



Foundations and Contemporary Relevance of Salafi Islamic Education in Indonesia: Principles, Curriculum, and Moral Development

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Abstract: This study analyzes the foundational principles, curriculum structure, and contemporary contributions of Salafi Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, focusing on their adherence to the manhaj salaf methodology. Employing a qualitative conceptual analysis through a structured literature review of 34 scholarly sources from 2010 to 2024, it explores the theological underpinnings, pedagogical approaches, and institutional responses to modernity. Salafi education prioritizes the purification of Islamic teachings, emphasizing tawhīd, memorization of the Qur'an and ḥadīth, and traditional instructional methods such as halaqah and talaqqī. Secular knowledge integration remains minimal and strategic, preserving doctrinal orthodoxy. The institutions contribute significantly to moral and character development by fostering ethical discipline grounded in prophetic teachings. While cautious, selective adaptations to globalization and technological advances are evident, ensuring educational relevance without compromising core values. Limitations include reliance on textual analysis without empirical fieldwork, prompting recommendations for future research on practical implementations and comparative pedagogical models. The study underscores Salafi education's vital role in maintaining Islamic orthodoxy and moral integrity within Indonesia's pluralistic context, advocating for ongoing epistemological dialogue to balance doctrinal fidelity and educational openness.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini menganalisis prinsip-prinsip dasar, struktur kurikulum, dan kontribusi kontemporer lembaga pendidikan Islam Salafi di Indonesia dengan fokus pada kepatuhan terhadap metodologi manhaj salaf. Metode yang digunakan adalah analisis konseptual kualitatif melalui tinjauan pustaka terstruktur yang melibatkan 34 sumber ilmiah dari tahun 2010 hingga 2024. Studi ini mengeksplorasi landasan teologis, pendekatan pedagogis, serta respons institusional terhadap modernitas. Pendidikan Salafi menekankan pemurnian ajaran Islam, dengan fokus pada tauhid, hafalan Al-Qur'an dan hadits, serta metode pengajaran tradisional seperti halaqah dan talaqqi. Integrasi ilmu sekuler bersifat minimal dan bersifat strategis untuk menjaga ortodoksi doktrin. Lembaga-lembaga ini memberikan kontribusi penting dalam pembentukan moral dan karakter melalui penanaman disiplin etika yang berlandaskan ajaran Nabi. Meski berhati-hati, terdapat adaptasi selektif terhadap globalisasi dan kemajuan teknologi demi menjaga relevansi pendidikan tanpa mengorbankan nilai-nilai inti. Keterbatasan penelitian ini terletak pada fokus analisis tekstual tanpa studi lapangan empiris, sehingga direkomendasikan penelitian lanjutan terkait implementasi praktis dan model pedagogis komparatif. Temuan ini menegaskan peran penting pendidikan Salafi dalam menjaga ortodoksi Islam dan integritas moral di tengah konteks pluralisme Indonesia, serta mendorong dialog epistemologis berkelanjutan guna menyeimbangkan kesetiaan doktrin dan keterbukaan pendidikan.



1. Introduction

Islamic education plays a strategic role in shaping the character, spirituality, and identity of Muslims around the world.¹ In this context, the diversity of schools of thought (*mazhab*) and movements within Islam has led to the emergence of various educational models, each reflecting the ideological interpretations of their respective groups. One of the rapidly growing models is Salafi-based education, which seeks to revive the understanding and practices of the early generations of Muslims (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*). This model is believed to offer doctrinal purity and moral discipline through a strict and textual educational approach.² However, the presence and development of Salafi educational institutions have sparked debates among the public and academics alike.³

Several studies show that Salafi Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia have developed as an alternative model reflecting the transnational Islamic movement.^{4,5} Integrated Islamic schools and Salafi pesantren have become key platforms for disseminating Salafi principles through both formal and informal education systems.⁶ Strategic leadership planning, cadre regeneration, and continuous training are essential factors in maintaining the quality of education in these institutions.⁷ Moreover, some Salafi institutions successfully manage their organizations using modern management approaches while upholding core values such as gender segregation and the dominance of religious curricula.⁸ This demonstrates that, despite their theological conservatism, Salafi educational institutions are capable of managerial adaptability.

