



Strengthening Character Education in Pesantren based Madrasahs: Curriculum Integration, Role Modeling, Institutional Culture, and Spiritual Mentoring

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Abstract

This study aims to examine how character education is strengthened in pesantren based madrasahs through curriculum integration, role modeling, institutional culture, and spiritual mentoring. Employing a qualitative research design with a case study approach, the study was conducted at MTs Al-Khoirot Malang. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, and analyzed thematically. The findings reveal that character education is embedded across the curriculum, where core values religiosity, discipline, responsibility, humility, and honesty are systematically integrated into instructional practices. Teachers function as living curricula by demonstrating consistent moral exemplarity that shapes students' character development. Furthermore, institutional culture operates as a collective practice through daily routines, pesantren traditions, and habituation that reinforce moral discipline. Spiritual mentoring plays a crucial role in facilitating deep internalization of character values by fostering moral awareness and self-regulation among students. This study contributes an integrated model of character education grounded in pesantren traditions, offering insights for faith-based educational institutions seeking holistic character formation.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, character education has emerged as a critical global concern amid increasing social problems such as moral disengagement, declining civic responsibility, intolerance, and youth behavioral misconduct (Lailatul

Mufarrohah, 2026; Muhammad, 2025; Muqoffi, Ainun Nafila, 2026). Educational institutions are increasingly expected not only to develop students' cognitive competencies but also to cultivate ethical awareness, moral integrity, and social responsibility (Azizah & Hikmah, Ika Nur, 2026; Muhammad, Wahidmurni Wahidmurni, 2023; Zuyyina Linda Sari, Kudsiyeh, Sholi Asrori, 2026). This expectation arises from growing evidence that academic achievement alone is insufficient to address complex societal challenges in multicultural and rapidly changing societies (Ishmah Syafiulloh, Aisyah Nindi Antika, 2026; Muhammad, 2026b; Rahmania & Kurnia, Fitri Ayu, 2026; Subairi, Muhammad Husni, 2025). Numerous international reports indicate that moral erosion among adolescents is often linked to fragmented educational systems that prioritize standardized performance over holistic human development (Fakhridana et al., 2026; Hikmah & Umaroh, Siti, 2026; Husen et al., 2026). Consequently, education systems worldwide are urged to adopt integrative approaches that balance intellectual growth with moral and spiritual formation (Bisri et al., 2026; Lailatur Rohanita, Husnul Hilar, 2026; Muhammad, 2026; Muzedi, Hesim, 2026). In this context, character education becomes a strategic response to societal demands for morally grounded citizens capable of ethical reasoning and responsible action. Therefore, examining effective models of character education is not merely an educational agenda but a societal imperative to sustain social cohesion, moral continuity, and cultural resilience in contemporary communities (Arisih & Muhammad, 2026; Muhammad, 2026; Muhammad & Barizi, 2026; Muhammad Syauqillah, 2023).

Despite the global emphasis on character education, many educational institutions struggle to implement it effectively due to conceptual ambiguity, fragmented practices, and instrumental approaches (Azaim & Latif, Abdul, 2025; Maqfiroh & Sumarni, Yustina, 2025; Muhammad, 2025). Character education is often reduced to formal instruction, moral slogans, or extracurricular activities

detached from students' lived experiences (Az-zuhdy & Sirgar, M Taufiki, 2026; Hasbiyalloh, Ifa Farhatin, 2025; Muhammad, H. Nur Ali, 2021; Muqoffi, Muhammad, 2026). Such approaches fail to foster deep moral internalization and long-term behavioral transformation. In many contexts, character education is treated as an additional program rather than an integral educational philosophy (Baehr, 2017; Peterson, 2020; Simbolon, 2024), resulting in superficial compliance rather than genuine moral commitment. Moreover, modern schooling systems frequently separate cognitive development from moral and spiritual dimensions, creating a dichotomy that weakens ethical formation (Ergashbayev, 2025; Zollo et al., 2017). This problem is exacerbated by institutional cultures that lack consistent role modeling and value driven leadership. As a result, students may demonstrate moral knowledge without moral action, highlighting a gap between ethical understanding and practice. These challenges underline the need for comprehensive, contextually grounded models of character education that integrate curriculum, culture, exemplarity, and spirituality in a coherent educational framework.

