



Transformative Islamic Education: The Role of Qur'anic Value Internalization in Building Santri's Religious Character

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to explore the implementation of Qur'anic values in shaping the religious character. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach to investigate how Qur'anic principles are internalized through daily practices, role modeling, and institutional management. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation involving teachers, students, and pesantren administrators. Findings reveal that the Qur'an serves not only as a textual source of knowledge but also as a behavioral guide actively embodied in the daily routines of santri. Religious character formation is facilitated through consistent activities such as communal prayers, Qur'an recitation, and ethical mentoring, supported by the exemplary behavior of teachers. Furthermore, the institutional management plays a strategic role in designing and maintaining an environment that integrates Qur'anic values into all aspects of pesantren life. The study concludes that the successful internalization of Qur'anic values results from a synergy of value-based education, modeling, and structured management. This model provides a transformative and holistic framework that addresses the contemporary crisis of moral and religious identity among Muslim youth, offering a replicable alternative for character education in formal settings.

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INTRODUCTION

Character education is a fundamental aspect of the educational domain, particularly in shaping students' personalities to embody noble values. In the context of Islamic education, character formation does not merely focus on cognitive development, but also integrates the spiritual, emotional, and social dimensions of the learners (Miftahuddin et al., 2024), (Wahid, A., et al, 2022). The primary goal of character education is to cultivate a generation that is not

only intellectually competent but also morally and spiritually grounded. The Indonesian government, through the Ministry of National Education, has outlined 18 core values of character education, including religiosity, honesty, responsibility, social care, and love for peace. These values serve as essential references in the national education process. Islamic educational institutions, especially pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), hold a strategic role in instilling these values, particularly religious character (Jusubaidi et al., 2024). This aligns with the broader mission of Islamic education, which aims to nurture holistic individuals who maintain good relationships with God, fellow humans, and their environment.

Religious character serves as a central element in the personal development of students (santri) within pesantren. In an increasingly complex society, religious character is expected to act as both a moral shield and a spiritual foundation in facing social challenges. Religious character education is not limited to the theoretical teaching of religion, but rather encompasses the internalization of Islamic values into daily behavior (Saepudin et al., 2023), (Wulandari et al., 2022). In Islam, the formation of religious character consists of three interrelated components: *‘aqīdah* (creed), *sharī‘ah* (Islamic law), and *akhlāq* (ethics). These three elements are inseparable and mutually reinforcing in shaping a complete Muslim personality. Therefore, educational processes that emphasize the integration of Qur’anic values are crucial, especially within (Safiudin et al., 2023). The Qur’an, as the primary source of Islamic teachings, provides both normative and practical guidance in shaping individuals who are religious, tolerant, and morally upright.

Nevertheless, the social reality within pesantren reveals several challenges in fostering students’ religious character. Although pesantren are widely recognized as institutions rooted in Islamic values, there remain evident instances of moral decline among some students in their daily conduct. Behaviors inconsistent with religious character such as lying, using harsh language, violating Islamic codes, and even consuming alcohol indicate that the internalization process of religious values has not yet reached its optimal level. This situation raises serious concern, as it directly contradicts the fundamental mission of pesantren as centers of moral and spiritual cultivation. Amidst the currents of globalization and rapid social change, religious values are often marginalized by popular culture, which tends to lack educational depth (Wisudaningsih et al., 2024). Hence, a more holistic and contextualized approach to character education particularly one that is grounded in Qur’anic values is urgently needed to ensure that the formation of santri character becomes more effective and touches their inner spiritual dimensions.

The phenomenon of moral degradation among santri (Islamic boarding

school students) indicates a critical gap in the system of religious character development. In several pesantren, instances have been reported where students engage in secret romantic relationships, neglect obligatory prayers, and even exhibit aggressive behavior toward others (Imami & Wijaya, 2020). Such occurrences not only tarnish the reputation of pesantren but also present a substantial challenge for educators and caretakers in fostering a clean and conducive educational environment. Ideally, pesantren should serve as nurturing spaces for the growth of both individual and social piety. The inconsistency between the religious teachings delivered and the students' actual behavior underscores the need for a renewed approach to character education. Here, Qur'anic values can serve as a strong foundation in building the students' religious character comprehensively. These values must not only be taught in a textual manner but also contextually implemented in all aspects of the students' lives to foster real behavioral change (Sumanti et al., 2024).

