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## SOCIOLOGY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Acceptance of the existence of salafi in the development of da'wah in Riau Islamic Malay society

Hasbullah Hasbullah<sup>1\*</sup>, Wilaela Wilaela<sup>1</sup>, Masduki Masduki<sup>2</sup>, Jamaluddin Jamaluddin<sup>1</sup> and Imron Rosidi<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** *Salafi da'wah* has recently spread rapidly to various regions in Indonesia. The presence of *salafi da'wah* in various regions does not often lead to conflict as a result of the *da'wah* method used. Unlike the case in Riau, especially Pekanbaru, in the last decade *salafi da'wah* has gained a place in the hearts of the people so that it has experienced a rapid increase. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the factors that led to the acceptance of *salafi da'wah* in Pekanbaru society. This paper uses a qualitative method based on a series of interviews with 15 informants. Informants were selected based on the purpose of this paper. This study found that the acceptance of the *salafi manhaj* in Pekanbaru society was caused by internal factors and external factors. Internal factors consist of *salafi da'wah* which aims to carry out Islamic teachings in accordance with the Quran and Sunnah, and the profile of *salafi ustadz* (Islamic scholar or preacher) who carry out *da'wah*. Meanwhile, external factors consist of Islamic values contained in Islamic Malay culture and the character of the Islamic Malay society which is open to differences. The form of salafism da'wah that accelerated the development of this *manhaj* was in establishing mosques as Quran study centers, establishing Islamic educational institutions, and developing economic activity through herbal sales centers and *ṭibbun nabawi*. This study cannot make generalizations; therefore, it is recommended that a comparative study be conducted with other regions that have the same character.

**Subjects:** Anthropology - Soc Sci; Philosophy; Religion

**Keywords:** society acceptance; salafism movement; da'wah development

### 1. Introduction

The acceptance of Islamic da'wah in Riau society has increased in the last decade. The presence of this *manhaj* (ideology) is slowly gaining a place in the hearts of the society, whereas previously it was often seen as a group that brought different understandings and would cause disunity in society. This can be seen from the increasing number of Quran study centers and Quran study groups; increasing number of educational institutions; and the emergence of centers for selling herbs, *ṭibbun Nabawi* (prophetic medicine), and Middle Eastern snacks. Nabil (2012) explained that the development of *salafi* in Riau began with the establishment of the al-Furqon Islamic Boarding School in Pekanbaru and the return of scholars from studying in the Middle East. Until 2014 in Pekanbaru City, there were only two Islamic boarding schools that were *salafi manhaj* (Sarifandi, 2014). However, now it has increased to five educational institutions (Table 1).

**Table 1. Salafi school in pekanbaru, riau**

No.	Name	Since
1.	Al-Furqon Islamic Boarding School	1987
2.	Umar bin Khattab Islamic Boarding School	1999
3.	Ummu Sulaim Female Islamic Boarding School	2016
4.	Al-Kahfi Tahfidz Quran Islamic Boarding School	2018
5.	Ma'had Imam Ibnu Katsir	2016
6.	Kuttab Al-Fatih Islamic Education Institute (Kindergarten to Elementary School)	2016
7.	An-Najiyah Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT)	2016
8.	Al Bayyinah Islamic School (SMPIT and SMAIT)	2009 and 2012
9.	Imam An Nawawi Integrated Islamic Junior High School (SMPIT)	2014
10.	Imam Syafii 2 Islamic School (Kindergarten to SMAIT)	2015
11.	Imam As Syafii High School of Islamic Economics	2016

Sources: Processed data of 2021

So far, the study of the Salafi *manhaj* tends to see their movement in three perspectives. The *first* tendency, is to see the *salafi* movement as a movement that leads to the emergence of violence and radicalism (Kusumah, 2020; Muthohirin, 2016; Qodir, 2008). *Second*, discuss certain concepts in *salafi* teachings and see the implications of understanding these concepts on the religious behavior of *salafi* groups (Faizah & Faizah, 2012; Muliono, 2011; Muzammil, 2013; Rosadi, 2015). *Third*, the study of the use of hijab among *salafi* women, both in terms of aesthetics and symbolic meaning (Fitrianita, 2018; Mahanani et al., 2019; Ramadhini, 2017). These three tendencies tend to place *salafi* da'wah as part of the radicalism movement that leads to negative things and as an exclusive group, and does not provide space for the positive contribution of this movement in generating a religious spirit that can be identified from public acceptance. In fact, Salafis in Pekanbaru have a different understanding from the studies above. Salafi in Pekanbaru intends to purify religious understanding, not as a political movement. This is clearly seen from the various policies taken by this group in response to government decisions, such as closing mosques during the Covid-19 period, following the determination of the beginning of the month of Ramadan and following the determination of the beginning of the month of Zulhijjah.

