



REVITALIZING THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF RUMOH ACEH IN PIDIE REGENCY AS A MEANS OF LOCAL CULTURAL EDUCATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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ABSTRACT

The rapid development of globalization and digital transformation has significantly reshaped social structures and cultural transmission patterns within local communities, including the social function of Rumoh Aceh as the traditional house of Acehnese society. Historically, Rumoh Aceh functioned not only as a residence but also as a center for customary deliberation, social interaction, informal education, and collective identity formation. However, in Pidie Regency, its social function has gradually declined due to modernization, lifestyle changes, economic factors, and limited integration of local culture into formal education. This study aims to analyze the current condition of the social function of Rumoh Aceh, identify the factors contributing to its degradation, and formulate revitalization strategies relevant to the digital era. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach using in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies. The findings indicate that although the intensity of its social use has decreased, the symbolic value and educational potential of Rumoh Aceh remain strong and can be revitalized through cultural digitalization, curriculum integration based on local wisdom, and multi-stakeholder collaboration among government, schools, and communities. Participatory and technology-based revitalization is essential to ensure the sustainability of local cultural identity in the era of globalization.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Submitted/Received 17 Feb 2026

First Revised 23 Feb 2026

Accepted 01 Mar 2026

First Available online 28 Mar 2026

Publication Date 28 Mar 2026

Keywords:

Rumoh Aceh; Social Function;
Cultural Revitalization; Local
Wisdom; Digital Era

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of globalization and digital transformation over the past decade has significantly reshaped social structures and patterns of cultural transmission in society. Beyond influencing economic and communication sectors, digitalization has also affected the sustainability of local cultural heritage by shifting interaction patterns from physical communal spaces to virtual environments. Recent studies highlight that digital transformation has redefined how cultural values are transmitted and experienced, often reducing direct social interaction in traditional spaces while expanding virtual cultural engagement (Pulungan & Damayanti, 2025).

In the context of Acehese society, this phenomenon is reflected in the changing role of Rumoh Aceh, the traditional house that embodies both cultural values and Islamic principles. Traditionally, Rumoh Aceh served not only as a residence but also as a multifunctional social space, encompassing deliberation, social interaction, informal education, and the transmission of cultural values across generations. Its spatial organization represents the social system, ethical norms, and hierarchical structures within the community.

However, in contemporary society, these social functions have undergone significant transformation due to modernization, urbanization, economic considerations, and changing lifestyle preferences. The shift from communal to individualistic living patterns, combined with increased reliance on digital communication, has reduced the role of Rumoh Aceh as a physical center of social interaction. Previous studies have largely focused on the architectural preservation and symbolic meaning of traditional houses (Azra, 2002; Sedyawati, 2006), while more recent research emphasizes digital preservation and cultural adaptation (Ramadhan, 2023; Robertus & Rasmita, 2025). Nevertheless, limited attention has been given to the transformation of their social functions and their relevance in the digital era, particularly within an educational framework.

In this study, the social function of Rumoh Aceh refers to its role as a space for social interaction, cultural transmission, informal education, and community deliberation. Meanwhile, revitalization is understood as an adaptive process of reactivating and reconstructing these functions to align with contemporary societal needs without losing their core cultural values (Kurniawan, 2022). Furthermore, the concept of a cultural laboratory refers to the use of Rumoh Aceh as a contextual learning space where students can directly engage with local cultural values, practices, and social systems. These conceptual definitions are important to ensure analytical clarity and avoid ambiguity in interpretation.

From an educational perspective, the integration of local wisdom into learning processes has been widely recognized as an effective approach to strengthening cultural identity and character development in the 21st century. Contemporary studies indicate that culturally responsive and place-based education can enhance student engagement, improve social awareness, and foster meaningful learning experiences (Astuti et al., 2026; Masrukhi et al., 2024). However, the practical integration of local cultural spaces such as Rumoh Aceh

into formal education remains limited and underexplored, particularly in rural contexts such as Pidie Regency.

