

THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL EDUCATION IN SHAPING STUDENTS' RELIGIOUS CHARACTER AMID THE CHALLENGES OF GLOBALIZATION

Mustain, M. Yunus Abu Bakar

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya
Jl. Ahmad Yani No. 117, Jemur Wonosari, Kec. Wonocolo, Surabaya, Jawa Timur
e-mail: mustainalkhazani123@gmail.com, elyunusy@uinsa.ac.id

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis peran strategis lembaga pendidikan pesantren dalam membentuk karakter religius siswa di tengah tantangan globalisasi dan krisis moral. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan metode studi lapangan, diharapkan bisa mendapatkan informasi penelitian secara lebih mendalam. Pesantren dipahami sebagai lembaga pendidikan Islam yang tidak hanya menekankan aspek akademik, tetapi juga menanamkan nilai-nilai spiritual dan moral melalui pendekatan ta'lim (pengajaran), ta'dib (pembiasaan), dan uswah hasanah (keteladanan). Temuan menunjukkan bahwa praktik pendidikan di pesantren, seperti salat berjamaah, tadarus, pengajian kitab kuning, dan kehidupan sosial berbasis nilai Islam, efektif dalam menanamkan sikap disiplin, tanggung jawab, serta kesadaran spiritual. Namun, implementasi pendidikan karakter ini juga menghadapi tantangan, baik internal seperti keterbatasan sumber daya manusia maupun eksternal seperti pengaruh media digital dan kurangnya dukungan keluarga. Oleh karena itu, dibutuhkan kolaborasi antara pesantren, keluarga, dan masyarakat agar pendidikan karakter religius dapat berjalan optimal dan berkelanjutan. Artikel ini diharapkan menjadi rujukan teoretis dan praktis dalam penguatan pendidikan karakter di lembaga pendidikan Islam.

Kata Kunci: Pesantren, Pendidikan Islam, Karakter Religius

Abstract: This study aims to analyze the strategic role of Islamic boarding schools in shaping the religious character of students amid the challenges of globalization and moral crisis. Using a descriptive qualitative approach with field study methods, it is hoped that more in-depth research information can be obtained. Pesantren are understood as Islamic educational institutions that not only emphasize academic aspects but also instill spiritual and moral values through the approaches of ta'lim (teaching), ta'dib (discipline), and uswah hasanah (setting a good example). Findings indicate that educational practices in pesantren, such as congregational prayer, Quran recitation, study of classical Islamic texts, and social life based on Islamic values, are effective in instilling discipline, responsibility, and spiritual awareness. However, the implementation of character education also faces challenges, both internal, such as limited human resources, and external, such as the influence of digital media and lack of family support. Therefore, collaboration between Islamic boarding schools, families, and the community is needed so that religious character education can run optimally and sustainably. This article is expected to be a theoretical and practical reference in strengthening character education in Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: Islamic Boarding Schools, Islamic Education, Religious Character

INTRUDUCTION

In the current era of globalization, the world is experiencing a very rapid transformation in various aspects of life, especially in terms of information and communication technology. This development has a major impact on the way of thinking, behaving, and interacting, especially among the younger generation. The flow of information that is so free and not well filtered through social media, the internet, and global popular culture has presented new challenges for the world of education, namely the occurrence of a character crisis and the decline of religious values among students. Symptoms such as individualism, consumptive attitudes, low respect for parents and teachers, and other deviant behaviors are a clear picture of an increasingly worrying moral crisis (Putri et al., 2016).

This condition requires educational interventions that are not only oriented towards academic aspects and skills, but also focus on shaping the values and personality of students. This is where the important role of Islamic educational institutions, especially pesantren, becomes very relevant and strategic. Pesantren, as an Islamic educational institution that has existed and is deeply rooted in the history and culture of the Indonesian nation, has long been known as a center for fostering morals, spirituality, and discipline (Usman, 2013). Pesantren not only teaches religious knowledge, but also forms the character of students through a structured life system and values that are internalized in their daily lives (Roby & Muhid, 2022).

The pesantren education system offers a holistic and integrative approach, where

education is not separated from moral and spiritual development. In pesantren, learning is not only done in the classroom, but takes place in every aspect of the santri's life. Activities such as the habituation of five-time congregational prayers, Qur'anic tadarus, recitation of classical or yellow books, sunnah fasting, and routine dhikr and wirid become part of the daily routine that is consistently instilled. More than that, the example of the kyai, ustadz, and caregivers becomes a concrete example for santri in understanding and practicing Islamic teachings as a whole.

