

NEGOTIATING IDENTITY AND RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD A Case Study of SDITs in Lombok, Indonesia

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Abstract

In recent years, Integrated Islamic Elementary Schools (Sekolah Dasar Islam Terpadu, SDIT) have witnessed significant expansion, particularly in Indonesia's urban areas. Targeting urban professionals and the upper-middle class, these institutions present a novel educational model that integrates secular and religious instruction. This movement actively disseminates broader Islamic symbols to the public while conducting specific experiments, such as the Islamization of formal education. Notably, several SDITs, classified as elite elementary schools in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, exhibit distinct teaching methodologies and incorporate ideological elements that diverge from those commonly found in public elementary schools, which are often perceived as more inclusive. Employing Michel Foucault's concept of narrative and his framework of power-knowledge as an analytical lens, this study identifies the integration of these schools' curricula as a significant marker of the emergence of a "new style of Islam" within Indonesia's educational landscape. This evolving religious paradigm is characterized by an accelerated incorporation of Islamic symbols and the narratives of Post-Reform Islam, including pedagogical approaches that emphasize the teaching of "kaffah" Islam and the cultivation



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of religious identity from an early age. Educational institutions interpret this transformation favorably, viewing it as an intersection of economic, ideological, and religious opportunities.

[Dalam beberapa dekade terakhir, Sekolah Dasar Islam Terpadu (SDIT) telah mengalami perkembangan signifikan, khususnya di kawasan perkotaan Indonesia. Lembaga pendidikan ini menyasar kalangan pekerja urban dan kelas menengah atas dengan menawarkan pendidikan model baru yang mengintegrasikan pendidikan umum dan agama. Gerakan ini secara aktif memperkenalkan simbol-simbol Islam yang lebih luas kepada masyarakat, sekaligus menawarkan pengalaman khas, seperti islamisasi pendidikan formal. Secara khusus, beberapa SDIT yang dikategorikan sebagai sekolah dasar elit di Lombok, Nusa Tenggara Barat, menerapkan metode pengajaran yang unik dengan memasukkan unsur ideologi yang berbeda dibandingkan dengan sekolah dasar negeri, yang sering dianggap lebih inklusif. Dengan menggunakan konsep narasi Michel Foucault serta kerangka kerja power-knowledge sebagai alat analisis, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa integrasi kurikulum di SDIT merupakan salah satu indikator penting dari munculnya “Islam model baru” dalam lanskap pendidikan di Indonesia. Paradigma keagamaan yang berkembang ini ditandai oleh akselerasi penggunaan simbol-simbol Islam serta narasi Islam Pasca-Reformasi, termasuk pendekatan pedagogis yang menekankan pengajaran Islam “kaffah” serta pembentukan identitas keagamaan sejak usia dini. Institusi pendidikan membaca perubahan ini secara positif, melihatnya sebagai peluang ekonomi, ideologi, dan keagamaan yang menguntungkan.]

Keywords: SD IT, ideology, religious expression, religious education

A. Introduction

The discourse surrounding Integrated Islamic Elementary Schools (*Sekolah Dasar Islam Terpadu*, SDIT) has long been linked to ideological shifts within Islam, as observed in various Muslim-majority countries, such as Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Indonesia.¹ The expansion

¹ Helen N. Boyle and Abdenour Boukamhi, “Islamic Education in Morocco”, in *Second Handbook of Information Technology in Primary and Secondary Education*, ed. Joke Voogt et al. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), pp. 1–12; Michaela Prokop, “Saudi Arabia: The Politics of Education”, *International Affairs*, vol. 79, no. 1 (2003), pp. 77–89; Karen Bryner, “A New Educational Movement,” *Inside Indonesia* (September 18, 2011), <https://www.insideindonesia.org/archive/articles/a-new-educational-movement>; Suyatno, “Integrated Islamic Primary School in the Middle-Class Muslims Indonesia

of Islamic elementary education has contributed to a transformation in Islamic ideological perspectives among urban Muslim parents, a phenomenon not confined solely to Muslim-majority nations but also increasingly evident in Western societies.² This shift reflects broader sociopolitical changes, including efforts to reconcile religious education with modern educational frameworks. Additionally, it highlights how Islamic schooling serves not only as an academic institution but also as a medium for shaping religious identity and community belonging from an early age.

Since the post-Soeharto era, Integrated Islamic Schools have experienced significant growth, originating from non-formal Islamic educational initiatives in mosques at Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB) and Universitas Indonesia.³ These institutions have evolved from localized religious study groups into a structured educational movement, integrating secular and Islamic curricula to cater to the changing needs of Muslim communities in Indonesia. A study by Noorhaidi argues that the expansion of integrated Islamic schools reflects the rise of a new Muslim middle class, keen to express its religious identity while simultaneously affirming its social standing as globalized, modern Muslims. He further asserts that, with their high fees and extensive facilities, these schools offer parents a sense of social prestige and reinforce their identity as committed Muslims.⁴ This argument aligns with Pribadi's research, which highlights how parents at certain Islamic schools actively seek to cultivate a 'true' Islamic identity, asserting their religious identity as the most authentic.⁵ In this context, SDITs have emerged as a new model for formal education in Indonesia, introducing Islamic institutions and symbols as integral components of post-reform Muslim middle-class initiatives within the public sphere.

Recent transformations in Indonesia's Islamic education

Conception", *Analisa*, vol. 22, no. 1 (2015), pp. 121–33.

² Jaap Dronkers, "Islamic Primary Schools in the Netherlands", *Journal of School Choice*, vol. 10, no. 1 (2016), pp. 6–21.

³ Haidar Putra Daulay and Tobroni, "Islamic Education in Indonesia: A Historical Analysis of Development and Dynamics", *British Journal of Education*, vol. 5, no. 13 (2017), pp. 109–126.

