

The Role of PEMUDATA in Islamic Education: A Case Study of Subulussalam City

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Abstract: This study examines the role of the Persatuan Mubaligh Muda Sada Kata (PEMUDATA) as a youth missionary association in the development of non-formal Islamic education in the city of Subulussalam. Using a qualitative approach with a case study method, data was collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation of the activities carried out by the organization. The results of the study indicate that PEMUDATA has made a significant contribution to expanding access to Islamic education through its da'wah programs, religious training, and youth development initiatives at mosques. The uniqueness of this organization lies in its adaptive approach to the local socio-cultural context and the ability of its members to build intergenerational communication. The practical implications of these findings suggest that youth missionary associations like PEMUDATA can be strategic partners for local governments and Islamic educational institutions in improving religious literacy among the community, especially in areas not fully reached by formal education. This research contributes to the literature on non-formal Islamic education and opens opportunities for developing partnership models between the state, society, and youth religious organizations at the local level.

Keywords: Non-Formal Education, Qualitative Case Study, Youth Missionary Association

A. Introduction

In a global context, Islamic education is not only an instrument for transmitting religious values, but also a means of building social cohesion in multicultural and pluralistic societies. Studies by (Halstead, 2004) and (Jackson, 2014) highlight how Islamic education in various countries faces challenges of pluralism, secularization, and identity crises among the younger generation. As social complexity increases, various countries are now beginning to adopt inclusive and contextual approaches to Islamic education, including through the role of community-based youth organizations. In Indonesia, Islamic education develops in formal, non-formal and informal spectrums. However, in many studies, the focus is still dominantly on formal institutions such as madrasah and pesantren (Muttaqin, 2020), while the role

of youth religious organizations in the implementation of non-formal education is rarely raised academically. In fact, organizations such as the Sada Kata Young Mubaligh Association (PEMUDATA) play a strategic role in reaching grassroots communities, especially in areas that have not been fully reached by the formal Islamic education system.

One of the most important aspects in the implementation of Islamic Sharia law is education (Anas et al., 2016). The city government and various Islamic educational institutions are working to improve the quality of religious education in schools and madrasas. The focus is on the contents of the curriculum that strengthen the understanding of Islamic teachings, the cultivation of noble moral values and the habituation to worship practices. In addition, supporting recitation activities, taklim gatherings, and religious forums in the community is also part of religious development efforts.

Islamic education plays a central role in shaping the character and religious understanding of the Subulussalam community. In addition to formal education in schools, the existence of private Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) and Madrasah Aliyah (MA) also helps to produce a young generation that is pious and devout. Non-formal education such as recitation in mosques and taklim gatherings is also an important forum for people to deepen their religious knowledge, learn the Quran, Hadiths, and various other aspects of Islamic teaching. Studies on non-formal Islamic education have developed in various contexts, highlighting the role of community institutions, religious communities and local actors in supporting the education process outside the formal system. Some studies emphasize the importance of community-based religious organizations in building Islamic literacy and strengthening spiritual and social values in society (Ramadan, 2007). At the global level, the concept of non-formal education in Islam has also received attention in studies which emphasize the integration of Islamic ethical and moral values in community-based learning activities (Halstead, 2004).

However, literature that specifically discusses youth-based Islamic missionary associations is still relatively limited. A study by (Sulaiman, 2020) in West Africa shows that youth missionary associations are able to play a significant role in presenting alternative Islamic education in marginalized communities, especially in the context of the lack of formal education infrastructure. This is relevant to the context of Subulussalam City, where some areas still face limited access to formal education.

Research in Indonesia tends to focus on the role of Islamic boarding schools, madrasas, and religious NGOs in Islamic education (Azra, 2012), but still lacks the role of youth groups such as PEMUDATA that organize dakwah activities, religious training, and community development independently. Therefore, this study fills a void in the literature by highlighting local dynamics that have not been widely

explained academically (Muttaqin, 2020). Geographically, the city of Subulussalam is located on the border with North Sumatra. As a result, Subulussalam has become a pluralistic city, serving as a meeting point for various ethnic groups, cultures, and religions. This reality inspired young people to establish a missionary organization, the Young Missionaries Association of Sada Kata, or PEMUDATA for short. This organization serves as a platform for young people to engage in missionary work, including strengthening Islamic education for all segments of society in Subulussalam.

