

Islamic Character Building through the Study of Classical Islamic Texts: An Ethnographic Study at Tahfidzul Qur'an Alhikmah Islamic Boarding School

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the process of Islamic character building through the study of classical Islamic texts in Islamic boarding schools. The classical Islamic texts, as a repository of traditional Islamic intellectual heritage, not only serve as a source of religious knowledge but also as an instrument for internalising moral, ethical, and spiritual values. The research method used is qualitative with an ethnographic approach, where data is obtained through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The results show that the study of classical Islamic texts in Islamic boarding schools does not only emphasise cognitive aspects but also builds the affective and psychomotor dimensions of students. This process takes place through the sorogan and bandongan methods, as well as direct examples set by kiai and ustaz who serve as role models. The internalisation of Islamic values occurs gradually through daily interactions, discipline, and the culture of Islamic boarding schools, which is rich in religious values. Thus, the study of classical Islamic texts has proven to play a significant role in shaping the Islamic character of santri, which is reflected in their humility, sincerity, discipline, and social responsibility. This study recommends that Islamic boarding schools continue to develop adaptive strategies for teaching classical Islamic texts in line with the times, without losing their traditional values, so that Islamic character building remains relevant to the current generation of Muslims.

Keywords: character building, classical Islamic texts, Islamic boarding schools, Islamic education

Introduction

Islamic education plays a fundamental role in shaping individuals who are faithful, pious, and have noble character (Muhammad Syu'aib & M.Husni, 2025).

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One manifestation of Islamic education that still survives today is the existence of Islamic boarding schools as traditional educational institutions. Islamic boarding schools not only function as centers for the transmission of classical Islamic knowledge, but also as institutions for character building for students. Throughout its long history, Islamic boarding schools have proven to be a place for shaping individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also spiritually and morally mature. Amidst the rapid development of a world that is full of the challenges of globalization, Islamic character values have become an urgent necessity for maintaining the identity of the Muslim generation. Therefore, discussions about the process of shaping Islamic character in Islamic boarding schools have become very relevant. This study focuses on the role of classical Islamic texts in internalizing Islamic character values in students. Classical Islamic texts are seen as educational instruments that not only present knowledge but are also full of moral and spiritual dimensions.

The Classical Islamic Texts, as the intellectual heritage of traditional Islam, have become the main foundation of the pesantren education system. These books cover various disciplines such as fiqh, tauhid, tasawuf, and akhlak, all of which are oriented towards strengthening faith and shaping Islamic behavior (Syah et al., n.d.). The function of the Classical Islamic Texts is not only limited to the delivery of religious theory, but also as a means of shaping a way of life based on Islamic values. Through the Classical Islamic Texts, students are guided to understand the importance of simplicity, humility, and devotion to Allah and society. The presence of the Classical Islamic Texts distinguishes Islamic boarding schools from other Islamic educational institutions because it contains a unique value system. The process of studying the Classical Islamic Texts is generally carried out using methods such as sorogan, bandongan, musyawarah, and collective recitation of the book. This pattern involves intense interaction between the kiai and the santri, creating a strong scientific and emotional bond. Thus, the Classical Islamic Texts not only contributes to knowledge but also becomes a vehicle for shaping Islamic character.

The formation of Islamic character is a fundamental goal of pesantren education, which is emphasized in all activities. Islamic character encompasses the dimensions of faith, worship, morals, and social responsibility, which are manifested in daily behavior. Students are required to emulate the noble character of the Prophet Muhammad through the practice of simplicity, sincerity, and discipline. These values are practiced in daily life at the pesantren, whether when studying the scriptures, worshiping, or interacting with fellow students. Thus, the pesantren functions as an educational space that integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects into a single entity (Hanani, 2022). The role of the Classical Islamic Texts is very significant because every text studied always contains moral and spiritual messages. This means that learning the Classical Islamic Texts never stands alone, but is always connected to the character building of the students. The formation of Islamic character through the Classical Islamic Texts ultimately becomes a strong identity of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia.