⁴ Noorhaidi Hasan, "Education, Young Islamists and Integrated Islamic Schools in Indonesia", *Studia Islamika*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2012).

⁵ Yanwar Pribadi, "Sekolah Islam (Islamic Schools) as Symbols of Indonesia's Urban Muslim Identity", *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and National Studies of Southeast Asia*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2022), p. 203.

landscape have unfolded alongside the rise of religious pragmatism and the emergence of new models of religious learning facilitated by social media—developments increasingly regarded by the market as strategic capital. Azra observes that the Islamic school model has garnered significant appreciation among urban Muslims, serving as a key institution for shaping a new generation, particularly those without ideological affiliations with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) or Muhammadiyah.⁶ The increasing popularity of SDIT schools among middle-class Muslims underscores a growing demand for educational frameworks that emphasize Islamic values, such as Quran memorization and a Quran- and Sunnah-based lifestyle, akin to the traditional pesantren system, while simultaneously upholding modern academic standards. By offering a holistic educational approach that fosters both intellectual and spiritual development, these institutions provide an alternative to secular Western education models, enabling families to impart a faith-based education without disengaging from modernity.⁷ SDIT schools represent a distinct paradigm that redefines conventional religious and contemporary educational models.

An intriguing case emerges in one of the SDITs in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, where teachers employ distinctive pedagogical approaches while promoting a unique ideological framework. Although not officially mandated, the normalization of *niqāb*-wearing is evident among older female students—particularly those in grades 4 to 6—who adopt the practice, reflecting the attire of their teachers. Furthermore, several contentious terms, such as *kafir*, *jihad*, and martyrdom, along with the phrase ‘*ish karīman aw mut shahīdan* (live nobly or die as a martyr), are integrated into school routines through songs and sports jingles. These elements underscore how teacher modeling functions as a conduit for ideological transmission within the educational environment.

This study originates from a fundamental inquiry into how early childhood religious expression within several SDITs in Lombok influences student identity formation. By examining narratives, pedagogical methods, and learning materials,⁸ it seeks to analyze the mechanisms through

⁶ Azyumardi Azra and Jamhari, “Pendidikan Islam Indonesia dan Tantangan Globalisasi: Perspektif Sosio-Historis”, in *Mencetak Muslim Modern: Peta Pendidikan Islam Indonesia* (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 2006), p. 18.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Claire Blewitt, et al., “It’s Embedded in What We Do for Every Child?: A Qualitative Exploration of Early Childhood Educators’ Perspectives on Supporting Children’s Social and Emotional Learning”, *International Journal of Environmental Research*

which religious values and ideology are internalized among students, alongside key factors shaping the development of Islamic education in Indonesia—a landscape increasingly marked by ideological consolidation and curriculum intensification.⁹ Grounded in Michel Foucault's concepts of narrative and power-knowledge, this study investigates instructional strategies, learning resources, and student expressions within SDITs, particularly in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. As Foucault asserts, narratives play a crucial role in constructing knowledge and power within the discourse produced.¹⁰ Furthermore, this study critically examines SDIT policies and the underlying political ideology driving the expansion of Islamic education, particularly in institutions that operate under the Integrated Islamic label as a defining framework.

This qualitative study employs a multi-method approach, integrating document analysis, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders—including government education officials, teachers, civil society leaders, and religious/cultural figures in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB)—and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted across five SDITs. The FGDs bring together representatives from Islamic civil society organizations, particularly those affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, alongside academics from various universities, including scholars from State Islamic Universities. Additionally, closed questionnaires are utilized to examine the motives, ideas, perspectives, and normative frameworks that shape the religious expression of primary school students.

B. Curriculum Dualism in New Islamic Education Model

SDITs occupy a distinct position within Indonesia's educational landscape. While operating under the Ministry of Education and Culture's framework, similar to public schools, they place a strong emphasis on Islamic ethics and values, aligning more closely with the pedagogical approaches of Islamic schools (madrasah) and traditional Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). A key distinction lies in their curriculum: in addition to covering standard public school subjects, SDITs integrate traditional Islamic disciplines such as Islamic history, fiqh, and theology,

and *Public Health*, vol. 18, no. 4 (2021).

⁹ Saparudin and Arhanuddin Salim, "The Rise of Islamic Movements and Dilemmas for Contemporary Islamic Education: A Study in Lombok, Indonesia", *Issues in Educational Research*, vol. 33, no. 2 (2023).

¹⁰ Michel Foucault and Colin Gordon, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980).

reinforcing religious principles through ethical and moral instruction. These schools have effectively distinguished themselves by branding their curriculum with flagship programs—including Quran memorization, Arabic language acquisition, and classical Islamic studies (*turāth*)—which have garnered significant support and appreciation from the community.¹¹

A noteworthy development in Lombok is the increasing prevalence of Islamic elementary schools, with 21 out of 28 private elementary institutions falling into this category. The strong enthusiasm of the upper-middle-class community in Mataram for enrolling their children in SDIT presents valuable opportunities for deeper research into the underlying motivations. Over the years, the number of such institutions has expanded across the city, transcending religious affiliations. Urban communities are particularly drawn to these schools due to their integrated educational framework, which they perceive as a viable alternative to conventional models.