Some research results support the effectiveness of the pesantren education system in shaping students' religious character. For example, a study conducted at Pesantren Al-Mustaqim Parepare showed that the pesantren education environment has a very high influence on student character building. Based on data from 56 respondents, it was found that the pesantren environment was in the very high category (87.42%) and student character was also very high (86.19%). Statistical tests show a significant positive correlation between the two ($r_{\text{count}} = 0.840 > r_{\text{table}} = 0.266$) (Wahyuni, 2019). This study strengthens the assumption that the environment and value system in pesantren can be a medium for internalizing religious values effectively.

Similar findings were also obtained in a study at Ad-Dimyati Integrated Vocational School, where the habituation of religious activities such as morning tadarus, study of the book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, and daily exemplary programs proved to be able to foster students' religious character which was marked by the discipline of worship, morals

towards teachers, and social care for others (Permana et al., 2023). The pattern of collective life and religious social relations in pesantren creates a very supportive ecosystem in the formation of students' Islamic personality.

Based on the background of the problem, social reality, and empirical evidence, this research was prepared using the literature review method. This approach aims to critically and systematically examine various relevant literature and research results related to the role of pesantren educational institutions in shaping students' religious character. By examining various credible academic sources, this research is expected to identify the form of pesantren's contribution to the formation of students' religious character, analyze the educational strategies used, and evaluate the challenges and obstacles faced in its implementation.

The purpose of this study is to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how pesantren as Islamic educational institutions are able to be at the forefront in facing the religious character crisis in the midst of globalization. To achieve this goal, this research specifically focuses on three main things: 1 identifying the real contribution of pesantren in shaping students' religious character; 2 analyzing the educational strategies applied in the lives of students; and 3 evaluating the challenges and obstacles faced in the process of implementing character education in the pesantren environment.

The benefits of this research are expected not only to contribute theoretically in the development of Islamic education and character education studies, but also to provide

practical benefits for educators, pesantren managers, formal education institutions, and educational policy makers. The results of this study can be a reference in adopting and integrating pesantren education values into the general education system, so that efforts to foster students' religious character can run more optimally, sustainably, and in accordance with the noble values that are the roots of the nation's culture.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a field study method. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the contribution of pesantren educational institutions in shaping students' religious character through direct observation in the pesantren environment. The main focus of this research is to analyze the educational strategies applied as well as to identify the religious values that are internalized to students in daily life.

The location of this research is Pondok Pesantren Mambaus Sholihin, which was chosen because it has a distinctive education system in instilling Islamic values as a whole. The data in this study were collected through observation techniques, in-depth interviews with caregivers, ustadz, and santri, and documentation of learning activities and religious activities in the pesantren.

Data analysis techniques were carried out descriptively qualitatively, through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The analysis process focused on: (1) the contribution of pesantren in the formation of students' religious character; (2) educational strategies used in the process of

internalizing Islamic values; and (3) challenges faced in the implementation of pesantren-based character education. The results of this analysis are presented in the form of a thematic synthesis to provide a comprehensive picture of the strategic role of pesantren in shaping the religious character of the younger generation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Contribution of Pesantren Education Institutions

Pesantren educational institutions have a very significant contribution in shaping students' religious character. As an Islamic educational institution that has been rooted in Indonesian culture, pesantren not only functions as a place for teaching religious knowledge, but also as an environment for forming the personality and morality of students (Triyono & Mediawati, 2023). Contribution in several forms:

1. Planting the Value of Tauhid and Devotion

Pesantren plays an important role in shaping the foundation of students' faith through the cultivation of the value of tawhid as the core of Islamic education (Taufik & Akip, 2021). Tawhid, in the view of pesantren, is not just a theological doctrine about the oneness of God, but also as a basis for building the mindset, behavior, and spiritual awareness of a Muslim (Ramadhan, 2025). This concept is believed to be the starting point in creating humans who not only submit outwardly, but also inwardly to Allah in all aspects of life. Therefore, tawhid is the main element that colors all dimensions of education in pesantren, both in teaching and learning activities, moral

development, and daily social interactions between students and teachers.

In the pesantren curriculum structure, learning aqidah or tawhid occupies a central position. This is realized through the recitation of classical or yellow books such as Aqidatul Awam, Kifayatul Awam, or Jawahirul Kalamiyah, which deeply discusses the basic concepts of faith, such as the attributes of God, faith in the messenger, the last day, destiny, and others. The material is not delivered cognitively alone, but is synergized with spiritual and affective approaches, so that the values of tawhid are not only understood rationally, but can also be felt and practiced (Mustajib et al., 2022).

