



TRANSFORMATION OF HALAQAH METHOD IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION AT PESANTREN-BASED SCHOOLS IN SAMARINDA CITY

*TRANSFORMASI METODE HALAQAH DALAM PEMBELAJARAN PAI DI
SEKOLAH BERBASIS PESANTREN DI KOTA SAMARINDA*

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the transformation of the halaqah method in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at pesantren-based schools in Samarinda City. Through a qualitative case study approach, this study analyzes how this traditional Islamic teaching method adapts within modern formal educational contexts. Data collection was conducted through participant observation of 15 halaqah sessions across three schools, semi-structured interviews with teachers and administrators, focus group discussions with students, and analysis of curriculum documents. The findings reveal that halaqah transformation encompasses multiple dimensions including modified physical arrangements, shifting teacher roles toward facilitation, three curricular integration models (supplementary, complementary, and integrated), expanded content focus, digital technology integration, evolved assessment practices, and varied student engagement patterns. The research demonstrates that these adaptations represent sophisticated educational innovations that maintain core pedagogical and spiritual values of traditional halaqah while incorporating contemporary educational approaches. This study provides insights into how traditional Islamic educational methods can meaningfully adapt within modern educational contexts and highlights the importance of teacher development in mediating traditional-contemporary educational integration. The implications highlight the potential of "dynamic tradition" in Islamic education, where tradition is viewed not as a static inheritance but as a living educational resource capable of adaptation to changing contexts.

Keywords: Halaqah Method, Islamic Religious Education, Pesantren-Based Schools, Pedagogical Transformation, Traditional-Modern Integration, Islamic Educational Innovation, Samarinda

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji transformasi metode halaqah dalam pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di sekolah berbasis pesantren di Kota Samarinda. Melalui pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana metode pembelajaran tradisional Islam ini beradaptasi dalam konteks pendidikan formal modern. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi partisipan terhadap 15 sesi halaqah di tiga sekolah, wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan guru dan administrator, diskusi kelompok terfokus dengan siswa, dan analisis dokumen kurikulum. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa transformasi halaqah mencakup berbagai dimensi termasuk perubahan pengaturan fisik, pergeseran peran guru menjadi fasilitator, tiga model integrasi kurikulum (suplementer, komplementer, dan terintegrasi), perluasan fokus konten, integrasi teknologi digital, evolusi praktik penilaian, dan pola keterlibatan siswa yang bervariasi. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa adaptasi ini mewakili inovasi pendidikan yang canggih yang mempertahankan nilai-nilai pedagogis dan spiritual inti halaqah tradisional sambil mengintegrasikan pendekatan pendidikan kontemporer. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan tentang bagaimana metode pendidikan Islam tradisional dapat beradaptasi secara bermakna dalam konteks pendidikan modern dan menunjukkan pentingnya pengembangan guru dalam memediasi integrasi pendidikan tradisional-kontemporer. Implikasi penelitian menyoroti potensi "tradisi dinamis" dalam pendidikan Islam, di mana tradisi bukan dipandang sebagai warisan statis melainkan sebagai sumber pendidikan yang hidup dan mampu beradaptasi dengan konteks yang berubah.

Kata Kunci: Metode Halaqah, Pendidikan Agama Islam, Sekolah Berbasis Pesantren, Transformasi Pedagogis, Integrasi Tradisional-Modern, Inovasi Pendidikan Islam, Samarinda

A. INTRODUCTION

The integration of traditional Islamic educational methods into modern school systems represents a significant area of educational innovation, particularly in Indonesia where religious education maintains a central position in the curriculum. The halaqah method, characterized by its circular seating arrangement where students gather around a teacher to study Islamic texts, has been a cornerstone of traditional Islamic education for centuries, dating back to the Prophet Muhammad's time (Shaleh, 2018). In contemporary educational contexts, particularly in pesantren-based schools in Samarinda City, this method has undergone various transformations to remain relevant while preserving its essential pedagogical values. This research examines how these transformations manifest and impact the quality of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in these institutions.