Most SDITs in Indonesia emphasize the integration of Islamic character education within their formal curriculum, guided by a well-defined vision, mission, and strategic objectives. These institutions adopt specific character values shaped by their interpretation of Islamic character development, ensuring coherence between pedagogical principles and religious ideals. This initiative leads to the formal incorporation of Islamic character values into the curriculum, supported by a comprehensive integrated syllabus and meticulously designed lesson plans rooted in Islamic educational frameworks.¹²

The curriculum serves as the fundamental framework of the learning system, shaping educational objectives and significantly influencing student learning outcomes. It also plays a crucial role in parental decision-making, as parents often seek detailed information before enrolling their children in a particular school. In SDIT, the prevailing curriculum model is an integrated approach, seamlessly synchronizing the national curriculum established by the Ministry of Education with religious education (*al-Islam*) and locally relevant content. This integration is further distinguished by the implementation of a

¹¹ Muharir, “Resilience, Accommodation and Social Capital Salafi Islamic Education in Lombok”, *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2022).

¹² Salim Hasan et al., “Management of Character Education at Integrated Islamic Elementary School, Gowa and Al-Biruni Mandiri Makassar Integrated Islamic Elementary School: A Multi-Case Study”, *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, vol. 8, no. 7 (2021), pp. 678–84.

Negotiating Identity and Religious Expression in Early Childhood full-day school system, ensuring a structured and immersive learning experience.¹³

In Lombok, the curriculum plays a crucial role in shaping parental decisions regarding enrollment in SDIT programs. This study examines five prominent integrated Islamic schools in the region: SDIT Abu Hurairah, SDIT Anak Sholeh, SDIT Al-Iqra, SDIT Abata, and SDIT Luqman Al-Hakim. Despite their affiliations with different Islamic organizations, these institutions exhibit shared pedagogical characteristics, particularly in their implementation of an integrated curriculum and distinctive teaching methodologies.

1. SDIT Abu Hurairah Mataram

SDITs frequently set educational objectives that extend beyond conventional academics. Parents select SDIT Abu Hurairah for its religious curriculum, prioritizing Qur'an memorization, Arabic language skills, and Islamic values. The school's expectation that students can memorize three *juz'* of the Qur'an by graduation underlines this religious focus. The Vice Director of Public Relations, who is also a school teacher for 14 years, further explained:

We strongly emphasize the teachings of the six pillars of faith. We teach the students religious practices, including how to greet others, to love and respect their parents, and to be sincere. We also strongly emphasize that children always perform collective prayers in the mosque. Our school follows the way of teaching and learning from the Qur'an, the Hadith, which is consistent with the understanding of Madhhab Shafi'i, Imam Ahmad, Imam Malik, and Abu Hanifa. Teachers have also compiled special reference books for the religious curriculum. We teach centuries-old books that cover all essential aspects of the religion, such as Nawawi's *al-Arba'īn*. This book is memorized at the beginner level. For students who want to memorize three juz of the Quran or more, we offer an extracurricular class called Tahfid. In addition, extracurricular activities and journalism train the students in psychomotor activities, such as martial arts and magazines.¹⁴

He also said that the curriculum at SDIT Abu Hurairah is firmly grounded in religious principles, focusing on the pillars of Iman derived

¹³ Anis Fauzi and Hasbullah Hasbullah, "Pre-Eminent Curriculum in Islamic Basic School Integrated Comparative Studies in Islamic Basic School Integrated Al-Izzah Serang and Al-Hanif Cilegon, Banten, Indonesia", *International Education Studies*, vol. 9, no. 4 (2016), pp. 124–31.

¹⁴ Interview with JSH (Vice Mudir), 5 November 2021.

from Hadith and its explanation found in *al-Arba'in al-Nawawiyyah*. Rote learning is common in many pedagogical and non-pedagogical activities, including martial arts and journalism. As JSH said, "In the *akhlāq* curriculum, we introduce the positive and negative impacts of gadgets. During the pandemic, we reduced the learning volume but did not change the learning values of the curriculum; we also conducted online learning according to government directions."¹⁵ He further explained that all general subjects are integrated with religious values on the basis that every teacher, regardless of their subject, must do the da'wah. The vice director said, "At the beginning of every lesson, we remind children to remember God and the Apostles' commandments and obey their parents."¹⁶

This system, particularly its curriculum and teaching methods, provides students with a rich and well-rounded educational experience. By adopting an integrated approach, students receive secular knowledge and spiritual guidance. The school argues that this system enhances students' critical thinking and academic excellence and instills moral values, discipline, and a deep understanding of Islamic principles. This dual focus also confirms the government's educational requirements and fulfills parents' hopes for their children to develop a strong religious foundation. As a result, the school's curriculum serves as a key factor in attracting families who seek academic excellence and spiritual growth for their children.

2. SDIT Anak Sholeh

SDIT Anak Sholeh Mataram is under the Ministry of Education and Culture and has implemented the 2013 curriculum since the 2015/2016 academic year.¹⁷ The 2013 curriculum aims to prepare students to be faithful, productive, creative, innovative, and active and to contribute to society, nation, State, and world civilization.¹⁸ Regarding the philosophical foundations of the school, one of the teachers says:

The schools, as centers of cultural development, cannot be separated from the cultural values. Indonesia has cultural values derived from Pancasila, a philosophy of life for the nation and State, including religious

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Interview with SA, the vice Headmaster of SDIT Anak Sholeh, 3 November 2021.

