



Effectiveness of Dayah Jabal Nur Policy in Improving Student's Achievement Motivation

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the effectiveness of educational policies implemented at Dayah Jabal Nur in enhancing students' achievement motivation. While previous research has highlighted the importance of leadership and values in Islamic boarding schools (dayah), few have specifically examined the institutional policies and their influence on students' academic and non-academic performance. Employing a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method, this research aims to understand how policy implementation at Dayah Jabal Nur fosters both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among santri (students). Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving teachers, students, and administrators. The findings indicate that the educational policies—such as reward systems, extracurricular activities, and character development programs—contribute significantly to increasing student motivation. However, challenges remain, particularly in aligning students' understanding of the policy goals and ensuring consistent commitment from all stakeholders. The study concludes that well-structured and participatory educational policies play a crucial role in shaping a competitive and spiritually grounded learning environment within Islamic boarding schools.

1. Introduction

The landscape of national education in Indonesia is characterized by a unique duality, where traditional religious institutions coexist and integrate with modern systemic frameworks. Within this structure, pesantren or dayah education holds an undeniably strategic and historical position, particularly within the autonomous province of Aceh. Historically, the dayah has served as the bedrock of Acehnese intellectualism and resistance; however, in the contemporary era, its mandate has expanded significantly. Today, dayah is not merely a traditional center for the transmission of classical Islamic sciences (tafaqquh fiddin) through the study of yellow books (kitab kuning), but it has also evolved into a central pillar for character building and moral fortification for the younger generation. This dual role—as both a guardian of tradition and a molder of future citizens—becomes increasingly critical as Indonesia faces the turbulent waves of globalization, digital disruption, and a perceived crisis of moral identity among the youth. Consequently, the modernization of dayah requires more than just pedagogical shifts; it demands a sophisticated formulation and implementation of educational policies that are both robust in their Islamic foundation and adaptive to the complexities of the 21st century (Mulyasa, 2013).

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In the realm of institutional management, effective policy serves as a transformative tool that transcends mere administrative regulation. A well-crafted policy acts as a navigational compass, providing the necessary infrastructure to motivate santri (students) toward holistic excellence, encompassing both rigorous academic achievement and profound spiritual development. However, despite the burgeoning literature on Islamic boarding schools, a significant scholarly gap remains. Existing studies have extensively mapped the terrains of charismatic leadership (kyai/teungku centralism), the preservation of traditional values, and the unique organizational culture of pesantren. Yet, empirical inquiries that specifically scrutinize the effectiveness of formal educational policies as a primary driver for "achievement motivation" among santri are notably sparse. In the absence of such policy-focused analysis, the "heart" of institutional change remains unexamined. Without a clear policy framework, educational programs in dayah risk becoming reactionary rather than proactive, leading to unmeasurable outcomes and a dangerous stagnation in student motivation (Dunn, 2003). This study, therefore, seeks to bridge this theoretical and empirical chasm, offering a new perspective on how policy-driven environments can catalyze student potential in a traditional setting.

Dayah Jabal Nur, situated in the industrial and cultural crossroads of North Aceh Regency, serves as a compelling case study for this inquiry. As an "integrated" (terpadu) institution, it represents a modern synthesis, harmonizing the salafiyah (classical) curriculum with the national educational standards. The institution has gained recognition for its proactive stance in fostering a competitive atmosphere through various motivational interventions, including internal merit-based scholarships, diverse extracurricular platforms, and structured student leadership training. These initiatives are codified within a reward system designed to incentivize excellence. Nevertheless, preliminary observations indicate a "disconnect" between policy intent and grassroots reality. The implementation of these motivational policies has yielded asymmetrical results; while some santri thrive, a significant cohort remains disengaged, exhibiting a lack of enthusiasm or a fundamental misunderstanding of the policy's long-term objectives (Dayah Jabal Nur, January 2024). This phenomenon suggests that the mere existence of a "good policy" does not guarantee a "motivated student body."

The complexity of policy effectiveness is rooted in the intricate interplay between the text of the policy and the context of its execution. Effectiveness is frequently compromised by top-down, non-participatory implementation styles, ambiguous communication channels, and a chronic misalignment between ambitious goals and available institutional resources. In the specific ecosystem of a dayah, these challenges are compounded by social environmental factors, the ingrained "culture of silence" or total obedience, and the varying psychological profiles of individual santri. Furthermore, the level of "buy-in" and commitment from the Teungku (teachers) and senior administrators is a decisive variable (Steers, 1985). At Dayah Jabal Nur, evaluating the efficacy of these policies is not merely an academic exercise but a necessity to understand how a structured environment can be transformed into a vibrant "learning laboratory" that moves students toward both intellectual brilliance and spiritual resilience.

