pesantren conducts gender-sensitive teacher training to challenge traditional views that marginalize women's education, thereby extending its advocacy beyond institutional boundaries to influence broader community perspectives (Srimulyani, 2016).

"We recognize that women and children are often in vulnerable positions. Therefore, we created a curriculum that focuses not only on religious education but also on life skills and human rights awareness. The students here not only learn to recite but also learn about their role in society in the future." (Interview with Dayah's leadership, 2024)

The changes that have occurred at Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam are part of the phenomenon of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia that have begun to adopt an inclusive and responsive approach to gender issues. Islamic boarding schools, which were once considered conservative educational institutions, are now beginning to show a new face that is more open to social change and the demands of modernity (Azra, 2002). The new face of this pesantren is marked by various innovations, including the development of a curriculum that is more relevant to the needs of the times, a more participatory approach to education, and strengthening the role of women as leaders and educators in the pesantren (Lopes Cardozo et al., 2022). This change can be seen from the efforts of the pesantren to integrate gender justice values into every aspect of education, from teaching to the daily lives of students. This

transformation also reflects an increase in dialogue about the role of women in Islam. In various Islamic boarding schools, women are no longer seen only as caregivers or companions but as leaders who have an important role in the development of the Muslim community (Lopes Cardozo & Srimulyani, 2021). Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam, for example, has begun to promote the role of women in educational leadership by giving them a more strategic position in the management and decision-making of Islamic boarding schools.

Although significant progress has been made, Islamic education advocacy for women and children in Islamic boarding schools such as Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam still faces various challenges. One of the main challenges is the still strong cultural resistance in some communities, where women's education is often still seen as a non-priority. In addition, limited resources, both in terms of financial and human resources, are also an obstacle to the development of broader advocacy programs (Rachmawati, 2022). However, despite these challenges, there is growing optimism that Islamic boarding schools such as Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam will continue to be pioneers in advocating for inclusive and gender-equitable Islamic education. By continuing to innovate and strengthen advocacy networks at the local and national levels, these Islamic boarding schools have the potential to become a model of progressive Islamic education in Indonesia and even in the Muslim world in general (Azizah, 2023; Farida & Kasdi, 2018).

“... We understand that the sustainability of this advocacy requires support from various parties. In addition to strengthening the curriculum, we also collaborate with non-governmental institutions to provide training for educators and students. We believe that small but consistent changes can have a big impact in the future.” (Interview with manager Dayah, 2024).

The new face of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia is expected to be an inspiration for other Islamic educational institutions in fighting for the right to education for women and children. Thus, the advocacy of Islamic education carried out in Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam not only has a local impact but can also make a significant contribution to broader social change in Islamic society.



Figure 1: Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam, West Aceh

Source: BBC Indonesia 2022/10

Women's and Children's Rights Advocacy

Advocacy for women's and children's rights through education is one of the key pillars in efforts to achieve gender equality and community empowerment worldwide. Education is considered a fundamental human right and is a very effective tool in combating discrimination, poverty, and gender inequality (UNESCO, 2016). In Indonesia, education advocacy for women and children is critical, given the challenges that remain, such as limited access to quality education, social norms that limit women's participation in education, and gender-based violence that is still high (Murtado et al., 2024).

In recent decades, attention to advocacy for women's and children's rights in Islamic boarding schools has increased, along with the growing awareness of the importance of gender equality and the protection of children's rights in various sectors, including in the educational environment (Azra, 2004; Daniels, 2007). However, Islamic boarding schools also face great challenges in carrying out this advocacy, especially due to limited resources, the influence of a patriarchal culture that is still strong, and a limited understanding of human rights in the context of religious education (Karim & Rochmahwati, 2021; Palulungan et al., 2020).

Education is the most effective tool in empowering women. Through education, women gain the knowledge, skills, and confidence necessary to overcome various challenges in their lives, both at home and in society. Education also opens up opportunities for women to participate more actively in social, economic, and political life, which in turn can reduce gender inequality (Sen, 2017). Education advocacy for women not only focuses on improving access but also on the quality of education received by women. In many cases, women who have access to education still face barriers in the form of discrimination in the classroom, gender-insensitive curriculum, and a lack of support from family and community (Apriliandra & Krisnani, 2021).

Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia have long been institutions dominated by men, both in terms of leadership and the curriculum taught. However, in recent decades, there has been a greater awareness of the importance of women's empowerment in Islamic boarding schools. Advocacy for women's rights in Islamic boarding schools involves efforts to ensure that women have equal access to religious education, participation in leadership, and protection from all forms of discrimination and violence (Nuroniyah, 2019; Prasetiawan & Lis, 2019). Several Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia have begun to integrate gender equality issues into their curricula, develop specific programs to improve women's skills and knowledge, and promote women as leaders in Islamic boarding schools. For example, programs focused on life skills training, teaching women's rights in Islam, and economic empowerment have been an important part of this advocacy (Malihah et al., 2023; Wahyuni et al., 2023).

In addition, advocacy for women's rights in Islamic boarding schools also involves efforts to change social norms that prevent women from taking a more active role in society (Fahrub et al., 2023). This approach often involves collaborating with non-governmental organizations, governments, and civil society to create sustainable and profound change. For example, programs designed to increase women's participation in higher education, job skills

training, and initiatives to eliminate violence against women in schools are some examples of advocacy efforts that have been undertaken.

One of the Santri we interviewed said:

“... I was initially afraid to come here because of my past experiences. But here, I feel welcome. We are taught to be confident, understand our rights, and how to be economically independent. I hope to one day help other women who are going through something similar.” (Interview with Santri, 2024).

Children, as a vulnerable group, also need strong educational advocacy to ensure that they can enjoy their rights to the fullest, which includes efforts to protect children from various forms of exploitation, violence, and discrimination, as well as access to quality education (UNICEF, 2019). Inclusive and equitable education is key to protecting children's rights. Through education, children not only learn academic skills, but also values such as equality, human rights, and tolerance. This advocacy is becoming increasingly important in developing countries, such as Indonesia, where many children still experience inequities in access to education, especially girls, children with disabilities, and children from poor and marginalized communities (Irawati & Winario, 2020).

The Indonesian government has also worked with international organizations to develop policies that support inclusive education and protect children from various forms of violence and discrimination (Saputra, 2018). Children who study at Islamic boarding schools often come from diverse backgrounds, such as victims of violence, disaster victims, and conflict victims, including those from poor families or remote areas. Therefore, Islamic boarding schools have a great responsibility to protect their rights, especially the right to education, protection from violence, and access to basic needs such as health and nutrition (Zikrika et al., 2021).

Advocacy for children's rights in Islamic boarding schools includes a variety of efforts to ensure that children not only receive quality religious education but are also treated fairly and respectfully. This includes efforts to eliminate harmful practices for children, such as physical violence in discipline, as well as providing psychological and emotional support to children in need (Muafiah et al., 2022).

“... My son used to experience trauma due to violence. When we were accepted at Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam, I felt a new hope. In addition to receiving religious education, my son also receives psychological assistance. Now, he's smiling again and confident to learn.” (interview with Santri's parents, 2024).

Some Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia have begun implementing “child-friendly boarding schools” policies, which are designed to create a safe and supportive environment for children. This policy includes training for pesantren staff on children's rights, providing adequate facilities, and developing programs that support children's development (Badrudin, 2022). The following table presents a structured summary of the key findings, challenges, and strategic efforts undertaken by Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam in advancing advocacy for women's and children's rights through its educational practices.

Table 1: Women's and Children's Rights Advocacy at Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam

Research Aspect	Key Findings	Challenges	Initiatives
Advocacy for Women's Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Providing space for female students to participate in student organizations. b. Integrating gender-equality perspectives into the curriculum. c. Leadership and communication training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Resistance from traditional communities. b. Limited understanding of gender equality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Advocacy approaches grounded in Islamic values. b. Discussions and interpretative studies on gender. c. Involvement of ulama and community leaders.
Advocacy for Child Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Humanistic and non-violent teaching methods. b. Counseling and guidance programs. c. Introduction of the "rumah aman" concept. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Limited educational facilities. b. Lack of human resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Training for caregivers on children's rights. b. Collaboration with social institutions and government agencies.
Educational Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Studies on women's rights in Islam. b. Introduction to female leadership in Islamic history. c. Training in rhetoric and advocacy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Limited availability of gender-sensitive learning materials. b. Lack of family support for women's education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Development of an inclusive curriculum. b. Community and family engagement in outreach and socialization.
Community Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Open discussions with community members. b. Community service programs conducted by students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Traditional views on women's roles. b. Limited involvement of men in gender advocacy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Collaborative gender-interpretation studies with the community. b. Community-based education initiatives.

The findings of this study illustrate that advocacy for women's and children's rights at Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam is implemented through a range of educational initiatives.

