

# The Transformation of Surau in Historical Studies and SLR on the Evaluation of Local Islamic Education in Minangkabau

Putri Adona<sup>1</sup>, Ahmad Deski<sup>2</sup>, Daniel Alfaruqi<sup>3</sup>, Iswantir M<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1 2 3</sup>Institut Darul Qur'an Payakumbuh – Indonesia

<sup>4</sup> UIN Sjech. M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi – Indonesia

\*Corresponding author : [iswantir@uinbukittinggi.ac.id](mailto:iswantir@uinbukittinggi.ac.id)

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.47625/fitua.v6i2.1137>

Article	Abstract
<b>Article History :</b> Received : Oct., 25, 2025 Reviewed : Dec.,02,12, 2025 Accepted : Dec.,16,12, 2025 Published : Dec.,23,12, 2025	The surau is a traditional Islamic educational institution that has a vital role in shaping the character and religious identity of the Minangkabau people. However, modernisation and social change have affected its continued function as an educational centre. This study aims to analyse the transformation of the surau from the classical period to the modern era, highlighting changes in its institutional structure, learning methods, and social function. The method used is a Systematic Literature Review with a qualitative-descriptive approach, which involves searching various scientific sources from books, articles, and local documents. The results show that the Surau has undergone a shift in role from a community-based informal educational institution to a centre for moral and spiritual guidance that is more adaptive to the times. Despite undergoing modernisation, Surau has retained its core values of simplicity, togetherness, and spirituality. These findings prove that Surau has high resilience in facing social changes without losing its identity. This research makes an important contribution to the development of local wisdom-based Islamic education by offering an integrative model between tradition and modernity.
<b>Keywords:</b>  <i>Surau, Minangkabau, Local Wisdom, Islamic Education</i>	

## INTRODUCTION

The surau is one of the earliest Islamic educational institutions in Minangkabau, playing a central role in shaping the character, morals, and religious identity of the community. In the past, the surau was not only used as a place of worship, but also as a centre for religious and cultural learning and social leadership training. The education system implemented in the surau was communal and took place through direct interaction between teachers and students (Zamroni, 2019). The scholarly traditions developed within the Surau have produced many influential figures in the religious and social spheres. However, social changes marked by modernisation and urbanisation have had a major impact on the Surau's continued functioning (Zihad Islami et al., 2024). Many Suraus no longer play an active pedagogical role and are only maintained as religious symbols (Afdayeni, 2017). This condition raises concerns about the decline in the instilling of spiritual values and local wisdom in society. Therefore, it is important to re-examine the position of the Surau in the dynamics of Islamic education today.

Scientific discussions about Surau have been widely found in studies of social history and Islamic education in Minangkabau. Various studies describe that Surau has a dual function as a centre of worship and a means of training community leaders. Over time, there have been changes in the educational patterns in Surau due to the introduction of a more structured formal education system (Natsir & Hufad, 2019). This institution was then required to adapt in order to remain relevant to the needs of modern society. However, not all Surau were able to survive these changes. Some Surau experienced stagnation, while others adapted through certain forms of innovation. This phenomenon shows that there is complex internal dynamics in the journey of this traditional educational institution.

This study aims to analyse the transformation process of the Surau as an Islamic educational institution from the classical to the modern era. The focus of the study is on changes in institutional structure, learning methods, and educational values that have been preserved or abandoned. In addition, this study also highlights the social role of the Surau in fostering community development amid the development of the formal education system (Furqan, 2019). Using a qualitative approach based on historical studies, this study attempts to trace the continuity and fundamental changes in the function of the Surau (Nurhasnah et al., 2024). This study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how traditional institutions survive amid the tide of change. In addition, this study also seeks to discover the distinctive Minangkabau educational values that are relevant to be developed in the context of contemporary education (Faridi et al., 2024). Thus, this study has theoretical and practical contributions to the development of Islamic education based on local wisdom.

Although there have been many studies on the Surau, there is still a gap in studies that discuss the internal transformation of this institution in greater depth. Many previous studies only describe the Surau as an institution in decline without elaborating on the actual forms of adaptation that have taken place. Some studies have not examined in detail the changes in curriculum, teaching methods, or the relationship between teachers and students in modern Surau. However, these aspects are important for understanding the future direction of Surau development (Hermawansyah, 2023; Nurbaya et al., 2024). By combining historical and cultural approaches, this study attempts to fill this gap. The analysis is conducted not only at the institutional level, but also at the epistemological and pedagogical dimensions. Thus, this study offers a new perspective in understanding the development of traditional Islamic education.