The purpose of this paper is to complement the shortcomings of previous studies which did not pay attention to aspects of society acceptance of the presence of *salafi* groups. Correspondingly, this paper specifically aims to not only map the *salafi* movement in Riau society, the basis for the acceptance of Riau society on the existence of Salafis, the implications (benefits) of the presence of salafis for Riau society, as well as analyzes the structural and cultural conditions that led to the acceptance of the *salafi manhaj* by Riau society. Therefore, this paper will focus on 3 main questions: 1) What is the form of society acceptance of salafis da'wah? 2) what are the factors that shape the acceptance? 3) what are the implications of the acceptance of *salafi* da'wah to Riau society? The answers to these questions will provide a deep understanding of the anatomy of *salafi* da'wah in Riau society.

The acceptance of Riau society to the *salafi manhaj* is not only related to the character of *salafi* da'wah, but also involves Islamic Malay cultural values, the character of the Islamic Malay society

which is open to differences, and *ghirah* society to live life as taught by the Prophet. Salafi da'wah which uses a textual approach (Quran and Sunnah) coupled with the character of *ustadz* who is alumni of schools in the Middle East, makes people interested in returning to study religion. This condition is in line with the spirit of the society who want to become true Muslims or live the Sunnah of the Prophet. Something that was originally considered as "foreign and different" by the society, was finally accepted as part of the form of practicing Islamic teachings. The desire to become a true Muslim by following the life of the Prophet Muhammad, making *salafi* da'wah as a contribution in encouraging the emergence of religious *ghirah* (passion) in society.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Da'wah

Da'wah comes from Arabic which means a call or invitation. The meaning of da'wah in Islam becomes a perspective that brings people from one perspective to another (Abdul Gahaf Don et al., 2012). The implementation of da'wah has external and internal dimensions wherein internal da'wah is intended to increase the faith of Muslims regarding obligations to Allah and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. Based on its internal content, da'wah contains teachings such as the basics of monotheism, *fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence), history, sufism, the Quran and Islamic knowledge which are conveyed through calls to all places of worship (Nasir et al., 2019). Meanwhile, external da'wah has the aim of inviting adherents of other religions to Islam (Mirza, 2014). However, in practice, da'wah does not only discuss the intricacies of Islam and its teachings contextually or theologically but also discusses the laws used in everyday life including political, economic, and social issues (Rosidi, 2021). Da'wah is a part of self-reformation, a source of happiness, satisfaction, obedience, and pride (Kashif et al., 2015). By applying da'wah orally, visually, in practice, and in action (Siagian et al., 2016).

Da'wah has three functions in the life of Muslims. *First*, it functions as a messenger (Bukay, 2016; Mahmuddin & Aisyah, 2019; Salam, 2016). The delivery of messages related to the teachings of the Islamic religion which is sourced from the Quran and Hadith (Mahmuddin & Aisyah, 2019). The effectiveness of da'wah can be a communication tool to convey the message of Islam to the society (Salam, 2016). *Second*, da'wah is used to reduce radicalism (Rabasa & Benard, 2014; Thaib, 2020; Abdul Gahaf Don et al., 2012). Da'wah is an effective communication medium for massive religious activities in Islamic society (Thaib, 2020). Because da'wah can inform Muslims about the faith and teachings of Islam and promote tolerance and social harmony (Abdul Gahaf Don et al., 2012). *Third*, da'wah as a bulwark of Muslims from disobedience. (Abdul Gahaf Don et al., 2012; Hassan, 2017). The implementation and giving of da'wah to Muslims with Islamic content can make Muslims avoid tyrannical values (Don et al., 2012). The three functions of da'wah make Muslims have a need for da'wah and an obligation to carry out da'wah in kindness to others (Rassool, 2016).

### 2.2. Salafis movement

Salafism began as a modernist reformist Islamic movement in the 19th century under the leadership of Muhammad Abduh, Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani and Muhammad Rasyid Rida. (Amini Amir, 2011). Salafi teachings are Sunni and a strong critique of Shia traditions. They argue that the Shia do not respect the companions of the Prophet (M & K, 2018). The concept of Salafi is based on its literal meaning which comes from Arabic, namely Salaf (ancestor). They believe that true Islam must rest on the roots of the Islamic religion (Horst, 2013). The meaning of ancestor is intended as an ideal vision of the life of the first Muslim and tries to persuade Muslims to live according to that lifestyle (De Koning, 2018). This *salafi* movement tries to create a fulfilling and just life, in stark contrast to a world of immorality, oppression and temptation (Roex, 2014). Because the *salafi* is against all forms of idol worship and is considered a heresy, such as carrying out the funeral service, *tawassul* or intermediary in asking for prayers. (Ahmad et al., 2018). The consequences of

this *salafi* movement make Sharia law a means to overcome social problems, economic challenges, and politics facing society (Sonkar, 2020).