Previous studies have consistently emphasized the urgency of religious character education in shaping student personalities, including within pesantren settings. For example, research by Enok Anggi Pridayanti (2022) found that religious character plays a critical role in guiding individual behavior and serves as a vehicle for the transformation of religious values into everyday life. Similarly, Marzuki (2019) highlighted the importance of integrating Qur'anic values as guiding principles in character formation, specifically through the approaches of 'aqidah (creed), shari'ah (Islamic law), and akhlāq (ethics). These studies affirm that an education system focusing solely on cognitive development, without spiritual reinforcement, is likely to produce graduates vulnerable to moral deviations. Hence, an integral and holistic approach to character education based on Qur'anic teachings that touch upon the spiritual, emotional, and social dimensions simultaneously is highly recommended.

In addition, a study by Muhammad Alim emphasized that religious character constitutes a core value in the national character education reinforcement movement. Religious character is not only an indicator of the success of Islamic education but also serves as the foundation for building work ethics, social attitudes, and emotional intelligence among students. According to Alim, religious attitudes derived from the internalization of Islamic values can foster responsible behavior and a collective orientation toward goodness. However, these existing studies remain general and have not specifically explored how Qur'anic values are systematically implemented in shaping the religious character of santri in pesantren. Therefore, there is a pressing need for more contextual and in-depth research that not only articulates the importance of religious character but also investigates the strategies, methods,

and challenges of its implementation in Islamic-based educational institutions such as pesantren.

This study's novelty lies in its investigation of the implementation of Qur'anic values at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Qur'an Kraksaan, Probolinggo. Unlike previous studies that were more conceptual in nature, this research adopts a contextual and exploratory approach, focusing on the practical realities of forming religious character in students based on the Qur'an (Çakin, 2022). Pondok Pesantren Nurul Qur'an was selected due to its strong tradition in teaching Qur'anic memorization (tahfiz) and exegesis (tafsir), while simultaneously facing contemporary challenges in fostering students' moral development.

This study systematically explores the strategies for internalizing Qur'anic values carried out by the caretakers, teachers, and the pesantren environment. The novelty also lies in the triangulation method combining observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis to understand how religious character is shaped through habituation of worship, exemplary role modeling, and institutional management. Accordingly, this research contributes substantively to the development of character education within pesantren settings.

In addition to focusing on Qur'anic values, this study maps the role of institutional management at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Qur'an Kraksaan in creating an educational climate conducive to the formation of students' religious character. Rather than relying solely on religious teaching materials, the pesantren applies a comprehensive approach integrating formal curriculum, the exemplary conduct of teachers (ustadz), Islamic-themed extracurricular activities, and the strengthening of pesantren culture.

This holistic approach constitutes a significant novelty by demonstrating that the formation of religious character cannot be separated from an environment consistently aligned with Qur'anic values. The study is expected to produce an applicable model for implementing Qur'anic values that can be replicated by other pesantren across Indonesia. Thus, this research not only enriches the literature on character education but also serves as a practical reference for strengthening the morality of young Muslim generations through traditional pesantren-based educational institutions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, which aims to deeply understand and describe social phenomena occurring at the research site (Risnita, 2024), (Abdussamad, 2021). This approach was chosen as it is appropriate for examining the complex and contextual process of implementing

Qur'anic values in shaping the religious character of santri, which cannot be measured quantitatively. The research was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Qur'an Kraksaan, Probolinggo, selected purposively due to its distinguished Qur'anic education program and its contemporary challenges in addressing santri's character development in daily life. The main focus of this study is to explore the internalization process of Qur'anic values through learning, habituation, and social interaction within the pesantren environment that shapes the religious character of santri.

The research subjects comprised the caretakers of the pesantren, ustadz/ustadzah, santri, and daily management staff, purposively selected based on their active roles in religious character development activities. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation of religious activities and Qur'anic learning. Secondary data were obtained from pesantren documents, including character education guidelines, daily activity schedules, curricula, and archives of religious activities.