The method of learning the Classical Islamic Texts in Islamic boarding schools has its own characteristics that are rich in character education values. The

sorogan method, for example, emphasizes the independence and sincerity of students in understanding the text directly in front of the kiai (Syah et al., n.d.). Bandongan or wetonan trains students' perseverance in listening, taking notes, and internalizing the kiai's explanations. Meanwhile, musyawarah fosters a culture of discussion and collaboration among students, thereby training them in democratic attitudes and collective responsibility (Mu'izzuddin et al., 2019). In addition, the students' lives, which are full of disciplinary rules, also reinforce the Islamic values they practice. The exemplary behavior of the kiai and ustaz is an important factor because santri learn not only from texts, but also from the attitudes and behavior of their teachers. With this pattern, the process of internalizing Islamic values does not take place instantly, but rather through long experience in pesantren life. Therefore, in the context of pesantren, the Classical Islamic Texts is more accurately understood as a comprehensive Islamic character education system.

From an Islamic educational perspective, character building cannot be separated from the aspect of internalizing values. This internalization of values occurs through learning, role modeling, habituation, and daily experiences. Pesantren as an educational environment is very conducive to the process of internalization because every activity is full of religious meaning (Nasihin, n.d.). Starting from the routine of congregational worship, recitation, to the rules and regulations of the pesantren, all are part of the character education process. The Classical Islamic Texts is at the core of this entire process because the texts studied contain moral principles that are then brought to life in real life. Students are not only required to memorize and understand the contents of the books, but also to practice them in their daily lives (Maisy Apriliany Wilanda et al., 2025). This process fosters the awareness that knowledge must always be accompanied by action. In this way, Islamic character education in Islamic boarding schools becomes more holistic and sustainable.

Research on the formation of Islamic character through classical Islamic texts is important because this phenomenon is relevant to the challenges of modern education. Many contemporary Islamic educational institutions tend to emphasize cognitive aspects and academic achievement alone. In fact, education should not only be oriented towards the transfer of knowledge, but also towards character transformation. Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) serve as an alternative and role model in maintaining a balance between knowledge and morals (Maskuri et al., 2022). Thus, examining classical Islamic texts in relation to Islamic character building can enrich the discourse on Islamic education in the modern era. Moreover, the ethnographic method used in this study provides space to understand the experiences of santri (Islamic boarding school students) in depth. The results are expected to show that classical Islamic texts are still relevant to the character building needs of the current Muslim generation. Therefore, this study is not only descriptive but also reflective of the dynamics of Islamic education.

Ethnographic studies were chosen for this research because they provide a more holistic understanding of educational practices in Islamic boarding schools. Through participatory observation, researchers can directly witness the dynamics of learning the Classical Islamic Texts and the daily interactions of

students. In-depth interviews allow researchers to explore the views, experiences, and reflections of students and clerics regarding learning the book. Document analysis was also used to examine the curriculum, books, and rules that apply in Islamic boarding schools. With a combination of these methods, this study attempts to present a realistic picture of how Islamic character building takes place in context. Ethnography also allows researchers to understand hidden dimensions that are not always apparent in formal studies. The process of internalizing values, for example, is often unconscious to santri, but is evident in their daily behavior and interactions. With this approach, the research results are expected to be more valid, meaningful, and in-depth (Akbar & Ismail, 2018).

Tahfidzul Qur'an Alhikmah Islamic boarding school was chosen as the location for this study because it has a strong tradition of teaching classical Islamic texts. This boarding school is known for consistently maintaining its traditional education system, while also being adaptive to the changing times. Students at Tahfidzul Qur'an Alhikmah Islamic boarding school lead a disciplined life with a busy schedule of activities, ranging from studying religious texts and communal worship to social activities. The kiai and ustaz who serve as the boarding school's guardians play an important role as role models for the students. Religious, moral, and spiritual values are instilled not only through teaching but also through daily practices. The pesantren environment, which is full of religious nuances, creates an atmosphere that supports the formation of Islamic character. Therefore, Tahfidzul Qur'an Alhikmah Islamic Boarding School is an appropriate representation for studying how classical Islamic texts contribute to the character formation of santri (Akbar & Ismail, 2018). This research also provides empirical contributions to the study of pesantren in Indonesia.

The results of the study show that learning the Classical Islamic Texts in Islamic boarding schools does not only emphasize cognitive aspects, but also affective and psychomotor dimensions. Students are educated to be humble, sincere, and disciplined through a long learning process. The sorogan and bandongan methods not only train students to understand texts, but also foster patience, diligence, and respect for teachers. In addition, communal life at Islamic boarding schools trains students to have social responsibility and concern for others (Mawardi et al., 2021). The internalization of Islamic values takes place gradually through daily habits and interactions among pesantren residents. This makes character education in pesantren more contextual and applicable. Thus, the Classical Islamic Texts is not only understood as a text, but also as a source of inspiration for life. This contribution shows the importance of pesantren in shaping a Muslim generation with Islamic character.