DISCUSSION

From Islamic Education to Social Advocacy

Aceh, often referred to as the "Serambi Mekkah" has a long history of spreading Islam in the archipelago. This region is one of the main centers of Islamic education in Indonesia, where dayah have played a key role in maintaining and spreading Islamic teachings since the time of the Aceh Sultanate in the 15th century (Hurgronje, 2019). Islamic boarding schools in Aceh not only function as centers of religious education but also as centers of culture and resistance to colonialism. Since its inception, Islamic boarding schools in Aceh, often referred to as *dayah*, have become a center for learning religious sciences, especially fiqh, tafsir, and hadith. *Dayah* in Aceh has different characteristics compared to Islamic boarding schools in Java or other regions in Indonesia, mainly due to the strong influence of Aceh's local culture and traditions, which are very thick with Islamic values (Fatah et al., 2025; Silahuddin et al., 2025; Suyanta et al., 2024; Tabrani ZA et al., 2024).

The scientific tradition in Aceh Islamic boarding schools is also marked by a close relationship between scholars and the community. Ulama in Aceh not only play the role of teachers but also serve as highly respected spiritual leaders (Tabrani ZA et al., 2023). This relationship forms a strong basis for dayah to function not only as an educational institution but also as a guardian of morality and Islamic identity in Aceh (Thalal & Sabil, 2010). In the socio-political context, Islamic boarding schools in Aceh have a very significant role. Since the Dutch colonial period, the dayah in Aceh has become the center of resistance against colonialism. Islamic boarding schools such as Dayah Teungku Chik Pante Kulu and Dayah Teungku Paloh became the headquarters of resistance movements led by charismatic scholars. This role strengthens the position of Islamic boarding schools as the last bastion of defense for Islamic identity and culture in Aceh (Reid, 2005).

During the protracted conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the government of the Republic of Indonesia (RI), the dayah again played an important role. Many Islamic boarding schools have become shelters for people affected by the conflict (Akmal, 2020; Nuraini, 2022). In addition, Islamic boarding school scholars often act as mediators in conflict resolution efforts, thanks to the influence and moral authority they have in Acehnese society (Sahlan et al., 2019). The political role of dayah in Aceh also continued after the 2005 Helsinki Agreement, where dayah became one of the institutions that supported the process of reintegration and reconciliation in Aceh. These Islamic boarding schools contribute to promoting peace and rebuilding the people of Aceh, who were destroyed by the conflict (Junaidi et al., 2025; Muslihun et al., 2025; Safriadi, 2022).

The role of pesantren did not stop after the conflict and tsunami in 2004, dayah in Aceh continued to experience significant dynamics. Islamic boarding schools are not only focusing on religious education but are also starting to integrate general education and life skills into their curriculum. This is in line with efforts to recover Aceh from the trauma of war and natural disasters, as well as to build a more independent and competitive society in the era of globalization. This transformation also includes efforts by dayah to be more inclusive in accepting and educating women. As seen in Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam, there has been a significant increase in women's participation in dayah education. This dayah not only provides access to education for women but also strives to elevate the role of women as leaders and educators in Acehnese society (Rahmah, 2019; Nurwahyuni & Tabrani ZA, 2025).

The dynamics of Islamic boarding schools in Aceh are also influenced by the local government's efforts to integrate Islamic Sharia values into the education system. Several Islamic boarding schools have begun to develop programs that support the implementation of Islamic Sharia in Aceh, including training for students to become leaders who can apply Sharia in their daily lives. Support from local governments and international institutions is used as an opportunity for Islamic boarding schools in Aceh to continue to develop and adapt to the demands of the times.

Islamic boarding schools in Aceh have played a key role in Aceh's social and economic development, especially in shaping a young generation that not only understands religion but also has the relevant skills to contribute to the global community (Krisdiyanto et al., 2019). The prospects of Islamic boarding schools in Aceh depend heavily on their ability to innovate and maintain relevance in an ever-changing context. By utilizing a strong scientific

heritage and adapting to modern developments, Islamic boarding schools in Aceh can become a fortress of progressive and inclusive Islamic education.