The Salafi movement around the world can be categorized in three forms. *First*, Salafi-purist (Ahmad Bunyan Wahib, 2017; Lauzière, 2012). This is a movement that calls for the return of the Koran and Sunnah and does not tolerate religious practices that are mixed with shirk, *bid'ah* (Islamic innovation), and superstition. (Wagemakers, 2018). *Second*, Salafi Haraki (Bangstad & Linge, 2015; Mårtensson, 2014). The movement focused on the intellectuals by not advocating attacks or rebellion. Therefore, this movement has the characteristics of purification, although a nationalist ideology based on Sharia (Mårtensson, 2014). *Third*, Salafi Jihad who are the same as Salafis of Haraki but ratify all acts of rebellion which they deem to be incompatible with sharia (Wagemakers, 2011). They usually carry out bombings in the name of jihad against countries that uphold sharia. Apart from that they also fight the unbelievers and consider all groups outside their community as infidels (Pattison et al., 2017). The three forms of *salafi* actually have the same belief, they all emphasize monotheism and reject the role and intelligence of humans in dealing with and understanding how the unchanging sources of Islam must be applied in modern times (Suharto, 2018).

### 2.3. Public acceptance

Public acceptance is one of the important indicators in measuring everything that can be done and implemented by the public. Where the public's acceptance of everything will increase in line with the increase in the positive consequences felt by the public (Gu et al., 2018). The term public referred to in this article is society, in this case the Malay community. So, the term public is not intended as a public sphere. Vice versa, public acceptance will be very low when they know the negative consequences resulting from these actions (Gu et al., 2018). The function of public acceptance in social life is as a reference and measure that has a consensus of shared values (Kitjanukit, 2019). Public acceptance is needed as the adoption of autonomy has a wide effect. Drawing on the diffusion of innovations, perceived values and theoretical beliefs to identify factors influencing public acceptance (Yuen et al., 2020). In social life, public acceptance can be used as a benchmark for the formation of relationships and interactions in a communal environment. Public acceptance is considered the most important for the effectiveness of a public management scheme. Assessment of social acceptance in the environment, whether it is religious, social, political, or cultural matters (Achillas et al., 2011).

The relationship between acceptance of salafism in Indonesia can be seen from several cases that exist in society. The acceptance of society in this modern era cannot be separated from the existence of technology and communication. The news about the Salafism movement in Indonesia made this religious movement the fastest growing in contemporary times. Even the *salafi* have spread their da'wah through various media (Iqbal, 2014). One of the *salafi* movements in Indonesia, Wahdah Islamiyah, which is the largest Salafi organization in Indonesia, has a more open movement and collaborates in the field of education and international *salafi* donors. Given his loyalty, making this *salafi* more accepted among the Muslim community in Indonesia (Chaplin, 2018). In Indonesia, the term and elements of Salafism have been Indonesianized and are now an established element of the kaleidoscope of religion and culture (Woodward et al., 2011). So that the power of *salafi* and public acceptance can be seen clearly from the history of its development from anti-politics to *realpolitik*, from a silent movement to a more open movement. They have been present and active since the 1980s and developed into a prominent socio-political force after the fall of Suharto in 1998 (Izharuddin, 2015).

### 3. Methods

This research on the acceptance of *salafis* da'wah in the people of Pekanbaru City was carried out in 2020–2021. In line with the *salafi* da'wah which has developed in recent years in Pekanbaru City, it is interesting to study, considering that previously this group did not get much response from the community. In addition, knowing clearly about the community's acceptance of this group will help

to minimize conflicts between groups with different understandings and create tolerance and internal harmony among religious communities. Pekanbaru City was chosen as the research location because Pekanbaru City as the capital city of Riau Province. Pekanbaru was chosen because important salafi figures live in Pekanbaru, and the presence and development of salafi is visible in this city compared to other areas in Riau. The community consists of the upper middle class, and the emergence of *hijrah* groups.

The data used in this research is descriptive or narrative data related to the research issue. This research is a qualitative research with an emphasis on descriptive data obtained from the informants (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). In addition, documentation data is also needed from the Ministry of Religion of Pekanbaru City, *manhaj salafi* institutions, as well as data and online news related to the issue of the study.

As an insider, the researcher conducts this research objectively because the researcher is not directly involved in the salafi management activities. In addition, the researcher is also not an active member of the Salafi management. The advantages of being an insider (Muslim people) is that the researcher understands the teachings of Islam and the culture of the community being studied. This study involved community leaders and citizens, religious leaders, Islamic Malay leaders, administrators of the *manhaj* Salaf mosque, Salafi clerics, managers of *manhaj* Salaf educational institutions, herbal traders and *tibbun nabawi* as research informants totaling 15 people. The selection of these informants was determined based on the objectives of this study. The reason for choosing these informants is because they are active salafi followers and they know salafi activities. The reason for choosing male informants is because female informants do not want to be interviewed and they tend to be passive in salafi activities compared to men. The information obtained from each of these groups will enrich and deepen the understanding of Pekanbaru society's acceptance of the *salafi manhaj*. From each of these informants, data will be obtained about the views on *salafi* da'wah, the development of *salafi* da'wah through recitation, education, and economic activities, as well as cultural values held by the people of Pekanbaru City. In this study, the names of the informants were mentioned because they did not ask to be kept secret. The average duration of the interview is 1 to 1.5 hours, but if they have other business, the duration of time is less than 1 hour.

