



The Role of Gayo Customary Law in Supporting the Effectiveness of Aceh Qanun No. 9 of 2015 on the Implementation of Education

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ABSTRACT

Aceh Qanun No. 9 of 2015, which amends Qanun No. 11 of 2014 on the Implementation of Education, obliges students to dress Islamically, stay free of narcotics, and avoid pornography, and prohibits educators, education personnel, and students from brawling, smoking, dressing improperly, communicating improperly, and misusing gadgets during instruction. It assigns no institution to these norms beyond the school and provides no sanction, leaving a gap between a provincial norm and the community in which conduct actually occurs. This article asks what the qanun regulates and where it is institutionally silent, what Gayo customary law offers at those points, and what legal basis exists for connecting them. It uses a normative juridical design combining statutory, conceptual, and analytical approaches, reading the qanun and related regional legislation against peer-reviewed scholarship on Gayo adat and on legal pluralism in Aceh. The analysis yields three findings. The qanun's conduct provisions are stated as prohibitions without addressees, procedures, or consequences beyond the classroom. Gayo customary law supplies at those precise points a behavioural vocabulary, the four categories of sumang governing speech, gaze, movement, and sitting, together with an institution, the Sarak Opat, that already exercises recognised jurisdiction over such conduct. Existing legislation on customary institutions and the qanun's own clauses on local excellence education and local content books provide the legal channel for the connection. The article argues that adat contributes to the qanun's effectiveness not as supplementary content but as normative translation and jurisdictional complement.

Keywords: Gayo Customary Law, Sarak Opat, Sumang, Aceh Qanun, Legal Pluralism

ABSTRAK

Qanun Aceh Nomor 9 Tahun 2015, yang mengubah Qanun Nomor 11 Tahun 2014 tentang Penyelenggaraan Pendidikan, mewajibkan peserta didik berbusana muslim, bebas narkoba, dan tidak terlibat pornografi, serta melarang pendidik, tenaga kependidikan, dan peserta didik untuk tawuran, merokok, berpakaian tidak sopan, berkomunikasi secara tidak patut, dan menyalahgunakan gawai saat pembelajaran. Qanun ini tidak menautkan norma tersebut pada lembaga mana pun di luar sekolah dan tidak menyediakan sanksi, sehingga terbentang jarak antara norma provinsi dan komunitas tempat perilaku itu sesungguhnya berlangsung. Artikel ini menanyakan apa yang diatur qanun dan di titik mana ia diam secara kelembagaan, apa yang ditawarkan hukum adat Gayo pada titik-titik tersebut, dan dasar hukum apa yang tersedia untuk menghubungkannya. Penelitian ini memakai desain yuridis normatif dengan pendekatan perundang-undangan, konseptual, dan analitis, membaca qanun dan peraturan daerah terkait bersama kajian bertelaah sejawat tentang adat Gayo dan pluralisme hukum di Aceh. Analisisnya menghasilkan tiga temuan. Ketentuan perilaku dalam qanun dirumuskan sebagai larangan tanpa penanggung jawab, prosedur, maupun akibat hukum di luar ruang kelas. Hukum adat Gayo justru menyediakan pada titik yang sama sebuah kosakata perilaku, yakni empat kategori sumang yang mengatur tutur kata, pandangan, langkah, dan cara duduk, sekaligus sebuah lembaga, yakni Sarak Opat, yang sudah memiliki yurisdiksi yang diakui atas perilaku semacam itu. Peraturan tentang lembaga adat serta klausul qanun tentang pendidikan berbasis keunggulan lokal dan buku muatan lokal menyediakan saluran hukumnya. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa adat menyumbang pada efektivitas qanun bukan sebagai materi tambahan, melainkan sebagai penerjemahan normatif dan pelengkap yurisdiksi.

Kata Kunci: Hukum Adat Gayo, Sarak Opat, Sumang, Qanun Aceh, Pluralisme Hukum

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I. INTRODUCTION

Aceh's special autonomy has produced an unusually dense body of regional legislation on education. Under the framework established by Law No. 11 of 2006 on the Governing of Aceh, the provincial government has legislated not only on the administration of schooling but on its Islamic character, its curriculum, and the conduct expected of those within it. Qanun Aceh No. 11 of 2014 on the Implementation of Education set out this architecture, and Qanun Aceh No. 9 of 2015, promulgated on 8 January 2015, amended fourteen of its provisions. The amendment tightened the obligations of students, redistributed authority between the provincial and district governments, and inserted a list of prohibitions binding on educators, education personnel, and students alike. Read as a statement of what Acehnese education should look like, the qanun is comprehensive. Read as an instrument for producing that outcome, it raises a question it does not answer.