Data collection was conducted simultaneously and repeatedly until data saturation was reached, no new relevant information was found for further analysis (Winarni, 2021). The data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, consisting of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involved sorting, summarizing, and focusing the data in accordance with the research objectives. Data display was carried out in the form of systematic descriptive narratives to depict patterns, categories, and relationships among data components. Conclusion drawing was conducted continuously throughout the research process, using both inductive and interpretive reasoning, resulting in an in-depth understanding of how Qur'anic values are implemented in shaping the religious character of santri.

The validity of the data was ensured through triangulation of sources, techniques, and time, as well as member checking with key informants to guarantee the credibility of the findings (Risnita, 2024).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Contextual and Exploratory with a Focus on the Actual Practice of Forming Santri's Religious Character Based on the Qur'an

The results of the study indicate that Pondok Pesantren Nurul Qur'an Kraksaan has consistently implemented Qur'anic values in the daily lives of its santri. One manifestation of this implementation is through habituation of daily religious activities such as morning Qur'an recitation (tadarus), performing the five daily congregational prayers, as well as dhikr and supplication after

prayers. These activities have become routine practices that are not merely ritualistic but also embody the cultivation of values such as discipline, obedience, gratitude, and patience.

This has a profound impact on the character formation of the santri, particularly in fostering a more personal and responsible religious awareness. Some santri even reported that changes in their behavior began by emulating the habits of their ustadz. This exemplarity becomes a principal strength in the process of religious character education, which relies not only on verbal instruction but also on affective and relational approaches.

Observations and interviews reveal that the formation of religious character occurs gradually and progressively, primarily through habituation and daily social interactions. Many santri who were initially passive began to show improvements in discipline, honesty, responsibility, and enthusiasm for worship after spending several months in the pesantren environment. The santri acknowledged feeling ashamed if they neglected prayers or lied, as they felt monitored by Allah and inspired by the Qur'anic verses they had memorized. This indicates that the internalization of Qur'anic values shapes not only external behavior but also internal awareness.

The Role of Institutional Management in the Pesantren

The findings indicate that the role of institutional management at the pesantren is pivotal in determining the direction and success of programs aimed at shaping the religious character of santri. This planning involves all pesantren components, from caretakers, heads of madrasah, disciplinary officers, to dormitory supervisors (musyrif), creating a collaborative and purposeful work pattern for instilling religious values among santri.

In terms of organization, the management of Pondok Pesantren Nurul Qur'an has established a structure that supports the realization of a Qur'anic educational environment. Daily administrators are divided into several divisions such as worship, discipline, moral guidance, and Islamic studies. Each division has specific tasks overseen by a musyrif or ustadz who holds full responsibility for the implementation of Qur'anic values within their respective areas.

Regarding evaluation, the pesantren management implements a character assessment system grounded in Qur'anic principles. Evaluations are not limited to academic or memorization achievements but also include behavioral indicators in daily life, such as honesty, social care, responsibility, and religious obedience. Behavioral deviations are addressed through guidance based on relevant Qur'anic verses, accompanied by reflection and personal mentoring. These innovations demonstrate the institution's commitment to

making Qur'anic values the soul of the entire educational process while serving as a strategic response to modern challenges that often alienate santri from noble religious values.

Currently, the phenomenon of value shifts and moral decadence among Muslim youth has become a critical issue. In this context, pesantren play a crucial role as moral fortresses and centers for strong character development. The findings of this study reveal that Pondok Pesantren Nurul Qur'an Kraksaan addresses these challenges through practical approaches to religious character formation, rooted directly in Qur'anic values applied in the santri's daily life. Santri are not only taught to understand the sacred verses but also to adopt them as principles of life reflected in their ethics, worship, and social interactions.

The formation of santri's religious character is conducted contextually, meaning that Qur'anic values are not taught in abstract terms but are connected to their real-life experiences. For instance, the value of honesty is instilled through verses on trust (*amanah*), which are implemented in monitoring belongings, fulfilling assigned tasks, and reporting activities. The value of patience is contextualized through challenges such as memorization and time discipline. Santri learn to internalize Allah's words in real situations—not as mere memorization.