Based on the above explanation, this study confirms that learning the Classical Islamic Texts plays a significant role in shaping the Islamic character of santri. The Classical Islamic Texts has been proven to be able to bring moral, spiritual, and social values that are integrated into the daily lives of santri. Pesantren, through their traditional teaching methods, remain relevant in the modern era as a moral fortress for the Muslim generation. Therefore, it is important for pesantren to continue to develop adaptive strategies for teaching the Classical Islamic Texts in line with the world without losing their traditional

values (Nopianti, 2018). In this way, pesantren can maintain their existence while making a real contribution to society at large. This research is also expected to enrich the literature on Islamic character education based on Islamic boarding schools. In addition, the results can be used as material for reflection for other educational institutions to integrate character values into learning. Ultimately, Islamic education based on classical Islamic texts remains relevant as a main pillar in shaping a Muslim generation with noble character.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with an ethnographic type. This approach was chosen because it is suitable for understanding the meaning, practices, and values contained in the study of the Classical Islamic Texts and the process of Islamic character building in Islamic boarding schools. The research was conducted at Tahfidzul Qur'an Alhikmah Islamic Boarding School, which is known for consistently teaching the Classical Islamic Texts using traditional methods and has an education system that emphasizes the formation of students' morals. The research subjects were senior and junior students at Alhikmah Islamic Boarding School who regularly studied the classical Islamic texts. The main informants consisted of the supervising kiai, teaching ustaz, and several selected students. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, based on their involvement in the learning process and the relevance of their experiences. Research data was collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation (Pahleviannur, dkk, n.d.). Observations were made by following the daily activities of students at the pesantren, especially when studying the classical Islamic texts. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the informants' views and experiences regarding the role of classical Islamic texts in shaping Islamic character. Documentation was used to complement the data through the analysis of the curriculum, activity schedules, and pesantren regulations. Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Through this method, the study is expected to provide an in-depth description of how the learning process of *kitab kuning* (Classical Islamic Texts) at Pesantren Alhikmah contributes to the formation of the students' Islamic character.

Results

The Classical Islamic Texts (Content of Islamic Teachings)

The *kitab kuning* (Classical Islamic Texts) represents a classical Islamic intellectual heritage passed down by scholars for centuries. These books cover various branches of knowledge, including fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), tauhid (theology), tasawuf (Sufism), tafsir (Qur'anic exegesis), hadith, as well as adab and akhlaq (ethics and morals). A distinctive feature of the *kitab kuning* (Classical Islamic Texts) is its use of unvocalized Arabic (without diacritical marks), requiring readers to possess strong Arabic grammar skills to grasp its meanings. In Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), the *kitab kuning* (Classical Islamic Texts)

is not merely a text to be read, but a source of life values that guides students' attitudes and behavior (Dahlan & Dahlan, n.d.). The teachings contained within serve to cultivate deep religious understanding and foster noble character. For instance, ethical works such as *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* emphasize the importance of proper conduct in seeking knowledge—respecting teachers, studying diligently, and avoiding laziness. Similarly, Sufi texts such as *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* teach spiritual values that highlight sincerity, patience, and self-control. Thus, the kitab kuning functions not only as a source of theoretical knowledge but also as a medium for internalizing moral and spiritual values that shape a holistic Muslim personality.

The teachings within the kitab kuning emphasize a balance among cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects in Islamic education. Cognitively, it enriches students' understanding of Islamic law, Arabic linguistic rules, and theological principles. Affectively, it instills moral virtues such as humility, sincerity, patience, and respect toward others. Psychomotorically, it trains students in the correct performance of worship practices—such as prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and daily social interactions (*mu'amalah*). These values are internalized through textual study and contextual explanation by *kyai* (religious teachers), making them easily understood and applied by students in daily life. Consequently, students not only read and comprehend the content of the books but also strive to embody their teachings in real practice. In this way, the kitab kuning forms both the intellectual and behavioral framework of students, creating a harmony between knowledge and action. Moreover, it serves as a medium for transmitting the religious culture of *pesantren*, as each teaching is manifested in the daily traditions and practices of the students (Dedy Mardiansyah et al., 2024).