Based on these conditions, a critical research gap emerges: while the physical preservation and symbolic value of Rumoh Aceh have been widely discussed, there is still limited research that examines (1) the transformation of its social function in the context of digitalization, and (2) its potential revitalization as a medium for local cultural education. This study addresses this gap by combining a socio-cultural analysis with an educational perspective, thereby offering an interdisciplinary approach that has not been sufficiently explored in previous research.

Therefore, this study aims to: (1) analyze the current condition of the social function of Rumoh Aceh in Pidie Regency, (2) identify the factors contributing to its functional transformation, and (3) formulate adaptive revitalization strategies based on community participation and digital technology. The novelty of this research lies in its emphasis on the reconstruction of social functions rather than mere physical preservation, as well as its integration of cultural revitalization with local wisdom-based education in the digital era.

This study contributes theoretically by strengthening the concept of function-based cultural revitalization and practically by providing a contextual model for integrating local cultural heritage into education systems. In doing so, it positions Rumoh Aceh not merely as a cultural artifact, but as a dynamic socio-educational space that connects tradition with contemporary societal needs.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a single case study design (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The qualitative approach was chosen because this study is oriented towards meaning-centered inquiry into the dynamics of the social function of Rumoh Aceh in the context of social change in the community. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the values, perceptions, cultural practices, and social constructions that develop at the community level. Theoretically, contemporary qualitative research emphasizes the importance of contextual and interpretive exploration of social phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2020). This approach does not aim to make statistical generalizations, but rather to produce analytical generalizations, which are conceptual contributions to the development of theory or understanding of similar phenomena in different contexts.

Single Case Study Design

A single case study design was used because the research focused on a single unit of analysis that had distinctive characteristics and was relevant to the focus of the study, namely Gampong Reubee, Delima District, Pidie Regency. According to the contemporary case study approach, a single case study is appropriate if the case is representative or typical, has contextual uniqueness, or is a critical case in understanding a phenomenon (Yin, 2020). Gampong Reubee was chosen because it still has Rumoh Aceh, which historically functioned as a center for social and traditional activities but is now undergoing a transformation of function due to modernization and the penetration of digital technology. Therefore, this

village is considered a relevant case for examining the revitalization of the social function of traditional houses in the digital era.

Location and Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis in this study is the social function of Rumoh Aceh as a space for social interaction, informal education, and a symbol of cultural identity for the community. The research was conducted naturalistically in the social environment of Gampong Reubee to obtain authentic and contextual empirical data.

The fieldwork was conducted over approximately 2–3 months, allowing the researcher to observe social dynamics and cultural practices in a sustained manner. This duration enabled prolonged engagement, which is important in qualitative research to enhance data credibility.

Research Informants

Informants were determined using the purposive sampling technique, which is the selection of informants based on their relevance to the research focus. This strategy is in line with the qualitative research paradigm that emphasizes the depth of information rather than the number of respondents.

A total of 12 informants were involved in this study, consisting of the Geuchik of Gampong Reubee, traditional and community leaders, owners or heirs of Rumoh Aceh, village officials, social studies/history teachers, and representatives of the younger generation. Data collection was carried out until data saturation was reached, which is the condition when the information obtained has been repeated and does not produce new categories (Guest et al., 2020).

Data Collection Techniques

This study used triangulation methods to strengthen data validity, including:

- (1) participatory observation, to directly observe the physical conditions and social dynamics around Rumoh Aceh, conducted systematically using field notes;
- (2) in-depth interviews (semi-structured), to explore historical narratives, changes in social functions, factors causing transformation, and revitalization strategies based on local cultural education;
- (3) documentation, in the form of photographs of buildings, village archives, traditional activity documents, and cultural preservation policies; and
- (4) literature study.