The Salafi education model also serves as an important arena for the formation of students' morality and religious identity. Salafi pesantren are known for emphasizing religious practices based on literal interpretations of sacred texts.⁹ Traditions such as *talaqqy* (direct transmission), memorization of classical texts, and *halaqah* (study circles) are the main methods used to transmit religious knowledge.¹⁰ In some pesantren, there are special programs such as *tarbiyah al-nisā'* for women, designed to strengthen their

¹ Wahyu Hidayat dan Nur Hidayat, "Islamic Boarding School Management: A Comprehensive Analysis of a Special Program for Fostering Students' Disciplinary Character in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah," *HEUTAGOGIA: Journal of Islamic Education* 3, no. 2 (31 Desember 2023): 225–36, doi:10.14421/hjie.2023.32-07.

² Jamhari dan Saifudin Asrori, "The Making of Salafi-Based Islamic Schools in Indonesia," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 60, no. 1 (2022): 227–64, doi:10.14421/ajis.2022.601.227-264.

³ I Iskandar, "Manhaj Salafi and its Controversial Da'wah in Youtube Vlogs," *International Journal of Nusantara Islam* 9, no. 2 (2021): 573–90, doi:10.15575/ijni.v9i2.16870.

⁴ Irham Irham, "Pesantren Manhaj Salafi: Pendidikan Islam Model Baru Di Indonesia," *ULUL ALBAB: Jurnal Studi Islam* 17, no. 1 (2016): 1–18, doi:10.18860/ua.v17i1.3252.

⁵ Fitri Meliani, Hasan Basri, dan Andewi Suhartini, "Learning System in Salafi Manhaj Boarding School," *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 4, no. 2 (2023): 175–86, doi:10.31538/munaddhomah.v4i2.300.

⁶ Jamhari dan Asrori, "The Making of Salafi-Based Islamic Schools in Indonesia."

⁷ Tubagus Syihabudin, B Syafuri, dan Anis Fauzi, "The Leadership Planning and Education Quality of Salafi Islamic Boarding Schools," *Tadbir: Jurnal Studi Manajemen Pendidikan* 7, no. 2 (20 September 2023): 477–94, doi:10.29240/jsmp.v7i2.7552.

⁸ Rudi Erwandi et al., "Salafi-Based Integrated Islamic Elementary School Management," *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education* 4, no. 3 (16 September 2023): 502–18, doi:10.31538/tjije.v4i3.598.

⁹ Din Wahid, "Nurturing Salafi manhaj: A study of Salafi pesantrens in contemporary Indonesia PhD Thesis Summary A study of Salafi pesantren in contemporary Indonesia," *Wacana: Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia* 15, no. 2 (2014): 367–76, doi:10.17510/wacana.v15i2.413.

¹⁰ Ulyan Nasri dan Arif Mulyohadi, "Salafi Islamic Education: Teaching Methods, Traditions and Ideologies in Lombok Boarding Schools," *SYAIKHUNA: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pranata Islam* 14, no. 2 (2023): 216–33, doi:10.58223/syaikhuna.v14i02.7029.

roles within a limited framework.¹¹ The daily life of students is regulated to instill discipline and adherence to Salafi principles. This structure serves as the foundation for developing students with strong moral character and unwavering commitment to what is believed to be pure Islamic teachings.

Nevertheless, Salafi education is not free from public criticism and concern, particularly regarding its rigid doctrine and limited secular curriculum. Some studies warn that the infiltration of extremist Salafi-Jihadi ideologies is possible if there is no effort to mainstream religious moderation within the curriculum and institutional policies.¹² Furthermore, Salafi da'wah practices via digital platforms have often sparked controversy due to confrontational and unwise delivery.¹³ This presents a particular challenge for Salafi institutions to convey their messages with *hikmah* (wisdom), especially in today's open and pluralistic digital era.¹⁴ Therefore, the adoption of moderation and wisdom in propagating Salafi values must be reconsidered and reevaluated.

On the other hand, some Salafi institutions have shown an ability to adapt to global challenges and technological advancements without compromising their fundamental principles. For example, a Salafi *ma'had* in Lombok has maintained a classical curriculum based on *kitab kuning* (yellow books) and *talaqqy*, while also opening up to technology-based educational innovations.¹⁵ In Aceh, Salafiyah *dayah* remain active and have managed to innovate while retaining traditional values.¹⁶ Radio broadcasts and digital da'wah programs are increasingly used to expand their religious mission, albeit selectively.¹⁷ These adaptations reflect an effort to balance theological conservatism with the demands of contemporary life. This phenomenon adds complexity to the study of Salafi education, which cannot be simplistically labeled as anti-modern or closed.