The uniqueness of this research lies in its perspective, which does not position the surau as merely a relic of the past. The surau is viewed as an institution that continues to evolve and adapt to changing social realities. This research not only traces historical narratives but also interprets the process of educational evolution that takes place within it. By highlighting the interaction between traditional values and the modern education system, this research presents a more comprehensive analytical approach. This perspective allows the Surau to be understood as a flexible entity that is responsive to developments in society (Muslim, 2021). Therefore, the Surau is not only an object of historical study, but also a source of inspiration for future education models.

In general, this study argues that the changes that have occurred in the Surau are a form of adaptation to evolving social needs. Rather than being considered a step backwards, these transformations reflect the ability of traditional institutions to maintain their relevance. The Surau now not only performs an informal educational function, but also plays a role in spiritual guidance and strengthening the religious identity of the community. Therefore, understanding the dynamics of the Surau is important in formulating the direction of national Islamic education policy. The Surau can be used as an example of how local values and modernity can coexist. Thus, the existence of the Surau remains significant in shaping the Islamic educational civilisation in Minangkabau.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The unit of analysis in this study is the Surau as an Islamic educational institution that has developed in two main forms, namely traditional and modern. The object of study focuses on changes in institutional structure and shifts in educational values applied from time to time. The Surau is understood not only as a place of worship but also as a socio-cultural institution that has educational and community development functions. Each Surau studied was selected based on historical considerations, continuity of role, and active involvement in educational

activities (Juliwansyah & Iswantir, 2022). Thus, this study does not view the Surau individually, but rather as an institutional system with internal dynamics. The focus of this study allows for a deeper understanding of the Surau's adaptation to social change. In addition, this approach also opens up space to compare the development of Surau in various historical periods.

The research method used is a Systematic Literature Review with a qualitative-descriptive approach (Syahrizal & Jailani, 2023). This method was chosen to trace and reorganise various relevant scientific findings on the transformation of the Surau as an Islamic educational institution in Minangkabau. The literature search process was conducted through various scientific databases and educational repositories that provide reliable academic sources. The criteria for selecting literature were based on topic relevance, completeness of information, and relevance to the focus of the study. The data obtained was then collected through documentation techniques and organised in the form of a theme matrix. The systematic organisation of data provided strong support for the analysis. With this method, the research relied on the strength of secondary data that had been tested for credibility.

Data analysis techniques were carried out through the application of triangulation to strengthen the validity of the study results. Triangulation was applied in three forms, namely source triangulation, theory triangulation, and time triangulation (Nurfajriani et al., 2024). Source triangulation was carried out by comparing information from various types of references, such as classical books, modern research articles, and local documents. Theory triangulation is applied by linking literature findings with Islamic education concepts and social transformation theories. Meanwhile, time triangulation is carried out by tracing the changing role of the Surau from the pre-colonial era to the contemporary period. Each piece of data obtained is then categorised based on major themes to identify patterns of change. Thus, the analysis is carried out sequentially and in layers to ensure depth of interpretation.

To maintain the validity of the research results, a gradual literature evaluation process was carried out through the stages of identification, screening, and feasibility determination. Each piece of literature was compared with one another to avoid interpretative bias and ensure consistency of information. The researchers also compiled documentation notes of the search process as evidence of methodological transparency. In addition, informal discussions were held with academics who understand the context of Islamic education and Minangkabau culture to strengthen the interpretation of the data. This cross-verification process provides a solid foundation for the development of research arguments. Through a combination of analysis techniques and validation mechanisms, this study is expected to produce a credible synthesis of knowledge. Therefore, the methods used are not only exploratory but also reflective and evaluative.