¹⁸ *Anak Sholeh Mataram Curriculum for the 2015/2016 Academic Year* (Yayasan Pendidikan Islam Terpadu (YPIT) Ibnu Abbas Mataram, 2015), p. 7.

values, humanity, unity, peoplehood, and justice. These values are the philosophical basis for preparing and developing the school curriculum.”¹⁹

SDIT Anak Sholeh Mataram is known as one of the pioneers in developing integrated Islamic schools in Mataram. Through continuous improvements and innovations, such as the cultural approach to character education, it emphasizes religion-based students’ daily activities through rituals and programs such as *dubā* prayer (usually performed before the start of class), *Jumat Mubarak* (a Friday routine), *Sunnah* fasting (on Monday and Thursday), charity, voluntary activities, and the Qur’ān memorization, fostering both spiritual and ethical growth.²⁰

These initiatives resonate with the aspirations of the parents who actively support the school’s vision of integrating academic objectives with religious practice. The practice of religious disciplines becomes part of the student’s daily habits and school culture. The school is not only seen as a place for teaching-learning processes and academic achievements but also a model for implementing strong moral values and strengthening religious identity. Here, SDIT Anak Sholeh Mataram has successfully created an educational model that appeals to families’ hopes where academic achievement and Islamic identity development are closely interrelated.

3. SDIT Abata

SDIT Abata Mataram offers several interesting programs, most notably the *tahfīz* program. Regarding religious education, SDIT Abata frequently participates in and wins medals at *tahfīz* deport tournaments at both the provincial and national levels. Despite the focus on religious education, students also excel in secular subjects, with some competing in and winning international mathematics Olympiads and the National Science Competition, demonstrating success in both religious and general education. One of the reasons parents send their children to SDIT Abata is that they notice positive growth and improvements in their children. Children at this school come from Middle to upper-class socio-economic backgrounds. In an interview with Mrs. TR, from the management of the Abata Foundation, she says:

Alhamdulillah, we have produced a generation that can compete

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁰ Emawati, “School Culture Program: Implementation of School Innovation in the Disruption Era in SDIT Anak Sholeh Mataram Lombok”, *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, vol. 8, no. 1 (2019), pp. 27–47.

nationally and worldwide, thanks to the combination of special and general extracurricular activities and religious curriculum. The curriculum outlines how Islamic spiritual education disciplines and teaches students the value of *Akhlaq* and etiquette. SDIT Abata offers two categories of extracurricular activities: required and elective. All students must participate in mandatory extracurricular activities, while thirty kinds of extracurricular electives exist. Students can select extracurricular activities and must pay IDR50,000 each month for each one. Some extracurricular activities include robotics, science club, taekwondo, pencak silat, drum band, dance, piano, English club, and master of ceremonies. Abata often holds many events that involve children”.²¹

SDIT Abata is not affiliated with any particular religious organization or group and is more independent in determining the curriculum. The national curriculum is integrated with other religious learning, especially *akhlāq* and *tahfīz*. The school motto, “Abata, Islamic, global-minded, and cheerful,” aligns with the school’s curriculum, as confirmed, “We prioritize religious learning, but do not ignore general knowledge so that both religious and public education run harmoniously.”²²

This dual curriculum is considered a success story for SD Abata. The accomplishments of students participating in competitions and competing globally are tangible evidence that the school’s integrated curriculum significantly enhances the students’ quality. Such achievements validate the educational model’s effectiveness and serve as a compelling testament to prospective parents to send their children there.

4. SDIT *Luqman Al-Hakim*

Tahfidz and the Qur'an program are two of the school's outstanding offerings that entice parents to enroll their children. The classical *tahfīz* approach is employed, in which the recitation is followed by memorization, which is consistently used at all grade levels (1-6). Aligned with the Hidayatullah Foundation, the school utilizes the “Tahsin al-Hidayah” method, a four-volume curriculum that guides Qur'ānic instruction, with volumes 3-1 serving as prerequisites for volume 4. Beyond academic goals, the school also focuses on character-building and everyday habits, such as proper meal etiquette, shoe placement, mosque attendance, and other habits. Due to the positive changes observed in their children's attitude, parents eventually recommend the school to others. As emphasized by

²¹ Interview with TR, SDIT Abata, 1 November 2021.

²² *Ibid.*

the school's Principal, the emphasis of education is *tawhīd*, ensuring this fundamental principle is integrated across all academic disciplines.²³ He explains further:

In addition to studying in class, children may participate in some outdoor activities based on the homeroom teacher's guidelines. We have class forums at every new school, and all parents are welcome to attend to discuss the curriculum and activities for students in grades 1 through 6. Learning the Qur'an and coaching akhlak are two of our many important programs. Children learn essential life skills at school, like organizing their shoes and praying together. Every Friday, we have extracurricular activities that include archery, pencak silat, pandu (scouting), and riding. We also intend to organize extracurricular activities following the Apostle's Sunnah. Our curriculum is integrated with the national and the Hidayatullah curriculum, which serves as a guide. Every subject is incorporated with *tawhīd* and religious values. At the beginning of the class, we convey teaching values regarding the unity of God. Every teacher who works with us must be qualified to teach the Qur'an, thus, we prioritize teachers who can read the Quran during the teacher selection process. Since the first grade of elementary school, our courses have been divided based on gender. The class names for men are al-rijāl, and women are al-nisa'. We use the term "Noble life or sahid death" to encourage the spirit of the students and 'ustadz' and 'ustadzah' for the school's teachers and instructors.²⁴

This school curriculum emphasizes teaching the Qur'an and nurturing *tawhīd* in most lessons as a bridge between the Hidayatullah and national curricula. As AH further mentions, "True learning here is not just academic mastery, but the development of noble character and self-sufficiency. Our distinctive sunnah-inspired activities program --featuring *pencak silat*, archery, swimming, and horsemanship-- embodies our holistic approach to nurturing complete individuals".

This distinctive educational approach has earned the school recognition within its community. Rooted in the belief that *tawhīd* should be cultivated early through immersive integration across all facets of learning, both inside and outside the classroom, SDIT Luqman Al-Hakim effectively addresses this societal demand. By positioning *tawhīd* as the foundation of all subjects, the school challenges the prevailing dichotomy between "religious" and "secular" knowledge.