Although many studies have examined the development of the Salafi movement and its institutions in Indonesia, most tend to focus on ideological aspects or socio-political dynamics.¹⁸ There remains a lack of in-depth research exploring the educational principles, curriculum design, and pedagogical strategies employed by Salafi institutions, particularly in the context of modernizing Islamic education. This gap leaves unanswered questions about how Salafi institutions shape students' morality, preserve doctrinal purity, and simultaneously respond to the demands of the times. In addition, systematic studies on curriculum adaptation and the use of technology within Salafi doctrinal frameworks are still limited. Therefore, this study attempts to fill that gap in the contemporary Islamic education literature.

¹¹ Wahyudin Wahyudin, "Pendidikan Muslimah Bercadar di Pesantren Bermanhaj Salafi di Kota Metro," *Tarbawiyah: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan* 2, no. 2 (2018): 323–46, doi:10.1080/10576100500497004.

¹² Hatim Gazali, Dewi Anggraeni, dan Mariam Eit Ahmed, "Salafi-Jihadist Movements and Ideology in Educational Institutions: Exploring the Nexus with Religious Moderation," *Edukasia Islamika* 8, no. 1 (28 Juni 2023): 127–46, doi:10.28918/jei.v8i1.365.

¹³ Iskandar, "Manhaj Salafi and its Controversial Da'wah in Youtube Vlogs."

¹⁴ Sulyman Muhammad-Busayri, "a Comparative Study of Manhaj Salafi Cum At-Taşawwuf Al-Islāmiy on Radio: a Clarion Call for Muslim Brotherhood," *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies* 11, no. 2 (2021): 67–84.

¹⁵ Nasri dan Mulyohadi, "Salafi Islamic Education: Teaching Methods, Traditions and Ideologies in Lombok Boarding Schools."

¹⁶ Mulia Rahman dan Syahminan, "The existence of Dayah Salafiyah in the Development of Islamic Education in the era of globalization," *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education* 5, no. 3 (2024): 462–77, doi:10.31538/tijie.v5i3.1151.

¹⁷ Muhammad-Busayri, "a Comparative Study of Manhaj Salafi Cum At-Taşawwuf Al-Islāmiy on Radio: a Clarion Call for Muslim Brotherhood."

¹⁸ Adis Duderija, "Constructing the religious Self and the Other: neo-traditional Salafi manhaj," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 21, no. 1 (1 Januari 2010): 75–93, doi:10.1080/09596410903481879.

This research aims to comprehensively analyze the core principles, curricula, and contributions of Salafi Islamic educational institutions to contemporary Islamic education in Indonesia. It also examines how these institutions navigate the tension between preserving theological purity and adapting to modern challenges. Through a deep and contextual approach, this study seeks to contribute to the discourse on Islamic education, particularly in understanding an educational model that emphasizes doctrinal authenticity while responding to contemporary needs. As such, the study is relevant for broadening perspectives on moral development, pedagogical strategies, and institutional governance within Salafi educational contexts. Ultimately, this research offers a significant contribution to the study of Islamic education in Indonesia and beyond.

2. Method

This study employs a conceptual analysis approach using descriptive qualitative methods to investigate the foundational principles, curriculum, and contemporary relevance of Salafi Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. Data were collected through a structured literature review of 34 scholarly references spanning classical Islamic texts, institutional documents, and recent academic publications dated from 2010 to 2024. These sources included primary materials such as Salafi scholars' writings, curricula, and pedagogical manuals, alongside secondary literature comprising peer-reviewed journal articles, monographs, and doctoral dissertations focusing on Islamic education and Salafi thought.

The literature search was conducted using targeted keywords including "Salafi education," "Islamic curriculum," "manhaj salaf," and "Islamic pedagogy" across prominent academic databases such as JSTOR, Scopus, Brill Online, and relevant Indonesian academic repositories. The collected data were thematically analyzed by categorizing materials into four core domains: theological and philosophical foundations, curriculum design and pedagogy, institutional responses to modern challenges, and moral and character education.

A systematic thematic content analysis was applied to identify, synthesize, and interpret recurring concepts and normative frameworks characteristic of Salafi educational institutions. Emphasis was placed on key Salafi constructs such as *al-tasfiyah wa al-tarbiyah* (purification and education), *tawhīd*-centered teachings, and traditional instructional methods including *halaqah* and *talaqqī*.

