The Role of Mosque Youth in Preventing Deviant Behavior among Adolescents

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Abstract

The phenomenon of deviant behavior among adolescents, such as promiscuity, misuse of social media, and low participation in religious activities, poses a serious challenge for modern society. This study aims to analyze the role of Mosque Youth in preventing deviant behavior through a case study at Al-Ikhlas Mosque, Tanjung Gusta Village. The research employed a qualitative approach with data collection techniques consisting of in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Data were analyzed using Miles & Huberman's model, including reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that Mosque Youth play three significant roles: as peer educators who provide exemplary religious practices and moral conduct; as organizers of religious, social, Islamic sports, and arts activities; and as social mediators who bridge communication between adolescents, religious leaders, and the community. Preventive strategies include establishing positive youth communities, implementing Youth Islamic Camps and short Islamic boarding programs, and utilizing social media as a creative da'wah platform. Challenges encountered involve low youth participation due to external influences, limited financial and facility support, and the stigma that mosque activities are monotonous. Nevertheless, supporting factors such as community support, youth enthusiasm, and collaboration with schools and community leaders strengthen the sustainability of these programs. This study highlights the strategic role of Mosque Youth in building social and spiritual resilience among young generations to prevent deviant behavior in the digital era.

Keywords: Mosque Youth, Deviant Behavior, Digital Da'wah, Peer Education, Social Capital.

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Introduction

Deviant behaviors among adolescents ranging from violence, promiscuity, excessive use of gadgets/social media, to declining religious engagement have been identified as increasing and taking more diverse forms in the digital era. The Indonesia Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) 2023 reported a high proportion of risk behaviors among secondary school students; for example, nearly half of students reported sedentary time ≥3 hours/day outside school hours, which often correlates with excessive digital exposure and self-regulation problems (WHO, 2023). These national findings have also been highlighted by government research institutions as a strong signal of the urgent need to strengthen community-based youth development ecosystems (BRIN, 2025).

In the psychosocial domain, recent systematic reviews show that problematic social media use is associated with identity distress, decreased self-concept clarity, and certain mental health symptoms among adolescents (Pazdur et al., 2025; Rodgers et al., 2022). In Indonesia, qualitative studies also emphasize the link between negative social media use and deviant religious behaviors among youth (Ashari, 2024). In other words, the main challenge is not merely "access to platforms" but rather the quality of digital interactions that shape adolescents' values, morals, and self-control.

On the other hand, regional empirical evidence indicates that religiosity and involvement in faith-based communities are positively related to the dimensions of Positive Youth Development (PYD) the 5Cs (competence, confidence, connection, character, caring) which are known to protect adolescents from risky behaviors (Alampay et al., 2024). In Indonesia, religious organizations have proven to serve as effective social leverage, functioning both as agents of social control and as producers of social capital (Syafrida et al., 2022). Specifically within the mosque ecosystem, *Remaja Masjid* (Mosque Youth) play a strategic role as: (1) peer educators who transmit norms and worship practices; (2) organizers of meaningful activities (thematic religious studies, sports, Islamic arts, digital literacy); and (3) mediators between youth, mosque administrators, parents, and schools (Harti et al., 2024; Nahdliyyin, 2025).

Recent case studies in mosque youth communities in East Java illustrate how structured da'wah communication (mentoring, digital da'wah content, and cross-sector networks) contributes to preventing juvenile delinquency (Nahdliyyin, 2025). Similar findings—that mosque youth activities enhance worship discipline, self-control, and ethical social interaction—have also emerged from field studies in North Sumatra (Harti et al., 2024). These insights align with national youth development policy mandates, which emphasize the empowerment of local communities including mosques to strengthen youth capacity and participation (BPS, 2024).

Taqwa (piety) is a "high concept" in the sense that it embodies multiple dimensions and requires a continuous and staged effort to attain. Its realization presupposes not only knowledge and understanding but also the embodiment of such values in actual behavior (Tumiran et al., 2023). The mosque, therefore, should not be reduced to a place of worship alone; rather, it must be cultivated through various religious activities such as prayer, remembrance (*dhikr*), and Qur'an recitation (Bahtiar Siregat et al., 2022). Since the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the mosque has played a central role in Muslim life—not only as a place of worship but also as a hub of education, deliberation, and social empowerment.

In the rural context, the mosque is ideally a collective space for nurturing faith, worship, and morals, especially among the younger generation. However, the reality in many villages, including Sukadono Village, Deli Serdang Regency, shows a declining educational role of mosques. Innovation has thus become essential for fostering progress and adapting to the dynamics of change across various domains (Danny Abrianto et al., 2025).

According to Zubaedi (2021), mosque-based religious education should be participatory and contextual, tailored to the local community's conditions. Religious education provides knowledge that shapes personality and attitudes. Its purpose is to enable children from an early

age to grow and develop into individuals with good character (Mhd Habibu Rahman et al., 2020).