Strengthening the value of tawhid is also carried out through worship habituation activities that are integrated into the daily routine of students (El Montadzery et al., 2024). The five daily prayers in congregation, Qur'anic tadarus after dawn and maghrib, the implementation of sunnah prayers such as dhuha and tahajjud, as well as daily dhikr and wirid become an inseparable part of the pesantren education system. These activities indirectly build spiritual awareness that every human action is always under God's supervision, so that students learn to internalize the value of faith more deeply. Thus, tawhid education in pesantren is not just a transfer of knowledge, but rather a process of internalizing divine values into students' personalities.

2. Habituation of Worship and Islamic Morals

One of the advantages of pesantren-based education in shaping students' religious character lies in the consistent

habituation of worship activities in daily life (Hasanah & Sofa, 2025) . This habituation is not only in the form of verbal instructions or theoretical advice, but is carried out through direct practice which is carried out on a scheduled basis, supervised, and accompanied by educators or ustadz. Activities such as five-time congregational prayers, sunnah fasting, reading the Qur'an, and dhikr together become an integral part of students' daily activities, both in the classroom and dormitory environment.

Through congregational prayer activities, students are trained to be present on time, maintain solemnity, and follow the procedures of worship correctly. This activity not only trains the spiritual aspect, but also fosters discipline, obedience, and a sense of community. Prayer is no longer an individualized obligation, but becomes part of a collective culture that is deeply embedded in the rhythm of pesantren life.

The custom of sunnah fasting, such as Monday-Thursday fasting or Ayyamul Bidh fasting, also has a very high character education value. Through this act of worship, students are formed into individuals who are able to restrain their lust, foster a sense of empathy for people who are hungry, and develop self-control and determination. These values become an important foundation in forming a religious and tough personality (Fahreza & Sa'dullah, 2024) .

Tadarus activities or reading the Qur'an regularly after dawn or maghrib prayers become spiritual moments that not only improve reading skills, but also bring students closer to divine values. From the verses that are read and listened to every day,

students slowly absorb the meaning and moral messages contained in the Al-Qur'an, thus fostering awareness to make the Al-Qur'an a guide to life.

Meanwhile, joint dhikr and daily recitation of wirid serve as a medium to calm the soul and strengthen the vertical relationship between servants and God (Sukarni, 2017) . This practice also trains students to present God in every activity, which in Sufism terms is known as muraqabah or feeling always watched by God. Spiritual awareness like this is key in fostering authentic religious character, not merely because of external encouragement, but born from an inner desire to continue to get closer to the Creator.

This whole habituation process shows that education in pesantren is comprehensive and sustainable, not only teaching values cognitively, but also training and growing these values in the form of real practice (Rukhayati, 2020). Thus, daily worship activities in pesantren become an effective tool for value internalization, which ultimately shapes students into individuals who have strong religious characters, such as discipline, responsibility, istiqamah, and have a life orientation based on Islamic values.

3. Exemplary Teachers and Clerics

One of the most distinctive and fundamental contributions of pesantren educational institutions in shaping students' religious character is through the exemplary approach or *uswah hasanah* (Fahrudin, 2025) . In the pesantren tradition, the educational process does not only occur in the classroom through lectures or verbal

delivery of material, but also takes place naturally through the real behavior displayed by educators, especially kyai, ustadz, and asatidz who live side by side with the students.

The kyai and ustadz in pesantren are not only positioned as conveyors of knowledge, but also as role models who reflect Islamic values in everyday life. In a polite way of speaking, a simple way of dressing, a compassionate attitude towards students, and in making decisions wisely and fairly, they become real figures that students look up to. This example is even the core of the Islamic education process as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad, whom Allah declared as *uswah hasanah* or a good example in QS. Al-Ahzab: 21.

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

Meaning: *Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah there is indeed a good example for you, (i.e.) for those who expect (the mercy of) Allah and (the coming of) the Last Day and who remember Allah much.*

This exemplary approach has enormous power in shaping religious character because the process is affective and persuasive, not just cognitive and instructive (Nur'asiah et al., 2021). Santri learn not because they are ordered, but because they see, feel, and emulate. When teachers give advice to be patient and sincere, but in practice they are easily angry or show favoritism, the moral message will lose its power. On the contrary, when the teacher's behavior is in line with the values taught,

there will be a strong and authentic internalization process.