The uniqueness of the kitab kuning (Classical Islamic Texts) as a source of Islamic teachings lies in its ability to integrate intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions into a unified whole (Farhanudin & Muhajir, 2020). For example, books on *fiqh* not only explain what is lawful and unlawful but also cultivate mindfulness and caution in ensuring all actions align with Islamic law. Texts on *tauhid* go beyond rational discussion of theology, strengthening students' faith and resilience in the face of life's challenges. Works on *tasawuf* teach the purification of the heart from negative traits and the cultivation of sincerity and patience in worship. Books on *adab* emphasize social ethics respecting parents, honoring teachers, and fostering brotherhood among fellow humans. The values contained within the kitab kuning (Classical Islamic Texts) are consistently instilled through both teaching and everyday practice within the *pesantren* environment. Therefore, the kitab kuning (Classical Islamic Texts) functions as a primary instrument for forming Islamic character that is grounded not only in theory but also in lived experience. In conclusion, the content of the kitab kuning (Classical Islamic Texts) serves as a vital foundation for nurturing Muslim generations who are knowledgeable, virtuous, and spiritually committed.

Pesantren learning Methods (Sorogan, Bandongan, and Musyawarah)

The learning methods used in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) have distinctive characteristics that set them apart from formal education systems. One

of the most prominent methods is sorogan, in which students (santri) read classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning) directly before the kyai (teacher) or ustaz, who then corrects mistakes and explains the meaning of the text. Sorogan requires diligence, independence, and discipline, as every error is corrected in detail. Through this method, students learn to study carefully and responsibly while developing perseverance and accuracy. Moreover, sorogan fosters a close relationship between students and teachers because the interaction is intensive and personal. In practice, students who are diligent in sorogan usually show significant progress in mastering both the Arabic language and the content of the texts. Thus, the sorogan method not only cultivates cognitive knowledge but also instills values of perseverance, patience, and respect for teachers (Ulfah et al., 2018).

In addition to sorogan, another highly prevalent method in pesantren is bandongan (also known as wetonan). In this method, the kyai reads and explains the content of the kitab kuning, while students listen attentively, take notes, and annotate the unvocalized Arabic text (Iryani, 2024). Bandongan allows the kyai to convey knowledge to a larger group of students at once, maintaining the efficiency of the learning process. This method trains students to listen with full concentration, take systematic notes, and develop rapid comprehension of the texts. Bandongan also nurtures patience, humility, and tawadhu' (respectful modesty), as students must listen attentively without frequent interruptions. This tradition has been passed down through generations in many Indonesian pesantren, becoming a hallmark of Islamic boarding school education. From a character-building perspective, the bandongan method shapes students to be diligent, disciplined, and cooperative learners who appreciate the long, rigorous process required for deep understanding.

Another equally important method is musyawarah (discussion), where students exchange ideas about the content of the texts being studied. Through musyawarah, students are trained to express opinions, listen to others, and develop open-mindedness toward differing viewpoints. These discussions are often conducted in small groups under the guidance of senior teachers, providing students with opportunities to engage more actively and critically. Musyawarah develops analytical thinking skills, the ability to argue constructively, and fosters a healthy academic culture within the pesantren environment. Furthermore, this method reinforces values of togetherness, mutual respect, and democratic attitudes aligned with Islamic teachings.

In addition to these three main methods, the exemplary behavior of kyai and ustaz serves as one of the most effective forms of education. Students learn not only from the texts but also from the conduct, manners, and morals directly demonstrated by their teachers. Thus, the pesantren learning system integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions in a holistic way, producing students who are not only knowledgeable but also virtuous and morally upright.