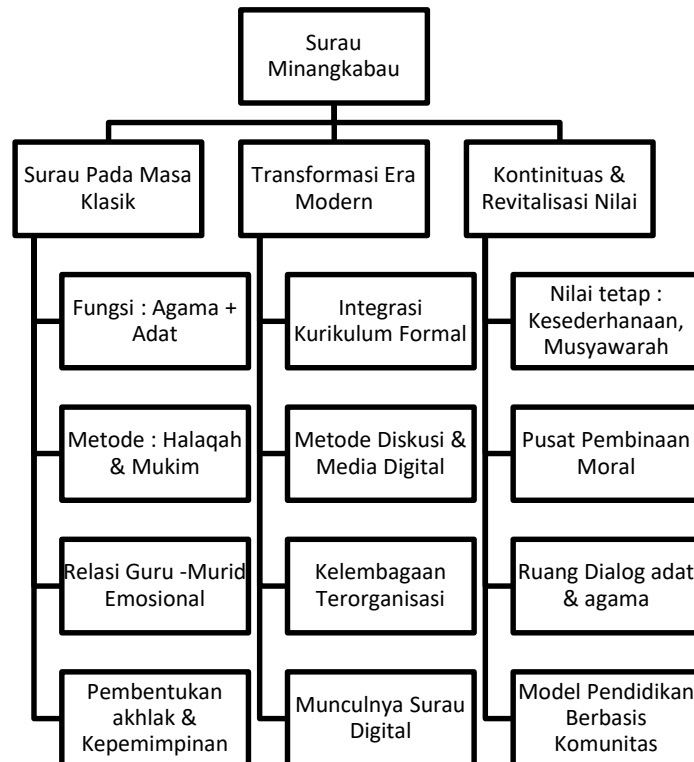
## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As a result of analysing the historical journey and functional dynamics of the Surau in Minangkabau, it can be concluded that this institution has undergone evolutionary and adaptive development. The Surau not only served as an Islamic educational institution in classical times, but also became a centre for the cultivation of customs, morals, and social leadership. The transformation that occurred was not linear towards a completely new form, but rather a process of recontextualising old values within a more modern institutional framework. Thus, the existence of the Surau reflects the continuity of traditions that remain relevant in facing the challenges of the times.

To clarify the relationship between these findings, the following conceptual mapping chart (mind mapping) illustrates the three main pillars of the Surau's development: (1) the Surau as a Classical Islamic Educational Institution, (2) the Transformation of the Surau in the

Modern Era, and (3) the Continuity of Values and Revitalisation of Functions. This diagram was compiled to show that the changes that have occurred are not a dichotomous shift from traditional to modern, but rather an integration of historical values with contextual innovations. This visualisation also emphasises that the Surau remains an important entity in the social and educational structure of Minangkabau society to this day.

**Image 1**  
**Transformation of Surau at Minangkabau**



### The Surau as a Classical Islamic Educational Institution

During the classical period in Minangkabau, the surau was an Islamic educational institution that grew organically from the needs of the indigenous community and religion. Its existence served not only as a place of worship but also as a centre for the transmission of religious knowledge and indigenous values (Juliwansyah & Iswantir, 2022; Zihad Islami et al., 2024). The education system implemented was non-formal but culturally structured through the halaqah pattern, in which a tuanku led the teaching process directly. The santri lived in the Surau, so that learning activities were not limited by time and took place throughout the day. The relationship between teachers and students was based on the principles of spiritual submission and respect for customs, reflecting a harmonious blend of religion and local culture. Traditional manuscripts and Minangkabau tambo indicate that the Surau curriculum includes fiqh, tauhid, tasawuf, and akhlak, which are taught in (Fajriani et al., 2025; Hakim, 2017). Thus, the Surau forms an educational environment based on direct experience and emotional closeness. This type of educational model makes the Surau an institution that shapes the character and morals of society.

As a centre for the formation of religious scholars and traditional leaders, the Surau plays an important role in producing generations of local leaders. Young people who study at the Surau not only learn religious texts, but are also trained in social leadership. Activities such as mutual cooperation, deliberation, and conflict resolution are taught through direct practice in everyday life. This makes the Surau not only a place of learning, but also an arena for community-based leadership training. From a modern educational perspective, this model reflects the concept of character-based learning or character building. The approach applied is

holistic as it simultaneously addresses the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. There is no separation between religious knowledge and social customs, so that santri grow as whole individuals. Thus, the Surau builds Minangkabau people who have spiritual depth as well as social responsibility.