Exemplary behavior also encourages the birth of respect and emotional closeness between students and ustadz, which is the basis for the formation of healthy and effective educational relationships. In this context, the role of the teacher is not only teaching, but also fostering and guiding the soul of the santri in total. Therefore, the pesantren environment is often referred to as an educational institution that educates with morals, not just with the tongue.

Thus, it can be concluded that exemplary teaching is a strategic instrument in the pesantren education system. It becomes a bridge between the values taught and the behavior modeled, which in turn is able to form students' religious character consistently, deeply, and sustainably. This is the main strength of pesantren that distinguishes them from other formal educational institutions whose values are not only taught, but lived out in daily life.

4. Structured and Scheduled Religious Activities

Pesantren, as a traditional Islamic educational institution that has been deeply rooted in the culture of Indonesian society, has a system of activities that are structured, programmed, and full of religious meaning (Usman, 2013). One of the main strengths of pesantren in shaping students' religious character lies in the regularity and continuity of daily activities that are nuanced in worship and spiritual development. The schedule of activities in pesantren is not only organized to meet academic needs, but more than that, it is designed to build the

personality of students as a whole, including intellectual, emotional, social, and especially spiritual aspects.

Religious activities that are part of the pesantren routine include the recitation of the yellow classical books, which is a typical tradition and the main identity of pesantren. Classic books such as Ta'lim al-Muta'allim, Arba'in Nawawi, Bidayatul Hidayah, and Ihya Ulumuddin not only convey religious knowledge, but are also full of moral values, manners of studying, patience, and respect for teachers. Through this recitation, students are not only formed intellectually, but also treated with advice and noble moral guidance.

In addition, there is also the reading of maulid or shalawat, which is usually done regularly, both weekly and during the commemoration of Islamic holidays. This tradition serves as a spiritual tool that fosters a sense of love for the Prophet Muhammad, as well as strengthening the emotional bond of santri with the main role model in Islam (Lailatulmufarrohah & Husni, 2025). In a solemn and respectful atmosphere, students learn to cultivate a humble attitude, appreciate Islamic history, and understand the importance of exemplary in everyday life.

Halaqah activities or scholarly discussions are also an important part of the education system in pesantren. In halaqah, santri are invited to explore the meaning of a verse, hadith, or contemporary Islamic issue, with a dialogical and critical approach (Maula, 2022). This activity trains thinking skills, discussion skills, and openness to different views within the framework of

ukhuwah Islamiyah. More than that, halaqah is a medium for forming mental and emotional toughness, because santri are accustomed to listening, expressing opinions politely, and respecting scientific authority.

No less important is the practice of sermons, lectures, or religious speeches, which are directed to form santri into individuals who are able to convey Islamic values to the community in a wise and responsible manner. This activity is a space for santri to build self-confidence, rhetorical skills, and moral responsibility as future leaders of the people (Wahidah & Fatikhun, 2022). In this process, religious values are not only passively instilled, but also actualized in the form of the ability to convey goodness to others.

The overall religious activities that are scheduled and carried out routinely have a very significant long-term impact on the formation of the santri's religious character. Routines not only train consistency and discipline, but also instill Islamic values in students slowly and deeply. This is in line with the principle of value internalization, where understanding, appreciation, and practice of values are carried out gradually and continuously in a conducive environment.

With such an organized system of activities, pesantren essentially become a living educational social space, a place where values are not only taught in the classroom, but also lived in daily practice. Santri are not only required to be intellectually intelligent in understanding Islamic teachings, but also trained to be emotionally mature, resilient in facing the

tests of life, and spiritually mature, because they are always involved in activities that foster closeness to Allah.

5. Religious Social Environment.

One of the advantages of pesantren that is not owned by many other educational institutions is the existence of a common life that blends the aspects of education, moral development, and strengthening social values (Rofi'ie, 2017). The students not only learn in the classroom, but also live, do activities, and interact in the same environment for 24 hours. This collective life creates a social atmosphere that is very distinctive and thick with religious values, which directly or indirectly becomes an effective medium in the process of religious character formation.

The pesantren social environment is built on the basis of Islamic values, such as mutual respect, ukhuwah or brotherhood, trust or responsibility, and karimah or noble morals. The santri are accustomed to maintaining adab towards teachers and fellow friends, not only in the form of speech but also in daily behavior, such as how to greet, ask permission, or respect food and living together. These values are not only conveyed through theoretical lessons, but are formed through living habits and constant social interaction.