Interaction and Culture in Pesantren (Discipline, Worship, Habituation, and Exemplary Behavior)

Life in a pesantren (Islamic boarding school) is not limited to studying kitab kuning (classical Islamic texts); it also encompasses rich social interactions

among students (*santri*), teachers (*ustaz*), and the *kyai* in daily life. Students live together in modest dormitories, eat together, worship together, and participate in collective daily activities. This communal lifestyle fosters strong social bonds, a deep sense of togetherness, and mutual solidarity. The daily routines of *santri* are regulated with discipline—from waking up early for the dawn (*Subuh*) prayer, attending *kitab* study sessions, to participating in community service (*gotong royong*) to maintain the cleanliness of the *pesantren* environment. These everyday interactions serve as a medium for shaping Islamic character, not only theoretically but also practically. Students learn to respect one another, offer help, and share responsibilities (Aziz et al., 2024). Thus, social interaction within the *pesantren* environment instills values of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood), strengthening bonds of fraternity, sincerity, and compassion among individuals.

The *pesantren* culture is deeply imbued with religious values that are reflected in every aspect of daily life. Discipline in worship is a defining feature, as students are habituated to perform congregational prayers, engage in *dzikr* (remembrance of God), recite the *Qur'an*, and attend regular religious lessons (*pengajian*). These practices cultivate a consistent and profound spiritual routine, enabling students to live with a worship-oriented mindset. Moreover, the culture of simplicity stands out as a hallmark of *pesantren* life—evident in students' modest lifestyle, simple clothing, and humble meals. This simplicity not only nurtures humility but also teaches students to live with *qana'ah* (contentment) and gratitude. Discipline is another emphasized aspect: students must adhere to *pesantren* regulations, such as prohibitions on leaving without permission, the obligation to attend religious lessons, and participation in scheduled cleaning duties. Through such habituation, students learn obedience to rules, time management, and commitment to responsibilities.

Interactions and cultural practices in the *pesantren* also teach social responsibility through collective activities (Alam et al., 2023). For instance, community service projects such as cleaning the environment, working together to build *pesantren* facilities, and engaging in social outreach programs cultivate a sense of care, cooperation, and awareness that religiosity carries both individual and social dimensions. Students are encouraged to take active roles in community life serving as prayer leaders (*imams*), teaching *Qur'anic* recitation to children, or assisting in local religious events. In this way, *pesantren* education forms students who are not only pious on an individual level but also beneficial to their communities. Rooted in Islamic values, *pesantren* culture transforms the students' daily life into a living laboratory for holistic Islamic character formation where theory, worship practices, social interaction, and community service merge into a harmonious and mutually reinforcing whole.

Internalization of Islamic Values

The process of internalizing Islamic values in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) occurs through multiple interconnected stages—beginning with the study of *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts), reinforced through habitual practices, and further strengthened by the exemplary conduct of teachers and the social environment. In the first stage, *santri* (students) acquire a theoretical

understanding of Islamic values from the kitab kuning, which teaches the importance of adab (ethics), proper forms of worship, and virtuous moral behavior. However, these values do not remain merely cognitive; they are immediately put into practice in daily life. For instance, the value of discipline is not only taught verbally but also demonstrated through the obligation to attend every pesantren activity on time. Similarly, sincerity (ikhlas) is not just understood as a concept but cultivated through regular worship and collective, selfless activities. Thus, the internalization of Islamic values in pesantren is a gradual process that integrates understanding, experience, and continuous habituation (Muhammad Syu'aib & M.Husni, 2025).

The second stage of internalization occurs through consistent habituation in the daily activities of the santri. This includes performing congregational prayers, communal dzikir (remembrance of God), community service (gotong royong), and the fulfillment of daily duties with a sense of responsibility. Through these repeated practices, Islamic values become deeply rooted in the students' character. For example, the value of responsibility is developed through tasks such as cleaning the dormitories or managing the pesantren kitchen on a rotating basis, while the value of togetherness grows from collaboration in group work (Mawardi et al., 2021). Likewise, simplicity is cultivated through a humble lifestyle reflected in clothing, food, and daily living. This process of habituation gradually shapes a strong Islamic character, as the values are not only learned intellectually but also lived out in reality. In other words, habituation serves as the bridge connecting theoretical understanding from the texts to real-life application that molds one's personality.

The final and most influential stage in the internalization of Islamic values is keteladanan—the exemplary behavior demonstrated by the kyai (religious leader), ustaz (teacher), and senior students. Santri learn not only from written texts or formal rules but also from the living example of their teachers. When a kyai displays humility (tawadhu'), simplicity, and steadfastness in worship, students are inspired to imitate such behavior directly. This form of modeling is more powerful than verbal instruction because it engages both the emotional and behavioral dimensions of learning. Consequently, keteladanan becomes the most effective medium for deeply embedding Islamic values. Students do not merely memorize the concepts of sincerity or patience—they witness firsthand how their teachers embody these virtues with unwavering faith.