Methodologically, this research adopts a qualitative paradigm with a phenomenological lens to capture the lived experiences of those within the Dayah Jabal Nur ecosystem. This approach is uniquely suited for this study as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the subjective perceptions of santri, educators, and administrators. By focusing on the "essence" of their response to educational policies, phenomenology can uncover the hidden dynamics and social meanings that quantitative metrics often overlook (Creswell, 2013). This method is expected to illuminate the "key dimensions" that either facilitate or hinder policy success, providing a nuanced understanding of the obstacles that must be dismantled to optimize student motivation.

Ultimately, the contributions of this research are twofold. Theoretically, it seeks to expand the horizon of pesantren-based management literature by positioning policy effectiveness as a central variable in student development. Practically, the findings are intended to provide a diagnostic and evaluative framework for the management of Dayah Jabal Nur and similar institutions across Aceh. By refining policy designs to be more contextual, participatory, and performance-oriented, dayah can better fulfill their mission (Siagian, 2005). Through such effective governance, the goal is to cultivate a competitive yet deeply religious learning culture—one that produces graduates who are not only intellectually competent in the global arena but also possess the spiritual and social fortitude to lead their communities.

2. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach rooted in the phenomenological tradition, a methodology specifically designed to explore and interpret the fundamental essence of human experience. The primary objective of this phenomenological inquiry is to gain a profound understanding of the underlying meanings and lived experiences of students (*santri*), teachers (*teungku*), and administrators regarding the educational policies implemented at Dayah Jabal Nur. Phenomenology was selected as the most robust framework for this research because it excels at uncovering the subjective realities of participants within their specific social contexts. By emphasizing direct experience and deep individual perception, this approach allows the researcher to move beyond superficial observations to grasp the "lifeworld" (*lebenswelt*) of the subjects as they navigate the institutional mandates of the *dayah* (Creswell, 2013).

The research was conducted within the socio-religious ecosystem of Dayah Jabal Nur, a prominent traditional Islamic educational institution in Aceh. To ensure the richness and relevance of the data, research subjects were selected through purposive sampling. This non-probability sampling technique was utilized to identify and engage key informants—specifically students, educators, and policy-makers—who possess specialized knowledge and first-hand experience regarding the practical execution of educational policies. These participants were chosen based on their strategic roles and their ability to provide "information-rich" cases that illuminate the successes and challenges of the motivational policies under study.

To capture the multifaceted reality of the *dayah*, data collection was triangulated through three primary techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentary studies.

1. In-depth Interviews: These were conducted using a semi-structured format, providing a flexible yet focused conversational space. This allowed for an explorative process where participants could express their subjective views and emotional responses to policy impacts without being constrained by rigid questioning.
2. Participant Observation: The researcher engaged directly in the social and educational environment of Dayah Jabal Nur. By immersing themselves in the daily rhythms of the institution, the researcher gained a nuanced, contextual understanding of the interpersonal dynamics and behavioral patterns that emerge in response to administrative directives.
3. Documentary Studies: This involved a rigorous analysis of formal policy documents, educational activity logs, student achievement records, and relevant institutional archives. This served to cross-reference the oral testimonies of participants with the official structural framework of the *dayah*.

The analytical process followed the interactive model of data analysis as conceptualized by Miles and Huberman, which involves a continuous cycle of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

- Data Reduction: The vast amount of raw data collected from the field was systematically organized, coded, and distilled to highlight information directly relevant to the research focus.
- Data Display: The reduced data was then synthesized and presented through thematic narratives and direct participant quotations, allowing for a clear visualization of the emerging patterns of achievement motivation.
- Conclusion Drawing and Verification: This was an iterative process where initial findings were constantly tested for validity and meaning throughout the duration of the study.

To uphold the highest standards of rigor, validity, and reliability (often referred to as trustworthiness in qualitative research), this study utilized triangulation of sources and methods. Furthermore, the researcher implemented member checking, a process of returning the preliminary interpretations to the participants to confirm that the researcher's analysis accurately reflected their intended meanings and experiences. This prevents interpretive bias and ensures that the "voice" of the *dayah* community is authentically represented.