²³ Interview with AH, Head of SDIT Luqman Al-Hakim, 1 November 2021.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

5. SDIT Al-Iqra

Almost similar to other SDITs, the primary reason why parents are enthusiastic about sending their children to SDIT Al-Iqra is the education program, including its curricula. This school teaches students how to live with integrity, such as *dhikr*, Qur'ānic memorization, and congregational prayer.

Concerning the curriculum, the Vice Principal says:

The national and Iqra curricula are two curriculum models applied in SDIT Al-Iqra. The Iqra curriculum emphasizes character education and the development of religious values in addition to Arabic and English. The teachers implement the curriculum by setting a positive example for children. We provide two types of extracurricular activities: required and voluntary. Our required after-school program is scouts, and among the extracurricular activities is kasidah.²⁵

SDIT Al-Iqra's dual-curriculum approach offers a model for Islamic schools' goal to balance faith and modernity. Preserving ideology through the Iqra curriculum while embracing national educational trends equips students to navigate global and spiritual contexts. However, as further emphasized by the Vice Principal, while SDIT Al-Iqra implements the National Curriculum and its periodic revisions, the institution maintains religious principles as its foundational framework. For instance, unlike conventional language programs, SDIT Al-Iqra integrates Arabic and English instruction with Islamic ethics, ensuring students develop linguistic proficiency and strong moral values.

We always follow curriculum changes as directed by the government. However, we are more likely to focus on children's personalities than to follow the prescribed curriculum. That is why 80% of our curriculum is based on the Iqra references. Not all educators can include religious principles in every class. Every time I teach, I integrate it with religious values.²⁶

All five SDITs observed in Lombok operate on a dual-curriculum model, integrating the national curriculum with their own institutional or foundation-based curricula. This parallel approach allows the schools to meet government educational standards while preserving their unique Islamic character. However, the development of their religious curricula is significantly influenced by their respective affiliations—whether with

²⁵ Interview with SD, SDIT Al-Iqra', 5 November 2021.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Negotiating Identity and Religious Expression in Early Childhood national Islamic organizations, local foundations, or independent entities.

C. Patterns of Religious Value Internalization in SDIT within the Lombok Context

The growth of SDIT in Indonesia is a notable trend. Several studies indicate that this phenomenon is closely linked to the wave of Islamist proliferation since the 1990s, including Salafism.²⁷ Moreover, the dual nature of Indonesian education, which separates the areas of religious and secular education, has been instrumental in fostering innovative educational models that respond to evolving societal demands.²⁸ Through the integrated learning approach that develops students' cognitive, emotional, and spiritual dimensions (*fikriyah, ruhiyah, and jasadiyah*), SDITs are transforming Indonesia's educational paradigm. These institutions are redefining Islamic education by simultaneously challenging conventional models such as *Madrasahs* and *pesantren* but competing with public schools' academics. This portrayal is seen as unique educational hybrids that combine the Islamic values of madrasahs, the character-building of boarding schools, and the academic competitiveness of public schools.

In the context of Lombok, SDIT opens the discourse on the complexity of the teaching and learning process, especially those related to internalizing religious values. Selecting an SDIT is a solution to parents' limitations in providing insight and religious education for their children. SDITs are generally considered high-income institutions. In Mataram, for example, admission fees typically range from 3 to 12 million rupiah, with monthly fees between 350,000 and 1,200,000 rupiah. It clarifies that the Middle to upper class of society is the focus and target consumers for these schools, most of which are found in urban locations where different racial and ethnic groups, occupations, social backgrounds, and even religious affiliations converge.

This research shows that integrated Islamic schools have effectively

²⁷ Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Salafi Madrasas of Indonesia," in *The Madrasa In Asia Political Activism And Traditional Lingkages*, ed. Farrish Noor, Yongider Sikand, and Martin van Bruinessen (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008); Saparudin, "Salafism, State Recognition and Local Tension: New Trends In Islamic Education in Lombok", *Ulumuna*, vol 21, no. 1 (2017), p. 81-107.

²⁸ For SDIT under Jaringan Sekolah Islam Terpadu (JSIT), founded by Gerakan Tarbiyah, assumed the task of teaching Islam must be a comprehensive and integral unit (*shumuliyah*), as a resistance to secular, dichotomous (*juz'iyah*) understanding; Marwazi and M. Husnul Abid, "Traditional Madrasah, State Policies and the Rise of Integrated Islamic Schools in Jambi", *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2021), pp. 75–102.

established a new model for educational investment. Parents of SDIT students in Mataram have attested to this in various ways. While integrating religious and secular knowledge is common, each school implements a unique curriculum tailored to its specific objectives. This curriculum is key in how each school integrates and applies religious principles.

The research identifies three distinct patterns of religious value internalization within these schools. The first is deep and comprehensive internalization, where religious values are systematically integrated into a structured curriculum targeting students, teachers, and parents through scheduled programs. The second pattern, thorough internalization, relies on active parental involvement, particularly through tools like liaison books that track students' Quranic recitation at home, ensuring continuity between school and family in reinforcing religious norms. Finally, described internalization tailors religious learning to students' preferences by incorporating values into extracurricular activities, making religious engagement more appealing. These patterns demonstrate how SDITs employ institutional, familial, and student-centered strategies to cultivate religious identity early on. In this context, the role of parents determines the choice of students' programs. These three patterns impact the curriculum, internalization goals, and activity formats.