The question concerns institutions. Article 9 of the amended qanun requires students to dress Islamically, to be free of narcotics, alcohol, psychotropic substances, and other addictive substances, to avoid involvement in pornography and pornographic acts, and to follow instruction while respecting teachers and fellow students. Article 88 prohibits educators, education personnel, and students from brawling, smoking, dressing improperly, communicating improperly, and misusing electronic devices during teaching and learning. These are not curricular matters. They describe conduct, much of which occurs outside school hours and beyond school premises, and the qanun attaches to them no addressee other than the education unit, no procedure, and no consequence. The norm is provincial; the behaviour is communal.

This gap is where customary law becomes relevant. In the Gayo highlands of Central Aceh, Bener Meriah, and Gayo Lues, a functioning customary order already governs precisely the conduct the qanun describes. Gayo society classifies improper behaviour under the category of *sumang*, and administers it through the *Sarak Opat*, a village-level institution composed of the *reje*, *petue*, *imem*, and the people. Research on customary sanction in Central Aceh documents that acts classified as *sumang* remain socially serious and that customary sanctions for them continue to be applied in Gayo villages (Surya & Basri, 2020). The question this article pursues is whether and how this existing normative order can be understood, in legal terms, as supporting the effectiveness of the qanun.

Scholarship on law in Aceh has established that adat and Islamic law are not competing systems there but interlocking ones. Djawas et al. (2024) show that sharia in Aceh operates within Indonesia's legal pluralism and that state law, custom, and Islamic law are presented as harmonised, with the state providing juridical legitimacy through legislation and sharia courts. Kasim and Nurdin (2020), drawing on interviews with customary councils and *mukim* forums, find that conflict resolution through adat mechanisms functions as a means of social control and is justified in the vocabulary of Islamic law. Ilyas et al. (2023) demonstrate that adat has been accommodated within Islamic inheritance law in Aceh, and that this accommodation strengthens observance of custom while allowing Islamic law to operate as social control. Closest to the present setting, Fauzi (2019) examines *patah titi* in Central Aceh and shows that its resolution draws on the interaction of state, customary, and religious law, which establishes that the Gayo highlands are already a site of documented legal interaction rather than of custom alone.

A second body of work concerns Aceh's education policy. Srimulyani (2013) shows that change in Acehnese Islamic schooling has been driven as much by government policy and local politics as by educational considerations. Basri et al. (2023) trace how post-conflict regional regulations transformed the funding, curriculum, governance, and quality assurance of the *dayah*, which demonstrates that qanun-level legislation does reshape educational institutions when it is accompanied by budget and administrative machinery. Feener (2012) reads Aceh's sharia project as future-oriented social engineering rather than a merely reactive measure, and Ichwan (2011) shows that the institutions through which it operates have been politically contested. Nurdin et al. (2018) document the role of the Ulama Consultative Assembly in defining the boundaries of acceptable religious practice in the province.

A third body of work explains why such legislation often underperforms. Arifin et al. (2021), analysing the regulatory basis of Indonesia's disaster resilient village scheme, argue that the arrangement is inefficient because the village apparatus is treated as the central player while the residents of the areas concerned are an afterthought, leaving communities without a framework for converting knowledge into practice. The parallel with education legislation is close. Amri et al. (2017) find that disaster risk reduction education in Indonesia faces persistent difficulties in scaling up despite policy support, and Vasileiou et al. (2022), reviewing the integration of local and scientific knowledge, conclude that integration succeeds or fails according to the processes through which it is attempted rather than the compatibility of the knowledge itself.

Taken together, this literature establishes three points. Adat in Aceh is legally recognised and functionally active rather than residual. Qanun-level legislation reshapes education when it carries administrative and fiscal machinery. And policy that positions communities as recipients rather than as participants tends to underperform (Djawas et al., 2024; Basri et al., 2023; Arifin et al., 2021).

