

## UNCOVERING THE CHALLENGES OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR MUALLAF SUKU ANAK DALAM (SAD) CHILDREN!

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### ABSTRACT

*This article will explore the challenges of Islamic religious education for Suku Anak Dalam (SAD) children who are converts or muallaf. We will discuss the problems faced by the Suku Anak Dalam (SAD) converts in obtaining Islamic religious education in the community. This research uses a descriptive qualitative research approach, data collection through in-depth interviews and observations and documentation. Testing data validity with triangulation of sources and methods. The results of this study show that the children of Suku Anak Dalam (SAD) converts face various challenges in obtaining Islamic religious education, namely the problem of cultural barriers and traditions, social problems such as discrimination and marginalization, accessibility to quality Islamic education institutions, learning that is not in accordance with needs or interests, problems of financial resources and financial support, problems of human resources such as teachers and religious leaders who provide role models and problems of low learning motivation. Strengthening the role of teachers, communities and formal, informal and non-formal Islamic education institutions is essential to overcome these challenges.*

**Keywords::** Challenges, Islamic Education, Suku Anak Dalam, Muallaf, Children

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

Children of Suku Anak Dalam (SAD) muallaf are children of indigenous people in the interior of Sumatra, Indonesia who have converted to Islam (Ahat & Auliahadi, 2019b; Asha, 2020; Provinsi et al., 2022; Tuhri, n.d.). They are the original settlers of the tropical rainforest and have a unique culture, traditions and language (Morfologi et al., 2018; Rahmawati et al., 2021). Suku Anak Dalam (SAD) is known for their connection to nature and the sustainability of natural resources obtained from the forest (Maciej Serda et al., 2019). They are also known for their hunting ability (Nurlina, 2021) and the ability to recognize medicinal plants from the forest (John et al., 2021; Salam et al., 2020). Suku Anak Dalam (SAD) is also known for its diverse culture and traditions passed down from generation to generation (Sustianingsih, 2014).

The conversion of these children to Islam is part of the challenge for Islamic Education and the challenge of providing Islamic religious education to these children is an issue that needs to be addressed. Children of Suku Anak Dalam (SAD) who convert to Islam (Ahat & Auliahadi, 2019a) have a different Islamic education background compared to children born in a Muslim environment. They do not have a basic knowledge of the teachings of Islam because they were not raised in a Muslim environment. In addition, Suku Anak Dalam children also have different cultural backgrounds and traditions (Purwasih, 2020; Ridho, 2018; Ritonga, 2022; Sapina et al., 2022; Uin et al., 2020) with Islamic education received in the community, school or madrasah.

Islamic Religious Education for children of Suku Anak Dalam muallaf is one way to instill Islamic values in Suku Anak Dalam children, so that they can become obedient Muslims and have noble morals and are capable of living in society and the state. Islamic Religious Education is one of the important aspects in shaping a person's character and morals, including for Suku Anak Dalam (Negeri, 2021). However, for Suku Anak Dalam children who become converts, Islamic education faces several obstacles. This is because Suku Anak Dalam children have cultural backgrounds and traditions that are different from the Islamic education received in the community, school or madrasah. In addition, they also lack access to information about Islamic education, so they do not understand the importance of Islamic education and are less motivated to learn (Aletheiani, 2021; Anwar & Marmoah, 2018; Mukti et al., 2022).

Research on the education of Suku Anak Dalam children found that Suku Anak Dalam children lack access to education. Several studies have shown that Suku Anak Dalam children often lack access to good education, especially in rural or remote areas (Latief et al., 2020). Lack of quality education, several studies show that the quality of education received by Suku

Anak Dalam children is often poor, especially in areas that lack adequate educational facilities and infrastructure. (Mukti et al., 2022). Lack of motivation to learn, some studies show that Suku Anak Dalam children often lack motivation to learn, due to lack of financial support, lack of access to information about education, or due to cultural differences and traditions (M. Syamsul Hidayat, 2013). Lack of parental support, some studies show that parents of Suku Anak Dalam children are often less able to provide the necessary support to improve their children's education, due to lack of education or lack of financial support. (Zain et al., 2019). Lack of employment opportunities, several studies have shown that Suku Anak Dalam children who complete education often struggle to find jobs that match their skills, due to racial discrimination or lack of employment opportunities in the areas where they live. (Astarika et al., 2019; Kasiono, 2018).