In the first pattern of internalization, parents and families play an active role in providing faith-based values to their children as part of the deep and comprehensive internalization pattern of Islamic religious concerns. This process is reinforced through structured activities regularly

Pattern of Internalization	Curriculum	Target	Activities
A deep and comprehensive internalization	Ministry of Education, JSIT, Hidden Curriculum	Teachers, students, education staff, parents	Teaching learning at schools, Extracurricular Activities, Mabit, Training
Thorough internalization	Ministry of Education and School Foundation	Teachers, students, education staff, parents	Teaching learning at school, Study Forum, Liaison books for parents and teachers
Described internalization	Ministry of Education and School Foundation	Teachers, students, education staff, parents	Teaching learning at schools, Extracurricular Activities

Figure 1: Patterns of Religious Value Internalization

organized for parents, ensuring continuity between home and school. Furthermore, the institution employs a cadre system, a phased approach to internalizing religious values that includes instructors, staff, and extended family members, such as grandparents and mothers, thereby embedding religious consciousness across generations.

In the second pattern, religious ideals are internalized through a collaboration of teachers, parents, and institutional tools. In this model, parents play an essential role by guiding their children through faith-based learning activities, such as Qur'an memorization (*tahfīz*) and sunnah prayers, ensuring continuity between school and home. To facilitate this partnership, schools provide structured resources like parent-teacher link books and digital platforms, enabling consistent communication and tracking student activities progress. Importantly, this internalization process is intentionally designed within the school's curricular framework, engaging students, educators, and staff in a shared ecosystem of religious growth.

The described internalization refers to the school's formal curriculum, in which the process only includes students, educational staff, and school teachers. However, this model demonstrates precise ideological alignment with specific Islamic organizations, including Hidayatullah, PKS (Prosperous Justice Party), Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, and Salafi networks (Ibn Abbas). Although none of the five SDITs in Mataram state officially belong to or are affiliated with organizations or political parties, these connections manifest implicitly through three key dimensions: (1) organizational structures and symbols adopted by the schools, (2) shared narratives in curricular materials and pedagogical approaches, and (3) ideological and socio-political perspectives promoted within the educational environment.

D. Narrative Map of Internalization of Religious Values

As previously discussed, the internalization of religious values is manifested not only through curricular frameworks and structured educational systems but also through habituation within a shared religious ecosystem, particularly through religious narratives. Research findings indicate that Islamist narratives—centered on concepts such as monotheism, visions of paradise, the practice of *niqāb*, and martyrdom—are disseminated through multiple channels. These narratives are transmitted via (a) media (books, pamphlets, and online platforms), (b)

Narrative	Method	Activities	Acceptance
<i>Tawbīd</i>	Curriculum	Learning Process	Implemented by teachers and students
Longing for paradise	Interactive	Preaching	Compact and Active (has been happening for a long time)
<i>Niqāb</i>	Rules	School rules	Forbid, appeal, unconstrained
Martyrdom	Symbolic instructive	Extracurricular, sports, scouts	Students carry out the instruction well

Figure 2: Narrative Map of Religious Value Internalization

physical spaces and social settings (such as recitation sessions and *halaqah* gatherings), (c) rituals and organized activities (including ceremonies and charitable engagements), and (d) interpersonal relationships (among teachers, parents, and student guardians). Moreover, these distribution mechanisms are deeply interconnected and mutually reinforcing. The narratives are systematically structured and conveyed through direct instructional guidance, symbolic messaging embedded within narrative practices, and interactive methodologies integrated into the curriculum. This multi-layered approach underscores the complexity of ideological transmission within SDIT institutions.

The internalization of religious values among students is profoundly influenced by active parental engagement in reinforcing faith-based education. The collaborative relationship between schools and families is often assessed through observable outcomes of institutional programs, such as *sunnah* fasting, encouragement of charitable giving, and consistent worship practices, particularly daily prayer. These behavioral indicators illustrate how structured educational initiatives, when complemented by engaged parenting, effectively cultivate children's adherence to Islamic principles and shape their religious identity.

A key indicator of success within the SDIT education system is the attainment of Quran memorization, a milestone often observed and valued by parents. As one parent remarked, "My child memorized three *juz'* at first," highlighting its transformative impact on family dynamics and social interactions. While SDITs effectively facilitate the internalization of religious values, research suggests that this process may be transient unless students remain within the institutional framework. Moreover, the absence of sustained parental involvement in reinforcing

religious education after graduation contributes to the gradual erosion of values instilled during primary schooling. Given students' diverse social backgrounds, individual family responses to religious internalization vary; however, institutions offering secondary and high school education provide a continuous and structured framework for reinforcing Islamic values, ensuring their deeper and more sustained integration. In such cases, the foundational religious socialization established in Integrated Islamic Elementary Schools serves as a crucial basis for long-term ideological and spiritual development.

1. Religious Expression of SDIT Students: Symbols and Substance

In contemporary Indonesia, SDITs represent a convergence of education, religious identity, and nationalist discourse. At multiple levels, these institutions exhibit traits of religious conservatism, propagate Islamist ideas, and cultivate a new generation of Muslims expected to spread their beliefs, advocate for Islamic law, and contribute to the formation of an ideal Islamic society. Simultaneously, SDITs actively express a distinct form of nationalism shaped by their interpretation of Islam.²⁹ For some urban middle-class Muslims influenced by Salafism, religion functions as a central aspect of identity, serving as both a foundation for social connections and a defining framework for self-perception. Islamic schools are often perceived as sanctuaries, offering a "true" Islamic environment that fosters personal and spiritual development.³⁰ This research in Lombok examines how these dynamics manifest in student religiosity, highlighting both the effectiveness and limitations of internalization models within diverse sociocultural settings.