The learning structure at the Surau is flexible and tailored to the abilities of each individual. There is no formal examination system or class division as in modern education, but rather academic recognition is given through social legitimisation. A santri is considered to have graduated when they are able to teach the knowledge they have received back to the community. This recognition is usually marked by the awarding of a certain title such as 'malin' or 'tuanku'. This mechanism reflects the principles of justice and egalitarianism in traditional education. In addition, the Surau also serves as a centre for scholarly documentation through the copying of classical Islamic texts and local manuscripts. This practice emphasises that the Surau is not only an oral institution but also a literary one. Therefore, the Surau has made a significant contribution to the development of the tradition of reading and writing in Minangkabau.

The social context during the classical period made the Surau the centre of community life in its entirety. In addition to its educational function, the Surau also served as a lodging place for travellers, a location for traditional meetings, and a space for resolving social issues (Natsir & Hufad, 2019). This shows that the existence of the Surau cannot be separated from the Minangkabau social system. From an anthropological perspective, the Surau is a multifunctional institution that integrates religion, customs, and education within a collective space. The communal lifestyle cultivated in the Surau fosters strong solidarity among community members. Thus, the Surau serves as a symbol of social cohesion and cultural identity. The legacy of values from the classical Surau became the foundation for the development of Islamic education in Minangkabau in subsequent periods.

### **The Transformation of Surau in the Modern Era**

The introduction of formal education through madrasahs and schools in the early 20th century had a significant impact on the function of Surau in Minangkabau. Some Surau experienced a decline in the number of students as the community began to prioritise formal education as a requirement for social mobility. However, Surau were not immediately abandoned, but rather adapted to the demands of the times. Some Surau leaders integrated modern teaching methods such as the use of blackboards, printed books, and regular study schedules. The traditional curriculum, which focused on classical Islamic texts, began to be supplemented with lessons in Arabic, Islamic history, and even general knowledge. These changes reflect the surau's ability to adapt without losing the essence of spiritual education. This adaptation shows that surau are not static, but dynamic in the face of social change. Thus, the transformation of surau is an evolutionary process that maintains continuity while embracing innovation.

Field observations show that some Surau now perform functions similar to semi-formal educational institutions. Students follow a more structured daily schedule with time allocated for recitation, worship practice, and social activities. The halaqah method, which is characteristic of Surau education, is still maintained but enriched with discussion and presentation learning techniques. The presence of simple technology such as loudspeakers, projectors, and audio recordings also supports the effectiveness of learning. Some Surau even collaborate with formal educational institutions to organise tahfizh programmes or leadership training. This shows that modernisation does not necessarily erode traditional values, but rather opens up opportunities to expand the reach of education. Thus, the Surau is able to maintain its position as a relevant educational institution amid changing times.



In addition to structural adaptations, Surau also underwent transformations in institutional and management aspects. Management, which was previously family-based, began to implement simple administrative systems such as financial record-keeping and student data collection. Several Surau formed management organisations consisting of community leaders and alumni to ensure operational sustainability. The leadership model, which was previously individualistic, changed to become collective and participatory. This transformation reflects a shift from a charismatic system to an institutional system. Nevertheless, the authority of a *tuanku* is still respected as a symbol of spiritual legitimacy. Thus, the modernisation of Surau has not only touched on methodological aspects, but also its organisational structure.

The modernisation of suraus can also be seen in the emergence of the 'digital surau' phenomenon, which utilises information technology for preaching and learning activities. Some Suraus document their religious study activities through social media and online video platforms. This allows for a wider dissemination of knowledge beyond geographical boundaries. Although there are concerns about the erosion of the emotional closeness that characterises Surau education, some leaders have successfully combined direct interaction with digital delivery. Thus, Surau has successfully entered a new era without abandoning its traditional roots. This transformation proves that the sustainability of an institution does not depend solely on its physical form, but on the flexibility of the values it embodies. Therefore, the modernisation of Surau must be understood as a creative process in maintaining cultural relevance.