Empirical observations in many Indonesian madrasahs reveal contrasting realities in character education practices. While formal policies emphasize character development, their implementation often remains inconsistent and symbolic. However, pesantren based madrasahs present a distinctive phenomenon where character education is embedded in daily life through religious routines, communal discipline, and close teacher student relationships (Priatmoko et al., 2025; Putro et al., 2019; Sarwadi & Raihan, 2025). At MTs Al-Khoirot Malang, character formation is not confined to classroom instruction but is reinforced through pesantren traditions, spiritual guidance, and habituation processes. Teachers and religious leaders actively model moral conduct, while institutional norms shape students' ethical behavior. This lived experience suggests that character education functions as a holistic ecosystem rather than a

segmented program (Balontia, 2024; Jordan, 2023; JOSHI, 2026). Nevertheless, these practices are rarely articulated in systematic academic models, limiting their visibility in international discourse. This phenomenon indicates a rich pedagogical context that warrants scholarly examination to uncover how pesantren based madrasahs operationalize character education in ways that transcend conventional schooling practices.

Previous studies on character education predominantly focus on curriculum based interventions, moral instruction, and values clarification models within secular or general education systems (Bahiyah, 2025; Njui, 2017; Pratama, 2026). Research has examined the role of character education in promoting citizenship, ethical reasoning, and social-emotional learning, often emphasizing cognitive and behavioral outcomes (Burroughs & Barkauskas, 2017; Hatchimonji et al., 2022; Utamirohmahsari, 2024). Other studies highlight the importance of school culture and teacher professionalism in shaping students' moral development (Muhsin et al., 2020; Tabassum et al., 2024). However, much of this literature conceptualizes character education as either a pedagogical strategy or a policy driven framework, with limited attention to spiritual and cultural dimensions. Studies conducted in faith based schools often emphasize religious instruction but tend to isolate spirituality from broader institutional processes (D'agostino et al., 2019; D'Agostino & Asadullah, 2025; Effendy et al., 2025; Evangelinou-Yiannakis, 2016; Marshall, 2018). As a result, existing research frequently treats curriculum, role modeling, institutional culture, and spirituality as separate variables rather than interconnected mechanisms. This fragmented approach limits the explanatory power of character education models, particularly in contexts where moral formation is deeply embedded in communal and spiritual life.

Furthermore, the majority of existing studies employ quantitative or mixed-method approaches that prioritize measurable outcomes over contextual depth.

While such studies provide valuable generalizations, they often overlook the lived experiences and meaning making processes through which character values are internalized. Qualitative studies, particularly case studies, remain limited in exploring integrated character education models grounded in indigenous and religious traditions. Pesantren based madrasahs, despite their long standing role in moral and spiritual education (Bahri et al., 2026; Sarwadi & Raihan, 2025), are underrepresented in international academic discourse. This gap results in a lack of theoretically grounded and empirically rich models that demonstrate how character education operates holistically in faith based educational settings. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by offering an in depth qualitative analysis of character education practices in a pesantren based madrasah, positioning pesantren pedagogy as a legitimate and valuable source of theoretical insight for global character education scholarship.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrative conceptualization of character education as a synergistic system encompassing curriculum integration, role modeling, institutional culture, and spiritual mentoring. Rather than examining these components in isolation, this research demonstrates how they interact dynamically to foster deep moral internalization. By situating character education within the lived realities of a pesantren based madrasah, this study advances the state of the art by bridging moral pedagogy, institutional culture, and spiritual formation. It challenges dominant Western centric models that emphasize individual moral cognition while neglecting communal and spiritual dimensions. Moreover, this research foregrounds spiritual mentoring as a core pedagogical mechanism, highlighting its role in transforming external discipline into internal moral commitment. This integrative model offers a context-sensitive yet transferable framework that can inform character education practices in diverse faith-based and values-oriented educational institutions.