To ensure academic rigor and data reliability, cross-verification among sources was performed, and interpretative analysis employed a hermeneutic framework allowing contextualization of classical texts within Indonesia's contemporary educational landscape. Furthermore, comparative analysis highlighted both continuities and local adaptations of the Salafi model in response to globalization and modernity.

This methodological approach aims to develop a coherent conceptual understanding of Salafi Islamic education's intellectual and ethical contributions while providing insights applicable for educators, policymakers, and researchers engaged in Islamic educational development.

3. Results

3.1. Core Principles and Educational Philosophy of Salafi Institutions

Salafi Islamic educational institutions are founded upon a distinctive theological and pedagogical framework rooted in the legacy of the *salaf al-ṣāliḥ* the Prophet's Companions (*ṣaḥābah*), their followers (*tābi'īn*), and the followers of the *tābi'īn*. Central to their vision is the doctrine of *al-tasfiyah wa al-tarbiyah*-the purification of Islamic

teachings from innovations and the moral and spiritual cultivation of students based on the Qur'an and Sunnah.¹⁹

This foundational ideology draws strong legitimacy from key Islamic texts. One such reference is Surah At-Taubah (9:100), which praises the earliest Muslims—the *Muhajirin* and the *Ansar*—and those who follow them in righteousness. This verse underlines the Salafi imperative to emulate the understanding and practices of the earliest Muslim generations. Similarly, Surah Yusuf (12:108) affirms the prophetic method of *da'wah* grounded in insight and direct adherence to divine guidance. The Hadith *Khayru al-Qurūn*, which states, “The best of people are those of my generation, then those who follow them, then those who follow them,” serves as a guiding maxim for the Salafi emphasis on the purity of early Islamic interpretations.²⁰

Grounded in these texts, Salafi institutions develop an educational orientation characterized by literal textualism, prioritizing apparent meanings in scripture and rejecting metaphorical or allegorical interpretations unless explicitly established by early scholars. The concept of *tawhīd*, or the absolute oneness of God, is central, permeating worship, law, and theology. Any practice or belief perceived as an innovation introduced after the Prophet and his companions is strongly rejected. Education, therefore, is not limited to the transmission of knowledge but is viewed as a means to cultivate religiously devout and ethically upright individuals who embody the prophetic example and the ethos of the early Muslim community.²¹

Salafi scholars and educators generally avoid speculative theology (*‘ilm al-kalām*) and philosophical inquiry, viewing such disciplines as sources of doctrinal deviation. As noted by Saada, knowledge is classified into beneficial knowledge (*‘ilm nāfi‘*)—which strengthens one's faith and religious practice—and harmful or unnecessary knowledge, which is often associated with worldly sciences. Secular subjects are approached with caution and are frequently excluded unless they directly serve religious ends.²²

This ideological framework shapes not only curricular content but also institutional structures, teacher selection criteria, and pedagogical strategies. Salafi education aspires to produce an *ummah* that is not only intellectually grounded in scripture but also morally disciplined, theologically sound, and resilient in the face of what is perceived as religious deviation or cultural corruption.²³

3.2 Curriculum Structure and Pedagogical Methods in Salafi Islamic Education

The curriculum of Salafi Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia is profoundly influenced by classical Islamic sciences. It centers on the authoritative texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah as interpreted by the *salaf al-ṣāliḥ*, emphasizing the preservation of religious purity and moral formation over the integration of secular knowledge. Consequently,

¹⁹ Najwan Saada, “The Theology of Islamic Education from Salafi and Liberal Perspectives,” *Religious Education* 113, no. 4 (8 Agustus 2018): 406–18, doi:10.1080/00344087.2018.1450607.

²⁰ Ismail Nasution dan Ridwan Hasbi, “Hadis ‘Khair Al-Qurun’ Dan Perubahan Sosial Dalam Dinamika Hukum,” *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 26, no. 1 (2022): 69, doi:10.24014/jush.v26i1.4042.

²¹ Nafik Muthohirin, “Salafi Madrasah: Ideology, Transformation, and Implication for Multiculturalism in Indonesia,” *Fikrah: Jurnal Ilmu Aqidah dan Studi Keagamaan* 10, no. 1 (2022): 81–100, doi:10.21043/fikrah.v8i1.14380.

²² Najwan Saada, “Educating for global citizenship in religious education: Islamic perspective,” *International Journal of Educational Development* 103 (2023): 102894, doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2023.102894.