### **Continuity of Values and Revitalisation of Functions**

Despite undergoing various structural changes, the Surau continues to uphold the fundamental values that form the basis of its existence. The principle of balance between religion and customs remains the main guideline in all learning activities. Values such as simplicity, deliberation, and mutual cooperation continue to be taught through direct practice in the daily lives of the students. The relationship between teachers and students remains familial, so that the educational process takes place with a personal and empathetic approach. The value of respect for knowledge and scholars is also maintained through the traditions of pilgrimage and respect for senior teachers. This shows that modernisation has not erased the spiritual character of the Surau. On the contrary, these values have become the identity that distinguishes the Surau from formal educational institutions. Thus, the continuity of values has become the main force that has maintained the existence of the Surau to this day.

The revitalisation of the Surau's function can be seen in its role as a centre for community moral guidance. In some areas, the Surau has become a venue for youth development programmes such as *majelis wirid* (prayer gatherings), training for young *khatib* (preachers), and religious social activities. This function shows that even though formal education has shifted to schools, the Surau remains a bastion of community morals. In addition, the Surau also functions as a space for mediation between generations to discuss traditional and religious issues. Activities such as traditional discussions, communication training, and spiritual strengthening are part of a regular agenda that reinforces social cohesion. Thus, the Surau acts as an institution for character building that cannot be replaced by the modern education system (Hasnah et al., 2024). This change in function is not a form of regression, but rather an adaptation to contemporary social needs.

In the context of community development, the Surau can be seen as an effective and sustainable model of community-based education. Its existence does not depend on state funding or formal regulations, but rather on community participation and social legitimacy. This makes the Surau a concrete example of the concept of independent and participatory grassroots education. This uniqueness can be a reference in the development of alternative education based on local wisdom. In an era of globalisation that tends to erode cultural identity, the Surau plays an important role in maintaining the continuity of local values. Thus,

revitalising the function of the Surau can be a strategy for preserving tradition through an innovative approach. Therefore, the Surau has great potential to continue to develop as a value-based educational institution.

The entire journey of the Surau from the classical to the modern era shows that continuity and innovation can go hand in hand (Hasnah et al., 2024). The Surau is able to maintain its identity as a spiritual educational institution while opening itself up to the developments of the times. The main strength of the Surau lies in its flexibility in adapting to change without losing its foundation of values. Thus, the Surau can be used as an example of how traditional institutions can survive dynamically in an ever-changing social context. From an Islamic educational perspective, the Surau is an ideal model of integration between knowledge, morals, and culture. Therefore, the urgency of preserving the Surau is not only historical but also strategic for the development of civilisation. Thus, the Surau remains relevant as a pillar of education based on local wisdom.

## CONCLUSION

The main strength of this study lies in its historical qualitative approach, which enables an in-depth analysis of both continuity and transformation in the function of the *Surau* as an Islamic educational institution. The application of source triangulation and thematic analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of the *Surau's* institutional dynamics and confirms the resilience of traditional Islamic institutions in responding to social change. Theoretically, the *Surau* offers a viable model for the revitalisation of Islamic education rooted in local culture, with values such as simplicity, togetherness, and spirituality serving as foundational principles for contemporary educational development. In this context, the *Surau* is not only historically significant but also strategically relevant to character formation and nation building.

However, this study is limited by its geographical scope and the number of *Surau* examined. It also does not explore in depth the economic dimensions and educational policies that influence the sustainability of the *Surau*. Future research should adopt a broader and more interdisciplinary approach to capture the *Surau* within its wider social, economic, and policy contexts. Further studies are also encouraged to explore the potential of the *Surau* as a model of sustainable Islamic education that integrates digital technology with local wisdom. In this way, the *Surau* can be positioned not merely as cultural heritage, but as a living source of innovation in contemporary Islamic education, sustained through strong community engagement.