This research begins by conducting a desk-review to map relevant issues from written sources. After determining the issues to be studied, field observations and interviews were then carried out. Observations were made at the activity centers of *salafi* congregations, such as the Raudhatul Jannah mosque and the Abu Darda mosque. In line with the government's policy during the COVID-19 pandemic to limit various activities, observation activities cannot be carried out optimally, because the activities carried out in mosques are very limited. Likewise, educational activities cannot be observed, because schools and Islamic boarding schools are closed and there are no teaching and learning activities. Interviews are a reliable data collection technique to obtain data related to the issue of the study. Interviews were conducted with informants either directly or using mobile phones.

Data analysis activities are basically carried out as long as the research is carried out. This is to ensure the adequacy of the data in accordance with the research objectives. Data analysis begins with a "restatement" of the interview notes which are then outlined in the form of quotations. The next activity is to carry out a "description" process to show patterns and trends from the data. The last stage is "interpretation" to find the meanings that are communicated in the data on each informant's statement. To ensure the validity of the data, data triangulation was carried out.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. The forms of the salafis movement in Riau Malay society

Salafi is one of the religious groups whose understanding of religious teachings is widely discussed. The existence of *salafi* groups/people is now easily found in Riau Malay society. This group forms

a wide network, both in terms of geography and aspects of community life (A.M. Iqbal, 2014; Nabil, 2012). The network built by this group is not only limited within the country, but also to the Middle East. Networking in the Middle East is usually carried out by alumni who completed their education there. Through this network, *salafi* groups can get donations, whether in the form of money, goods, or books. Geographically, this group has grown in various areas in Riau and has formed recitation groups, both in mosques and prayer rooms. In life aspects, *salafis* movement can be seen in three aspects, i.e., da'wah, education, and economic.

The development of *salafi* group's da'wah is carried out through Quran study, both in mosques and prayer rooms. This study discusses various aspects in Islam, especially related to worship (Chaplin, 2018; Ahmad Bunyan Ahmad Bunyan Wahib, 2017; Wahid, 2012). Before the Covid-19 pandemic, each *Manhaj* Salafi mosque conducted scheduled Quran study, whether daily, weekly and monthly. However, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the mosque which was used as a study center was closed in accordance to government recommendations (Observation, April 2020). The *ustadz* who lead the Quran study in those mosques are scheduled alternately and are the alumni from Al-Furqon Islamic Boarding School in Pekanbaru, the Indonesian Arab Institute of Sciences (LIPIA), the Al-Aqidah Islamic Institute in Jakarta, the Islamic University of Medina and also the alumni of some other universities in the Middle East. This is as explained by Muhammad Akhyar, the administrator of the Raudhatul Jannah Mosque that:

“The Raudhatul Jannah Mosque carries out scheduled activities, every day after Fajr and Maghrib. Quran study after Maghrib is led by different *ustadz* in each night, as well as the book discussed. While Quran study after Fajr (Monday—Friday) is led by Ustadz Dr. Aspri Rahmat Azai, MA, Saturday Fajr by Ustadz Maududi Abdullah, Lc., and Sunday Fajr by Ustadz Zamzami Juned, Lc. Special Quran study for youth/male and female students are held on Saturday ba'da Asr alternately, odd week for male and even week study for female students. The Quran study of adult female is held on Monday morning at 10.00 led by Ahmad Doni, Lc. discusses the book *Faḍā'ilul A'amal*; and Thursday morning at 09.30 was led by two *ustadz*, namely Ust. Dr. Aspri Rahmat Azai, MA and Ust. Asror Habibi, Lc. who discuss the book of *Mau'izatun Nisa'*. Meanwhile, *Daurah* (mentoring) is conducted once a month, with the *ustadz* invited from Jabodetabek. While the *ustadz* who ever lead the *daurah* in Raudhatul Ahmad mosque are Zainuddin, Ust. Syafiq Rizal Basalamah, Ust. Abdullah Taslim. The number of worshipers who attend the public Quran study at night is around 400 to 500 people. People attended this Quran study came from various places in Pekanbaru” (Muhammad Akhyar, interview, 15 March 2020).

The development of da'wah is not only carried out through study, but also by establishing educational institutions. This group establishes various educational institutions, ranging from Islamic Elementary Schools to higher education. This can be seen in the following table:

*Manhaj* Salaf educational institutions are spread across several districts in Pekanbaru, such as in Tampan District, Marpoyan Damai District, Rumbai District, and Tenayan Raya District. Seen from the distribution, it can be said that there are educational institutions located in urban areas as well as in border areas or suburbs.