This process illustrates that the internalization of Islamic values in pesantren is a harmonious synthesis of text-based learning, habitual practice, and lived example. Through this integrated approach, pesantren successfully nurtures santri who are not only knowledgeable but also virtuous, possessing strong integrity and the resilience to face life's challenges grounded in deeply rooted Islamic principles.

Formation of Islamic Character in Santri (Morality, Spirituality, and Social Responsibility)

The formation of Islamic character among santri (students) in pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) is the result of an integration between the study of kitab kuning (classical Islamic texts), the pesantren culture, and the exemplary

conduct of the kyai (religious leader) and ustaz (teacher). This character development is a long, holistic process that encompasses not only the cognitive dimension but also the affective and psychomotor aspects. Santri are not merely taught to understand fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) or theological concepts (aqidah), but are also trained to internalize and practice the moral values taught in the texts. For instance, discipline is cultivated through the pesantren's strict and consistent rules, such as the obligation to attend lessons and congregational prayers on time (Ulfah et al., 2018). Likewise, humility (tawadhu') grows from the tradition of showing respect to teachers and maintaining egalitarian interactions among peers. Thus, the formation of Islamic character in pesantren emerges through the fusion of theoretical teachings and everyday practices, shaping santri into individuals who balance knowledge ('ilm), faith (iman), and action ('amal).

The prominent Islamic traits developed among santri (students) of Pesantren (Islamic Boarding School) Tahfidzul Qur'an Alhikmah, for example, include sincerity (ikhlas), discipline, independence, social responsibility, and humility (tawadhu'). Sincerity is instilled from the beginning through the intention to study solely for the sake of Allah, without expecting material rewards. Discipline arises from the structured pesantren routines that require adherence to schedules for worship, lessons, and daily duties. Independence is cultivated as santri learn to manage their own needs washing their clothes, organizing their study schedules, and solving problems collaboratively with peers. Social responsibility develops from the culture of collective work (gotong royong), such as maintaining cleanliness, assisting community activities, and helping fellow students. Meanwhile, humility flourishes through respect for teachers and senior students, as well as the habit of remaining modest despite academic or personal excellence. Each of these values is not only taught but lived out daily, forming santri who are intellectually competent, morally mature, and spiritually grounded (Aziz et al., 2024).

In relation to the goals of Islamic education, the formation of Islamic character in santri (Students) serves as concrete evidence of the successful integration of knowledge, morality, and spirituality. Pesantren education does not merely produce graduates proficient in understanding kitab kuning (Classical Islamic Texts), but individuals who serve as moral exemplars within their communities. Santri (students) who have undergone character formation in pesantren generally demonstrate adaptability, a strong sense of social responsibility, and a sincere commitment to serve others. These Islamic values become essential assets as they return to society as educators, community leaders, or professionals in various fields. This demonstrates that pesantren play a vital role in nurturing a generation of Muslims who are both knowledgeable and morally upright. Therefore, the formation of Islamic character through kitab kuning (Classical Islamic Texts) education in pesantren remains highly relevant—not only to the past but also to the present and future—especially in addressing the moral and spiritual challenges of the modern era.

Discussion

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) represent one of the most essential institutions in shaping knowledgeable and morally upright Muslim generations.

One of the core elements of pesantren education lies in the use of the kitab kuning (classical Islamic texts) as the primary learning source. These texts function not only as academic materials but also as moral and spiritual guides that embed Islamic values comprehensively. Through these books, students (santri) gain a deep understanding of religious teachings and are guided to internalize these values in their daily lives. Works such as Ta'lim al-Muta'allim, Ihya' Ulum al-Din, and Bidayatul Hidayah provide a foundation for the development of Islamic character by emphasizing proper etiquette, sincerity, humility, and self-restraint. Therefore, the kitab kuning serves as a bridge between intellectual knowledge and moral formation, creating a balance between the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects of Islamic education.