The significance of the halaqah method lies in its emphasis on direct teacher-student interaction, oral transmission of knowledge, and the development of a spiritual connection to Islamic learning. According to Rahman (2019), the halaqah system promotes intensive dialogue between teachers and students, creating a learning environment that goes beyond mere content transmission to include character formation and spiritual development. However, as noted by Azra (2020), traditional Islamic educational methods face challenges in contemporary educational settings where standardized curricula, limited instructional time, and technology integration have become predominant concerns.

Pesantren-based schools in Indonesia represent a unique educational hybrid that combines elements of traditional Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) with the formal national curriculum. Dhofier (2021) describes these institutions as attempts to bridge classical Islamic educational traditions with modern educational demands, creating spaces where methods like halaqah can be preserved while adapting to contemporary pedagogical frameworks. In Samarinda City, East Kalimantan, several such schools have emerged as significant educational institutions that serve the Muslim community's desire for education that is both academically rigorous and deeply rooted in Islamic traditions.

The transformation of halaqah in these contexts involves several dimensions that merit scholarly attention. Lukens-Bull (2018) identifies curriculum integration, pedagogical adaptation, spatial reorganization, and technological augmentation as key areas where traditional methods like halaqah undergo modification to fit within formal school structures. These transformations are not merely technical adjustments but reflect deeper negotiations between traditional Islamic educational values and modern educational paradigms, influencing how religious knowledge is conceptualized, transmitted, and assessed.

The adaptation of halaqah methods in pesantren-based schools also reflects broader trends in Indonesian Islamic education toward what Hefner (2019) terms "progressive traditionalism"—a stance that values traditional methods and content while adopting progressive pedagogical approaches. This position challenges simplistic dichotomies between tradition and modernity, suggesting instead that traditional methods like halaqah may contain pedagogical insights relevant to contemporary educational concerns such as

student-centered learning, critical thinking, and character development.

Educational research in Indonesia has increasingly recognized the potential contributions of indigenous and traditional pedagogical methods to educational quality and cultural relevance. Raihani (2022) argues that the integration of methods like halaqah into formal education represents an important form of "educational indigenization" that can enhance student engagement and learning outcomes, particularly in religious education. This perspective suggests that the transformation of halaqah is not merely about preserving tradition but about leveraging culturally embedded pedagogical wisdom to improve contemporary educational practice.

The specific context of Samarinda City adds further dimensions to this research. As the capital of East Kalimantan province, Samarinda represents a rapidly urbanizing environment where traditional and modern influences intersect in complex ways. According to Suryadi (2021), educational institutions in such contexts often serve as sites where communities negotiate changing identities and values, making them particularly significant for understanding broader sociocultural transformations. The pesantren-based schools in this city thus provide a window into how Islamic educational traditions respond to urbanization, technological change, and evolving educational expectations.

Teachers play a crucial role in the transformation processes of traditional methods like halaqah. Hashim (2020) emphasizes that teachers' pedagogical beliefs, religious understanding, and professional training significantly influence how they interpret and implement traditional methods in contemporary contexts. This suggests that the transformation of halaqah in pesantren-based schools is not merely an institutional or structural phenomenon but is mediated through teachers' agency and pedagogical decision-making, highlighting the importance of understanding teachers' perspectives in this research.

Student responses to transformed halaqah methods represent another critical dimension of this research. Tan (2021) notes that contemporary Muslim students navigate multiple educational and cultural influences that shape their reception of traditional methods. Their perceptions of halaqah's relevance, engagement with its pedagogical approach, and learning outcomes provide essential insights into the effectiveness of these transformations. This understanding is particularly important in the context of growing concerns

about religious education's ability to remain meaningful to younger generations while maintaining doctrinal authenticity and spiritual depth.