Based on the above discussion, this study addresses the following research

problem: How is character education strengthened in pesantren based madrasahs through curriculum integration, role modeling, institutional culture, and spiritual mentoring? This research argues that character education is most effective when embedded holistically within an institution's pedagogical, cultural, and spiritual ecosystem. Using a qualitative case study approach at MTs Al-Khoirot Malang, this study provides empirical evidence that character formation is sustained through the interaction of instructional practices, moral exemplarity, collective routines, and spiritual guidance. The findings contribute theoretically by proposing an integrated character education model grounded in pesantren traditions and contribute practically by offering a replicable framework for faith-based education. Ultimately, this study positions pesantren based madrasahs as valuable sites of innovation in global character education discourse.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design using a case study (Gammelgaard, 2017; N. I. Khan, 2019; Viera, 2023) approach to explore in depth the processes through which character education is strengthened in a pesantren based madrasah. A qualitative case study was chosen because the research seeks to understand complex social and educational phenomena within their real-life context, rather than to measure predefined variables. Character education, particularly in faith-based institutions, involves values, meanings, interactions, and institutional practices that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative methods. The case study design allows for holistic and contextual analysis of curriculum integration, role modeling, institutional culture, and spiritual mentoring as interconnected components of character formation. Furthermore, this approach enables the researcher to capture multiple perspectives from educators, students, and institutional leaders, thereby revealing the dynamic relationships among pedagogical practices, cultural norms,

and spiritual guidance. By focusing on a single bounded system, this study provides rich, in-depth insights that contribute to theory development and offer transferable understanding for similar educational contexts.

The research was conducted at MTs Al-Khoirot Malang, a pesantren based madrasah located in East Java, Indonesia. This site was purposively selected due to its strong integration of formal madrasah education with pesantren traditions, making it a relevant and information-rich setting for examining character education practices. MTs Al-Khoirot Malang is recognized for its emphasis on moral discipline, religious habituation, and close teacher–student relationships, which reflect the core elements of character education examined in this study. The institution’s structured daily routines, spiritual mentoring programs, and value-driven institutional culture provide a distinctive educational ecosystem for character formation. Additionally, the madrasah’s consistency in integrating character values across curricular and non-curricular activities offers a compelling case for understanding how holistic character education is operationalized in practice. Selecting this site enables the study to generate context-sensitive insights while maintaining relevance to broader discussions on faith-based education.

Data were collected using multiple qualitative techniques to ensure depth, richness, and triangulation. In depth semi structured interviews (Chand, 2025) were conducted with key participants, including school leaders, teachers, pesantren caregivers, and students, to capture diverse perspectives on character education practices. Participant observation (N. Khan et al., 2025) was employed to document daily routines, classroom interactions, religious activities, and informal social practices that contribute to character formation. This method allowed the researcher to observe how values were enacted in natural settings. In addition, document analysis (Berndtsson, 2017) was conducted on institutional policies, curriculum plans, lesson plans, school regulations, and pesantren

guidelines to understand the formal articulation of character education. The combination of interviews, observations, and document analysis enabled the researcher to construct a comprehensive picture of how curriculum integration, role modeling, institutional culture, and spiritual mentoring function collectively. This triangulated approach enhanced the credibility and contextual depth of the findings.