As discussed earlier, *tawhid* concepts, such as heaven and hell, martyrdom, and other doctrinal expressions, serve as effective mechanisms for internalizing Islamic values. This form of narrative teaching functions as a mode of moral discipline for students, reinforcing religious principles through the analogy of divine reward and punishment. Drawing from Hall's interpretation of Foucault, these narratives constitute discourse, wherein meaning is temporarily stabilized, structured within language

²⁹ An understanding of SDIT is that the integration of nationalistic and religious values is an indicator of Muslims who obey their religion due to Islam itself, the love of the State as a part of God's order; Akhsanul Fuadi and Suyatno, "Integration of Nationalistic and Religious Values in Islamic Education: Study in Integrated Islamic School," *Randwick International of Social Science Journal*, vol. 1, no. 3 (2020), pp. 555–70.

³⁰ Pribadi, "Sekolah Islam (Islamic Schools)", pp. 203–18.

and practice, and ultimately contributes to the production of knowledge.³¹ Through this process, discourse not only shapes students' perceptions but also informs the broader construction of material realities and social norms.

Similarly, the narratives and daily practices of SDIT students constitute what Foucault termed a discursive regime that systematically constructs, legitimizes, and reproduces specific forms of Islamic knowledge.³² Since discourse provides a manner of speaking in the same way about a particular topic with a motive or set of ideas, practices, and forms of knowledge that are repeated throughout the arena of activity, then any person or group can form discourse. Foucault argues that discourse regulates what can be said under certain cultural and social conditions and who speaks, when, and where.

It is apparent how narrative discourse is produced and becomes knowledge for the students. This discursive formation, manifest in classroom interactions, school rituals, and peer socialization, not only shapes students' cognitive paradigms but also regulates the conditions under which religious truth claims can be articulated, by whom, and in what contexts. As previously explained, the concept of 'heaven,' martyrdom, and jihad conveyed in classrooms, at morning flag ceremonies, games, and sports eventually becomes knowledge internalized in students' thoughts, behavior, and actions. As stated by one of the teachers, "The lessons we teach are more focused on instilling the values of *tawhid*; for instance, SDIT Luqman Al-Hakim has the motto of 'noble life or die as *sahid*'.³³ The school intentionally integrates monotheistic values into all its subjects, emphasizing the importance of these values, which are rooted in the Islamic foundation to provide strong religious guidance.³⁴

An important aspect of internalizing Islamic values is how knowledge production is related to power relations. Following Foucault's argument, power is not about who is powerful and where it comes from but is related to exercising power and how it operates. The concept of power in modern society is not sovereign but disciplinary power. Disciplinary power is not the concept of power possessed by authority to control others but functions in and towards every social, economic,

³¹ Stuart Hall, "Foucault: Power, Knowledge and Discourse", in *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader* (London: SAGE, 2001), pp. 72–5.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 74.

³³ Interview with AH, SD Luqman Al-Hakim, 21 November 2021.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

family, and sexual relation. Power in this context is not about the legality of actions and punishments in controlling others but about the normalization of behavior designed by utilizing the productive and reproductive capabilities of the body.³⁵

As previously described, the internalization pattern of religious values is part of exercising power conducted in SDIT. A comprehensive method and spectrum in internalizing a school's ideology are not only seen as a school's regulation but also as a school culture. As stated by one of the SDIT teachers, the ideology's internalization is reflected through the curricula and school activities involving students, teachers, and parents. As mentioned by AH at SDIT Luqman Al-Hakim:

In general, our school focuses on how to teach the Qur'an, the sound hadiths of the apostle, with the understanding of Imam Syafii, Imam Ahmad, Imam Malik, and Abu Hanifah, which refers to how the practice of the Prophet's Sahabah. The teachers compile a particular book for the religious curriculum as a reference. We also teach hundreds of years old books, such as *Al-Arbaūn al-Nawawiyyah* by Imam Nawawi, which covers all the main topics of religion. The book is memorized at the primary school level. We have extracurricular *tahfīz* for students who want to memorize more than three juz, Arabic language, journalism, and activities to form psychomotor skills such as self-defense.³⁶

A distinct educational model is also seen at SDIT Abu Hurairah, where internalization extends beyond students to systematically engage teachers, staff, and parents in a unified framework. The school institutionalizes this approach through regular community assemblies that reinforce shared ideological commitments, effectively binding all stakeholders to the institution's philosophical foundations, as stated by one of the teachers, JSH:

The school's commitment to these values extends beyond students to all staff. Teachers and other personnel participate in biannual workshops (daurah) led by Middle Eastern professors. These workshops focus on classical Islamic texts, examining their teachings on creed and education. Monthly meetings with staff provide further guidance; occasionally, external education experts are brought in for additional training. The training focuses on the *Qutub qoratiyah*, namely the books by ancient scholars from which we examine the side of *aqīdah* and *tarbiyyah*. Every month, we hold meetings with teachers and employees to provide a

³⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), pp. 93–4.

³⁶ Interview with AH, SDIT Luqman Al-Hakim, 21 November 2021.

debriefing. Sometimes, education experts are also invited to train the teachers.³⁷

The above data reveals how the internalization of Islamic values operates simultaneously across multiple layers, where discursive practices are embedded in curricula, classroom dynamics, daily rituals, and peer networks. This Foucauldian framework demonstrates how institutional discourse shapes students' cognitive paradigms and regulates the conditions under which religious truth claims and expression can be articulated, by whom, and in what contexts. Such regulation produces an internalization process where values could be absorbed differentially, either as doctrinal imperatives or social compliance.