Therefore, it is important to provide Islamic education that is tailored to the background of the children of Suku Anak Dalam converts. This can be done by providing basic education on Islamic teachings, as well as providing education that draws on their culture and traditions. (Nurwahyuliningsih et al., 2022; Sari, 2019). In addition, competent educators in the field of Islamic education and adequate facilities and infrastructure are also needed to improve the quality of Islamic education for the children of Suku Anak Dalam muallaf. (Nurhaliza et al., 2018a, 2018b; Pembelajaran et al., 2022; Purwasih & Fitriani, 2020). In this way, it is hoped that the children of Suku Anak Dalam muallaf can understand and accept Islamic religious education well, and can apply the knowledge gained in their daily lives.

Based on the above study, it is clear that Islamic religious education needs to provide a special approach to the children of Suku Anak Dalam muallaf. Therefore, the efforts of various parties are needed, one of which is this research which aims to describe how Islamic Religious Education by the community in the children of Suku Anak Dalam muallaf and what factors are obstacles or challenges in efforts to instill Islamic values in children of Suku Anak Dalam muallaf. in Bungku Village, Bajubang District, Batanghari Regency Jambi Province. Understanding how Islamic religious education is obtained by Suku Anak Dalam children and the inhibiting factors can be a foothold in formulating concrete efforts to design Islamic religious education planning that favors improving learning outcomes and the acceptance of Suku Anak Dalam children towards Islamic values. In addition, this paper can be a foothold for the government in formulating learning needs that are in accordance with the background of Suku Anak Dalam children.

## **B. LITERATUR REVIEW**

### **Islamic Education**

Here are some definitions of Islamic Religious Education according to experts, according to M. Yusuf Al Qardawi (Yusuf Al Qardhawi, 1980), a Muslim scholar and scholar from Egypt, Islamic Religious Education is an educational process that is oriented towards certain goals in accordance with the values and principles of Islam. The main purpose of Islamic religious education is to form human beings who are devoted and have noble character and are able to carry out the teachings of Islam in a kaffah (comprehensive) manner in their lives. In Al Qardawi's view, Islamic religious education must be given to all people, both Muslims and non-Muslims. This is because Islam teaches universal values that can be applied by all mankind to achieve happiness and prosperity in life. Therefore, Islamic religious education must be inclusive and open to all groups, regardless of ethnicity, religion and race.

According to Hasan Langgulung (Hasan Langgulung, 1985) Islamic Education is a process of preparing the younger generation to fill the role, transferring knowledge and Islamic values that are aligned with human functions to do good in the world and reap the rewards in the hereafter. Azyumardi Azra (Azyumardi Azra, 2000) argues that Islamic education is just one aspect of the teachings of Islam as a whole. Therefore, the purpose of Islamic education is inseparable from the purpose of human life in Islam, which is to create personal servants of God who are always devoted to Him and can achieve a happy life in this world and the hereafter. And Zakiyah Daradjat (Zakiyah Daradjat, 2000) provides a view that Islamic education is the process of forming human personality as a Muslim. According to M. Arifin Ilham (Arifin, 2001), Islamic Education is an educational process carried out by providing teachings about Islam and practising it in everyday life.

According to Quraysh Shihab, Islamic Religious Education is an effort to foster human personality in order to become a man of faith, devotion, intelligence, noble character, and able to carry out his role as a servant of Allah SWT who is responsible for himself, society, and the environment. The definition of Islamic Religious Education according to these experts has similarities in terms of objectives, namely forming human beings who are noble, devoted, and able to carry out their role as servants of Allah SWT who are responsible for themselves, society, and the environment.

### **Purpose of Islamic Education**

Muslim experts explain the objectives of Islamic Education with various points of view, including Muhammad Fadil Al-Jumaly (Samsul Nizar, 2001) who explained that the purpose of Islamic Education is to foster awareness of the human self and of the Islamic social system.

His attitude and social responsibility, as well as towards his natural creation and awareness to develop and manage this nature for the benefit and welfare of mankind. And more important than that is the development of ma'rifat to Allah and worship and stay away from all prohibitions and carry out all the commands of Allah.