Data analysis followed an interactive qualitative process consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Mezmir, 2020; Monaro et al., 2022; Richards & Hemphill, 2018). During data condensation, interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were systematically reduced and coded to identify meaningful patterns related to character education practices. Data display involved organizing the condensed data into thematic matrices and narrative descriptions to facilitate interpretation and comparison across sources. Conclusion drawing and verification were conducted through continuous reflection, pattern matching, and iterative review of the data to ensure analytical rigor. To ensure trustworthiness, this study employed credibility, dependability, and confirmability strategies. Triangulation across data sources and methods strengthened the validity of the findings, while member checking was used to confirm interpretations with participants. An audit trail documenting research procedures further enhanced transparency and methodological rigor.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The integrated character education model observed at MTs Al-Khoirot Malang is operationally defined as a synergistic system where curriculum integration, role modeling, institutional culture, and spiritual mentoring collectively foster students' moral development. Curriculum integration ensures that character values such as religiosity, discipline, responsibility, humility, and

honesty are embedded across academic subjects, making ethical principles an inherent component of learning objectives and assessment practices. Role modeling functions through teachers and pesantren leaders who consistently demonstrate exemplary behavior, serving as living curricula for students to emulate. Institutional culture reinforces these values through communal routines, social norms, and pesantren traditions that habituate students in moral conduct. Spiritual mentoring complements these dimensions by fostering reflective practices, self-regulation, and internalization of ethical and religious values. Together, these four pillars operate not as isolated mechanisms but as an interconnected ecosystem, producing holistic character formation and ensuring that moral development is sustained both inside and outside the classroom.

Table 1. Interview Excerpts

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Indicators
Headmaster	"We always ensure that the values of discipline and responsibility are applied in all subjects, not just Islamic Religious Education."	Curriculum Integration
Islamic Religious Education Teacher	"I always set an example for my students, for example in prayer, reading the Bible, and being honest in daily interactions."	Role Modeling
Boarding Student	"Morning and evening routines, dhikr (remembrance of God), and social activities accustom them to internalizing moral values."	Institutional Culture
Senior Student	"The kiai often advises us privately, making us realize the importance of intention and patience."	Spiritual Mentoring

The data presented in the table illustrate a consistent alignment between institutional policies, daily practices, and pedagogical interactions that collectively reinforce character formation. Curriculum integration, as articulated by the headmaster, highlights that character values are not confined to religious instruction but permeate the entire educational framework. Role modeling, demonstrated by teachers and pesantren leaders, functions as a powerful pedagogical tool; students internalize moral behavior not merely through formal instruction but through daily observation and imitation. Institutional culture, reinforced through routines and communal practices, provides continuity and

habituation that sustain character values over time. Spiritual mentoring facilitates personalized moral guidance, enabling students to reflect on their behavior and intentions. The synergistic interplay of these four components underscores the systemic and contextually embedded nature of character education in a pesantren setting, revealing a complex yet coherent model that integrates cognitive, behavioral, social, and spiritual dimensions of moral development.

Critically, the data suggest that no single component alone is sufficient for holistic character formation. While curriculum integration ensures formal exposure to ethical values, without role modeling and cultural reinforcement, the internalization process remains incomplete. Likewise, institutional routines habituate behaviors, but reflective understanding requires spiritual mentoring to transform compliance into genuine moral commitment. The model's effectiveness is therefore contingent upon the mutual reinforcement among these four dimensions. Notably, this integrated system also accommodates the variability in students' receptiveness and personal experiences, allowing individualized pathways of moral development. The interplay between structured institutional practices and personalized spiritual guidance demonstrates how pesantren traditions operationalize character education beyond conventional classroom boundaries. Such insights provide empirical evidence supporting a multidimensional framework for faith-based character education that is transferable to other contexts with similar pedagogical and cultural foundations.

Observations conducted within classrooms, asrama, and pesantren activities corroborate the interview data, revealing visible enactment of the integrated model. For example, students consistently demonstrated punctuality, cooperative behaviors, and respectful interactions aligned with institutional norms, reflecting curriculum integration and institutional culture in action. Teachers and musyrif acted as moral exemplars, providing immediate feedback on ethical behavior, illustrating the role modeling component. Additionally,

private mentoring sessions with kiai emphasized introspection and self-regulation, highlighting spiritual mentoring's role in reinforcing internal moral standards. The researcher noted that students' behavior patterns were consistent across formal and informal settings, suggesting a successful internalization of character values. These observations strengthen the argument that the pesantren based integrated model produces not merely performative compliance but genuine moral awareness and ethical habit formation, confirming the systemic synergy among curriculum, culture, exemplarity, and spirituality.