The use of triangulation is widely recognized as an effective strategy to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research by combining multiple data sources and methods (Fusch et al., 2018; Stahl & King, 2020). Furthermore, the literature review in this study focuses on contemporary research on cultural heritage preservation, community-based cultural revitalization, and local wisdom-based education, which emphasize participatory approaches and the use of digital technology in sustaining cultural identity (Kurniawan, 2022; Ramadhan, 2023).

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Data Validity Test

Data validity was ensured through: (1) source triangulation, by comparing information between informants; (2) method triangulation, by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation; (3) member checking, to ensure the researcher's interpretation is consistent with the informant's perspective; and (4) audit trail, in the form of systematic documentation of the research process to ensure methodological transparency.

This approach is in line with the standards of rigor in contemporary qualitative research that emphasizes credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of findings.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical research standards. All informants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided informed consent prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants were maintained by not disclosing personal identities in the research report. Participation was voluntary, and informants had the right to withdraw at any stage of the research process.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Empirical Landscape of the Existence of Rumoh Aceh in Pidie Regency

Rumoh Aceh can still be found in Pidie Regency, although their numbers are limited. In several villages, these traditional houses remain physically preserved as family heritage; however, their utilization in daily social activities has significantly declined. Findings from Gampong Reubee indicate that while the physical structure of Rumoh Aceh is relatively well maintained, its role as a center of communal activities is no longer dominant.

Historically, Rumoh Aceh functioned not only as a residence but also as a socio-cultural institution. Its spatial organization reflects the value system of Acehnese society, including social hierarchy, gender relations, and the integration of adat and Islamic principles. In addition, decorative motifs embedded in its architecture carry symbolic meanings related to religiosity, harmony, and identity, reinforcing its role as a medium of cultural transmission (Sonata et al., 2024).

However, current findings reveal a shift in meaning and function. Rumoh Aceh is now primarily perceived as a symbol of cultural identity and genealogical pride rather than as an active space for social interaction. This indicates a transformation from a socio-productive function to a symbolic-representative function.

Transformation of Social Functions

The transformation of the social function of Rumoh Aceh can be understood through two main patterns.

First, the shift from deliberation space to formal administrative space. Traditional discussions and communal decision-making, which were previously held in Rumoh Aceh, are now commonly conducted in meunasah or village offices. This reflects the institutionalization of social processes into formal governance structures.

Second, the decline of informal educational functions. Previously, Rumoh Aceh served as a space where cultural values were transmitted through daily interaction. Children learned social norms, ethics, and kinship structures directly within the household environment. Today, this function has weakened due to reduced intergenerational interaction and the increasing dominance of formal education systems.

These findings confirm that the transformation is not merely physical but involves deeper changes in social practices and value transmission mechanisms.

Factors Driving Functional Transformation

The transformation of Rumoh Aceh is influenced by both structural and cultural factors.

From a structural perspective, modernization and economic considerations play a significant role. Permanent concrete houses are perceived as more practical and durable, while the maintenance of traditional houses requires higher costs and specialized craftsmanship.

From a cultural perspective, the younger generation tends to adopt a more digital-oriented lifestyle, prioritizing virtual interaction over physical communal engagement (Hendrawan, 2022). This shift reduces the relevance of traditional spaces as centers of social interaction.

At the same time, digitalization contributes to the **disruption of physical social spaces**, as communication and coordination can now be conducted through digital platforms. However, this condition also opens opportunities for cultural preservation through digital media.

Table 1. Thematic Analysis Matrix of Interview Results

Major Themes	Subtheme	Field Data	Analysis
Functional Shifts	Deliberation	Now carried out in meunasah	Formal institutionalization occurs
Cultural Education	Inheritance of values	Young people lack understanding of spatial philosophy	Disruption of cultural transmission
Public Perception	Identity	Traditional houses symbolize pride	Dominant symbolic function
Challenges	Care	High costs and limited craftsmen	Economic-structural factors
Opportunities	Digitization	Need for educational cultural content	Technology-based adaptation

Potential for Revitalization as a Means of Local Cultural Education

Integration into Formal Education. Rumoh Aceh has the potential to be used as a contextual learning medium in social studies, history, and character education subjects. Its spatial layout can be used to explain the social structure of Acehese society, the values of collectivity and mutual cooperation, the relationship between customs and religion, and the concepts of public and private space in local culture.