Bashori Muchsin and Moh. Sultthon (Muchsin B, 2010), reiterated that the general objectives of Islamic education must be aligned with the view of human beings, namely Allah's noble creatures with their intellect, feelings, knowledge and culture, worthy of being caliphs on earth. This general goal includes understanding, understanding, appreciation, and skills of action. Therefore, there are general objectives for early schooling, secondary schooling, advanced schooling, and tertiary education; and there are also objectives for public schools, vocational schools, educational institutions and so on.

According to Al Qardawi (Yusuf Al Qardhawi, 1980), Islamic religious education is not only limited to teaching the theory and laws of Islam, but also includes the development of students' character, ethics, and morality. Therefore, Islamic religious education must be carried out in a way that is good and beneficial for students, namely by providing interactive, applicable, and contextual teaching. Al Qardawi also emphasises the importance of Islamic religious education in building a civilised and prosperous society. Islamic religious education must form human beings who have moral and social awareness, and are able to carry out the teachings of Islam in social life.

According to Ibn Khaldun, the purpose of Islamic education is to produce a generation that has good morals and is able to produce innovations in science and technology. Al-Ghazali argues that the purpose of Islamic education is to form human beings who have noble morals, know God, and follow the teachings of Islam correctly. Fazlur Rahman argues that the purpose of Islamic education is to produce individuals who have correct knowledge of Islamic teachings, are able to integrate Islamic values in modern life, and are able to contribute positively to the progress of humanity (Ahmad Tafsir, 2001).

From the explanation of the experts above, we can understand that the purpose of Islamic religious education is to teach Islamic religious teachings to individuals so that they can understand and practice these teachings in their daily lives. The purpose of Islamic religious education is not only to achieve happiness in the world, but also happiness in the hereafter, namely getting the pleasure of Allah SWT and entering His heaven.

### **C. METHOD**

The place of this research was conducted in the muallaf Suku Anak Dalam community who live in Bungku Village, Bajubang District, Batanghari Regency, Jambi Province. The choice of location is based on, first, religious facts, namely that this village consists of Suku Anak Dalam who adhere to Islam, Christianity and Animism. The religious diversity of the Anak Dalam tribe is interesting because their understanding of religion is still quite new and they have to live in a diverse religious environment. Secondly, social facts, the people who live in Bungku village are partly semi-nomadic, where they will leave their homes for long periods of time to hunt or search for forest products. Both facts have strong implications for the environment and the character of the people there.

This research is a descriptive qualitative research (John W. Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research is also called naturalistic research because the nature of the data collected is natural or as it is, without being manipulated, arranged by experiments or tests. In this case, the researcher uses a qualitative method because the data that the researcher examines is naturalistic and is described according to the actual events in the observed behavior regarding Islamic religious education for children of muallaf Suku Anak Dalam in Bungku village. Informants were selected using a snowball sampling approach. Therefore, informants are those who are involved and have a direct impact on the research topic. They include Islamic religious educators, Islamic religious leaders, community leaders and parents of the children of Suku Anak Dalam muallaf in Bungku village, Batanghari Regency.

This study was conducted in several stages. The first stage is to formulate the main study questions related to Islamic religious education by the community for the children of Suku Anak Dalam muallaf and what factors are the supporters and obstacles in the effort to instill Islamic values in Suku Anak Dalam muallaf children. Second, data collection was done through unstructured in-depth interviews. These interviews were conducted naturally and did not follow a strict structure. This method is intended to build a friendly atmosphere between researchers and informants. During the interviews, reflection activities were ongoing. All information was recorded and transcribed. Data validity was tested using triangulation of sources and methods. Furthermore, data analysis is carried out, the data analysis technique used in this research is an interactive model. The interactive analysis model is a form of data analysis in which the three components of the analysis can be carried out in an interaction manner, namely, starting from data collection, then researchers make data reduction and presentation, then draw conclusions and verify.

## **D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Unique Challenges of Islamic Religious Education for Muallaf Suku Anak Dalam (SAD) Children.**

From the results of data collection and analysis conducted by the author, the challenges faced by SAD muallaf children in Islamic religious education are quite diverse. First, there is the issue of cultural and traditional barriers. These children are still unfamiliar with the Islamic traditions and customs of Islamic Malay society, making it difficult for them to understand and accept and apply the teachings of Islam in their daily lives. According to Islamic leaders in Bungku Village, some of the SAD people who are converts continue to practice their ancestral beliefs such as belief in ancestral spirits, rituals performed to ask for blessings, ask for protection from amulets. (Nurhaliza et al., 2018b). The traditions of Suku Anak Dalam children also have traditions that are different from those received in society, schools or madrasas, so they are less able to apply the knowledge gained in everyday life.