Restating the findings, the integrated character education model operates as a cohesive system where curriculum, role modeling, institutional culture, and spiritual mentoring mutually reinforce one another to achieve holistic moral development. Each component addresses different dimensions of character formation: curriculum provides formal knowledge and value articulation; role modeling exemplifies practical ethical behavior; institutional culture habituates consistent moral practices; and spiritual mentoring ensures internalization and reflective understanding. Together, these pillars create an environment in which students can internalize character values, develop moral reasoning, and translate these principles into everyday actions. The data illustrate that this synergistic system results in consistent behavioral patterns among students, supporting the notion that character education is most effective when embedded in a culturally and spiritually coherent educational ecosystem.

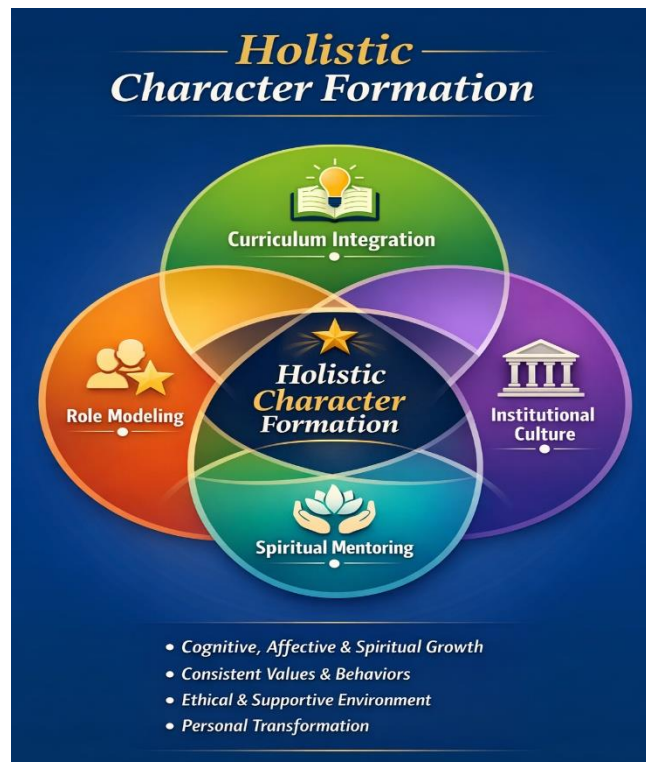
The observed pattern from the data indicates a cyclical and reinforcing process in character formation. Curriculum provides structured ethical guidance, which is exemplified through teachers' behavior, habituated via institutional routines, and internalized through spiritual mentoring. The interplay of these components creates a continuous feedback loop: students observe, practice, reflect, and refine moral behavior within the pesantren ecosystem. This pattern demonstrates that character education is not linear but multidimensional,

encompassing cognitive, behavioral, social, and spiritual domains simultaneously. The model highlights how pesantren traditions operationalize values holistically, suggesting that integrated approaches rather than isolated interventions are necessary to achieve sustainable character development. These findings provide a clear empirical basis for proposing an integrated character education framework suitable for replication in other faith-based educational contexts.