From this perspective, Al-Ikhlas Mosque in Tanjung Gusta Village holds a strategic position to implement a contextual community-based prevention model. First, mosque youth can operationalize peer education to normalize prosocial behavior and proper etiquette in the community (Alampay et al., 2024). Second, through the curation of "time-relevant" positive activities (creative da'wah content workshops, recreational sports, community service projects), mosque youth organizations can transform risky leisure time into meaningful engagement (Harti et al., 2024). Third, digital literacy and social media ethics need to be explicitly instilled to mitigate the risks of problematic social media use (Pazdur et al., 2025; Rodgers et al., 2022). Proper learning processes will help students maximize intelligence, enjoy life, and acquire the ability to interact positively with both their physical and social environments (Hadi Saputra Panggabean et al., 2021).

Therefore, this case study research argues that strengthening the capacity of *Remaja Masjid* (organizational structure, facilitator competence, partnerships with schools/local government, and digital da'wah communication strategies) is a key prerequisite for reducing adolescent deviant behaviors and reinforcing Qur'anic character—ethical, adaptive, and competitive (BRIN, 2025; BPS, 2024).

Literature Review

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage characterized by identity formation, heightened emotionality, and vulnerability to risk behaviors (Steinberg, 2014). In the digital era, the prevalence of deviant behaviors among adolescents—including violence, substance use, excessive social media engagement, and declining religious participation—has been widely documented across global and regional studies (WHO, 2023; Rodgers et al., 2022). These phenomena not only reflect individual challenges but also broader socio-cultural and technological transformations that shape youth values and behaviors.

2.1 Adolescent Deviant Behavior in the Digital Era

Research has consistently shown that problematic digital engagement is strongly correlated with self-regulation issues, identity distress, and mental health symptoms among adolescents (Pazdur et al., 2025; Rodgers et al., 2022). In Indonesia, qualitative evidence highlights the relationship between negative social media use and the erosion of religious practices among youth (Ashari, 2024). These findings indicate that adolescent deviance cannot be understood merely through individual or family factors but must also account for the quality of digital interactions that shape moral development.

2.2 Positive Youth Development and Religiosity

The Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework emphasizes the importance of competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring (the "5Cs") as protective factors against risky behaviors (Lerner et al., 2013). Empirical studies in Southeast Asia demonstrate that religiosity and participation in faith-based communities enhance PYD outcomes by fostering resilience, moral reasoning, and prosocial behaviors (Alampay et al., 2024). In Indonesia, religious organizations serve as agents of social control and social capital, contributing to the prevention of juvenile delinquency (Syafrida et al., 2022).

2.3 The Strategic Role of Mosque-Based Youth Organizations

Mosques have historically functioned not only as places of worship but also as centers for education, deliberation, and social empowerment (Bahtiar Siregat et al., 2022). Within this ecosystem, mosque youth (Remaja Masjid) play a crucial role as peer educators, program organizers, and mediators between adolescents, parents, mosque leaders, and schools (Harti et al., 2024). Structured da'wah communication—including mentoring programs, digital da'wah content, and cross-sector collaboration—has been shown to contribute to reducing deviant behavior among adolescents (Nahdliyyin, 2025).

Studies in East Java and North Sumatra further demonstrate that mosque youth initiatives enhance worship discipline, strengthen self-control, and cultivate ethical social interactions (Harti et al., 2024; Nahdliyyin, 2025). These findings align with national youth development policies that emphasize empowering local community-based organizations, including mosques, as strategic partners in strengthening adolescent character (BPS, 2024; BRIN, 2025).

2.4 Gaps in the Literature

Despite the growing body of research on adolescent behavior and the role of religious institutions, several gaps remain. First, most studies focus on the correlation between religiosity and youth outcomes but lack in-depth exploration of organizational strategies within mosque youth communities. Second, limited attention has been given to the integration of digital literacy and ethical social media practices as part of mosque-based youth education. Third, few case studies provide a holistic understanding of how mosque youth organizations interact with broader community stakeholders in preventing deviant behaviors.

Synthesis

The literature collectively highlights the significant potential of mosque youth organizations in addressing adolescent deviant behavior, particularly within the framework of PYD and community-based prevention. However, the absence of contextualized case studies that examine the organizational capacity, facilitation strategies, and digital adaptation of mosque youth underscores the need for further empirical investigation. This study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the role of Remaja Masjid at Al-Ikhlas Mosque, Tanjung Gusta Village, in preventing deviant behavior among adolescents through peer education, meaningful engagement, and digital ethics cultivation.A literature review is a systematic process of evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing literature relevant to a research topic. The goal is to provide an overview of existing knowledge, identify gaps in research, and establish a context for new research.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study method, focusing on Al-Ikhlas Mosque, Tanjung Gusta Village. Research participants include mosque youth leaders, community figures, parents, and mentored adolescents. This approach was chosen to deeply understand the role of mosque youth in preventing adolescent deviant behavior through lived experiences, social interactions, and organizational dynamics. According to Creswell & Poth (2018), qualitative case studies allow researchers to explore phenomena contextually by examining the interconnections between individuals, groups, and their social environments.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to capture personal perspectives from mosque youth leaders, community figures, and parents, while participant observation enabled researchers to directly witness activities and social interactions within the mosque. Documentation such as activity archives, photos, and meeting minutes served as complementary data to strengthen the validity of findings. This process aligns with Yin's (2018) assertion that multiple data sources are a hallmark of case studies, ensuring depth of analysis.