Living together also instills the value of simplicity and sincerity, as all santri live the same lifestyle without differentiating socio-economic backgrounds. They eat together, sleep in a room together, queue for food or bathing, and wear uniform clothes. This lifestyle fosters an attitude of humility, empathy, and high solidarity. The value of simplicity is a tangible form of Islamic

teachings that emphasize the importance of living in moderation and sharing.

An environment like this indirectly becomes a non-formal education space that plays a major role in shaping the personality of santri. Through daily interactions, santri naturally absorb religious values, both from the behavior of teachers, peers, and the system of life that is run. Value internalization occurs not only through cognitive processes, but also through social and emotional experiences that touch individual consciousness. Therefore, pesantren is an institution that is able to synergize value education, character building, and personality development as a whole.

Thus, the pesantren social environment functions as a value laboratory, a place where religious theories are practiced in real life. The internalization of religious values that occurs in this environment is natural, sustainable, and comprehensive. Values are not instilled indoctrinately, but are formed through habits, experiences, and exemplary practices that continuously take place during the santri's stay in the pesantren.

Therefore, in the context of students' religious character formation, the pesantren social environment becomes a strategic factor that supports the success of the value education process as a whole. When this collective life system is well managed and based on strong Islamic values, the pesantren will be able to produce a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also noble, socially concerned, and has a mature spirituality.

Holistic Strategy of Pesantren Education

One of the keys to the success of pesantren in shaping the religious character of students lies in the educational strategy that is not only theoretical, but also practical and applicable, and touches all aspects of the lives of students as a whole (Anita, 2025). Education in pesantren is not just oriented towards mastering teaching materials, but emphasizes more on value internalization, namely the process of instilling values that are carried out gradually, continuously, and integrated with daily activities.

In general, the education strategy in pesantren is holistic, which includes teaching or ta'lim, habituation or ta'dib, and exemplary or uswah hasanah. These strategies are not separated in their implementation, but strengthen each other and are integrated in the social, spiritual, and emotional environment created by pesantren.

In the Islamic education system, especially in the pesantren environment, the first is ta'lim or teaching which is one of the main foundations in the process of transferring knowledge and fostering the personality of santri. The word ta'lim comes from Arabic which means giving knowledge or teaching (Tarigan et al., 2024). However, in the context of Islamic education, ta'lim is not only understood as the delivery of academic subject matter, but also includes the process of instilling values, nurturing morals, and spiritual guidance as a whole (Zahra et al., 2024).

Teaching in pesantren has a deeper meaning than just a formal teaching-learning process as we know it in the modern education system. In practice, teaching in pesantren is

carried out through various traditional methods that have been proven effective in shaping the character of santri. One of them is sorogan, which is a one-on-one learning method between students and teachers, where students read the book and the teacher directly corrects or explains (Sirulhaq & Ohan, 2025). There is also the bandongan method, in which the teacher reads and explains the contents of the book in front of many students who listen in an orderly manner (Fitriyah et al., 2019). This method fosters discipline, full attention, and respect for knowledge and teachers.

The books taught in the ta'lim process in pesantren are generally yellow books written by classical scholars, such as Ta'lim al-Muta'allim, Arba'in Nawawi, Fathul Qarib, Sullam at-Taufiq, and others. These books not only contain religious laws, but are also rich in moral values, manners, spirituality, and the wisdom of life. Therefore, the teaching of kitab in pesantren is actually a strategic means of internalizing Islamic values into the santri in a deep and sustainable manner.

Moreover, teaching in pesantren is always based on the intention to seek Allah's pleasure and expect the blessing of knowledge. Before reciting the Quran, santri and teachers read prayers together, asking for ease and blessings. This activity shows that the ta'lim process is not only an intellectual activity, but also a form of worship that is full of spiritual values. This forms an attitude of tawadhu, sincerity, and adab towards knowledge, which is a typical character of pesantren students.

Thus, ta'lim is not only a teaching strategy, but also a means of transformative value education. It not only educates intellectually, but also revives the spirit of faith

and forms the religious personality of santri. In the context of student religious character building, ta'lim is a very important starting point, because this is where an understanding of divine values begins to grow and be developed in real life.

The second is in the character building system in pesantren is habituation. This strategy is based on the understanding that character cannot be formed instantly or through knowledge alone, but through a process that is repeated, consistent, and takes place over a long period of time (Koesoema, 2015). In the context of Islamic education, habituation is a tarbiyah method that has long been used by scholars to instill Islamic values in the souls of students from an early age (Kharismatunisa', 2021). These values are not instilled by coercion or indoctrination, but by creating an atmosphere, system, and routine that encourages learners voluntarily to do good continuously until it becomes part of their personality.