In the economic aspect, this group is promoting herbal medicine and *ṭibbun nabawi* (such as habbatus sauda, olive oil, honey, dates), *shar'i* clothes, and others to the community. They introduce *ṭibbun nabawi* treatment through Quran study activities, distributing pamphlets, and others. To meet these needs, there have emerged sales centers for *ṭibbun nabawi*, such as in the Raudhatul Jannah Mosque complex, and also shops that can be found in almost all areas in Pekanbaru. Likewise, the trend of *shar'i* clothing which is also demanded by the public has created business opportunities for this group. In addition, there are also *ruqyah shar'iyah* (a treatment by reciting the Quran to ask protection to Allah from disease or calamities) and cupping centers, both affiliated with hospitals (Rumah Sakit Ibu dan Anak Zainab) and independent ones, and home

practice. The presence of these commodities received a response from the community, as explained by Marwad, a member of the community that:

“Emerging stores selling commodities of Moslem necessities, including *shar'i* clothing, herbals, and *tibbun nabawi* means easier access to them. Herbal and *tibbun nabawi* now have become society's health needs alternative. All the more, *tibbun nabawi* is known to be the Prophet's way of maintaining health. People have been using a lot of this commodity for maintaining health and increasing stamina, especially in the middle of pandemic, namely dates, *habbatussauda* (black seed), honey and other herbals” (Marwad, *interview*, 16 July 2020).

This is admitted to be a fact by Imron, a dates seller that:

“Society's demand on dates is relatively stable even in the middle of the pandemic. In a month, I could have 100 boxes of dates sold out (3 kg per box). I have regular customers, and most of them are of middle to high social class” (Imron, *interview*, 18 July 2020).

#### **4.2. Riau Islamic Malays basis acceptance of the salafis**

Islamic Malay system value puts Islam as the main resource that beautifies the whole aspects of Islamic Malay culture. This brings forth a view that Islamic Malays is identical to Islam. This view could be seen when people of other ethnic convert to Islam (*muallaf*), the term known for this situation is converting to Islamic Malay (*masuk Melayu*). On the other hand, all aspects of Islamic Malay culture have to be based on Islamic values. Not all of Islamic Malays understand religious verses (al-Qur'an and hadith), but they will still live their lives based on their culture that carries Islamic values. For the Islamic Malays, Islam is a religion that is applicable in life and is to be taken to the grave. Islamic Malay's life orientation does not only relate to the worldly life, but also how this life should be lived for a good afterlife. Islamic Malay's acceptance of *salafi* teachings is influenced by several factors; (1) Islamic culture value that is similar with Islamic Malay culture, (2) The Islamic Malays open character to differences, and (3) Profile of *ustadz* of *salafi manhaj*.

Islam encourages the worshipers to be an obedient Moslem and to perform Islamic teachings in accordance to the Prophet's model and guidance. This is the main issue delivered by the *ustadz* in every Qur'an study. Religious practices with reference to verses that the *ustadz* delivered is such an appeal to those who want to be better worshiper. This has caused a thought among people that some wrong religious practices found are mostly continued habits rather than a gained knowledge. This is supported with values of Islamic Malay culture that contains Islamic values. Custom sayings stated, “*adat bersendi syara', syara' bersendi kitabullah, bersalahan adat dengan syara', tinggalkan adat tegakkan syara'*” (all customs and values of Islamic Malay culture should correspond to Islamic values. If custom or value in Islamic Malay culture do not correspond with Islamic value, leave them and follow the one that corresponds; Ashshubli, 2018; Hamidy, 1999; Junaidi, 2014; Luthfi, 1991; Thamrin, 2018). For example, traditions that exist in society that still contain elements of shirk, such as shamans, talismans, belief in the existence of guardians in certain places, and others. It is as discussed by UU. Hamidy, a Malay cultural practitioner that:

“The spirit of Islamic Malay is Islam. Islam gives Islamic Malay culture a complexion, and it is internalized in such a way into the culture. Malays term for Islam and Malay culture relationship is *sebati*. *Sebati* means united and unbreakable. Islam and Islamic Malay cultural values compatibility could be seen from various aspects of life, both normative and behavior aspects. Normative aspects could be found in various Islamic Malay custom sayings, for example, issues related to time-value, simple-life living, hard work, and so on. On the other hand, behavior aspect could be seen in various behavior of honoring guests, kind and polite attitude, helping each other in life, etc” (UU. Hamidy, *interview*, 8 July 2020)

Moreover, the Islamic Malay open character to differences means the Islamic Malays are known to be open to differences, be it ethnic differences, cultural differences, or difference in understanding (Budisantoso et al., 1985; Rab, 1990; Yusuf, 1996). This character means that the Islamic Malay



community has a tolerant attitude towards differences, so that different understandings from their own can develop. In Islam, there are differences in understanding among ulama, mostly related to *furū'iyah* issues. The Islamic Malays never question these differences because of their firm bound to Islamic view. They are also known to be tolerant and moderate in performing religious life, where it is natural that various understandings (as long as it is considered *Sunni madzhab*) could grow among them. This character could be observed from the religious practices differences, such as the reading of *qunut* (special prayer during the dawn prayer), *sir* (make quiet) of *basmalah* (Islamic words), the *raka'at* on *tarawih* prayer, determination on the beginning of Ramadan month, and so on.