Table 2: The Contextual Framework of Dayah in Aceh

Aspect	Context
<i>History</i>	Aceh, known as the “ <i>Serambi Mekkah</i> ” has a long history of spreading Islam in the archipelago. Dayah has existed since the Aceh Sultanate in the 15th century.
<i>Educational Role</i>	Dayah in Aceh function as centers for religious education, particularly in fiqh, tafsir, and hadith, as well as cultural hubs and bastions of resistance to colonialism.
<i>Distinct Characteristics</i>	Dayah in Aceh are strongly influenced by local traditions deeply rooted in Islamic values, making them distinct from pesantren in Java or other regions in Indonesia.
<i>Ulama-Community Relations</i>	Ulama serve not only as teachers but also as highly respected spiritual leaders, making dayah guardians of morality and Islamic identity in the community.
<i>Socio-Political Role</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Colonial Era: dayah served as centers of resistance against Dutch colonialism, such as Dayah Teungku Chik Pante Kulu. - GAM-RI Conflict: Acted as shelters for conflict-affected communities and mediators in conflict resolution. - Post-Helsinki Agreement: Supported reintegration and reconciliation efforts following the 2005 peace accord.
<i>Post-Conflict Dynamics</i>	After the conflict and the 2004 tsunami, dayah began integrating general education and life skills into their curriculum to build a more independent and competitive society.
<i>Women's Participation</i>	Dayah such as Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam have expanded women's access to education and emphasized their roles as leaders and educators in Acehnese society.
<i>Sharia Integration</i>	Dayah has developed programs supporting the implementation of Islamic Sharia in Aceh, including leadership training rooted in Sharia principles.
<i>Social and Economic Contribution</i>	Dayah plays a vital role in shaping a young generation that is both religiously devout and equipped with skills to contribute to the global community.
<i>Future Prospects</i>	The future of Dayah depends on their ability to innovate and remain relevant in a dynamic context, serving as centers of progressive and inclusive Islamic education.

The advocacy theory proposed by Dubois and Miley emphasizes three key aspects: individual empowerment, community-based social change, and policy advocacy to achieve justice for vulnerable groups (Dubois & Miley, 2005; Reyes et al., 2013). In the context of this study, the advocacy model implemented by Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam represents a community-based approach that actively involves Islamic scholars (ulama), human rights activists, and local communities in promoting inclusive education for women and children. This dayah, often referred to as “*Dayah HAM*” (Pesantren based on Human Rights), functions not only as a traditional Islamic educational institution but also as an advocacy platform that upholds social justice and safeguards the rights of marginalized groups.

From a human rights perspective, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) explicitly assert the rights of women and children to be protected from violence and to have equal access to education. Aceh, a region facing persistent challenges related to violence against women and children, requires a community-based strategy to provide concrete solutions. Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam plays a crucial role in addressing these challenges by offering an educational environment that not only focuses on religious knowledge but also

serves as a safe space where women and children can exercise their rights within a supportive framework.

However, the role of dayah in advocating for women's and children's rights must be examined within broader ideological and epistemological dynamics. Sabah Mahmood, in *Politics of Piety*, critiques liberal feminist approaches that often assume the struggle for women's rights must be rooted in secularism and individual freedoms (Mahmood, 2011). Mahmood argues that religious piety can serve as a form of resistance against structural domination rather than mere passive compliance. Within the context of Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam, women are not only educated in religious matters but also empowered to understand and advocate for their rights within the framework of Islam. In other words, the advocacy undertaken does not contradict Islamic norms but rather leverages Islamic values as a source of legitimacy for promoting inclusive and socially just transformation.

This dayah-based advocacy model offers a new perspective on the role of Islamic institutions in protecting vulnerable groups. Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam demonstrates that pesantren can transform into progressive social spaces without abandoning their Islamic traditions. By integrating human rights principles into an Islamic educational framework, this pesantren not only expands educational access for women and children but also strengthens their agency in navigating structural challenges that have historically limited their roles and rights in society.

Rethinking Advocacy Development in Islamic Education

Islamic education advocacy for women and children plays a strategic role in shaping a just and inclusive society by safeguarding their rights and empowering them to respond to the social, cultural, and economic challenges of contemporary life (Hairiyah et al., 2024). Within the Acehnese context, this form of advocacy gains particular significance as Islamic boarding schools (dayah) occupy a central position not only as religious educational institutions but also as moral, social, and cultural authorities. Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam exemplifies this expanded role by integrating Islamic education with advocacy practices that address structural inequalities affecting women and children. This study offers a reinterpretation of Islamic values within the context of social justice and provides an academic contribution to developing Islamic boarding schools as progressive agents of social change, which is conceptualized as *Islamic Religious Education Advocacy Development (I-READ)*.