Critically, the global literature offers conceptual frameworks that can be used to assess the effectiveness of non-formal education, such as the theory of transformational education by (Mezirow, 1991) or the concept of religious literacy in a multicultural context by (Jackson, 2014). However, the application of these theories in the Indonesian context, especially in rural areas such as Subulussalam, has rarely been done in depth. This study tries to bridge the gap by placing PEMUDATA's local practices within a broader conceptual framework, while criticizing the limitations of the literature that is too centered on formal institutional approaches. Subulussalam, as a border region located in Aceh Province and directly adjacent to North Sumatra, has unique socio-cultural characteristics. Despite being in an area that adheres to Islamic sharia law through Aceh's Qanun, Subulussalam also experiences the dynamics of cultural and religious pluralism that are higher than other cities in Aceh. This makes the role of non-formal da'wah institutions such as PEMUDATA important to study, especially in responding to the needs of contextual and participatory Islamic education.

Islamic organizations play an important role in promoting the religious life of the community of Subulussalam (Riaz et al., 2023; Suhendi, 2025). Various organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah and other Da'wa organizations actively organize religious, educational, social and community empowerment activities based on Islamic values. The existence of these organizations is a forum for Muslims to actively participate in the promotion of religious life in this city. Studies on non-formal Islamic education have developed in various contexts, highlighting the role of community institutions, religious communities, and local actors in supporting educational processes outside the formal system. Several studies emphasize the importance of community-based religious organizations in building Islamic literacy and strengthening spiritual and social values in society (Rohman, 2019). At the global level, the concept of non-formal education in Islam has also received attention in studies (Hasan, 2021), which emphasize the integration of Islamic ethical and moral values in community-based learning activities.

The emergence of da'wa institutions is a phenomenon that is closely related to the development of Islam and the social dynamics of society. In general, da'wah institutions exist in response to various needs and challenges faced by Muslims. During the time of the Prophet peace be upon him and his companions, da'wah was

performed directly by him and his companions to spread Islam among the Arab people. With the expansion of Islamic territory, the dissemination of Islamic teachings becomes more and more urgent. Da'wah institutions were established to organize and direct da'wah activities more systematically.

Da'wa institutions play a very strategic role in the development of Islamic education in Indonesia. As the spearhead of the dissemination of Islamic teachings, da'wah institutions not only play a role in promoting faith and morality, but also contribute to improving the quality of education as a whole. Although they do not have a formal structure and curriculum like schools or universities, da'wa institutions play a very important role in the formation of the community.

The city of Subulussalam, as one of the areas with the majority of the Muslim population, has great potential for the development of Islamic education. Da'wah institutions, as institutions that play a central role in the dissemination of Islamic values, are expected to make a significant contribution to improving the quality of religious education in the city. In the context of the dynamic development of the time, however, new challenges and opportunities are constantly emerging in the world of Islamic education. The city of Subussalam, which is inhabited by a majority of Muslims, is in fact inextricably linked to the plurality of its society.

Geographically, the city of Subulussalam is located on the border with North Sumatra. The result is that the city of Subulussalam has become pluralistic because it is a meeting place for different tribes, cultures and religions (Munif, 2023). This fact moved the hearts of the young people to found a da'wa organization, the Young Missionary Association of Sada Kata, or PEMUDATA for short. This organization is a forum for youth to preach, including strengthening Islamic education for all circles of people in the city of Subulussalam.

Plurality in society, especially in the context of Islamic education, is an inevitable reality. The diversity of ethnicities, cultures, religions and views on life in society will also shape the process of Islamic education (Fakhrul Husni, 2022). The effects of this plurality can be positive or negative, depending on how we respond to it. Negative effects can trigger conflict if there are differences in the performance of religious rituals, the understanding of a concept, etc. (Mahfud, 2019).

If one delves into it in depth, Subussalam, as an area that is undoubtedly Islamic and religious, coupled with the presence of formal educational institutions that are religious, religious organizations, religious Sharia institutions that establish the Aceh Qanan, still needs other non-formal da'wa institutions such as PEMUDATA (Yahya., 2010). This is a matter that needs to be questioned, as is the role of PEMUDATA in Islamic education in Subussalam, which certainly has several differences in terms of planning, conducting and evaluating its activities with formal institutions, Sharia institutions and other organizations (Muslimin, 2020).

The purpose of this study is to understand in depth the strategic role played by Persatuan Mubaligh Muda Sada Kata (PEMUDATA) in the implementation of non-formal Islamic education in Subulussalam City. This research aims to analyze how this youth organization contributes to strengthening Islamic literacy and moral development of the community, especially in the midst of plural and religious social conditions. In addition, this research also seeks to identify the form of programs, da'wah methods, and educational approaches used by PEMUDATA, and assess their effectiveness compared to formal Islamic education institutions and other official religious institutions, such as sharia institutions. The research also aims to explore the challenges and opportunities faced by the organization in carrying out its activities, especially given Subulussalam's geographical and sociocultural position as a border region with unique religious dynamics. Finally, this research is expected to provide practical recommendations for policy makers, educators and community leaders in strengthening the synergy between formal and non-formal institutions in the development of community-based Islamic education (Halstead, 2004).