In pesantren, habituation takes place systematically and structured in daily life. Every aspect of santri activities is packed with value content, so that time after time, santri are accustomed to living in an atmosphere that is filled with religious nuances (Suardika et al., 2022). A clear example of this strategy is the implementation of five daily congregational prayers which are not only a ritual obligation, but also part of the rhythm of santri life. By attending congregational prayers consistently and on time, students are not only trained to obey worship, but also formed into disciplined, orderly, and respectful of time.

This is in line with the results of a study that aims to determine how the implementation

of congregational prayer habituation contributes to the character building of students, especially in forming religious and disciplined characters. The research used a qualitative method with a case study approach, and data collection techniques through interviews, observation, and documentation. The study was conducted at Al-Husna Girls' Dormitory, which consistently performs congregational prayers every day, especially at key times such as dawn, maghrib, and isha. From the results of the study, it is known that this habituation has a significant impact on the character building of santri. The students not only show istiqamah in performing congregational prayers, but also experience changes in attitudes that reflect religious values and discipline, which can be seen in their daily behavior (Halimah et al., 2023).

In addition, the habit of reading the Qur'an every morning and night is part of the daily program in almost all pesantren. This activity aims to form santri's closeness to the holy book, foster love for the word of God, and maintain the purity of the heart before and after undergoing daily activities. In the long run, this routine will create a strong spiritual awareness, where santri are accustomed to starting and ending the day with the Qur'an, so that the moral values contained in it are slowly embedded in their way of thinking and acting.

This finding is in line with the results of research conducted by Siti Robi'ah Adawiyah, which shows that the discipline program for reading the Qur'an with a predetermined time and reading at the Ash-Shirathul 'Ulya Al-Adawiyah Islamic Boarding School has proven effective in shaping the character of qur'ani students. Santri who participated in the

program showed positive developments in moral aspects, such as courtesy, honesty, and responsibility, as well as having a good personality and being consistent in the good habits that have been instilled. The study concluded that the discipline of reading the Qur'an in a structured manner can be an effective strategy in instilling noble values, as well as motivating the next generation to make the Qur'an a guide to life (Adawiyah, 2023).

YellowIslamic classic book recitation activities are also a very distinctive form of habituation in pesantren. Books such as Ta'lim al-Muta'allim, Riyadushsholihin, or Adabul 'Alim wal Muta'allim not only teach religious knowledge, but also convey noble values such as adab towards teachers, the virtue of seeking knowledge, honesty, patience, and tawadhu attitude. This is reinforced by the results of research conducted by Saifullah Saifullah and Ainur Rofiq Sofa at Pesantren Raudlatul Hasaniyah Mojolegi Gading, Probolinggo, which shows that book recitation activities such as Riyadushsholihin play an important role in deepening religious understanding while strengthening the character of santri. The recitation of this book not only adds to Islamic insight, but also becomes an effective means of internalizing spiritual values in the daily lives of santri. Values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and empathy are not only taught in the text, but also manifested in the behavior of santri both inside and outside the classroom (Saifullah & Sofa, 2025). Thus, the recitation of yellowclassical books such as Riyadushsholihin functions as an integrative vehicle between knowledge transfer and religious character building, which makes pesantren an institution that not only educates

intellectually, but also fosters morals holistically.

On the other hand, the habituation of daily dhikr and wirid together helps build awareness of God's presence in every activity. This dhikr activity becomes a reflective moment for students to reflect on themselves, ask for forgiveness, and strengthen the vertical relationship with the Creator (Syarif Aini & Santosa, 2023). Values such as peace of mind, tawakal, patience, and gratitude grow from the practice of dhikr which is carried out continuously, not only in a state of spaciousness, but also in difficulty.

No less important is the habit of maintaining manners and ethics in social life, such as speaking politely to teachers, respecting fellow friends, sharing food, or helping sick friends. This habit does not arise by itself, but is instilled through strict supervision, reinforcement of values by the ustadz, and a culture that encourages reminding each other between students. In the long run, social interactions that are familiarized with this Islamic adab will form a personality that is noble, humble, and has high social care (Ferihana & Rahmatullah, 2023).

According to Armai Arief, the habituation method is a method that can be used to train students to think, behave, and act in accordance with Islamic teachings Arief, .2022) In the context of pesantren, habituation is a very effective strategy to build a solid and sustainable religious character. The character is not formed instantly or symbolically, but through daily life experiences that are constantly trained, supervised, and modeled consistently. In the long run, this process makes santri a disciplined, responsible,

spiritually close to Allah, and able to show good social morals in community life.