Finally, the entire research process was conducted in strict adherence to research ethics. This included obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring the absolute anonymity and confidentiality of the informants to protect their standing within the community, and maintaining a high level of cultural sensitivity. The researcher demonstrated profound respect for the local norms, hierarchies, and spiritual values inherent to the Dayah Jabal Nur environment, ensuring that the presence of the study did not disrupt the sacred educational tradition of the institution.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Historical Evolution and Institutional Transformation

Dayah Madinatuddiniyah Jabal Nur Paloh Lada stands as a prominent Islamic educational bastion, fundamentally dedicated to the holistic cultivation of the younger generation through a sophisticated synthesis of salafiyah (classical) and modern educational paradigms. Established in 1991, the institution emerged from the grassroots initiative of the Gampong Paloh Lada community, bolstered by the spiritual patronage of the venerable Abu Tumin Blangbladeh. In its foundational years, the dayah operated as a direct filial branch of the prestigious Dayah Al-Madinatuddiniyah Babussalam Blangbladeh, inheriting a rigorous tradition of classical scholarship.

A pivotal epoch in the institution's history occurred in 2003, marking a strategic shift from a "pure salafiyah" system to an "integrated" (terpadu) educational model. This transformation effectively harmonized the centuries-old traditional curriculum with the formal national curriculum mandated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. This evolutionary step was driven by a vision to produce a generation characterized by *akhlaqul karimah* (noble character)—individuals who possess a balanced triad of intellectual, spiritual, and emotional intelligence. To operationalize this vision, the dayah meticulously developed a multi-layered pedagogical structure: the intensive study of *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts), formal schooling at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) and Madrasah Aliyah (MA) levels, and a diverse array of supplementary programs, including Arabic and English language proficiencies, calligraphic arts, and athletic development. This systemic adaptability has significantly bolstered public trust, leading to a consistent upward trend in societal interest and enrollment.

The student body—referred to as *santri*—at Dayah Madinatuddiniyah Jabal Nur represents a rich tapestry of socio-economic and geographical diversity, drawing youth from various regions across the Aceh province. The student population is strategically categorized into regular and salafiyah tracks, spanning an age demographic of 12 to 22 years. The pedagogical delivery utilizes both classical classroom systems and the traditional *halaqah* (circular study groups), allowing for a differentiated learning approach tailored to the unique cognitive capacities and spiritual readiness of each student.

In the 2024/2025 academic year, the institution reached a significant milestone with a total enrollment of 843 students, consisting of 407 male *santri* and 436 female *santri*. Beyond the rigors of *diniyah* (religious) and general education, these students are actively immersed in organizational structures and character-building initiatives designed to foster leadership and social responsibility. This large-scale student body is supported by a robust infrastructure and a dedicated community of 120 salafiyah instructors, ensuring that the communal living and learning environment remains conducive to the attainment of high-level achievement motivation.

The excellence of Dayah Jabal Nur is underpinned by a formidable cadre of educators and administrative staff who possess diverse academic and spiritual backgrounds, ranging from traditional *pesantren* graduates to university-educated professionals. These educators serve a dual function: they are the transmitters of *turats* (classical heritage) and general sciences, while simultaneously acting as spiritual mentors and moral guardians. The teaching staff is organized into a clear hierarchical and functional structure, comprising Principal Teachers (*Guru Utama*), Senior Teachers, Junior Teachers, and Dormitory Mentors (*Musyrif*).

The role of these educators extends far beyond conventional teaching; their personal discipline and "exemplary conduct" (*keteladanan*) serve as the primary catalyst in shaping the *santri*'s motivation to excel. For the 2024/2025 academic cycle, the human resource configuration includes 28 administrative officers, 125 Madrasah (formal) teachers, and 120 dedicated Salafiyah instructors. This diverse and substantial workforce ensures a high ratio of mentorship, which is critical in maintaining the delicate balance between academic rigor and the spiritual-emotional development of the students in a 24-hour boarding school environment.

3.2. Discussion

The research conducted at Dayah Jabal Nur reveals a sophisticated multi-dimensional policy framework designed to catalyze achievement motivation among *santri*. The effectiveness of these policies is not merely a result of administrative mandates but is rooted in a strategic blend of formal incentives, social modeling,

and psychological empowerment.

3.2.1 The Reward Policy: Institutionalizing Appreciation

The implementation of a structured reward system at Dayah Jabal Nur—comprising academic certificates (*piagam*), internal scholarships, and the appointment of high-achieving students to structural leadership positions—has demonstrated a profound positive impact on learning motivation. This policy functions as an extrinsic catalyst that gradually fosters intrinsic pride. Students report feeling deeply valued for their intellectual and spiritual labor, which in turn ignites a persistent drive for continuous improvement.

This finding aligns with the research of Ridwansyah and Mutiah (2018), which posits that systematic recognition is a significant predictor of academic success in pesantren environments. Furthermore, at Dayah Jabal Nur, this policy is implemented with a high degree of consistency and perceived fairness, creating a "healthy competitive" atmosphere. This is consistent with Umaya (2024), who argues that when rewards and punishments are balanced and transparent, they do not merely regulate behavior but transform the institutional climate into one of excellence. The appointment of *santri* to structural roles particularly serves as a high-level reward, as it grants them social capital and trust, mirroring the findings of Najhan et al. (2024) regarding educative reward models.