²³ Md Kausar Alam dan Muhammad Shahin Miah, “Do Islamic banks use institutional theory in the light of Shariah governance? Empirical evidence from a Muslim dominant country,” *Heliyon* 10, no. 2 (2024): e24252, doi:10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e24252.

secular subjects are included only minimally, often as a strategic response to regulatory or societal demands rather than a shift in epistemological orientation.²⁴

A key focus of the curriculum lies in the memorization and study of the Qur'an, commonly known as *tahfidz*. This activity is regarded not merely as a technical exercise, but as a spiritual discipline that shapes students' character and instills strong religious identity.²⁵ Complementing Qur'anic studies, the instruction of *ḥadīth* involves both textual memorization and the mastery of the sciences of transmission (*ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*), typically through canonical collections such as *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. This ensures doctrinal precision and fosters a sense of connection to the Prophet's teachings.²⁶

Equally central is the teaching of *ʿaqīdah* (Islamic creed), which is firmly grounded in the concept of *tawḥīd* and draws on the theological legacy of figures such as Ibn Taymiyyah. Legal instruction (*fiqh*), often aligned with the Hanbali school, places strong emphasis on textual evidence from the Qur'an and Sunnah.²⁷ Alongside intellectual formation, Salafi schools place high importance on moral education (*tarbiyah akhlāqiyyah*), where educators serve not only as instructors but also as moral exemplars (*qudwah ḥasanah*) in daily life interactions, cultivating virtues like humility, honesty, and sincerity.²⁸

In terms of pedagogy, Salafi institutions rely predominantly on classical methods. The *halaqah* system—small group discussions facilitated by a teacher—provides space for direct engagement with texts and oral transmission. This is often complemented by *talaqqī*, in which the teacher reads a text aloud while students follow, repeat, and commit the material to memory, preserving traditional chains of knowledge (*sanad*).²⁹ These sessions emphasize oral-aural comprehension over written analysis.

Memorization (*tahfidz*) is not limited to the Qur'an but extends to *ḥadīth* and selected doctrinal texts. Repetition, daily testing, and teacher-student recitation cycles are integral to this process, reinforcing both content retention and spiritual discipline.³⁰ Furthermore, teachers closely supervise student behavior, modeling appropriate conduct and correcting moral lapses as part of the holistic educational experience.³¹ Occasional question-and-answer sessions allow students to seek clarification, though these remain within the boundaries of accepted doctrinal interpretations.³²

While highly traditional, this pedagogical model reflects an intentional continuity with the early Islamic education system. Its effectiveness lies not only in knowledge

²⁴ Jamhari dan Asrori, "The Making of Salafi-Based Islamic Schools in Indonesia."

²⁵ Agus Sriyanto, "Methods for Memorizing Tahfidz Qur'an in Children and the Search for Identity (Study in the Salafi Community of Ngawi Regency)," *AL-MUADDIB: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Kependidikan* 6, no. 4 (2024): 1012–26, doi:10.46773/muaddib.v6i4.1517.

²⁶ Nasri dan Mulyohadi, "Salafi Islamic Education: Teaching Methods, Traditions and Ideologies in Lombok Boarding Schools."

²⁷ Jamhari dan Asrori, "The Making of Salafi-Based Islamic Schools in Indonesia."

²⁸ Nasri dan Mulyohadi, "Salafi Islamic Education: Teaching Methods, Traditions and Ideologies in Lombok Boarding Schools."

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Kayyis Fithri Ajhuri, "Prophetic Literacy Education: An Integrative Model of Spirituality, Intellectuality, and Social Action," *HEUTAGOGIA: Journal of Islamic Education* 4, no. 2 SE-Articles (Desember 2024): 163–74, doi:10.14421/hjie.2024.42-02.

³¹ Suyadi et al., "Academic reform and sustainability of Islamic higher education in Indonesia," *International Journal of Educational Development* 89 (2022): 102534, doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2021.102534.