B. Methods

This study belongs to qualitative that aims to understand social and human phenomena in their natural context. The qualitative research approach is a research paradigm rooted in interpretative and constructivist philosophy (Moleong, 2017). The type of research that the researcher uses is a type of case study that involves the intensive evaluation of a research unit, such as a group, community, or institution. The researcher uses qualitative research because it is based on an inductive way of thinking based on participatory objective observations of social phenomena. The steps in this study are: 1) defining research questions and case study objectives, 2) case selection, 3) developing case study protocols, 4) data collection, 5) data analysis, 6) interpreting and drawing conclusions, 7) writing case study reports (Merriam, 2015). This research is located in the city of Subulussalam, which consists of five sub-districts. The place was chosen by the author based on the scope of the Da'wah of PEMUDATA, which includes all the sub-districts of Subulussalam City. The respondents to the study were the leaders of the Subulussalam community, the chairman of PEMUDATA, and the religious leaders of Subulussalam. The tool used in this study is an interview guide using data analysis techniques, which consists of three stages, namely data reduction by sorting the data into more specific stages, data presentation, where the reduced data is represented, and data verification, commonly referred to as inference (Sutopo, 2017).

C. Results and discussion

One of the obstacles to the implementation of Islamic Sharia law in the city of Subulussalam is geographical factors that lead to difficulties in monitoring and reaching a large area, as well as the potential for differences in the understanding

and acceptance of Islamic Sharia law in different regions, considering the vast and remote geography of the city of Subulussalam. Broad geographical factors can also lead to differences in the understanding and acceptance of Islamic Sharia law in different regions, as differences in local traditions and cultures can influence the way people view and accept Islamic Sharia law.

The great distance between areas in the city of Subulussalam can make it difficult to access religious and educational services necessary to increase public understanding and awareness of Islamic Sharia. Differences in the understanding and acceptance of Islamic Sharia law in different regions can trigger potential social conflicts if they are not adequately addressed through education and constructive dialogue.

PEMUDATA, as one of the organizations in the field of Da'wah, plays an important role in the implementation of Islamic Sharia law in the city of Subulussalam. They play a role in disseminating knowledge and understanding of Islamic Sharia, as well as in supporting the implementation of Islamic laws in daily life. The organization is also often involved in community development and the development of the quality of human resources, which in turn strengthens the application of Islamic Sharia law in the community.

In addition, PEMUDATA is also often involved in efforts to strengthen Islamic Sharia law in various ways, such as promoting the implementation of Islamic Sharia qanun (law), as well as providing input and suggestions to the government regarding the formulation of policies related to Islamic Sharia. PEMUDATA also cooperates with the government, related authorities and other municipal institutions within the scope of fulfilling the tasks of the Ministry of Religion, including strengthening the implementation of Islamic Sharia law in the region. PEMUDATA also plays a role in promoting human resources, especially with regard to education and the development of the quality of human resources that are religious and of integrity.

The PEMUDATA organization often collaborates with the Islamic Sharia Office in various socio-religious activities in the city of Subulussalam. For example, the implementation of socialization in public, dressing and behaving in accordance with Islamic Sharia. In addition, the head of the Islamic Sharia office of the city of Subulussalam explained the benefits of this cooperation for the Islamic Sharia office of the city of Subulussalam:

1. Increasing reach of socialization and education: Da'wa organizations, including PEMUDATA, have a wide network at various levels of society, including communities that may be difficult to reach directly by the Islamic Sharia Office. By working together, the agency can use this network to disseminate information, understanding and awareness about Islamic Sharia more effectively and evenly. Lectures, studies, trainings and da'wah activities

organized by organizations can be a powerful channel to convey religious messages and Sharia laws.