What is missing is any analysis connecting these three. Studies of legal pluralism in Aceh concentrate on family law, inheritance, and dispute resolution; they do not examine education legislation, even though the qanun regulates conduct of exactly the kind customary institutions handle. Studies of Aceh's education policy analyse curriculum, institutions, and Islamic content, but treat the community as the environment in which schooling occurs rather than as a normative order with its own jurisdiction. And the literature on Gayo adat, which documents *sumang* and the *Sarak Opat* in detail, has been read as ethnography or as criminal law scholarship rather than as evidence bearing on the implementation of education policy.

Three questions therefore remain open. The first is whether the conduct provisions of the qanun are enforceable at all in their present form, given that they name no addressee beyond the school and no consequence. The second is whether Aceh's own legislation on customary institutions, together with the qanun's clauses on education based on local excellence and on local content books, supplies a legal channel through which customary institutions could be connected to these provisions. The third is whether such a connection would strengthen the qanun or would instead expose students to customary sanctions that the qanun itself does not authorise.

This matters beyond the Gayo case. Aceh's education legislation is drafted in a religious idiom that is provincial in scope, while the province contains distinct ethnic communities whose normative vocabularies differ. If a provincial norm can only take effect through the institutions the provincial government itself creates, then the reach of that norm will be limited to the school gate. If, on the other hand, existing communal institutions can carry it, the question becomes one of legal design rather than of compliance.

This article addresses the gap by reading the qanun and Gayo customary law as two components of a single normative field rather than as a rule and its cultural context. Its central proposition is that adat contributes to the effectiveness of the qanun through two distinct functions. The first is *normative translation*: rendering the qanun's abstract prohibitions in a behavioural vocabulary that the community already uses and applies. The second is *jurisdictional complementarity*: supplying an institution whose authority operates in the domains where the school's does not.

The novelty of the article is threefold. Substantively, it is the first analysis to treat Gayo customary law as an implementation instrument for Aceh's education legislation rather than as cultural content to be inserted into a curriculum. Analytically, it shifts the question from what adat can teach to what adat can enforce, which relocates the discussion from curriculum studies to legal pluralism. Conceptually, it distinguishes translation from complementarity, two functions that discussions of local wisdom in education routinely conflate.

The analysis rests on the theory of legal pluralism. Griffiths (1986) argued that legal centralism, the assumption that law is the exclusive product of the state, is an ideology rather than a description, and that

normative orders coexist within any social field. Merry (1988) developed the analysis of relations between state and non-state normative orders and warned against treating the latter as merely residual. Moore (1973) supplies the most directly useful concept in the semi-autonomous social field, a social arena that generates its own rules and induces compliance with them while remaining permeable to the rules of the larger system in which it sits. A Gayo village governed by the *Sarak Opat* is such a field, and the question of the qanun's effectiveness is precisely the question of how a provincial rule enters it.

The article accordingly asks three research questions. First, what does Qanun Aceh No. 9 of 2015 regulate in the domain of conduct, and at which points is it institutionally silent? Second, what does Gayo customary law offer at those points, in terms of both normative categories and institutional capacity? Third, what legal basis exists for connecting the two, and what limits should constrain that connection? Its objective is to develop a legally grounded account of how customary institutions can support the implementation of provincial education legislation. The central argument is that Gayo customary law supports the qanun's effectiveness not by supplying additional content but by performing normative translation and jurisdictional complementarity, and that Aceh's existing legislation already provides the channel through which this can be done lawfully.

II. METHOD

This study uses a normative juridical (*yuridis normatif*) design, the method appropriate to research whose object is legal norms, their internal structure, and their relations with other normative orders rather than the measurement of behaviour. The design is library-based and generates no field data. It therefore makes no empirical claim about how any particular school or village currently behaves; its claims concern what the norms provide, where they are silent, and what legal consequences follow.

Three approaches are combined. The statutory approach (*pendekatan perundang-undangan*) examines the text and structure of the relevant legislation and the relations between instruments at different levels. The conceptual approach (*pendekatan konseptual*) draws on the theory of legal pluralism to construct the analytical categories through which the material is read. The analytical approach examines the operative content of individual provisions, asking of each what it commands, of whom, through what procedure, and with what consequence.