The third strategy that has a major influence in the process of forming the religious character of santri in the pesantren environment is strengthening through exemplary. Exemplary is not just a complementary method, but a fundamental approach in Islamic education that has been known since the time of the Prophet. In the tradition of Islamic education, it is not enough for moral and spiritual values to be taught verbally, but they must be shown clearly through the daily behavior of educators.

This is in line with Hidayat's view that exemplary is a very effective method in achieving educational goals, because it provides concrete examples that can be internalized by students (Hidayat, 2015). A Muslim educator, whether in the context of formal, informal, or non-formal education, is required not only to be able to direct students to the right values, but also to be a role model in real life. When a teacher or cleric equips himself with morals and behavior in accordance with the provisions of Allah and His Messenger, then the personality becomes a special attraction for students, which in turn encourages them to emulate voluntarily.

In the modeling approach, value cultivation occurs through what is called implicit learning, namely learning through observation and imitation without direct direction (Toharudin et al., 2025). When a kyai not only teaches the importance of honesty, but is also known as an honest person in words and actions, it will be easier for santri to internalize this value. A real example is more imprinted in the heart than a thousand words,

because it shows that the value can be lived in real life.

In addition to the kyai, ustadz and daily caregivers also play an important role in exemplary because they interact more intensely and directly with students in daily life. They become figures that are watched by santri, how they pray, how they respond to problems, and how they behave towards others. In this interaction, values such as sincerity, patience, compassion, and discipline are not only taught, but also seen and imitated by santri continuously.

Thus, exemplary is a very strong and effective medium of value internalization, because it combines the dimensions of experience and learning. It creates moral awareness that is not formed by instruction, but by self-identification with a role model. In the long run, this example will form the personality of students who are religious, emotionally mature, and ready to become role models for their own environment.

Challenges in Building Students' Religious Character Amidst the Challenges of Globalization

Although pesantren has been recognized as a very effective institution in instilling Islamic values and shaping students' religious character, in its implementation it is not free from various challenges. These challenges arise both from internal factors originating from within the pesantren itself, as well as external factors originating from social dynamics, culture, and the rapid development of the times.

1. Internal Challenges

One of the significant internal challenges in the implementation of

character education in the pesantren environment is the limited human resources, especially in terms of the quality and quantity of educators and caregivers who directly guide the lives of students (Sari & Darnoto, 2024). Religious character education is not just a theoretical teaching process, but requires intensive mentoring, real examples, and continuous spiritual guidance. In this context, the role of teachers or ustadz, kyai, and caregivers is central, because they not only function as providers of knowledge, but also as role models and moral coaches.

But in reality, not all pesantren have educators who are truly professionally prepared to carry out these roles optimally. Most ustadz and kyai are indeed very qualified in the scientific aspect of religion, but do not necessarily have the pedagogical and psychological abilities needed to foster the character of students who have different backgrounds, dispositions, and needs. (Widayanti, 2025). Especially in this modern era, the challenges of moral development are much more complex because students come with the influence of outside culture, gadget addiction, and a crisis of exemplarity from the home environment. In this situation, teachers are required to not only be smart teachers, but also patient, wise, empathetic, and inspiring educators.

In addition to competency issues, the limited number of educators is also a serious obstacle. The ratio between the number of students and the number of teachers or caregivers is often unbalanced, especially in large pesantren that accommodate hundreds to thousands of students (Ariani, 2020). This

has an impact on the lack of personal attention to each student, so that the character building process that should be carried out in depth and individually cannot run optimally. In fact, character education requires a warm and intimate relationship between teachers and students, because it is through closeness that values will be more easily conveyed, understood, and accepted wholeheartedly.

Another internal challenge that is no less important is time management and the density of the daily schedule in pesantren. Many pesantren have a very dense system of activities, ranging from congregational prayers, recitation of books, formal schools, tadarus, community service, to night activities. Although all of these activities are positive and religious, in practice this density can be counterproductive if it is not accompanied by sufficient space for self-reflection and in-depth character building.

Too tight a schedule can make santri undergo worship activities and other religious activities mechanistically and ritualistically, not because of understanding and awareness of value (Ubaidah et al., 2018). In the long run, this risks making spiritual activities just an empty routine, without strong emotional and spiritual meaning. Santris may be diligent in praying and reciting the Quran, but they do not necessarily understand the meaning behind these acts of worship and do not always translate them into life attitudes that are in line with Islamic values.