3.2.2 The Dynamics of Senior-Junior Mentorship: The EPM2S Model

One of the most effective informal policies at Dayah Jabal Nur is the structured involvement of senior *santri* in the guidance of their juniors. This peer-mentoring approach bridges the pedagogical gap through emotional proximity and informal communication. Junior *santri* feel more comfortable disclosing learning difficulties to their seniors than to formal instructors, creating a "safe space" for academic growth. Agung and Nazib (2022) support this, noting a high correlation (0.780) between senior guidance and learning effectiveness.

This study identifies a unique emergent model at Dayah Jabal Nur, which can be termed the Participatory Evaluation Model of Peer Mentoring (EPM2S). In this framework, senior *santri* act as "evaluative agents" who monitor not only academic progress but also the daily character and discipline of their peers. Unlike formal top-down evaluations, EPM2S is contextual and continuous, reinforcing values of solidarity and collective responsibility (*ukhuwah*). As noted by Farhan et al. (2023), this "peer teaching" method effectively decentralizes the source of motivation, making it a community-driven rather than a teacher-driven phenomenon.

3.2.3 Personal Goal Setting (PGS): Cultivating Proactive Learners

Dayah Jabal Nur has successfully integrated Personal Goal Setting (PGS) into its educational culture. Students are encouraged to formulate clear, measurable, and time-bound targets—such as memorizing specific chapters of the Qur'an (*tahfidz*) or achieving monthly academic benchmarks. This policy empowers *santri* to take ownership of their educational journey.

Theoretical support from Novitasari (2023) suggests that clear goal orientation significantly enhances self-discipline. When a *santri* has a specific target, their learning becomes "focused" rather than "routine." This is particularly evident in the *tahfidz* program, where the attainment of specific milestones acts as a psychological "win" that fuels further effort. Furthermore, effective communication strategies between the *Dayah* administration and the students ensure that these personal goals remain aligned with the institution's broader vision, creating a synergy that Yusuf et al. (2023) describe as the "productivity engine" of modern pesantren.

3.2.4 Social Modelling Techniques: The Power of Exemplarity

The final pillar of policy effectiveness at Dayah Jabal Nur is the utilization of Modelling Techniques. By highlighting "success stories" and exemplary figures from within the student body, the institution provides concrete, relatable archetypes for other students to emulate. This follows Bandura's Social Learning Theory, where observation and imitation serve as primary learning mechanisms.

Research by Fitri, Suharmawan, and Mawaddati (2023) confirms that group guidance using modelling techniques significantly increases motivation, particularly in high-stakes tasks like Qur'anic memorization. Beyond academic gains, modelling at Dayah Jabal Nur is used to curb indiscipline; seeing peers consistently attending congregational prayers and maintaining rigorous study habits exerts a powerful "normative pressure" on others to follow suit (Junaidi, 2022). Moreover, this technique enhances self-efficacy—when

students see someone similar to them succeeding, their belief in their own capability increases (Prayitno, 2021). The combination of modelling with group counseling sessions ensures that inspiration is translated into actionable behavioral changes (Siregar and Lubis, 2025).

4. Conclusions

Based on the comprehensive analysis of educational policies at Dayah Madinatuddiniyah Jabal Nur, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of an institution in fostering student achievement motivation is fundamentally rooted in a harmonious policy ecosystem. This study identifies four critical pillars that serve as the primary drivers of santri motivation: (1) a consistent and merit-based Reward System, (2) an organic yet structured Senior-Junior Mentorship (EPM2S Model), (3) the institutionalization of Personal Goal Setting (PGS), and (4) the strategic application of Social Modelling techniques.

The research findings emphasize that policies at Dayah Jabal Nur transcend mere administrative regulation; they function as psychological catalysts that bridge the gap between traditional religious values and modern achievement orientations. The integration of the Participatory Evaluation Model of Peer Mentoring (EPM2S) highlights a unique institutional strength where senior students act not only as instructors but as moral exemplars and informal evaluators, creating a high-trust learning environment. Furthermore, the implementation of PGS and modelling techniques has proven effective in transforming the santri's learning habits from passive obedience to proactive self-development, particularly in the mastery of kitab kuning and tahfidz Al-Qur'an.

However, the study also notes that for these policies to yield uniform results across the diverse student body, they must be supported by clear communication channels and high commitment from all stakeholders, especially the Teungku and administrators. The "exemplary conduct" (keteladanan) of the educators remains the ultimate anchor that gives legitimacy to every policy formulated.

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