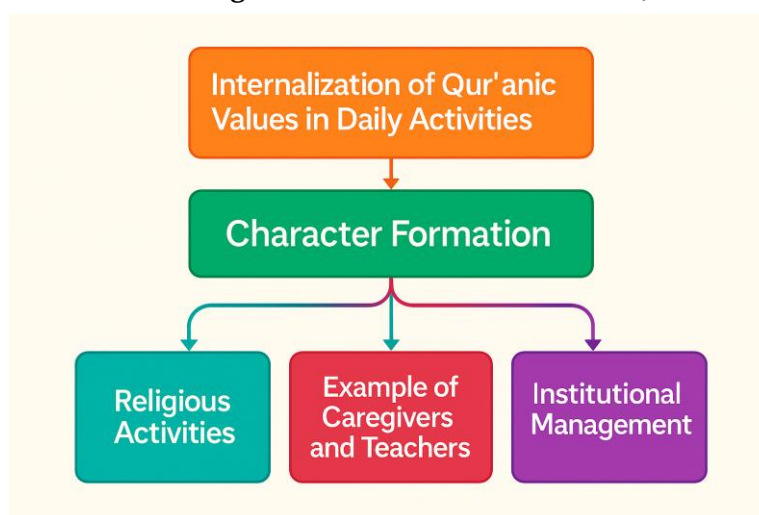
Institutional management at the pesantren plays a vital role in ensuring the continuity and effectiveness of character-building programs. The study shows that the leadership and administration of Pondok Pesantren Nurul Qur'an maintain a clear vision that Qur'anic values must serve as the core values of every institutional activity. From planning to evaluation, all processes are directed toward strengthening spiritual and moral values. This managerial approach addresses the demands of the modern era, which requires educational systems to be well-organized without compromising their religious essence. It demonstrates that pesantren can adapt to modern management practices while maintaining the authentic values taught by Islam.

The discussion also emphasizes that religious character formation cannot be separated from the exemplary conduct of caretakers and the overall pesantren environment. The Qur'anic values taught become more impactful when santri observe these values being practiced daily by their teachers and administrators. This is in line with Bandura's social learning theory, which asserts that behavior is more effectively learned through modeling than through instruction alone. The pesantren's management ensures that the physical environment, daily schedules, discipline systems, and cultural practices all support the internalization of these values.

These findings offer a valuable reflection for the national education

landscape: that religious character formation cannot be achieved solely through moral lectures, but requires a structured, contextual, and spiritually rich system. Pesantren like Nurul Qur'an Kraksaan demonstrate that the Qur'an can serve as the core of character development when supported by visionary and consistent institutional management. In a national education context often dominated by cognitive orientation, this holistic Qur'an-based approach presents a viable alternative model for character curriculum development. Therefore, this study contributes both theoretically and practically to value-based education, particularly in addressing the challenges of the digital age and the moral crisis facing today's youth.

Figure 1.1 Contextual and Exploratory Focus on the Actual Practice of Forming Santri's Religious Character Based on the Qur'an



Discussion

In the context of pesantren education, the Qur'anic value-based approach plays a crucial role in shaping the character of the santri. The caretakers actively relate Qur'anic verses to moral, social, and spiritual meanings that are relevant to the daily life of the santri. As a result, the santri learn not only to read the Qur'an as a text but also to understand it as an ethical guide for everyday behavior (Jusubaidi et al., 2024).

Another significant finding of this study is the role of exemplary behavior demonstrated by the caretakers, ustadz, and ustadzah in the internalization of Qur'anic values. This exemplary behavior is evident not only in classroom teaching but also in their interactions with the santri, such as speaking politely, exercising patience, and giving advice wisely (Wang, 2022). Values such as honesty, justice, and humility, which are rooted in the Qur'an, are brought to life through direct practice. Moreover, the pesantren implements

managerial strategies that support the development of the santri's religious character. This is evident in the integrated curriculum, value-based supervision, and activity scheduling that align with Qur'anic teachings. Flagship programs such as halaqah tafsir (Qur'anic interpretation study circles), thematic Qur'an studies, and memorization of ethical verses serve as direct media for religious character development.

Furthermore, the pesantren has a special assessment and guidance system for santri exhibiting behavioral deviations, using Qur'anic advice-based approaches rather than mere punishment (Karman et al., 2023). This demonstrates that the pesantren management is not merely administrative but also pedagogical and spiritual, aiming to shape the santri's behavior holistically in accordance with Islamic values (kaffah). This process is strengthened by supervision based on compassion and guidance, emphasizing the meaning of values rather than merely technical rules (Kadis et al., 2024).