Primary legal materials comprise Qanun Aceh No. 9 of 2015 concerning the Amendment to Qanun Aceh No. 11 of 2014 on the Implementation of Education, read together with the parent qanun it amends; Qanun Aceh No. 9 of 2008 on the Development of Customary Life and Customs, which governs customary institutions in the province; and Law No. 11 of 2006 on the Governing of Aceh, which supplies the constitutional basis for both. Secondary legal materials comprise peer-reviewed scholarship on legal pluralism, on adat and Islamic law in Aceh, on Gayo customary institutions, and on Aceh's education policy. Tertiary materials comprise dictionaries and reference works used for Gayo terminology.

Sources of secondary material were selected against three criteria: publication in a peer-reviewed journal with a verifiable digital object identifier; direct bearing on at least one of the three research questions; and, for empirical studies, a clearly stated design. Studies of Gayo culture that describe practice without addressing its normative or institutional dimension were excluded, as were normative writings advocating the revival of adat without legal analysis. Where the literature on a Gayo concept is thin or consists largely of untranslated local scholarship, this is stated in the analysis rather than concealed.

Analysis proceeds in four steps. First, the conduct provisions of the qanun are decomposed into their elements, namely the addressee, the regulated behaviour, the procedure, and the consequence, so that silences become visible as absent elements rather than as matters of interpretation. Second, the normative categories and institutional structure of Gayo customary law are set out from the secondary literature and mapped against the same elements. Third, the two sets are compared to identify points of convergence,

points of divergence, and points at which one supplies what the other lacks. Fourth, the legal instruments that could connect them are examined for the authority they confer and the limits they impose.

Two procedures support the reliability of the analysis. Every claim about the content of a legal instrument is tied to a specific article, so that the reading can be checked against the text. Every claim about Gayo customary law is tied to a published source, and where a claim rests on a single source or on sources not available in peer-reviewed form, this is stated. The principal limitation of the design, addressed in the conclusion, is that normative analysis establishes what the law provides and not what actors do with it; the article's conclusions are therefore claims about legal possibility and its conditions.

III. RESULTS

The findings are presented according to the three research questions. Table 1 sets out the conduct provisions of the qanun decomposed into their elements.

Table 1. Conduct provisions of Qanun Aceh No. 9 of 2015 decomposed into normative elements

Provision	Addressee and regulated conduct	Procedure and consequence
Art. 9(a)-(d)	Students: observe educational norms and school rules; dress as a Muslim; remain free of narcotics and other addictive substances; avoid pornography; follow instruction and show respect	None specified; no monitoring procedure and no consequence stated
Art. 88(a)-(e)	Educators, education personnel, and students: no brawling, smoking, improper dress, improper communication, or misuse of electronic devices during instruction	None specified; no sanction stated
Art. 88(f)	Residual clause delegating further prohibition to legislation and to the school, madrasah, dayah, or pesantren	Power to prohibit delegated; no enforcement mechanism supplied
Art. 13(c1)	Provincial and district governments: guarantee the widest possible access for students to obtain their rights	Obligation on government; operates as a constraint on any punitive measure
Art. 15(1)(j); Art. 16(1)(e)	Provincial and district governments: organise education based on local excellence at secondary and basic levels respectively	Creates a legal category through which locally specified norms may enter
Art. 22(f)	District governments: compose and determine local content books referring to the Aceh Curriculum and supervise their use	Administrative machinery available for locally specified content
Art. 26(h)	District governments: supervise and facilitate quality assurance at education units based on local excellence	Supervisory mechanism attached to the local excellence category
Art. 29(4)	Informal early childhood education delivered through the family or organised by the community	Recognises community delivery without assigning an institution

Source: Author's analysis of Qanun Aceh No. 9 of 2015 amending Qanun Aceh No. 11 of 2014.

What the Qanun Regulates and Where It Is Silent

A preliminary point of accuracy is necessary. Qanun Aceh No. 9 of 2015 is not a freestanding education statute. It is an amending instrument that modifies fourteen numbered provisions of Qanun Aceh No. 11 of 2014, and it must be read together with the parent qanun to be intelligible. This matters for the present analysis because several of the provisions most relevant to community involvement, including those on informal early childhood education, are amended rather than created by the 2015 instrument.