Secondly, social problems, they also experience marginalization (Setiyadi et al., 2020), Parents of SAD children often experience discrimination and prejudice because of their backgrounds, making it difficult for them to feel accepted in the community. And it is not uncommon for racial, socio-economic, or other discrimination to be received by Suku Anak Dalam children.

Third, there is the problem of accessibility to quality Islamic education institutions. Many of these children live in remote and rural areas, making it difficult for them to access Islamic religious education institutions. Furthermore, due to the lack of transportation and distance between these communities and Islamic educational institutions, and even less opportunity for adequate formal education, many of these children are unable to attend Islamic educational institutions. Most schools in the area are not equipped to provide quality Islamic religious education to the tribe's children. In addition, there is a lack of educational facilities and infrastructure, such as schools or madrasas around Suku Anak Dalam, due to geographical conditions that are difficult to reach.

Fourth, education that is not in accordance with the needs or interests of Suku Anak Dalam children. This happens such as the use of language that is not in accordance with the language used by the Suku Anak Dalam community, speaking a language that is different from the language used in Islamic Religious Education, so they have difficulty understanding the material taught. Islamic education has not provided education that is in accordance with the

culture of Suku Anak Dalam, such as education about the forest environment and how to live in accordance with the environment. Provision of learning facilities that are in accordance with environmental conditions, such as learning facilities in the forest or in locations that are easily accessible to the Suku Anak Dalam community. Providing education that can help Suku Anak Dalam children to acquire skills that can be used in daily life is important because it is close to their lives (Astarika et al., 2019).

Fifth, there is the issue of financial resources and financial support. Many of these children come from low-income households (Lukman, 2021), making it difficult for them to gain access to Islamic religious education institutions. In addition, many of these children do not have the financial resources to attend Islamic religious education institutions, making it even more difficult for them to gain access to Islamic religious education. Even Suku Anak Dalam children lack the financial support to pursue education, so they are unable to complete their education.

The sixth challenge is the lack of resources. Most communities in the region do not have adequate resources to teach children important aspects of the Islamic religion. Furthermore, the lack of qualified teachers makes it difficult for children to gain a comprehensive understanding of the teachings. Especially for informal Islamic education institutions, this community lacks competent educators in the field of Islamic education, so the quality of education received by Suku Anak Dalam children is not good..

The seventh challenge is lack of motivation. Most children in this area are not motivated to learn about Islam (Dakwah et al., 2019). According to these children, monotonous and formal learning in the classroom is boring and dull, far from their life in the forest. This lack of motivation makes it difficult for children to gain a comprehensive understanding of Islam. This is also supported by the lack of access to information for Suku Anak Dalam children about Islamic education, so they lack understanding of the importance of Islamic education and are less motivated to learn.

### **The Role of Teachers and Communities in the Islamic Religious Education of SAD Muallaf Children**

Teachers play an important role in the Islamic religious education of Suku Anak Dalam muallaf children. Teachers should ensure that their learners are provided with a safe and supportive learning environment and should encourage them to participate in the learning process. In addition, teachers should strive to make the learning process fun and interesting for

the children. They should also strive to develop positive and supportive relationships with children, as this will help them to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Islamic faith (Ramadhani et al., 2022).

Some of the challenges of culture and tradition in Islamic religious education for Suku Anak Dalam are enabled by the role of a teacher. *Lack of teachers who understand tribal culture*, Teachers who do not understand the culture and traditions of the Suku Anak Dalam often find it difficult to deliver Islamic religious material in a way that suits the needs of Suku Anak Dalam children. *An approach that is not culturally appropriate for Suku Anak Dalam*, approaches that are not in accordance with the culture and traditions of the Suku Anak Dalam can cause the children of the Suku Anak Dalam to have difficulty in understanding Islamic religious material. *Lack of attention to local wisdom*, The lack of attention to the local wisdom of the Suku Anak Dalam can cause the children have difficulty in relating Islam to their living environment. *Discrimination in religious education*, children are often not recognized as legitimate learners and are denied admission to religious schools or excluded from religious classes (Nurhaliza et al., 2018b). *Religious education that is not relevant to the needs of the tribal children*, religious education that is not relevant to the needs of Suku Anak Dalam (Nilai et al., 2021) can cause Suku Anak Dalam children to have difficulty in understanding the material taught. *Lack of understanding of the correct religion from religious leaders in the Suku Anak Dalam environment*, Religious leaders who do not understand the correct religion can cause Suku Anak Dalam children to receive a false understanding of religion and avoid religious education.