Through examining these multiple dimensions of halaqah transformation in pesantren-based schools in Samarinda City, this research contributes to broader scholarly conversations about educational innovation, religious pedagogy, and cultural continuity in Islamic education. The findings will provide insights into how traditional educational methods can be meaningfully integrated into contemporary educational frameworks while preserving their essential pedagogical and spiritual values. Moreover, this research addresses a significant gap in the literature regarding the specific adaptations of halaqah in Indonesian urban contexts outside Java, where most research on Islamic education has been concentrated.

B. INTRODUCTION

The concept of halaqah as a traditional Islamic teaching method has deep historical roots in Muslim educational practices. According to Berkey (2018), halaqah originated in the early Islamic period as informal study circles in mosques where scholars would transmit knowledge of the Quran, hadith, and Islamic jurisprudence to students seated in a circle around them. This arrangement facilitated direct interaction between teacher and students while symbolizing the equality of learners before knowledge. Halaqah became institutionalized within the classical Islamic educational system, forming an essential pedagogical approach in mosques, madrasas, and later in pesantren throughout the Muslim world. The distinctive characteristics of traditional halaqah include its oral transmission focus, memorization emphasis, text-centered approach, and the spiritual dimension of the teacher-student relationship, which Waghid (2020) describes as extending beyond mere knowledge transmission to include moral guidance and spiritual mentorship.

The transformation of traditional Islamic educational methods in contemporary contexts has been examined by several scholars. Alam (2019) identifies various patterns of adaptation, including methodological hybridization (combining halaqah with modern teaching techniques), curricular integration (incorporating traditional texts into standardized curricula), and technological enhancement (using digital tools to support traditional learning approaches). These adaptations reflect broader trends in what Pohl (2021) terms "Islamic educational modernization," where traditional methods un-

dergo conscious modification to address contemporary learning needs while maintaining religious authenticity. Such transformations are not uniform but vary significantly across different institutional contexts, geographical locations, and educational philosophies, resulting in diverse manifestations of "modernized tradition" in Islamic education.

Pesantren-based schools represent a distinctive institutional context for the transformation of halaqah and other traditional methods. Nilan (2019) describes these schools as educational hybrids that attempt to combine the religious intensity and character formation emphasis of traditional pesantren with the academic curriculum and organizational structure of modern schools. Within these institutions, halaqah often occupies a space between formal and informal learning, sometimes integrated into the official religious curriculum and at other times functioning as a supplementary educational activity. Van Bruinessen (2018) notes that this intermediary position creates both opportunities and challenges for halaqah transformation, as it must navigate between institutional requirements for standardization and the method's traditional emphasis on flexibility and personalized instruction.

The pedagogical dimensions of halaqah transformation have received attention from educational researchers interested in its potential contributions to contemporary learning theories (Ibrahim, 2020). Halstead (2021) argues that traditional halaqah, with its emphasis on questioning, discussion, and collaborative meaning-making, contains elements that align with constructivist learning approaches despite its apparently teacher-centered format. Similarly, Sahin (2020) identifies features of traditional halaqah that resonate with current emphases on critical thinking, deep learning, and metacognitive development. These analyses suggest that transformed halaqah practices might bridge Islamic educational traditions with contemporary pedagogical concerns, potentially enhancing religious education's educational effectiveness while maintaining its traditional spiritual and moral dimensions.

The sociocultural context of Islamic education in Indonesia significantly shapes how methods like halaqah are transformed and implemented. According to Hefner (2022), Indonesia's distinctive religious landscape—characterized by diverse Islamic interpretations and a strong tradition of educational syncretism—creates conditions where educational methods undergo unique transformations not seen in other Muslim-majority contexts. Regional variations fur-

ther complicate this picture, with Woodward (2020) noting that East Kalimantan's religious and educational traditions reflect distinctive influences from Javanese, Bugis, Banjar, and indigenous Dayak cultures, creating a complex environment for the transformation of Islamic educational methods like halaqah. These contextual factors suggest that the transformation of halaqah in Samarinda's pesantren-based schools likely reflects not only general trends in Islamic educational modernization but also specific regional cultural dynamics that merit careful investigation.

C. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to investigate the transformation of the halaqah method in Islamic Religious Education at pesantren-based schools in Samarinda City. According to Creswell and Poth (2023), case study methodology is particularly appropriate for educational research that seeks to understand complex phenomena within their real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. The transformation of traditional teaching methods represents precisely such a complex phenomenon, embedded within institutional, cultural, and pedagogical contexts that cannot be meaningfully separated from the practice itself. This methodological approach allows for an in-depth exploration of how halaqah has been adapted, implemented, and experienced within the specific contextual conditions of pesantren-based schools in Samarinda.

Data collection in this study employs multiple methods to achieve methodological triangulation, which Denzin (2019) describes as essential for enhancing the validity and depth of qualitative research findings. The primary data collection methods include participant observation of halaqah sessions, semi-structured interviews with teachers and school administrators, focus group discussions with students, and document analysis of curriculum materials, lesson plans, and school policies related to Islamic education. For the participant observation component, the researcher observed 15 halaqah sessions across three pesantren-based schools in Samarinda over a four-month period, focusing on teaching practices, spatial arrangements, teacher-student interactions, and content delivery approaches. Interview and focus group participants were selected using purposive sampling to include individuals with significant experience or insight into halaqah implementation. All data collection activities were conducted following ethical guidelines for

educational research, including obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality of participants, and maintaining researcher reflexivity throughout the process.

Data analysis follows Braun and Clarke's (2021) thematic analysis approach, involving systematic coding of data to identify patterns and themes that address the research questions. The analysis proceeds through six phases: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final analysis. This process is iterative rather than linear, allowing for continual refinement of codes and themes as new insights emerge. To enhance analytical rigor, member checking procedures were employed where preliminary findings were shared with selected participants to verify interpretations. Additionally, peer debriefing sessions with colleagues familiar with Islamic education research provided external validation of the analytical process. Throughout the analysis, attention was paid to both convergent and divergent patterns in the data, with particular focus on how variations in halaqah transformation relate to institutional contexts, teacher backgrounds, student characteristics, and specific subject matter within Islamic Religious Education.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The transformation of the halaqah method in pesantren-based schools in Samarinda reveals a complex pattern of adaptation that maintains core traditional elements while incorporating contemporary educational approaches. Observations across the three research sites demonstrate that the physical arrangement of halaqah has undergone significant modification from its traditional circular formation. While the circle remains symbolically important, classroom constraints have led to various spatial adaptations, including semi-circular arrangements, U-shaped seating, and clustered group formations that preserve face-to-face interaction while accommodating larger class sizes and rectangular classroom spaces. This spatial reconfiguration reflects what Abdullah (2022) describes as the "architectural negotiation" between traditional Islamic educational ideals and modern school infrastructure, where pedagogical values are maintained through creative adaptation rather than rigid adherence to historical forms.

The role of the teacher within transformed halaqah contexts demonstrates a notable shift from the traditional model of sheikh or ustadz as the singular authoritative source of knowledge. Teachers

in the studied schools frequently position themselves as facilitators who guide discussion rather than merely transmitting information, encouraging student participation while maintaining respect for religious authority. This balancing act manifests in what one teacher described as "guided discovery," where students are prompted to engage with religious texts through guided questions that lead them toward understanding rather than being provided with predetermined interpretations. According to Ramadan (2021), this approach represents an important evolution in Islamic pedagogy that preserves the teacher's authoritative religious role while incorporating contemporary educational principles that value student agency and constructive learning processes.