The amendment's conduct provisions fall into two groups. Article 9 states five obligations of students: observing educational norms and the rules of the education unit; dressing as a Muslim where the student is Muslim; being free of narcotics, alcohol, psychotropic substances, and other addictive substances; not being involved in pornography or pornographic acts; and following instruction while respecting teachers, education personnel, and fellow students. Article 88 states five prohibitions binding on educators, education personnel, and students at every level: brawling; smoking; dressing improperly; communicating

improperly; and misusing electronic devices during teaching and learning, together with a residual clause covering other prohibitions set by legislation or by the school, madrasah, or dayah.

Decomposed into elements, these provisions share a common structure and a common deficiency. Each specifies a regulated behaviour and, in Article 88, an addressee. None specifies a procedure by which compliance is to be monitored or a consequence for non-compliance, and none names any institution beyond the education unit. The residual clause in Article 88(f) delegates further prohibition to legislation and to individual schools, but delegation of the power to prohibit is not the same as provision of a mechanism to enforce. The behaviours themselves compound the difficulty, since several of them, including narcotics use, involvement in pornography, and improper dress, occur predominantly outside school hours and premises, where the education unit has neither presence nor authority.

Alongside these, the amendment contains provisions that create openings rather than obligations. Article 15(1)(j) empowers the provincial government to organise or manage education based on local excellence at the secondary and special education levels, and Article 16(1)(e) confers the equivalent authority on district and city governments at the level of basic education. Article 19(1)(d) directs the provincial government to compose an Islamic Aceh Curriculum across all levels, and Article 20(f) obliges districts to implement it. Article 22(f) empowers districts to compose and determine local content books for basic education with reference to the Aceh Curriculum and to supervise their use. Article 26(h) assigns districts the supervision and facilitation of quality assurance at education units based on local excellence. Article 29(4) recognises informal early childhood education delivered through the family or organised by the community. These provisions are significant for the present argument because they establish, within the qanun itself, both a legal category of locally distinctive education and an explicit recognition of community-delivered education.

What Gayo Customary Law Offers

Gayo customary law addresses the domain of improper conduct through the category of *sumang*. The literature on Central Aceh treats *sumang* as the classification of behaviour regarded as taboo and shameful, and documents that conduct so classified attracts customary sanction administered through village institutions (Surya & Basri, 2020). Gayo scholarship conventionally divides *sumang* into four types according to the mode of conduct concerned, distinguishing impropriety in speech (*sumang perceraken*), in looking (*sumang penengonen*), in movement or going about (*sumang pelangkahen*), and in sitting or the manner of being in company (*sumang kenunulen*). This four-part classification is widely reported in Indonesian-language scholarship on Gayo culture, although it has received limited treatment in internationally indexed publications, and the present analysis accordingly relies on it as a reported classification rather than as an established finding.

The institutional counterpart is the *Sarak Opat*, composed of the *reje*, the *petue*, the *imem*, and the people, which functions as the village-level authority in Gayo society and combines governmental, deliberative, religious, and popular elements in a single body. Its jurisdiction over customary offences, including the imposition of sanctions for conduct classified as *sumang*, is documented in studies of customary sanction in Central Aceh (Surya & Basri, 2020). Two features are relevant here. The *imem* gives the institution a standing religious component, which means that Islamic and customary authority are joined within it rather than sitting in separate bodies. And the inclusion of the people as a constituent element makes the institution deliberative rather than purely executive.

The presence of the *imem* within the institution also connects it to the wider structure of religious authority in Aceh. Usman et al. (2021) show that the identity of religious teachers in Aceh is formed substantially through service to the community, including teaching and leading prayers, rather than through study alone, which means that the religious component of a village institution is occupied by figures whose standing already derives from communal presence. This is relevant to the qanun because it indicates that the religious element of the *Sarak Opat* is not an external authority visiting the village but a resident one.

Two further features of the Gayo normative order bear on education. The first is the principle, expressed in Gayo in the idiom that religion and custom stand to one another as substance to attribute, which parallels the better-known Acehnese formulation and which Srimulyani (2010) documents as the framework through which Acehnese communities have long related adat to Islamic norms. The second is the principle of collective responsibility for children, expressed in the Gayo formulation that a young woman has all the village's mothers and a young man all its fathers, under which the upbringing of children is treated as an obligation distributed across the community rather than confined to the household. This principle is significant because it locates responsibility for precisely the conduct the qanun regulates in an institution that is neither the school nor the family alone.