A place-based education approach can strengthen students' connection with their cultural environment and make learning more meaningful. Teachers play a strategic role in integrating local cultural values into contextual learning activities in schools. Recent studies show that the integration of local wisdom into education can strengthen students' cultural identity, improve social behavior, and support character development (Masrukhi, et al., 2024; Rafsanjani, 2025). Community participation is an important element in maintaining sustainability of cultural heritage and strengthening collective cultural awareness (Santoso, 2024).

Revitalization in the Digital Age: An Adaptive Approach

Rather than viewing digitalization as a threat, this study positions it as an adaptive instrument. Strategies that can be developed include digitizing Rumoh Aceh archives and documentation, creating social media-based educational content, integrating it into online learning platforms, and promoting culture through village websites. This approach expands the reach of cultural education across regions and generations.

Cultural heritage preservation also requires sustainable management strategies and strong community awareness to ensure long-term sustainability, particularly through the use of digital technology as a medium for documentation, promotion, and revitalization of local culture (Pulungan & Damayanti, 2025; Robertus & Rasmita, 2025).

This study shows that revitalizing the social function of Rumoh Aceh cannot be done through a physical conservation approach alone. Sustainable preservation requires the

reconstruction of social functions that are relevant to the needs of contemporary society. The theoretical contribution of this research lies in strengthening the concept of revitalization based on local cultural education, integrating community and digitalization approaches as adaptive strategies, and emphasizing that cultural heritage is dynamic and contextual. Thus, Rumoh Aceh in Pidie Regency has the opportunity to return to being a living socio-educational space, not merely an architectural artifact of the past.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the transformation of the social function of Rumoh Aceh in Gampong Reubee, Pidie Regency, does not indicate cultural extinction, but rather reflects a shift in the mode of cultural expression and utilization. Empirical findings show that although the physical existence of Rumoh Aceh is relatively maintained, its role as a center of social interaction, informal education, and communal deliberation has significantly declined. Instead, its function has shifted toward symbolic representation and cultural identity, particularly among the younger generation.

These findings confirm that cultural heritage is dynamic and adaptive, where changes in function are closely related to broader processes of modernization, institutional transformation, and digitalization. Thus, the transformation of Rumoh Aceh should be understood not as a loss, but as a reconfiguration of its socio-cultural role within contemporary society.

Based on the empirical analysis, this study proposes a three-pillar revitalization model, consisting of: (1) community-based preservation, (2) integration into formal and informal education, and (3) digital-based cultural adaptation. This model is derived from field findings showing the weakening of communal engagement, the decline of intergenerational value transmission, and the increasing influence of digital lifestyles. Conceptually, these three pillars are interconnected and function as a holistic framework for sustaining the relevance of Rumoh Aceh in modern contexts.

From a practical perspective, this model offers several operational implications. First, local governments and community leaders can develop participatory programs that reactivate Rumoh Aceh as a space for cultural activities and communal learning. Second, educators can integrate Rumoh Aceh into contextual learning through project-based and place-based approaches, enabling students to engage directly with local cultural heritage. Third, digital strategies—such as virtual documentation, social media dissemination, and digital storytelling—can be utilized to expand access and relevance among younger generations.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the discourse on cultural heritage revitalization by emphasizing a function-based and adaptive approach, rather than a purely preservation-oriented perspective. Unlike conventional approaches that focus on maintaining physical authenticity, this study highlights the importance of reconstructing social functions as a key dimension of sustainability. This perspective positions cultural heritage as an evolving system that interacts dynamically with social change and technological development.

Nevertheless, this study is limited to a single case study context, which may restrict its generalizability. Future research is recommended to explore comparative studies across different regions or to examine the effectiveness of the proposed revitalization model in practical implementation.

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