In addition, the role of the community in Islamic religious education for Suku Anak Dalam children is very important (Sari, 2019). The community can provide support and good examples in practicing religious teachings, and assist in the process of teaching and learning religion at school or in the family environment. The community can also help in providing the necessary facilities and amenities for religious education, such as a mosque or madrasah. In addition, the community can play a role in promoting Islamic religious values to children and other communities.

To overcome the cultural barriers and traditions of Suku Anak Dalam towards Islamic religious education in the community, some solutions that can be applied are: Inclusive education (Biantoro & Setiawan, 2021), Inclusive education that accepts and respects different cultures and ethnic traditions can help overcome these barriers. Culturally appropriate approaches, approaches that are in accordance with the culture and traditions of Suku Anak

Dalam can help in a more effective Islamic learning process. The active participation of Suku Anak Dalam provides an opportunity for them to actively participate in the development of the Islamic education program and can help overcome cultural barriers and traditions. Respect for culture, respecting the culture and traditions of Suku Anak Dalam can increase self-confidence and respect for existing differences. Empowering the Suku Anak Dalam community, empowering the Suku Anak Dalam community in the process of learning Islam can help overcome cultural and traditional barriers. Cooperation with religious leaders and community leaders, cooperation with religious leaders and community leaders (Tirtosudarmo, 2022) can help in providing a correct understanding of Islam and respect for differences.

### **The Role of Schools and Educational Institutions in Supporting Islamic Religious Education for Muallaf Suku Anak Dalam (SAD) Children**

Schools and educational institutions (formal, informal and non-formal) also play an important role in supporting Islamic religious education for SAD Muallaf children. First, schools and educational institutions should provide Islamic religious education classes and programs to help these children understand and learn the basics of religion. In addition, schools and educational institutions must also provide a safe and welcoming environment for these children, free from discrimination and prejudice (Tirtosudarmo, 2022).

Second, schools and educational institutions should provide transportation to remote and rural areas to help these children gain access to Islamic religious education, This corroborates Sagala's research that SAD children experience accessibility barriers (Sagala et al., 2017). In addition, schools and educational institutions should also provide financial assistance to help these children attend Islamic religious education institutions.

Third, schools and educational institutions should provide resources and materials to help these children understand and learn the teachings of Islam. This can include books, pamphlets, audio/video recordings and other materials. This will help these children gain a better understanding of religion and become better citizens in their communities.

Fourth, schools and other educational institutions should provide inclusive education, providing a supportive and welcoming environment for these children. This will help them feel safe and accepted in their new community (Biantoro & Setiawan, 2021). In addition, it can also help them develop a better understanding of the culture and customs of the local community.

## E. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that Islamic religious education in the community faced by Suku Anak Dalam children still experiences various obstacles, The implementation is still hampered by several factors such as limited human and financial resources, habits and traditions that are not in accordance with Islamic teachings, and thinking that is still influenced by indigenous culture, accessibility to quality Islamic education institutions, social issues such as marginalization and discrimination, education that does not match the needs or interests of Suku Anak Dalam children and motivation issues. Therefore, support is needed from various parties, including teachers, parents and the community as well as the government, in an effort to improve Islamic religious education in the children of Suku Anak Dalam muallaf.

Given the limitations of this study, further research is suggested on how cultural and religious differences can be applied in the education of SAD muallaf children to strengthen their identity and understanding of themselves. In an effort to maximize Islamic religious education for Suku Anak Dalam muallaf children, this study recommends that teachers should ensure that Suku Anak Dalam muallaf children are provided with a safe learning environment, away from discrimination and encourage them to participate in the learning process by taking an approach that is appropriate to their culture and traditions. The community is expected to provide friendly and accommodating spaces, provide support and good examples in practicing religious teachings, and assist in the process of teaching and learning religion in the community, eliminating discrimination and marginalization. The government is expected to provide the widest possible access to them to obtain quality Islamic religious education and open community-based formal, informal and non-formal Islamic education with professional educators who respect differences.

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