³² Hasbialloh Hasbialloh, "Existence of Salafi Education Institutions in West Nusa Tenggara: Study on Resistance and Conflict of Beliefs and Student's Parents Motivation in Selecting the Salafi Educational Institutions" 8, no. 10 (2021): 341, doi:10.18415/ijmmu.v8i10.3060.

transmission but also in the internalization of discipline, reverence for knowledge, and religious piety.³³

3.3 Response to Modernization and Global Challenges

While traditionally resistant to secular influences, some Salafi institutions in Indonesia have begun to cautiously engage with modern educational demands. This includes the selective incorporation of technology, such as online classes and digital resources, to broaden the reach of religious teachings without compromising core principles.³⁴

Additionally, a number of Salafi schools have introduced basic secular subjects like mathematics and science at the elementary level, framing this inclusion as serving the public interest (*maṣlahah*) rather than as a theological concession.³⁵ These adaptations are often justified through the concept of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (higher objectives of Islamic law), emphasizing the preservation of intellect and community welfare. Institutional reforms, such as teacher training and facility upgrades, have also been implemented to enhance educational quality and competitiveness. However, these changes are carefully managed to ensure alignment with Salafi doctrines and to avoid diluting religious teachings.³⁶

Despite these developments, many Salafi institutions remain cautious about fully embracing interdisciplinary approaches or engaging extensively in public discourse beyond religious matters. Concerns about maintaining doctrinal purity continue to influence the extent and nature of modernization efforts.

3.4. Contribution of Salafi Islamic Education to Moral and Character Development

One of the most salient and enduring contributions of Salafi-oriented Islamic educational institutions is their pronounced emphasis on moral and character development (*tarbiyah akhlāqīyyah*), which occupies a central position within their pedagogical framework. Unlike many contemporary educational paradigms that prioritize cognitive skills, measurable academic performance, and technical competencies, Salafi education foregrounds the cultivation of ethical integrity and spiritual discipline as the core objectives of the learning process.

This normative orientation is deeply rooted in the prophetic tradition, particularly in the frequently cited hadith: "*Innamā bu'ithtu li-utammima makārim al-akhlāq*" ("Indeed, I was sent to perfect noble character") (Musnad Aḥmad, no. 8595). Within the Salafi pedagogical discourse, this narration is not interpreted as a supplementary ethical ideal but as a foundational educational goal. It reinforces the epistemological conviction that knowledge (*ilm*) must be intrinsically tied to action

³³ Ali Maksum, "Model Pendidikan Toleransi di Pesantren Modern dan Salaf," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam (Journal of Islamic Education Studies)* 3, no. 1 (2016): 81–108, doi:10.15642/jpai.2015.3.1.81-108.

³⁴ Asep Muhamad Iqbal dan Z. Zulkifli, "New Media Technology and Religious Fundamentalist Movements: Exploring the Internet Use by Salafi Movement in Indonesia," in *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Recent Innovations (ICRI)*, 2018, 1566–73, doi:10.5220/0009932115661573.

³⁵ Safudin Zuhri dan Atikah Syamsia, "Integration of Salafi Islamic Boarding School Education With Modern School Curriculum," *TARBIYA: Journal of Education in Muslim Society* 9, no. 1 (2022): 35–50, doi:10.15408/tjems.v10i1.25577.

³⁶ Wahidah Iskar Lestari, Rena Latifa, dan Muthia Rahmah, "Academic Cheating in Pesantren: How Self Efficacy, Religiosity, and Academic Integrity Predict Academic Cheating," *TARBIYA: Journal of Education in Muslim Society* 9, no. 1 (2022): 1–18, doi:10.15408/tjems.v9i1.24701.

(*amal*), and that moral conduct is a necessary corollary of authentic religious understanding.^{37,38}

Salafi institutions operationalize this vision through a synergistic integration of formal instruction, lived example, and behavioral habituation. Teachers are not merely conveyors of textual knowledge but are expected to embody *qudwah hasanah* (exemplary moral conduct), thereby serving as ethical models for their students. Educational interactions are deliberately structured to instill core Islamic virtues such as humility (*tawāḍuʿ*), sincerity (*ikhhlās*), obedience to divine commands, and mutual respect. These values are systematically reinforced through repetition, direct supervision, and social reinforcement mechanisms embedded in the institutional culture.³⁹

Central to this moral formation is the role of the Qur'an, which serves not only as a textual guide but also as a moral compass. Salafi educators frequently cite verses such as QS al-Aḥzāb (33):21—“*Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have a good example...*”—to encourage students to emulate the Prophet's behavior in both private and public spheres. Likewise, QS Luqmān (31):14, which emphasizes gratitude to parents, is employed to reinforce filial piety and social responsibility. These scriptural references are not abstractly interpreted but are tied directly to daily conduct and school discipline.⁴⁰