A further consideration concerns how such categories survive. Research on Simeulue documents that the *smong* narrative was carried across generations through ordinary communal transmission rather than through formal instruction, and that this transmission proved consequential in 2004 (Rahman et al., 2018). The Gayo case is comparable in mechanism if not in content: categories of conduct persist because they are used in evaluating behaviour, not because they are taught as a subject. The point matters for the present argument because it indicates that the vehicle for such categories is communal practice rather than the classroom, which is precisely the domain the qanun does not reach.

The Legal Channel

The third finding concerns the instruments through which the two orders could be connected. Three are relevant. Law No. 11 of 2006 on the Governing of Aceh provides the constitutional basis for both the province's legislative authority over education and its recognition of customary institutions. Qanun Aceh No. 9 of 2008 on the Development of Customary Life and Customs establishes customary institutions, including the *Sarak Opat* at village level in Gayo areas, as recognised bodies with defined functions. And the qanun under examination supplies, in Articles 15(1)(j), 16(1)(e), 22(f), 26(h), and 29(4), the categories of education based on local excellence, local content books, and community-organised informal education.

Read together, these establish that no new legislation would be required to connect customary institutions to the conduct provisions of the education qanun. The recognition of the institution exists in one instrument; the category of locally distinctive education and the recognition of community-delivered education exist in the other. What does not exist is any provision linking them, which is the finding that answers the third research question in its first part. The connection is legally available but has not been legally made.

The same analysis identifies the limits. The qanun's conduct provisions carry no sanction, and the customary order does. Connecting them without specifying the relationship would risk importing customary sanction into the enforcement of an education norm, which the qanun does not authorise and which would raise questions under child protection law and under the rights of access that Article 13(c1) of the amendment itself guarantees. The relationship would therefore need to be one of complementarity with defined boundaries rather than of delegation.

IV. DISCUSSION

Normative Translation

The first function that Gayo customary law performs for the qanun is translation. The qanun's prohibitions are stated in general and largely Indonesian administrative language: improper dress, improper communication. Neither term is defined in the instrument, and neither carries a settled local referent that a student, a parent, or a teacher could apply without further specification. The four categories of *sumang*, by contrast, specify impropriety by mode of conduct, distinguishing speech, gaze, movement, and manner of being in company, and they do so in a vocabulary that members of the community already possess and already use to evaluate behaviour.

The significance of this is not cultural but juridical. A norm that cannot be applied without interpretation depends on whoever performs the interpretation, and where no institution is assigned to do so, the norm's content is effectively indeterminate. Where a community already classifies conduct in categories that map onto the prohibited behaviour, the indeterminacy is reduced without any addition to the text. This is what distinguishes translation from the insertion of cultural content into a curriculum: the qanun's norm is unchanged, and what changes is its applicability.

This reading extends the accommodation analysis that dominates the literature on adat and Islamic law in Aceh. Ilyas et al. (2023) and Kasim and Nurdin (2020) show adat being accommodated within, and justified by reference to, Islamic legal categories; Djawas et al. (2024) present the resulting order as harmonised. Those studies concern substantive law, where the question is which norm governs. The present case is different: there is no conflict of norms to resolve, because the qanun and the customary categories prohibit the same conduct. What adat supplies is specification. The contribution to the study of legal pluralism in Aceh is to identify a mode of interaction between normative orders that is neither accommodation nor conflict, and that has gone unexamined because the literature has concentrated on domains where the orders compete.

Jurisdictional Complementarity

The second function is institutional, and it follows from Moore's (1973) concept of the semi-autonomous social field. A Gayo village governed by the *Sarak Opat* generates rules and induces compliance with them, while remaining open to rules originating outside it. The qanun's conduct provisions are precisely rules originating outside it, and their difficulty is that they arrive without a carrier. The education unit, the only institution the qanun names, has authority over students during instruction; it has none over the evening, the coffee shop, or the road home, where much of the conduct the qanun prohibits actually takes place.