However, the study also identified several challenges in implementing Qur'anic values, such as deviant behaviors among some santri, including lying, using harsh language, and reluctance to perform worship. The causes are diverse, ranging from family background, external environmental influences, to insufficient depth of understanding of Qur'anic values. Some santri admitted to memorizing verses without comprehending the content or moral message. Therefore, the pesantren recognizes the need to strengthen thematic tafsir programs and character education based on Qur'anic reflection so that these values are not only memorized but also deeply ingrained in the soul. This reflects that the success of religious character formation requires the integration and continuity of cognitive, affective, and spiritual approaches (Islamic et al., 2024).

At Pondok Pesantren Nurul Qur'an Kraksaan, educational program planning is not solely based on the formal curriculum but is also aligned with Qur'anic values as the primary foundation (Wisudaningsih et al., 2024), (Mulianti, W. O., & Sulisworo, 2023). The pesantren actively organizes daily, weekly, and monthly activity schedules with careful consideration of the spiritual and moral development of the santri. Activities such as muhadharah (religious lectures), tafsir study sessions, and recitations of ethical verses are positioned centrally within the educational calendar. Managerial exemplary behavior is also demonstrated by the caretakers and pesantren leaders who directly supervise, advise, and guide santri in both formal and informal settings (Dwi, 2024), (Hendrawan, 2022). The supervision and guidance system is dialogical rather than merely punitive, fostering moral awareness rather than mechanical compliance. This exemplifies an organizational model that places the Qur'an at the center of institutional governance.

Additionally, the pesantren management continuously innovates by developing new programs such as Qur'anic character halaqah, moral mentoring with selected verses, and leadership training based on Islamic values (Munif, 2025). The prevalence of instant gratification culture, hedonistic lifestyles, and weak spiritual control has led the younger generation into a crisis of religious identity (Suhermanto, S., & Anshari, 2018). This model of character formation proves effective in shaping resilient character because santri not only know the values but also experience how the Qur'an functions as a guide in daily life. This approach aligns with the principles of experiential learning often advocated in modern Islamic educational theory (Suhermanto, 2023). This is where the pesantren excels as an educational institution capable of creating an ecosystem of values, not merely a system of instruction (Mujiburrahman et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the formation of students' religious character at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Qur'an Kraksaan does not occur instantly, but through a long, systematic process that becomes internalized in the daily routines of the pesantren. Qur'anic values are not merely taught cognitively, but are enlivened through daily practices such as congregational prayer (*ṣalāh jamā'ah*), Qur'anic recitation (*tadārus*), and the embodiment of noble character (*akhlāq al-karīmah*). Students are not only guided to understand Qur'anic verses but are trained to concretely and consistently apply the values they contain. This illustrates that Qur'anic learning in the pesantren context has a transformative dimension, influencing both affective and behavioral aspects.

The findings also reveal that the exemplary conduct of teachers and caregivers plays a crucial role in the internalization of Qur'anic values. Students are more inclined to imitate real behavior than merely accept verbal advice. This modeling transforms religious values into a lived practice rather than ceremonial symbolism. In character education, the presence of role models strengthens the notion that religious character is built not solely through theory but through continuous, value-laden interactions. In this regard, the success of character transformation greatly depends on the quality of relationships between teachers and students.

Institutionally, the role of pesantren management emerges as a key element often overlooked in character education discussions. Good management not only ensures program implementation but also functions as a vehicle to align the entire institutional system with Qur'anic values. From activity scheduling and character development patterns to disciplinary regulations, everything is directed toward forming a strong religious habitus.

This is the unique feature of pesantren: management is not merely administrative, but value-based governance that creates a transformative educational ecosystem.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the successful development of students' religious character is the result of the synergy of three core pillars: the internalization of Qur'anic values, the exemplary conduct of educators, and the strategic role of institutional management. These three aspects are interdependent and inseparable. Amid today's moral crisis among the younger generation, the educational model implemented at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Qur'an offers a tangible contribution as an alternative system that is holistic, contextual, and sustainable. The challenge ahead lies in how this model can be adapted and replicated within formal educational systems without losing the distinctive spirit of pesantren.

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