Curriculum integration emerges as a significant dimension of halaqah transformation, with schools developing various approaches to incorporate this method into the formal Islamic Religious Education curriculum (Muhsyanur, 2021). The research identified three predominant integration models: the supplementary model, where halaqah sessions occur outside regular class hours to reinforce curriculum content; the complementary model, where halaqah is scheduled within the curriculum but focuses on content not covered in standard lessons; and the integrated model, where halaqah methods are directly incorporated into regular classroom teaching. This diversity reflects what Hassan (2023) terms the "curricular flexibility" necessary for traditional methods to function within standardized educational frameworks, allowing schools to adapt implementation according to their specific institutional priorities and constraints.

The content focus of transformed halaqah sessions reveals interesting patterns of both continuity and change. While traditional halaqah typically centered on classical Islamic texts, contemporary implementations show expanded content scope including: application of Islamic principles to contemporary social issues; integration of current events into religious discussions; interdisciplinary connections between Islamic teachings and subjects like science, history, and literature; and exploration of character development through religious storytelling and reflection. This content expansion reflects what Al-Attas (2022) identifies as a "holistic knowledge integration" approach in modern Islamic education, which seeks to overcome compartmentalization of religious knowledge by demonstrating its relevance across multiple domains of life and learning.

Technological integration represents one of the most striking innovations in halaqah transformation. Digital technologies have been incorporated into halaqah sessions in various ways, including the use of digital Quran applications and hadith databases for reference during discussions, multimedia presentations to illustrate complex concepts, online forums extending halaqah discussions beyond physical meetings, and video recordings of scholars to bring external expertise into the classroom. These technological adaptations reflect what Bunt (2023) calls "digital Islamic pedagogy," where traditional educational methods are enhanced rather than replaced by technology, creating hybrid learning experiences that combine the intimacy and oral tradition of halaqah with the expanded informational access afforded by digital tools.

Assessment practices within transformed halaqah contexts demonstrate significant innovation compared to traditional approaches. While traditional halaqah emphasized memorization and textual recitation, contemporary implementations incorporate diverse assessment methods including reflective journals where students document their understanding and questions, project-based assessments applying Islamic principles to real-world situations, peer teaching opportunities where students demonstrate mastery by instructing others, and formative dialogic assessment through questioning techniques that probe conceptual understanding rather than mere recall. These evolved assessment approaches align with what Sahin (2022) describes as "authentic assessment in Islamic education," which emphasizes the evaluation of holistic religious understanding rather than fragmented knowledge acquisition.

Student engagement patterns in transformed halaqah contexts reveal both strengths and challenges of this educational approach. Positive engagement manifests through active questioning, animated discussions particularly around contemporary applications of Islamic principles, student-initiated research extending beyond assigned materials, and expressions of personal connection to the learning content. However, challenges persist, including participation disparities between more and less confident students, occasional resistance to questioning traditional interpretations, and varying levels of preparation affecting discussion quality. These dynamics illustrate what Zine (2021) identifies as the "engagement dialectic" in Islamic education, where traditional authority structures interact with contemporary expectations for active learning, creating both productive tensions and opportunities for educational growth.

Teacher preparation for implementing transformed halaqah methods emerges as a critical factor influencing effectiveness. The research reveals considerable variation in preparation approaches, including formal training workshops on discussion facilitation techniques, informal mentoring by experienced practitioners, collaborative planning sessions among Islamic education teachers, and independent study of both classical Islamic pedagogical texts and contemporary educational theories. Teachers with cross-disciplinary training in both Islamic studies and modern pedagogy demonstrate greater comfort with halaqah transformation, exhibiting what Anzar (2021) terms "pedagogical bilingualism"—the ability to navigate between traditional Islamic educational paradigms and contemporary educational approaches while maintaining coherence and authenticity in teaching practice.