The *Sarak Opat* has authority in exactly those settings, and its authority over conduct classified as *sumang* is already recognised in provincial legislation on customary institutions and documented in the scholarship on customary sanction (Surya & Basri, 2020). The complementarity is therefore jurisdictional in a fairly precise sense: the two institutions have authority over different portions of the same conduct, and neither covers the whole. The principle of collective responsibility for children strengthens the fit, since it places the upbringing of the young within communal rather than exclusively parental competence, which is the normative basis on which a village institution can act at all.

Why such an institution can secure compliance where a school cannot is a separate question, and the literature on religious authority in Aceh suggests part of the answer. Muntasir et al. (2025) find that the legitimacy of religious authorities in the province rests partly on forms of belief embedded in local religious culture that operate alongside the visible power of office and organisation. Authority of this kind is not transferable to an administrative body by designation, which is why the qanun could not have created its own equivalent and why the relationship at issue must be one of connection to an existing institution rather than of institutional design from scratch.

This finding bears directly on the implementation problem that Arifin et al. (2021) identify in a different policy domain. Their analysis of the disaster resilient village scheme found the arrangement inefficient because the village apparatus was the central player while residents were an afterthought. The education qanun exhibits the mirror image: the community is not an afterthought so much as absent, since the instrument names only the education unit. The two cases together suggest a general proposition, namely that regional legislation in Indonesia tends to identify an implementing body and to assume that identification is sufficient, without asking whether that body has authority in the domain where the regulated behaviour occurs. Vasileiou et al. (2022) reach a compatible conclusion from the literature on knowledge integration, finding that outcomes depend on the process of integration rather than on the compatibility of the knowledge being integrated.

There is also evidence that adat already functions as a criterion by which state programmes are evaluated locally. Zulkarnaen et al. (2023) find that *dayah* ulama accept the national narrative of religious moderation on the condition that it accords with sharia and with Acehnese customary regulations. If state programmes are assessed against customary standards in any case, then legislation that ignores those standards forfeits a resource it could have used, while legislation that engages them is evaluated on terms its intended carriers already accept.

It also refines what the Aceh education literature has established. Basri et al. (2023) show that post-conflict qanun-level legislation did transform the *dayah*, and that it did so through funding, regulation, and a dedicated agency. Srimulyani (2013) shows that educational change in Aceh has followed political and administrative logics. Both cases involve legislation reaching institutions the state could fund and regulate. The conduct provisions examined here reach no institution at all, which is why they behave differently, and the contrast indicates that the decisive variable is administrative carriage rather than the legislative form or the Islamic content of the norm.

The Limits of the Argument

Three limits require statement, and the second and third are serious enough that the argument should not be read without them.

The first is ethnic scope. The qanun is provincial and applies uniformly, while *sumang* and the *Sarak Opat* are Gayo institutions. The argument developed here does not generalise to Aceh as a whole; what generalises is the analytical point that a provincial conduct norm requires a local carrier, not the identity of the carrier. Ichwan et al. (2020) show that Aceh has developed a form of civic belonging grounded in sharia and in a soft religious ethno-nationalism that bears on the position of minorities, which is a reminder that locally specified norms can exclude as well as integrate. A framework that makes provincial norms effective through ethnically specific institutions must therefore be explicit about how it treats those who stand outside the institution in question.

The second is sanction. Customary sanction in Gayo society can be severe; the literature documents *jeret naru*, under which an offender is treated as expelled from the village of origin, as a sanction for serious sexual offences (Surya & Basri, 2020). Nothing in the education qanun authorises sanction of any kind, and the amendment's own Article 13(c1) obliges government to guarantee the widest possible access for students to obtain their rights. Any connection between customary institutions and the qanun's conduct provisions must therefore be constructed as preventive and educative rather than punitive, and must be bounded by child protection law. The translation function carries no such risk; the complementarity function does, and it is the point at which legal design matters most.

The third is evidential. This study is normative, and the claim that customary categories are locally intelligible and that customary institutions retain authority rests on secondary sources, several of them published outside internationally indexed venues. Whether Gayo students, parents, and teachers actually understand and apply the categories of *sumang*, and whether the *Sarak Opat* in any given village retains the standing the literature attributes to it, are empirical questions this design cannot answer. The findings should accordingly be read as establishing legal possibility and its conditions rather than social fact.