Data analysis followed the three main stages of Miles & Huberman's model: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out to select relevant information from interviews, observations, and documentation. Data display was organized in descriptive narrative form to facilitate understanding of patterns and tendencies. Finally, conclusion drawing was conducted reflectively, linking empirical data with relevant theories (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2019). Through this approach, the study captures both the subjective meaning and the practical strategies enacted by the mosque youth community, offering a holistic picture of preventive strategies against deviant behaviors among adolescents (Syafrida et al., 2022).

Results

The findings of this study indicate that *Remaja Masjid Al-Ikhlas* in Tanjung Gusta Village play three main roles in preventing deviant behavior among adolescents. First, as peer educators, they serve as role models in worship and moral conduct within the adolescent social environment. This aligns with the concept of peer education, which emphasizes the strong influence of peers in shaping behavior and religious identity (Handayani & Prasetyo, 2023).

Second, as organizers of religious, social, Islamic sports, and Islamic arts activities, mosque youth create positive spaces for self-expression that channel creative energy while simultaneously reinforcing religious values. This role is consistent with the findings of Harti et al. (2024), which demonstrate that youth involvement in mosque activities enhances worship discipline, self-control, and ethical social interactions.

Third, as social mediators, mosque youth act as bridges between adolescents, religious leaders, the community, and parents, thereby fostering stronger social networks for the prevention of juvenile delinquency. In terms of strategies, the study found that *Remaja Masjid Al-Ikhlas* adopt preventive and creative approaches. These strategies are realized through the formation of positive activity communities such as sports, Islamic arts, Youth Islamic Camps, and short-term Islamic boarding programs (*pesantren kilat*). In addition, they utilize social media as a platform for creative da'wah aimed at reaching adolescents in ways that align more closely with their digital lifestyles. This finding corresponds with Nahdliyyin (2025), who argued that digital-based da'wah communication can serve as a preventive instrument against delinquency by effectively engaging adolescents in their personal digital spaces.

Nevertheless, several challenges were also identified. First, the lack of participation from some adolescents due to the dominant influence of external environments, such as promiscuity and popular culture that contradict Islamic values. Second, financial constraints and limited facilities hinder the sustainability of programs. Third, the stigma that mosque activities are "boring" discourages some adolescents from participating. These barriers are consistent with Ashari (2024), who highlighted that social media significantly reduces youth interest in religious activities by offering more attractive instant entertainment.

On the other hand, the study also found several supporting factors that strengthen the role of mosque youth. Support from mosque administrators (*takmir*) and the community provides social capital that ensures program sustainability. Youth enthusiasm for positive activities reflects a strong need for self-actualization that can be directed in Islamic ways. Furthermore, collaboration with community leaders and schools expands cooperative networks, facilitating program implementation. These findings reinforce Syafrida et al. (2022), who emphasized that social capital plays a crucial role in enhancing community resilience against deviant behavior.In conclusion, the results of this study demonstrate that the role of mosque youth extends beyond religious activities, encompassing social, cultural, and digital dimensions, which collectively function as a protective shield against deviant behavior among adolescents.

Figure 1. National Seminar

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the Youth of Al-Ikhlas Mosque in Tanjung Gusta Village play a significant role in preventing deviant behavior among adolescents. Their roles include functioning as peer educators, organizers of religious, social, artistic, and Islamic sports activities, as well as social mediators who bridge relationships between youth, religious leaders, and the wider community. These roles have proven effective in fostering prayer discipline, self-control, and ethical social interactions (Harti et al., 2024).

In terms of strategy, mosque youth utilize positive activities and digital media as instruments of guidance. Programs such as the Youth Islamic Camp, short-term Islamic boarding (pesantren kilat), and da'wah through social media represent innovative approaches that balance adolescents' need for self-expression with religious values. This strategy aligns with the findings of Nahdliyyin (2025), which emphasize the effectiveness of digital da'wah in preventing juvenile delinquency.

Nevertheless, several challenges persist, including low participation of some adolescents due to external influences, limited funding and facilities, as well as negative stigma toward mosque-based activities. These challenges are further exacerbated by the influence of social media, which often diverts youth away from religious engagement (Ashari, 2024). On the other hand, the presence of supporting factors such as community support, youth enthusiasm, and cross-sector collaboration highlights the importance of social capital in strengthening community resilience against deviant behavior (Syafrida et al., 2022).

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