2. Strengthening legitimacy and public acceptance: Da'wah organizations often have strong emotional closeness and community trust. Their involvement in Islamic Sharia enforcement programs can increase the legitimacy and acceptance of the guidelines issued by the service. People will be more willing to accept and follow the rules socialized and supported by religious leaders and organizations they trust.
3. Increasing resources and expertise: Da'wa organizations have a variety of staff with varying levels of expertise, ranging from ulama, dai, religious educators to experts in communication and community organization. The Islamic Sharia Office can use this expertise to strengthen its internal capacities in the areas of socialization, education, coaching, and even in supporting the mediation process or resolving problems related to Sharia violations.
4. Strengthening Community Guidance and Support: Enforcement of Islamic Sharia law is not limited to enforcing violations, but also includes coaching and supporting the community to properly understand and practice Islamic teachings. Da'wa organizations play a very important role in this aspect through regular coaching programs, religious accompaniment, and spiritual support. Working with organizations allows the agency to expand the reach of coaching and provide more comprehensive support to the community.
5. Reducing Workload and Increasing Efficiency: By involving da'wa organizations in socialization, education, and coaching tasks, the Islamic Sharia Office can reduce the workload of its staff and focus more on aspects of regulation, monitoring, and enforcement that require formal authority. This division of roles can increase the overall efficiency and effectiveness of efforts to enforce Islamic Sharia.
6. Increasing the deep understanding and appreciation of Islamic Sharia: Da'wah organizations have the ability to communicate Islamic teachings more deeply and touch the hearts of the community. Through a persuasive da'wah approach based on spiritual values, the community is expected not only to formally adhere to the rules of Sharia, but also to understand and live the wisdom contained therein, so that obedience arises from self-knowledge.
7. Mitigating potential conflicts and resistance: The implementation of Islamic Sharia law can sometimes lead to resistance or misunderstandings in some communities. Da'wa organizations can help bridge disagreements, provide clarity, and establish constructive dialogue with a closer and communicative approach, so that potential conflicts can be minimized.
8. Strengthening the positive image of Islamic Sharia law enforcement: The participation of credible and reputable Da'wa organizations can help build a positive image of Islamic Sharia enforcement efforts in the eyes of the public. The enforcement of Sharia law will be seen more as a collective effort for the common good, not just a repressive act by the government.

9. Increasing the active participation of the community: Cooperation with da'wah organizations can promote the active participation of the community in maintaining order and upholding Islamic values in their respective environments. The community will feel jointly responsible and encouraged to contribute to the creation of an Islamic environment.
10. Strengthening the religious base and morality of society as a whole: Ultimately, the greatest benefit of this cooperation is the creation of a society that has a strong religious and moral base. With a deep understanding and appreciation of Islamic Sharia, as well as the support of various parts of society, it is hoped that a better, harmonious world created in accordance with Islamic values will be created.

Islamic religious education conducted by PEMUDATA is included in the non-formal category. The form of implementation is:

1. Taklim Council, the taklim council is a forum or association that aims to study Islamic religious knowledge in an informal way. Literally, "assembly" means a seat or assembly, and "taklim" means teaching or learning. Simply put, the Taklim Council is a place or forum where people meet to learn and understand the teachings of Islam through lectures, studies, discussions, or reading religious books. The form of the Taklim assembly conducted by PEMUDATA takes the form of regular meetings (weekly or monthly) in mosques, prayer rooms, homes or other community places to listen to lectures, book studies or religious discussions.
2. Al-Qur'an Education Park (TPA), Non-formal educational institutions that focus on teaching reading, writing and understanding the Qur'an (TPA) and provide basic Islamic religious education (faith, morals, worship, dates) outside formal school hours (MDT). PEMUDATA faces the challenge of presenting Islamic messages that are relevant to the context of modern life and showing how Islamic teachings provide solutions and guidelines for dealing with various life problems without being trapped in rigid or contextless rhetoric. They must package the message of da'wa in a language that is easy for the younger generation to understand and use a medium that suits their preferences. Da'wa does not only have to be in mosques, but activities can also be carried out in places that are often visited by young people, such as tourist attractions, cafes and coffee shops.

In this study, the researcher looked for the sources of several previous research findings related to the research conducted. Research conducted by Muhammad Abdu Rahman Y.S.: *The role of religious leaders in the development of Islamic education in Bastem district, Luwu Regency*. Based on the results of the study, it was determined that: 1) The role of religious leaders in the development of Islamic education in Bastem District and Luwu Regency is performed through several programs based on the status of these religious leaders. 2) The challenges faced by religious leaders in the development of Islamic education in Bastem District of Luwu Regency are the

geographical conditions of the region, the lack of Islamic educational institutions, the lack of cooperation and good communication between religious leaders and the government and community, and the formation of bad habits in the community.

Journal entitled: *The Role of the Taklim Council and Da'wah Institutions in the Development of Islamic Education: A Functional Analysis*, written by Yusawinur Barella et al. (year 2024). This study examines the significant role of the Taklim Council and Da'wa institutions in the context of Islamic education in order to understand their actual contribution to educational development in the Muslim community. The results of the study show that both play a role in the synergy of formal knowledge with practical information about Islam, convey morality and faith, and form a strong Islamic consciousness in society.

D. Conclusion

The existence of PEMUDATA in the social community of the city of Subulussalam, which, by the way, is the border area of Aceh, plays a very important and multidimensional role. They are not only the guardians of the Islamic faith and identity, but also unifying actors, driving forces for socio-economic development, strategic partners of the government in maintaining stability and preserving local Islamic values. Against the backdrop of a unique and challenging border area, PEMUDATA is an important hope and strength for building a faithful, self-determined and harmonious society. Their success depends to a large extent on their ability to work together, innovate and continue to be relevant to the specific needs of the frontline community of the Republic of Indonesia.

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