Similarly, as Hall cites Foucault,³⁸ the concept of the truth regime—or what is perceived as the truth within disciplinary modernity—entails power relations where knowledge functions as a form of power, shaping subjectivity. In the context of education, the internalization of narrative symbols within the school learning process transforms into ideology. Althusser further emphasizes that ideology plays a fundamental role in shaping the subject, not as an autonomous agent but as a product of structural forces. For him, the moment we enter the symbolic order (language) and develop our identity as subjects is intrinsically tied to the workings of ideology.³⁹

2. *Islamic Identity*

Cultivating a strong Islamic identity is a defining feature of SDITs, manifested through distinctive uniforms, faith-integrated curricula, and structured religious practices. This includes the integration of religious and general sciences, the Qur'an memorization, and other supporting activities. As noted earlier, this intentional identity formation is a primary motivation for parents, particularly urban, upper-middle-class families who seek an education that harmonizes religious and secular knowledge.⁴⁰

For SDIT, the embedded identity confirms the role and

³⁷ Interview with JSH, SDIT Abu Hurairah, 5 November 2021.

³⁸ Hall, "Foucault: Power", pp. 72–5.

³⁹ Chris Barker, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, 2nd edition (London: SAGE, 2006), pp. 59–60.

⁴⁰ Urban Communities in Lombok see the SDIT's concepts and practices fulfill their expectations; Emawati, "Integrated Islamic Schools: Emergent Property, Branding, and Expectations of Urban Communities in Lombok," *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Islam, Science, and Technology (ICONIST 2019)* (Mataram: Atlantis Press, 2020), pp. 166–71.

internalization of the ideology. Giddens stated that identity is formed by the ability to perpetuate a narrative about the self, something we create that is always in the process rather than something that comes suddenly.⁴¹ Identity projects shape what we think of ourselves today regarding our past and present situations, what we think we want, and the trajectory of future expectations. In addition to the curriculum and teaching, another identity that appears in the representation of Islam is the physical appearance/school uniform. Of the five schools observed, Muslim clothing is one of the characteristics of Islamic schools, the same as other Islamic schools, such as Muhammadiyah and NU.

Moreover, the increasing adoption of the *niqāb* among female students in certain Salafi-affiliated SDITs, particularly in upper grades, reflects a nuanced interplay between institutional influence and identity formation. While these schools formally adhere to the national curriculum, they also employ strategies to disseminate Salafi doctrines, fostering an educational environment where specific interpretations of Islamic practice become culturally ingrained. Notably, the *niqāb*'s adoption often occurs organically through social acculturation rather than formal policy, as students emulate teachers and parents who model Salafi norms. This phenomenon aligns with Giddens' theory of identity as a socially constructed process, wherein the *niqāb* transcends individual choice to serve as a marker of collective identity within the school's cultural framework. Functioning both as a theological symbol and a social text, it reinforces group belonging while subtly advancing Salafi ideals through the 'hidden curriculum'.⁴² It is intriguing to observe how the *niqāb* contributes to a constructed atmosphere that fosters a shared identity and is even perceived as part of the school's culture.

E. Concluding Remarks

This research highlights the significant growth of public interest in SDIT, which has directly influenced the increasing number of these schools over time. In the earlier framework of Islamic-based education in Indonesia, the integration of religious and general knowledge was predominantly implemented in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and

⁴¹ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford Univ. Press, 2003), p. 70.

⁴² Jamhari Makruf and Saifudin Asrori, "In the Making of Salafi-Based Islamic Schools in Indonesia", *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 60, no. 1 (2022), pp. 227–64.

institutions affiliated with Islamic organizations. SDITs adopt and modify this model by introducing distinct educational concepts. Unlike traditional *pesantren*, where Arabic instruction and Qur'an memorization are not necessarily prioritized, SDITs establish these components as compulsory elements of their curriculum. Qur'an memorization, in particular, is widely regarded as a flagship program across SDIT institutions, including those in Lombok. Consequently, this phenomenon serves as a key indicator of the emergence of a "new style of Islam" within Indonesia's evolving educational landscape.

The new style of Islam identified in this research represents an accelerated approach to religiosity among elementary school-age children, implemented through specialized programs designed to provide religious foundations from early ages.⁴³ This trend has gained significant traction among parents, particularly working families, who perceive these programs as essential in compensating for their limited time and capacity to personally guide their children's religious development. Educational institutions interpret this demand as a convergence of economic, political, ideological, and religious opportunities, shaping their curricular and pedagogical strategies accordingly. The process of internalization within each school directly influences students' religious understanding and character formation, as well as the broader religious orientation of their families. Among the three internalization patterns identified—thorough and deep internalization, thorough internalization, and described internalization—the first pattern proves to be the most influential. Given its extensive scope, it exerts a wider impact on both the school community and the families of enrolled students, reinforcing a distinct mode of religious socialization in the educational landscape.⁴⁴

SDIT receives state support to implement a dual curriculum model, integrating the national curriculum from the Ministry of Education and Culture with a specialized curriculum developed by individual foundations or SDIT networks. Notably, the administrative process for establishing these schools is more streamlined compared to founding a *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, an Islamic elementary school under the jurisdiction of the

⁴³ Regarding the new Islam style, see Muhammad Wildan and Witriani in "Popular Piety in Indonesia: 'Aestheticization' and Reproduction of Islam", *Ilahiyat Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2.

⁴⁴ See also the post-dogmatic style in Amin Abdullah, "Intersubjective Type of Religiosity: Theoretical Framework and Methodological Construction for Developing Human Sciences in a Progressive Muslim Perspective" in *Al-Jāmi'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 58, no. 1 (2020), pp.63-102.

Ministry of Religious Affairs. Despite their explicit focus on religious values, SDITs remain outside the direct supervision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, including in matters concerning their curriculum development. This research offers an academic reflection on the implications of this framework, highlighting that while the internalization of Islamic values in SDITs is not inherently categorized as a vulnerable process, their continued expansion warrants particular attention. The internalization of religious principles—especially those rooted in Islamic teachings—has the potential to serve as a foundational element in the emergence of a new generation of Islamism in Indonesia whose embryo is an Integrated Islamic School.

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