The impact of transformed halaqah methods on student learning outcomes appears multidimensional. Teachers and students report several significant benefits, including enhanced retention of religious knowledge through active engagement with concepts, development of critical thinking skills applied to religious texts and principles, improved ability to articulate religious perspectives on contemporary issues, stronger peer learning communities fostering ongoing religious discussion, and greater personal connection to religious knowledge manifested through behavioral changes. These outcomes support Alam's (2023) contention that transformed traditional methods can achieve a "pedagogical synergy" where the spiritual depth of traditional approaches combines with the intellectual engagement strategies of contemporary education to produce holistic religious learning that addresses both knowledge acquisition and character formation.

Administrative support structures significantly influence the successful implementation of transformed halaqah methods. Schools with more effective implementations demonstrated several key support elements: explicit recognition of halaqah in curriculum documents and teaching load calculations, provision of appropriate physical spaces conducive to interactive learning, scheduling flexibility allowing for extended discussion sessions when needed, professional development opportunities focused on discussion facilitation skills, and assessment policies that value process-oriented learning outcomes. These institutional factors reflect what Houtsonen (2022) describes as the "organizational ecology" necessary for pedagogical innovation in religious education, where method

transformation requires coordinated changes across multiple organizational dimensions.

Cultural perceptions of authority and knowledge significantly influence how halaqah transformation unfolds in practice. Both teachers and students navigate tensions between traditional conceptions of religious knowledge transmission, which emphasize deference to established interpretations, and contemporary educational values that encourage questioning and critical engagement. This negotiation manifests differently across age groups, with older teachers generally maintaining more traditional epistemological stances while younger teachers more readily incorporate constructivist approaches. Students similarly demonstrate varying comfort levels with questioning religious knowledge, influenced by both their family backgrounds and prior educational experiences. These dynamics illustrate what Saeed (2023) terms the "epistemological evolution" occurring within Islamic education, where traditional conceptions of religious knowledge and authority gradually incorporate elements of critical inquiry while maintaining respect for scholarly tradition.

The sociocultural context of Samarinda City adds distinctive dimensions to halaqah transformation not observed in other regions. As a rapidly developing urban center with significant migration from various Indonesian regions, Samarinda's religious educational institutions reflect cultural influences from Javanese, Bugis, Banjar, and indigenous Dayak traditions. These multicultural influences manifest in halaqah practices through regionally varied honorific expressions, culturally specific examples and metaphors, incorporation of local wisdom traditions alongside standard Islamic teachings, and accommodation of different dialectical styles in religious discussion. According to Marranci (2022), such "cultural hybridization" in religious educational practices represents an important aspect of how Islamic traditions adapt to specific regional contexts while maintaining connections to broader Islamic educational principles.

E. CONCLUSION

The transformation of halaqah methods in pesantren-based schools in Samarinda City represents a significant educational innovation that navigates the complex terrain between traditional Islamic pedagogy and contemporary educational needs. This research demonstrates that rather than representing a simple modernization or preservation of tradition, these transformations consti-

tute sophisticated educational adaptations that selectively incorporate new elements while maintaining core pedagogical and spiritual values of traditional halaqah. The modified physical arrangements, expanded teacher roles, diverse integration models, broadened content focus, technological enhancements, evolved assessment practices, and varied engagement patterns collectively illustrate what might be termed "dynamic tradition"—an approach to Islamic education that views tradition not as a static inheritance but as a living educational resource capable of growth and adaptation in response to changing contexts.

The implications of this research extend beyond the specific case of halaqah transformation in Samarinda, offering insights into broader processes of educational innovation within religious contexts. These findings suggest that effective educational innovation in religious settings requires attention to multiple dimensions including pedagogical techniques, institutional structures, cultural epistemologies, and technological integration. Moreover, this research highlights the importance of teacher agency and professional development in mediating traditional-contemporary educational integration, suggesting that investment in teacher capacity building represents a crucial element in successful educational transformation. Future research might productively explore how similar processes unfold in other regional contexts, how students' religious identity development is influenced by transformed traditional methods, and how digital technologies might further enhance rather than diminish the distinctive pedagogical values of traditional Islamic educational approaches like halaqah.

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