The Islamic Malays openness to the differences has given a room of movement for *salafi manhaj* in performing *da'wah* and in introducing their *manhaj* understanding. Furthermore, this firm character of the *manhaj* in their spirit of *da'wah* has slowly opened its way to the hearts of Islamic Malays. They always deliver their *da'wah* in every occasion, such as in Qur'an studies or in daily conversation. They put the effort in applying the Prophet's *Sunnah* (Islamic path and principal) in daily life, and this is usually known as the term reviving the Prophet's *Sunnah*. The *manhaj* expansive behavior is clearly visible when they are delivering *da'wah* among the society. The word *Sunnah* is a keyword used in their *da'wah* as it influences the society's way of thinking.

Most of *manhaj salafi ustadz* in Riau are scholars and religious leaders. They usually finished their higher education, in the Middle East and/or in Indonesia. One of them is *Ustadz Dasman Yahya*, a scholar who is a master of *hadith* whose knowledge has been locally and nationally recognized. In his daily life, he is known to be a polite, respectful, kind and generous individual. He always begins his *da'wah* by delivering verses in every discussion, also delivers related discussion from the previous *ulama*. If there were differences on the issue, all related opinions are still discussed, where *salafi* view is emphasized more than the others. However, the differences are not referred as wrong and are not viewed as *bid'ah* (practices with unclear or doubtful resource). Thus, worshiper has the freedom to perform religious teaching according to verses they put their belief in. Some *ustadz* feature strong character in their *da'wah* delivery, that is such as judging and indicating certain religious practices as *bid'ah*, but this has never been causing conflicts within the people. The *da'wah* are not delivered directly to people of difference understanding, instead it is held in mosques of *salafi manhaj*.

The three factors are the basis of Islamic Malays acceptance of *salafi manhaj*. The Islamic Malays cultural values compatibility with *salafi manhaj* has making it a path to acceptance and has been socially accepted by the Islamic Malays. Islamic culture that placed Islam as the source of value would not face rejection if the teaching refers to verses of al-Qur'an and hadith. Even more, it is supported with the Malays open-minded and respecting difference (tolerant) character. The Islamic Malays acceptance to various new views expresses their open-minded character. On the other hand, their respect to differences is their wise approach to ethnic, cultural or views differences. Two factors previously mentioned facilitate *salafi da'wah* in introducing their *manhaj* to Islamic Malays. *Salafi manhaj* firm belief in implementing and performing the Prophet's *Sunnah* in life could slowly be accepted by the Islamic Malays.

#### **4.3. The implication (Benefit) of salafism for the people of Riau**

As *salafi* grows rapidly in the last decade in Riau Islamic Malay, more and more Middle East graduate scholars of the area are going back to Riau to perform *da'wah* and establish institution of education there, especially in Pekanbaru. At first, there was one *salafi* Islamic Boarding School in 1980 (Al-Furqon Islamic boarding school), and later in 2000, more of them has been established, along with other institution of education (Integrated Islamic School). *Salafi ustadz* have gradually infused a change in understanding and the religious pattern of Riau Islamic Malays. When most of Riau Islamic Malays performed worship, practices were inherited as habitual practices, now they are starting to question the basis verses of each practices. *Salafi manhaj* among Riau Islamic Malays has gained implication in

several aspects, including better religious understanding and religious practices, lifted the *ghirah* (passion) of religiosity, and the development of institution Islamic education.

Performing religious practices purely in accordance with the Prophet's guidance and model is every Moslem's wish. This could only be obtained from the knowledge gained in learning the Prophet's hadith. In numerous Qur'an studies, da'wah of *salafi manhaj* discusses various aspects of daily religious practices of the Islamic Malays. Their da'wah do not only cover main issues, including *wudhu'*, praying, fasting, *zakat*, *hajj*, *qurban* (sacrifice), but also issues related to the attitude of a Moslem. Among many religious changes and practices, it can be witnessed in *qurban* ritual practice. Salafi *ustadz* intensely explain how the *qurban* practice is following the Prophet's teaching, especially the practice related to the distribution of *qurban* meat for the committee of *qurban* execution. This is recognized by Rusydi, the head of the committee of *qurban* execution that:

“Slowly the mosque keepers have been changed the *qurban* performance pattern in the past to become closer to the Prophet's teaching” (Rusydi, *the interview*, 12 January 2021).