Moral instruction extends beyond the confines of the classroom. Students receive regular training in *ādāb* (Islamic etiquette), which governs interpersonal interactions, speech, demeanor, and even aspects of physical cleanliness and personal piety. Teachers closely monitor students' behavior, offering correction when necessary and affirming commendable actions to inculcate a consistent moral habitus. Hadiths on interpersonal ethics—such as “*Let whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day speak good or remain silent*” (Bukhari and Muslim)—are routinely memorized, internalized, and invoked as part of the school's spiritual ambience.⁴¹

Furthermore, moral discipline is reinforced through spiritual practices aimed at self-purification (*mujāhadah al-nafs*). Students are taught to be vigilant against vices such as *riyāʿ* (ostentation), *ḥasad* (envy), and *ghībah* (backbiting), supported by ethical injunctions found in QS al-Ḥujurāt (49):11–12, which prohibit mockery, suspicion, and slander. This ethical vigilance is framed not as mere behavioral conformity but as an internalized ethical consciousness, nurtured through regular reflection, prayer, and mentoring.⁴²

The overarching educational goal of Salafi institutions is thus to produce graduates who are not only theologically and doctrinally grounded but also morally upright and socially responsible. Their contribution to Islamic education transcends the

³⁷ Khalid Hussain Mir, “The Resurgence of Islamic Thought: The Reformist Approach of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan,” *AL-AFKAR: Journal for Islamic Studies* 6, no. 2 (2023): 11–24, doi:10.31943/Afkarjournal.V6i2.475.

³⁸ Minoo Mirshahvalad, “Islamic reform with or without Ulama? A comparative study between al-Kawakibi and Naini,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 2024, 1–16, doi:10.1080/13530194.2024.2373986.

³⁹ F Aidulsyah, “The rise of urban Salafism in Indonesia: The social-media and pop culture of new Indonesian Islamic youth,” *Asian Journal of Social Science* 51, no. 4 (2023): 252–59, doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajss.2023.07.003.

⁴⁰ Wahid, “Nurturing Salafi manhaj: A study of Salafi pesantrens in contemporary Indonesia PhD Thesis Summary A study of Salafi pesantren in contemporary Indonesia.”

⁴¹ Muzawir Munawarsyah, “Islamic Education in the Modern Era: Analysis of Student Character and Their Role in Facing the Challenges of Industry 4.0,” *HEUTAGOGIA: Journal of Islamic Education* 3, no. 2 SE-Articles (Desember 2023): 141–54, doi:10.14421/hjie.2023.32-01.

⁴² Emily Handsman, “From Virtue to Grit: Changes in Character Education Narratives in the U.S. from 1985 to 2016,” *Qualitative Sociology* 44, no. 2 (2021): 271–91, doi:10.1007/s11133-021-09475-2.

transmission of religious texts; it entails the formation of ethical agents capable of embodying Islamic values in every dimension of life. In a global educational climate increasingly dominated by technocratic and utilitarian aims, the moral-centered approach of Salafi pedagogy presents a necessary counterbalance—one that prioritizes ethical formation as inseparable from intellectual development.⁴³

4. Discussion

This study was initiated to examine the fundamental principles, curriculum structure, and moral contributions of Salafi Islamic educational institutions, particularly those adhering to the *manhaj salaf*, within the context of Indonesia's contemporary Islamic education. The research sought to clarify how these institutions maintain theological consistency while navigating modern educational demands. The study also investigated how Salafi pedagogical methods, especially those rooted in textual literalism and classical transmission, contribute to the formation of moral character. Previous scholarship has illustrated the growing influence of Salafi educational models in Indonesia through both *pesantren* and integrated Islamic schools (citation needed). However, there remains limited exploration into how these institutions reconcile the imperative for religious purity with the pressures of educational modernization.

The findings reveal that Salafi institutions construct their educational vision upon a rigorous theological framework that prioritizes scriptural authenticity and moral discipline. Their curriculum emphasizes the memorization of the Qur'an and ḥadīth, classical methods such as *halaqah* and *talaqqī*, and a deep-rooted resistance to speculative reasoning. Interestingly, while secular subjects are marginal, their inclusion—though minimal—is presented not as a deviation but as a strategic accommodation to societal expectations. It is notable that character formation (*tarbiyah akhlāqiyyah*) stands at the core of the pedagogical process, with educators serving as moral exemplars. These findings underscore the intentional continuity between Salafi educational practices and the pedagogical heritage of the earliest Muslim generations.