## REFERENCES

- Afdayeni, M. (2017). Dinamika Sistem Pendidikan Islam. *Fuaduna: Jurnal Kajian Keagamaan Dan Kemasyarakatan*, 1(1), 58–69.
- Fajriani, S. W., Tresno, T., Sari, K. A., Hartani, M., & Ilham, I. (2025). Integrasi Etnopedagogi Surau dan Pendidikan Formal dalam Pembentukan Karakter Anak. *JURNAL SYNTAX IMPERATIF: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Pendidikan*, 6(4), 923–936. <https://doi.org/10.54543/syntaximperatif.v6i4.771>
- Faridi, F., Ishomuddin, & Firmansyah, E. (2024). Kelembagaan Pendidikan Islam Di Nusantara: Surau, Meunasah, Masjid, Pesantren, Madrasah: *Iqra: Jurnal Ilmu Kependidikan Dan Keislaman*, 19(1), 93~97-93~97. <https://doi.org/10.56338/iqra.v19i1.4208>
- Furqan, M. (2019). Surau Dan Pesantren Sebagai Lembaga Pengembang Masyarakat Islam Di Indonesia (Kajian Perspektif Historis). *Jurnal Al-Ijtima'iyyah*, 5(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.22373/al-ijtima'iyyah.v5i1.5132>
- Hakim, I. (2017). Tentang Sejarah Surau di Minangkabau. *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies*, 13(2). <https://doi.org/10.18196/aiijis.2017.0077.283-287>

- Hasnah, R., Yafi, S., & Rahmi, R. (2024). Surau Sebagai Refleksi Tafaqquh Fi Al-Din dan Urgensinya terhadap Modernisasi Pendidikan Islam. *Journal of Education Research*, 5(2), 2212–2221. <https://doi.org/10.37985/jer.v5i2.1036>
- Hermawansyah, H. (2023). Kurikulum Merdeka Sebagai Akses Percepatan Transformasi Pendidikan di Era Society. *Fitrah: Jurnal Studi Pendidikan*, 14(2), 200–211. <https://doi.org/10.47625/fitrah.v14i2.535>
- Juliwansyah, J., & Iswanti, I. (2022). Surau Sebagai Lembaga Pendidikan Islam Di Sumatera Barat. *Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Pendidikan Indonesia*, 1(2), 182–187. <https://doi.org/10.31004/jpion.v1i2.41>
- Muslim, M. (2021). Pertumbuhan Insititusi Pendidikan Awal di Indonesia :Pesantren, Surau dan Dayah. *Jurnal Bilqolam Pendidikan Islam*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.51672/jbpi.v2i1.45>
- Natsir, M. H. D., & Hufad, A. (2019). *The Function of Surau in Minangkabau Culture*. 214(Ices 2018), 122–125. <https://doi.org/10.2991/ices-18.2019.29>
- Nurbaya, S., Tang, M., & Palili, S. (2024). Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam Multikultural: Tinjauan Literatur. *Fitrah: Jurnal Studi Pendidikan*, 15(2), 88–102. <https://doi.org/10.47625/fitrah.v15i2.654>
- Nurfajriani, W. V., Ilhami, M. W., Mahendra, A., Sirodj, R. A., & Afgani, M. W. (2024). Triangulasi Data Dalam Analisis Data Penelitian Kualitatif. *Penambahan Natrium Benzoat Dan Kalium Sorbat (Antiinversi) Dan Kecepatan Pengadukan Sebagai Upaya Penghambatan Reaksi Inversi Pada Nira Tebu*, 10(September), 826–833.
- Nurhasnah, Samad, D., Irfanda, H., & Tiffani. (2024). Surau: Fungsi Surau Sebagai Pusat Pendidikan Dan Penyiaran Islam, Pusat Tarekat, Pusat Pembinaan Adat Budaya Minangkabau. *Jurnal Pendidikan & Pengajaran (JUPE2)*, 2(2), 358–372. <https://doi.org/10.54832/jupe2.v2i2.353>
- Syahrizal, H., & Jailani, M. S. (2023). Jenis-Jenis penelitian dalam penelitian kuantitatif dan kualitatif (Types of research in quantitative and qualitative research). *QOSIM: Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial and Humaniora*, 1(1), 13–23.
- Zamroni, M. (2019). Transformasi Pendidikan Islam dalam Pesantren. *Pustaka Pelajar*, 4(2), 42–56.
- Zihad Islami, M., Farid Wajdi, M., Widya Putri, A., Alyssa Kurnia, N., & Pramesthi Sudewo, A. (2024). Pengembalian Fungsi Surau Sebagai Identitas Minangkabau Melalui Elaborasi Madrasah Diniyah Awaliah: Perspektif Neo-Fungsionalisme. *Jurnal Lafinus*, 1(1), 68–93. <https://doi.org/10.22146/lafinus.v1i1.9852>