Salafi *da'wah* could also create the religious *ghirah*, this can be seen from more and more *tahsin* of Quran groups, the intensity of salah in congregation, give *salâm*, congregational *fajr* campaign, blessed Friday campaign, and *fajr sadaqah* campaign. As stated by Usman, the imam of the mosque:

“*ghirah* and awareness of religiosity in the community are starting to rise alongside with the more vigorous Salafi *da'wah* in Pekanbaru city. The people start to realize the importance of congregational salah in mosques, study the Quran (*tahsin* of Quran), keen to do *sadaqah*, and greeting *salâm* while seeing fellow Muslims” (Usman, *the interview*, 13 January 2021).

The presence of Salafi groups also encourages the development of Islamic educational institutions (SDIT, SMPIT, and SMAIT—the integrated Islamic school network including elementary, secondary, and high school; Islamic boarding school), house of *tahfiz*, and so forth. The emergence of such Islamic educational institutions makes easy access for the Islamic Malay community in Riau Pekanbaru to gain good quality education. The Islamic Malay community in Riau nowadays is excited to enroll their kids into the Islamic educational institutions as well as into the *tahfiz* boarding schools. Such statement is also delivered by Ruslan Zuardi, Deputy Director of Imam Syafi'i School:

“many Islamic educational institutions in Pekanbaru city especially with Salaf *manhaj*, give answers and fulfill the parents' wishes for their children could become Islamic generation which understands and practices the Islamic teachings as practiced by *Rasul Allah SAW* (Ruslan Zuardi, *the interview*, 15 January 2021).

## 5. Discussion

The acceptance from Islamic Malay people in Riau toward *da'wah* with Salafi *manhaj* due to internal as well as external factors. Internal factors in question are factors that come from the salafi group, while external factors are factors that come from outside the salafi group. Internal factors such as the wide range of networks that Salafi *manhaj* has as well as the profiles of the *ustadz*. While the external factors including Islamic Malay cultural values which have similarities with Islam, and the Islamic Malay communities' character which welcome any diversities. The network of Salafi *manhaj* can be witnessed from *da'wah* activities, the establishment of educational institutions, and economic activities. These three activities have become the encouraging factors for a wide range of network formation within the Salafi *manhaj* community. Moreover, the profiles of many Salafi *ustadz* who are mostly educated in Middle Eastern countries have their charm and increase people's trust in this groups' sermon (Ubaidillah, 2012; Wahyudin, 2021). Salafi *da'wah* among Islamic Malay people is made easy with the Islamic values within Islamic Malay culture. In Islamic Malay culture, Islam is set to be the primary source of values, thus there should be no conflict of values contained in culture with Islamic values. In this case, Islamic values become the core of Malay cultural values, for example, Islam teaches friendship, in Malay culture Islamic values are manifested in the form of a friendly attitude and mutual cooperation. However, not all Malays

practice Islamic values, for example, there are Malays who do not like to help others. The different understanding in case of this *furu'iyah* brought by this *manhaj* is easier to be accepted for the welcome and tolerant characters of the Islamic Malay community. Therefore, either internal or external factors have become the strength that makes Salafi *manhaj* easier to accept in the Islamic Malay community.

The presence of Salafi *manhaj* in the Islamic Malay community gives a new atmosphere in terms of religious life, whether it is related to religious understanding or religious practice. Salafi *manhaj* brought the religious understanding that tends to be textual (Hamdeh, 2021; Rabbani, 2017; A B A B. Wahib, 2011) and in parts have differences with the ones the Islamic Malay community own. These differences generally are related to *furu'iyah* (the branches) not the *ushul* (the core) ones. Although these differences are related to *furu'iyah* matters, they also often cause problems and divisions in society. Issues that often cause disputes in society include the qunut prayer, praying together after congregational prayers, reading yasin on Friday nights, tahlilan, and others that are seen by the salafi group as having no strong evidence in Islam, or even heresy (Abidin & Hafizah, 2019; Kusumah, 2020). The Islamic Malay people are welcome to any differences; therefore, they can accept such *da'wah*, moreover, the things that are preached have been familiar to Islamic Malay community before the Salafi *da'wah* came. Furthermore, with the presence of Salafi *manhaj*, the religious *ghirah* is developed along with the Islamic Malay people's passion to become the true Muslim. People are eager to join the Quran study to improve their worship practices all this time, for in parts are considered not fully in accordance with the Prophet's teaching. The desire to live as closely as the Prophet's way of life makes this *manhaj* has a special place among the people's heart. Furthermore, the trend of dressed in modesty according to the *sharia*, herbal medicine, and *tibbun nabawi* (prophetic medicine) are the tangible forms of the desire to carry out the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. Therefore, the Salafi *manhaj* gives the contribution to the Islamic Malay people to better understand and practice Islamic worship in accordance with the Quran and *Sunnah* teachings.