When compared to previous studies, the results align with findings that Salafi institutions uphold a strict theological orientation while implementing modern administrative or infrastructural reforms (citation needed). This study supports earlier conclusions that Salafi schools selectively engage with modernization to preserve doctrinal integrity (citation needed). However, in contrast with works that highlight the ideological rigidity of Salafi movements, this study identifies adaptive elements—such as the cautious use of technology and secular content—indicative of pragmatic institutional evolution. The emphasis on moral cultivation also resonates with classical Islamic education paradigms but diverges from contemporary educational approaches focused on measurable competencies. This balance between traditional orthodoxy and selective innovation positions Salafi institutions uniquely within the spectrum of Islamic education reform.

The consistency of Salafi institutions in preserving theological purity can be understood through their commitment to *al-tasfiyah wa al-tarbiyah*, which filters religious knowledge from perceived innovations while promoting spiritual refinement. This paradigm prioritizes character over credentials and spiritual discipline over analytical skills, echoing the prophetic mission of perfecting noble character. However,

⁴³ Martin van Bruinessen, "Salafism and the State: Islamic Activism and National Identity in Contemporary Indonesia, by Chris Chaplin," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde / Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 178, no. 2–3 (2022): 338–41, doi:10.1163/22134379-17802004.

this orientation requires careful interpretation, particularly when assessing its long-term educational impact amid rapidly changing global norms. The limited integration of interdisciplinary thinking may restrict student exposure to critical skills needed in pluralistic and technologically driven contexts. Nevertheless, Salafi schools argue that the cultivation of religious identity and moral clarity takes precedence over utilitarian educational outcomes.

The pedagogical strategies employed—particularly memorization and oral transmission—are designed not only to preserve knowledge but to instill reverence and obedience. These methods, while criticized by some as outdated, serve a formative function in shaping ethical behavior and religious consciousness. The teacher-student dynamic is intentionally modeled after classical Islamic learning environments, ensuring transmission of both content and character. Yet, one must exercise caution in assuming that this model is universally replicable across diverse educational settings. The success of these strategies hinges heavily on the alignment between institutional ethos and communal expectations.

The inclusion of secular subjects, albeit minimal, represents a significant shift in Salafi educational thought. Framing such inclusion through the lens of *maṣlaḥah* and *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* suggests a theological elasticity grounded in public interest rather than ideological compromise. This nuanced adaptation allows institutions to remain legally compliant and socially relevant while preserving ideological boundaries. It also reflects a broader trend among neo-traditionalist Islamic institutions that selectively negotiate with modernity (citation needed). Nonetheless, the implications of these curricular choices for broader educational outcomes merit further empirical examination.

The moral-centric orientation of Salafi education has substantial implications for the future of Islamic education in Indonesia and beyond. In an era increasingly driven by market-oriented metrics, Salafi schools reassert the centrality of ethical formation as the telos of education. Their graduates—imbued with theological clarity and moral conviction—represent a counter-narrative to dominant technocratic models. This contribution, though sometimes underappreciated in mainstream discourse, challenges the educational community to reconsider the role of virtue, piety, and prophetic ethics in contemporary pedagogy. As such, the Salafi model offers both a critique of and an alternative to secularized educational paradigms that often neglect spiritual development.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the foundational principles, curriculum, and educational contributions of Salafi Islamic institutions in Indonesia, focusing on their adherence to the *manhaj salaf* and their response to modern challenges. These institutions are grounded in a theological framework that prioritizes textual fidelity, moral cultivation, and the rejection of innovations. Their curriculum centers on classical Islamic sciences, emphasizing Qurʾanic memorization, ḥadīth transmission, and the inculcation of *tawḥīd*-based theology, with minimal integration of secular knowledge. Salafi pedagogy—rooted in traditional methods such as *halaqah* and *talaqqī*—is not only aimed at intellectual formation but also at developing ethical character. Despite their conservative orientation, some institutions have selectively adopted modern tools and basic secular subjects, illustrating a strategic, albeit cautious, engagement with modernity. The findings underscore the significant role of Salafi education in preserving Islamic orthodoxy and moral values amid globalization. Its contribution lies in offering a theologically consistent

and ethically focused model that resists both secularization and radicalism. However, the limited scope of this study calls for broader research to assess long-term impacts and potential avenues for epistemological dialogue. Future studies should investigate how Salafi education interacts with wider societal structures and explore comparative frameworks with other Islamic pedagogies. Such inquiries could help position Salafi institutions as constructive participants in the evolving discourse of Islamic education.

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