Table 2. Ideal Influence in Character Education

Informant Position	Interview Excerpts	Indicators
Headmaster	"We strive to model integrity in our decision-making and daily interactions."	Exemplary Leadership
Islamic Religious Education Teacher	"I always emphasize honesty and discipline through my own behavior."	Role Modeling
Boarding Student	"We consistently guide our students to emulate the behavior of the kiai and teachers."	Institutional Reinforcement
Senior Student	"The kiai's exemplary behavior motivates me to be honest and disciplined."	Student Internalization

The table indicates that exemplary leadership serves as a central mechanism in reinforcing character values. Leaders and teachers embody integrity, honesty, and discipline, which students internalize through observation and interaction. Role modeling by teachers amplifies the influence of curriculum, demonstrating that moral principles are actionable, observable, and socially endorsed. Institutional reinforcement by musyrif ensures consistency and habituation, creating a structured environment where students can practice values continuously. Senior students acknowledge the impact of this ideal influence, highlighting the transmission of ethical behavior across hierarchical interactions. Collectively, this pattern illustrates the centrality of exemplarity as a conduit for curriculum, culture, and spiritual mentoring to synergize effectively, confirming that leadership and modeling are indispensable for integrated character education.



Picture 1. Holistic character formation framework

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that character education in pesantren based madrasahs operates as an integrated and systemic process rather than as a fragmented instructional program (Ihsan, 2019; Kartiko et al., 2026; Mujahid, 2021). This aligns with international scholarship emphasizing whole-school approaches to character education, which argue that moral development is most effective when embedded across curriculum, culture, and leadership practices (Gurley & Dagley, 2021; OBIZUE et al., 2025). However, unlike many Western models that primarily stress moral cognition, civic responsibility, or social-emotional learning, the present study highlights the centrality of spirituality as a structuring principle. The integration of religiosity, discipline, humility, responsibility, and honesty across instructional practices confirms prior research asserting that value infusion across subjects strengthens moral consistency (Finkelstein et al., 2025; Kumarassamy & Koh, 2019; Mullen & Monin,

2016; Zhang et al., 2019). Yet, this study extends the literature by demonstrating how curriculum integration is inseparable from lived religious traditions within pesantren. Thus, while consistent with holistic education frameworks, the findings reveal a distinctive faith-based epistemology in which spirituality is not supplementary but foundational to character formation.

Furthermore, the role modeling component observed in this research reinforces classical and contemporary theories that position teachers as moral exemplars. Existing literature consistently affirms that students internalize ethical values more effectively through observation of authentic behavior than through abstract instruction alone (Christensen et al., 2018; Komalasari & Masyitoh, 2022; Purwaningsih, 2024). The findings corroborate this view, showing that teachers and pesantren leaders function as living curricula, embodying the values formally articulated in lesson plans. However, this study reveals a deeper relational dimension that is less emphasized in secular contexts: moral authority in pesantren is grounded not only in professional competence but also in spiritual credibility. The close teacher student relationships and hierarchical respect structures amplify the influence of exemplarity, suggesting that moral modeling in faith based institutions operates within a culturally reinforced framework of reverence and trust (Chan & Ananthram, 2019; Okpanum & Omeihe, 2026). This expands existing theories by demonstrating that exemplarity gains transformative power when embedded within communal spiritual traditions rather than individualistic pedagogical settings.

The findings regarding institutional culture also resonate with scholarship highlighting the importance of school climate and habitual practice in shaping moral behavior (AJAYI et al., 2025; ATOBA et al., 2025; BABATUNDE et al., 2025). Prior research indicates that consistent routines and shared norms create environments conducive to ethical development (Khamrakulova, 2025; Nicholson & Kurucz, 2019; OBIZUE et al., 2025). The present study confirms this principle but

advances it by illustrating how pesantren traditions institutionalize moral discipline through daily religious rituals, communal living, and structured habituation. Unlike models that rely heavily on policy statements or behavioral codes, the pesantren based system embeds values in collective lived experience, thereby reducing the gap between moral knowledge and action. This communal dimension distinguishes the model from many modern schooling systems characterized by fragmented schedules and compartmentalized authority. The findings suggest that sustainable character formation requires institutional coherence, where rules, rituals, and relationships mutually reinforce shared values (Fajriyah et al., 2025; Holst, 2023; Purwaningsih & Ridha, 2024), thereby strengthening the moral ecology within which students construct their ethical identities.