The result of this research shows the reception of religious understanding developed in the Islamic Malay people. Various religious organizations as well as any religious view have been living side by side within the Islamic Malay community. Any differences do not bring the people into conflict against one group and another. The welcome and tolerant character toward differences make the Islamic Malay community wise in responding to them. In the case of religious practices, the Islamic Malay people can be considered traditionalists. The traditionalist view in religion accommodates the local culture as long as they don't conflict with Islamic values. While Salafi is closer to the neo-traditionalism view. According to Shepard (1987) neo-traditionalism accepts the emergence of technology, but only the values of "progress" contained in the modernization. This group would like to initiate pure Islam and be free from various mixtures of local cultures such as those found in certain groups. The Salafi group based in Riau is the Salafi non-*jihadist* group. This can be seen from their activities that focus on the religious sermon in order to purify the Islamic teaching. They do not participate in any political activities and follow all the government provisions, such as closing the mosques in Covid-19 time under government suggestion. Therefore, Salafi *manhaj* development among the people in Riau can be accepted by the community for their activities only as an effort to live according to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet.

The puritan Salafi *da'wah* has been spread all over Indonesia. Massive *da'wah*, whether through the conventional congregation, via on line media, and also through mass media accelerates the process of spreading and developing this *manhaj*. The Salafi *manhaj* perform their *da'wah* gradually within certain groups. However, now it grows rapidly, this is marked by the emergence of *manhaj* Salaf mosques in various areas in Riau (especially Pekanbaru), as well as the establishment of many educational institutions. The acceptance of this Salafi *da'wah* occurs when the conducted sermons are only related to Islamic teachings and do not involve political issues. Moreover, the *da'wah* is been performed not by condemning the practice of other groups (*bid'ah*). Nevertheless, there are still Salafi *ustadz* who preach with this method, causing potential conflict in the community (Abidin & Hafizah, 2019; Fitriani, 2015; Rohman, 2017). Even though the Salafi groups conduct *da'wah* among friendly people that is open to

differences, that does not mean they can deliver their sermon recklessly when dealing with mainstream view within the community. Salafi *da'wah* that emphasizes uniformity and turns down any differences tends to get rejected by the community. Through various symbols they put on, such as beard, robe clothes, and ankle pants, Turner calls them as the acts of piety, in one hand strengthening unity among the Salafis. On the other hand, those acts widened the gap between Salafis and opposing groups or other Muslim groups (Turner, 2008). However, it must be admitted, the presence of the Salafi group continues to enrich the religious understanding of the community and also requires the community to reexamine the religious practices they have been performing all this time (Hasan, 2013; Ahmad Bunyan Ahmad Bunyan Wahib, 2017).

The result of this research shows that the characters of Islamic Malay people, as well as Islamic Malay cultural values make the process of acceptance toward Salafi *manhaj* view easier. The act of tolerance and respect for other people, especially fellow Muslims formed by the teachings of Sunni Islam makes the Islamic Malay community open to various religious differences, as long as they are not against the core belief in religion. The rapid development of Salafi *manhaj* in Pekanbaru is supported by the network built through Quran studies activities, educational activities, and economic activities. To perform these activities, Salafi groups build mosques, Islamic educational institutions, as well as economic centers that focus on commodities related to the *Sunnah*. These three forces used as a means of Salafi *da'wah* will have implications for the religious style of the Riau people in the future. While the traditional view is still live well (practiced by most members of the community), it is possible that in the future there will be a shift in religious understanding. This shift in religious style does not only mean a change in religious understanding and religious practice. However, the thing more worrying is the shift of this Salafi movement from non-*jihadist* (purist) to *haraki* or *jihadi* (Wahid, 2012; Wiktorowicz, 2006). This does not rule out the possibility for Salafi teachings, which understand religion textually, tend to be intolerant of existing differences (Rohman & Puspitasari, 2011).

## 6. Conclusion

It turns out that what has been considered that the presence of Salafi *da'wah* always gets a rejection from the community does not have sufficient reasons. This research shows that people in Riau can accept their presence thus in the last decade the group has shown rapid development. This is certainly not only related to Salafi *da'wah* but also related to Islamic Malay cultural values which are closely related to Islamic values and also the character of the Islamic Malay community which is open to differences. Public acceptance of the presence of the Salafi *manhaj* can be witnessed by the emergence of Quran study groups, the establishment of mosques, the establishment of educational institutions ranging from elementary to higher education, and the development of trading centers selling commodities with *Sunnah* thematic strategy, as addition various wet cupping clinics and *ruqya sharia* (Islamic healing) centers.

This research is performed within one area in Riau, therefore it's not possible to draw generalizations. To do generalization, more studies need to conduct with more areas with similar characters as well as a similar type of people. Salafi communities grow in urban areas, where the upper classes live, either they are categorized based on education or economic ability. Therefore, continuous studies could be performed within Islamic Malay communities in other areas, such as Jambi, Borneo, Palembang, Medan, etc.

This study does not generalize the Malay community in other regions, because this study is limited to the Riau Malay community. Similar studies with this study in other regional Malay communities may produce different results. The social impact of this study allows the salafi to develop rapidly in Riau. However, the current salafi ideology in Riau tends to be moderate, so that it does not cause negative impacts such as conflict and the birth of terrorism groups.

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