The learning process of the kitab kuning in pesantren is implemented through distinctive methods such as sorogan, bandongan, and musyawarah. In the sorogan method, students read the text directly before the kiai (teacher) and receive corrections and explanations, training them in accuracy, patience, and discipline. Meanwhile, the bandongan method involves the kiai reading and interpreting the text while students listen attentively and annotate the Arabic script. This method nurtures humility, concentration, and respect for knowledge. The musyawarah (discussion) method, on the other hand, encourages analytical thinking, openness to diverse opinions, and a spirit of cooperation in the pursuit of truth. The combination of these three methods demonstrates that pesantren learning is not merely about the transmission of knowledge but also the cultivation of moral and ethical character. Students are thus molded not only as intellectually capable learners but also as individuals of mature moral and spiritual integrity.

In addition to the academic system, social interaction and the cultural environment of the pesantren significantly contribute to shaping students' personalities. Communal life in dormitories fosters values of solidarity, cooperation, and social responsibility. Students are accustomed to living simply, independently, and with discipline through daily routines such as congregational prayers, collective remembrance (dzikir), communal work, and social service activities. The culture of simplicity ingrained in pesantren life also serves as an effective means of character education, as students learn to appreciate modest living, avoid materialism, and cultivate gratitude. Moreover, the interactions among students and between students and teachers encourage mutual respect, humility, and the strengthening of Islamic brotherhood (ukhuwah Islamiyah). Hence, the pesantren culture forms not only religiously devout individuals but also socially aware and empathetic members of society.

The process of internalizing Islamic values in pesantren takes place gradually and continuously. The initial stage involves theoretical understanding through the study of kitab kuning, followed by consistent habituation in daily activities, and finally reinforced through the exemplary behavior of kiai and teachers. Habituation acts as a bridge between theory and practice, as values such as discipline, responsibility, and sincerity are applied directly in everyday life. The most influential stage, however, is modeling students witness firsthand how their teachers embody Islamic values in action. When a kiai demonstrates humility, simplicity, and steadfastness in worship, students are inspired to emulate such

behavior. Through this comprehensive approach, pesantren education becomes not only a process of knowledge transmission but also a holistic system of value formation that cultivates intellectual, moral, and emotional balance.

Ultimately, the formation of Islamic character among santri results from the integration of classical Islamic teachings, traditional learning methods, pesantren culture, and exemplary leadership. Values such as sincerity, discipline, independence, social responsibility, and humility become core elements in shaping the santri's personality. These characteristics reflect the success of pesantren education in nurturing the intellect, the heart, and behavior simultaneously. Upon returning to society, santri are expected to embody these values as educators, community leaders, and contributors to social welfare. In the context of modernity, the values cultivated in pesantren remain profoundly relevant in addressing the moral and spiritual challenges of globalization. Thus, pesantren continue to serve as the bastion of Islamic education—producing individuals of strong faith, moral integrity, and social consciousness who uphold the timeless principles of Islam in every aspect of life.

Conclusion

The formation of Islamic character among students (santri) at Tahfidzul Qur'an Alhikmah Islamic Boarding School is the result of a comprehensive and continuous educational process that integrates the study of classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning), the pesantren culture, habituation, and the exemplary conduct of the kyai and ustadz. The kitab kuning serves as the primary source of Islamic values encompassing cognitive (knowledge), affective (attitude), and psychomotor (behavioral) dimensions. Meanwhile, learning methods such as sorogan, bandongan, and musyawarah instill discipline, perseverance, and a strong enthusiasm for learning.

The pesantren's culture emphasizing discipline, simplicity, social responsibility, and solidarity provides an effective environment for students to internalize Islamic values in their daily lives. This internalization process is further strengthened through the role modeling of the kyai and ustadz, who demonstrate real examples of piety, morality, and social behavior.

As a result, students do not only master religious knowledge but also develop a complete Islamic character morally upright, spiritually strong, independent, disciplined, humble (tawadhu'), and socially responsible. These values enable them to become exemplary individuals and agents of positive change in society. Therefore, pesantren play a vital role in shaping a generation of Muslims who are knowledgeable, faithful, and virtuous, capable of facing modern challenges without losing their Islamic identity.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our deepest appreciation and gratitude to Head of the Islamic boarding school of Tahfidzul Qur'an Alhikmah, KH. Abdun Nashir Badrus and Nyai Hj. Mas'udah Syakur, for their invaluable support and assistance in this research. Our sincere thanks also go to the teachers and students who have

contributed to the research process. May all their kindness be rewarded abundantly by Allah SWT.

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