A particularly significant contribution of this study lies in its emphasis on spiritual mentoring as a mechanism for deep internalization. While existing literature acknowledges reflection and guidance as important components of character education, spiritual mentoring in pesantren contexts functions as an intentional process of cultivating moral awareness, intention (*niyyah*), and self-regulation. This dimension bridges the gap between external discipline and internal commitment, addressing a limitation frequently identified in character education programs that produce compliance without conviction. The individualized mentoring provided by kiai and senior educators fosters reflective dialogue, encouraging students to align behavior with spiritual accountability. Theoretically, this finding challenges purely behaviorist or cognitive-developmental models by introducing a spiritually grounded framework of moral agency. Practically, it suggests that character education initiatives should incorporate structured mentoring systems to facilitate personal moral reflection rather than relying solely on curricular or institutional mechanisms.

Collectively, the integrated model emerging from this study offers both

theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it proposes a multidimensional framework in which curriculum integration, role modeling, institutional culture, and spiritual mentoring function as interdependent pillars within a coherent moral ecosystem. This challenges reductionist approaches that isolate individual variables and instead advances a systems-oriented understanding of character education. Practically, the model provides a transferable blueprint for faith-based educational institutions seeking holistic character formation, emphasizing the necessity of alignment between pedagogy, leadership, culture, and spirituality. Policymakers and school leaders may draw from this framework to design context-sensitive programs that integrate formal instruction with communal practices and personalized mentoring. Ultimately, the study positions pesantren based madrasahs not as peripheral religious institutions but as significant contributors to global discourse on sustainable and spiritually grounded character education.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that character education in pesantren based madrasahs is most effective when implemented as an integrated and synergistic system encompassing curriculum integration, role modeling, institutional culture, and spiritual mentoring. The most significant finding lies in the recognition that holistic character formation emerges not from isolated interventions but from the dynamic interaction among pedagogical practices, communal traditions, and personalized spiritual guidance. The research underscores that moral internalization requires alignment between formal instruction, exemplary leadership, habitual discipline, and reflective mentoring. A key insight is that spirituality functions as the integrative core that transforms external regulation into internal moral commitment. The study thus reveals that sustainable character development depends on coherence across institutional structures and

lived experiences. The broader lesson derived from this research is that character education must be embedded within a culturally meaningful and spiritually grounded ecosystem in order to cultivate authentic ethical awareness and long-term behavioral consistency.

The principal strength of this study lies in its integrative conceptual framework and its contribution to advancing character education theory beyond fragmented models. By situating curriculum integration, role modeling, institutional culture, and spiritual mentoring within a unified system, the research offers a multidimensional perspective that bridges pedagogy, leadership studies, moral education, and spirituality. The qualitative case study approach provides rich contextual depth, enabling theory development grounded in lived educational practice. Furthermore, this study contributes to international scholarship by foregrounding pesantren pedagogy as a legitimate and theoretically valuable source of insight, thereby challenging dominant Western-centric paradigms that often prioritize cognitive or behavioral dimensions in isolation. The articulation of spiritual mentoring as a core pedagogical mechanism represents a novel conceptual contribution, expanding the discourse on moral internalization. Consequently, this research not only enriches empirical understanding but also proposes a transferable framework for faith-based educational institutions seeking holistic character formation.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that open pathways for future research. As a single-site qualitative case study conducted at one pesantren based madrasah, the findings are contextually rich but not statistically generalizable. Institutional culture, leadership dynamics, and spiritual traditions may vary across pesantren, potentially influencing the applicability of the integrated model. Additionally, the study primarily relies on qualitative data, which captures depth but does not measure long-term behavioral outcomes or comparative effectiveness across educational settings. Future research could

employ multi-site comparative designs to examine variations in integrated character education models across different regions or institutional types. Longitudinal studies would also be valuable to assess the sustainability of character internalization over time. Moreover, incorporating mixed-method approaches may strengthen empirical robustness by combining contextual insight with measurable indicators of moral development, thereby refining and expanding the theoretical framework proposed in this study.

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