Two further considerations qualify the argument's premises. The first concerns whether customary authority is in fact durable. Claims that traditional authority in Aceh has been eroded are widespread, yet Syafieh et al. (2022) find that the authority of *dayah* ulama remains strong enough to shape communal responses to competing religious currents, and Syafieh and Nur (2022) show that traditionalist networks continue to bargain effectively with government over religious policy. These findings support rather than undermine the present argument, but they concern religious rather than customary authority, and the inference from one to the other is not automatic. The second concerns generational change. Wati et al. (2022) document young Muslims in Aceh locating religious guidance through digital platforms rather than

through established institutions, which raises the question whether the students whose conduct the qanun regulates recognise village authority in the way the argument assumes. This is the point at which the analysis most needs empirical work.

Implications

Several implications follow. For the study of legal pluralism in Indonesia, the case suggests that the analytical focus on conflict and accommodation between normative orders has left a third relation unexamined, in which orders prohibit the same conduct and one supplies what the other lacks. Attention to this relation would open a range of regulatory domains, including education, public health, and environmental management, where regional legislation states norms that no state institution is positioned to carry.

For education policy in Aceh, the analysis suggests that the effectiveness of the conduct provisions is a question of institutional design rather than of socialisation. Amri et al. (2017) find that education policy in Indonesia struggles to scale despite support, and the present analysis indicates one reason: provisions of this kind are written as declarations rather than as mechanisms. A governor's regulation specifying the relationship between education units and customary institutions, bounded as described above, would be a modest and legally available step.

For Islamic Studies, the case illustrates that the relation between Islamic norms and local custom in Aceh is not exhausted by the question of whether custom conforms to sharia. Within the *Sarak Opat*, religious and customary authority are combined in one body, and the norms at issue here are simultaneously Islamic and customary, which makes the conventional framing of adat as the object of Islamic evaluation inadequate to describe what is actually occurring (Srimulyani, 2010). For the Gayo highlands specifically, the analysis identifies a use for customary institutions in education that does not depend on their inclusion in a curriculum, which is the form in which local wisdom is usually proposed for educational purposes.

V. CONCLUSION

This article asked what Qanun Aceh No. 9 of 2015 regulates in the domain of conduct and where it is institutionally silent, what Gayo customary law offers at those points, and what legal basis exists for connecting the two. In answer to the first question, the amendment's conduct provisions in Articles 9 and 88 specify behaviours and, in part, addressees, but supply no procedure, no consequence, and no institution beyond the education unit, even though much of the regulated behaviour occurs where that unit has no authority. In answer to the second, Gayo customary law supplies at those points a behavioural vocabulary in the four categories of *sumang* and an institution, the *Sarak Opat*, whose jurisdiction over such conduct is recognised in provincial legislation and documented in the literature on customary sanction. In answer to the third, the connection is legally available through the qanun's own provisions on education based on local excellence, local content books, and community-organised informal education, read together with the legislation on customary institutions, but it has not been legally made.

The contribution of the article lies in distinguishing two functions that discussions of local wisdom in education routinely conflate. Normative translation renders an abstract provincial prohibition applicable in a vocabulary the community already uses, and carries no risk of exceeding the qanun's authority. Jurisdictional complementarity supplies an institution with authority where the school has none, and carries a real risk of importing customary sanction into a domain the qanun does not authorise. Theoretically, the article identifies a relation between normative orders that is neither conflict nor accommodation, and applies Moore's semi-autonomous social field to the implementation of regional education legislation. Practically, it indicates that the effectiveness of these provisions is a matter of institutional design, and that a bounded governor's regulation would be sufficient to address it.

The study's limitations follow from its design. Normative analysis establishes what the law provides, not what actors do with it, and the article's account of Gayo customary categories and institutions rests on secondary sources of uneven availability. Its conclusions are therefore claims about legal possibility. Future research should establish empirically whether the categories of *sumang* are understood and applied by students, parents, and teachers in the highlands; should examine how *Sarak Opat* institutions in specific villages currently relate to schools; should compare the Gayo case with coastal Acehnese *gampong* institutions to test whether the analytical framework holds where the customary vocabulary differs; and should assess, through legal analysis, what form of governor's regulation could connect the two orders without exceeding the limits identified here.

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