Therefore, to overcome these challenges, pesantren need to take several strategic steps such as: increasing the

capacity of teachers through pedagogical and character training, increasing the number of teachers so that the coaching process is more evenly distributed and touches all students, and reviewing time management patterns so that there is a balance between formal activities and space for personal reflection and affective guidance.

2. External Challenges

From the external side, the challenges faced by pesantren educational institutions in implementing religious character education cannot be underestimated. Along with the progress of the times, pesantren are now in the vortex of globalization, modernization, and the digital revolution that moves very fast and is transnational. The development of information and communication technology, especially internet penetration, social media, and global popular culture, brings with it values that are often contrary to Islamic teachings and traditional pesantren ethics.

Santri today live in a very different era compared to previous generations. They are part of the digital-native generation, who since childhood have been familiar with technological devices such as smartphones, tablets, social media, and unlimited internet. Access to global content in the form of videos, music, games, and interactive entertainment platforms is increasingly easy to obtain. On one hand, this technological advancement opens up new opportunities in education. But on the other hand, it inserts serious challenges to the formation of religious character, because the contents accessed are not all educative and moral nuances, even most of them carry the values of hedonism, consumerism, individualism,

moral relativism, and secularism (Prihatmojo & Badawi, 2020).

As a result, there is a significant clash of values between what is taught and internalized in the pesantren environment and what they see and absorb from the outside digital world. For example, the values of simplicity, patience, self-control, and obedience to religious authorities instilled in pesantren can be disrupted by the instant culture, unlimited freedom of expression, and glamorous and permissive lifestyles promoted by cyber celebrities. The internalization process of religious values becomes unstable when santri experience cognitive dissonance, which is psychological tension due to the existence of two conflicting value systems in their minds.

In addition to technological challenges, the lack of family support is also a serious obstacle in the character education process. The role of parents in strengthening pesantren values is very important, especially when santri return home during the holidays (Sarifah Aini & Daulai, 2024). But in reality, not all santri families have the same understanding of the importance of continuity between pesantren education and coaching at home. Many parents completely leave moral development to pesantren, but do not strengthen the same values when their children are at home. In fact, there are families who unconsciously apply contradictory parenting styles, such as allowing children to indulge in free entertainment, using abusive language, or abandoning worship habits that have been built in pesantren.

This inconsistency of values between the pesantren environment and home can hinder the process of internalization of values, because students become confused or even lose direction in understanding which values to hold. Finally, pesantren values that should be part of the santri's character are only temporarily attached while they are in the pesantren environment, but fade when they return to the community or home. Religious character development becomes unsustainable and ineffective in the long run, if it is not supported by a compatible family and social environment. To answer all these external challenges, pesantren must carry out a number of strategic transformations without losing their Islamic identity and noble values that characterize them, which include providing santri with an understanding of how to use technology wisely and Islamically. Then collaborate with parents, through Islamic parenting programs, so that there is a continuity of values between pesantren and home.

With the synergy between pesantren, families, and communities, external obstacles in character education can be overcome gradually, and the function of pesantren as the nation's moral bastion can still be carried out effectively and sustainably.

CONCLUSIONS

Pesantren education institutions are proven to have a strategic contribution in the formation of students' religious character, especially in the midst of the challenges of globalization, moral crisis, and the swift flow of digital information that tends to be secular

and permissive. With a holistic and integrative education system, pesantren are able to internalize Islamic values into students through ta'lim (teaching), ta'dib (habituation), and uswah hasanah (exemplary) approaches. Various activities such as congregational prayers, recitation of the Qur'an, recitation of the yellow book, dhikr together, as well as religious and structured social life, are effective means of instilling values such as discipline, responsibility, honesty, empathy, and deep spirituality. The example of the kyai and ustadz is a key factor that strengthens the value internalization process. The exemplary behavior shown by pesantren educators has a great influence in shaping the attitude of students who are not only subject to the rules, but also live these values in their daily lives. However, the implementation of religious character education in pesantren also faces challenges, both internal, such as limited teaching human resources and tight time management, and external, such as the influence of digital media, lack of family support, and value clashes with the outside environment. Therefore, a collaborative strategy between pesantren, families, and communities is needed to maintain the sustainability and effectiveness of santri religious character formation. Overall, pesantren remains a relevant moral bastion in the modern era, because it is able to present value education that is not only taught theoretically, but also lived out in meaningful daily practices. Pesantren shows that religious character education can be practiced thoroughly, not just discussed.

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