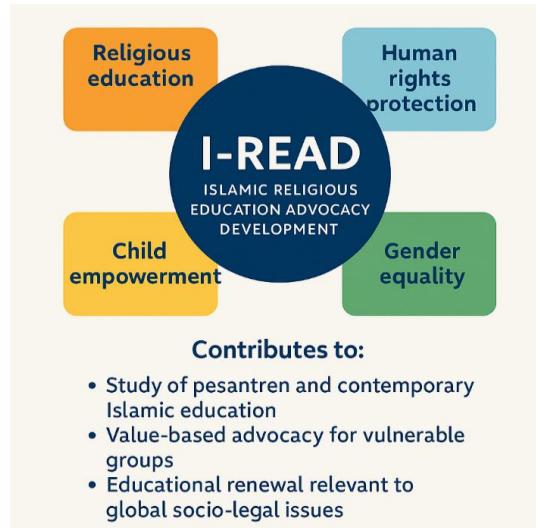


Figure 2: I-READ (Islamic Religious Education Advocacy Development)

In this regard, the concept of Islamic Religious Education Advocacy Development (I-READ) offers a relevant analytical framework for understanding how Islamic education can be transformed into a sustainable advocacy mechanism. I-READ conceptualizes advocacy as an integral part of religious education, combining the transmission of Islamic knowledge with empowerment, community engagement, and the promotion of social justice. Rather than positioning advocacy as an external or supplementary activity, I-READ embeds advocacy values within the educational process itself, ensuring that efforts to protect and empower women and children are institutionally rooted and socially legitimate.

Rethinking the sustainability of Islamic education advocacy through the lens of I-READ highlights the importance of long-term institutional strategies. At Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam, sustainability is pursued through the development of inclusive and gender-responsive curricula that integrate Islamic teachings with principles of human rights, equality, and social responsibility. These curricula not only provide religious knowledge but also cultivate critical awareness among students, particularly women, enabling them to understand their rights and roles within an Islamic framework. By grounding advocacy in religious texts and traditions, Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam ensures that gender justice and child protection are perceived as integral components of Islamic values rather than external impositions.

Educators play a crucial role in operationalizing the I-READ framework within dayah. In Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam, continuous training and capacity-building programs for teachers and religious instructors are essential to sustaining advocacy-oriented education. Such programs focus on enhancing educators' understanding of women's and children's rights, inclusive pedagogical methods, and ethical approaches to addressing sensitive social issues (Tandos, 2020). Through collaboration with civil society organizations, human rights activists, and local communities, the dayah strengthens its human resources while maintaining its religious authority and cultural legitimacy.

Policy support further reinforces the sustainability of Islamic education advocacy as envisioned in the I-READ model. At both institutional and governmental levels, policies that promote gender equality, provide adequate funding, and support inclusive educational practices are indispensable. In Aceh, where Islamic law and local governance intersect, Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam strategically engages with policy frameworks to advocate for educational environments that are safe, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of women and children. This engagement enables the dayah to function not only as a site of learning but also as an agent of policy advocacy and community-based social change.

Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam illustrates that Islamic boarding schools can maintain their religious traditions while simultaneously advancing inclusive and rights-based educational practices. By institutionalizing advocacy within religious education, the dayah contributes to the empowerment of women and children and strengthens its role as a progressive and transformative force in Acehnese society.

CONCLUSION

Islamic boarding schools (Pesantren/*Dayah*) in Aceh have undergone significant transformations over the past few decades, with adjustments in structure, curriculum, and policies to meet societal demands, including gender equality and children's rights. Despite progress, challenges such as conservative cultural norms and limited resources still require attention. Advocacy for women's and children's rights within the dayah necessitates inclusive strategies, such as curriculum development, educator training, and policies that support equality. The goal is to eliminate gender discrimination, protect against violence, and provide equitable access to education and empowerment for women and children based on Islamic values.

The sustainability of this advocacy requires a holistic approach, including the enhancement of curricula, training, and responsive educational policies. While cultural resistance and resource limitations persist, these strategies aim to ensure that Islamic education advocacy remains relevant and effective. Collaboration between pesantren, government, and non-governmental organizations is crucial to strengthening these efforts. Continued innovation in curriculum, training, and policy development is necessary to address challenges and ensure long-term impact. International collaboration can also offer additional perspectives and strengthen local efforts in Islamic education advocacy. This study is conceptualized as *Islamic Religious Education Advocacy Development (I-READ)*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support provided by the Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan (LPDP) / Indonesian Endowment Fund for Education, Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia. Several of the researchers are LPDP–BIB awardees and doctoral students at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, Aceh, Indonesia.

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