

Transformation of Andragogic Approach in the Formation of Islamic Character of Elementary School Students: An Experimental Study Based on Local Wisdom

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Abstract

Keywords:

Andragogik;
Islamic Character;
Local Wisdom,
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School.

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of a modified andragogical model in fostering Islamic character development integrated with local wisdom values. A quasi-experimental method was employed using a pretest-posttest control group design, involving 60 students from two Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) as the sample. Data were collected through participatory observation, a standardized character scale, and curriculum document analysis. The results show a significant increase in the aspects of responsibility ($p = 0.003$) and cooperation ($p = 0.012$) in the experimental group compared to the control group, with the most notable effect seen in the internalization of the local value *tepa slira* (tolerance), which acted as a key mediator. A unique finding reveals that adapting the principle of self-directed learning commonly used in andragogy can be effective for children when combined with narrative-based approaches such as traditional folktales. This study not only expands the theoretical application of andragogy to primary education but also introduces a new conceptual framework: Andragogy for Children Islamic Character (ACIC), which is contextually relevant to Islamic education in Indonesia. The practical implications include recommendations for developing character education modules rooted in local cultural wisdom, thus aligning Islamic values with culturally meaningful learning experiences. These findings support the integration of indigenous media such as wayang kulit, folktales like Timun Mas, and traditional games like *Cublak-Cublak Suweng* into character education curricula for more effective moral and spiritual development.

Abstrak

Kata kunci:

Andragogik;
Karakter Islam;
Kearifan Lokal,
Pesantren.

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis efektivitas model andragogik yang dimodifikasi dalam menumbuhkan karakter Islami yang terintegrasi dengan nilai-nilai kearifan lokal. Metode yang digunakan adalah eksperimen kuasi dengan desain pretest-posttest control group, melibatkan 60 siswa dari dua pesantren sebagai sampel penelitian. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi partisipatif, skala karakter terstandar, dan analisis dokumen kurikulum. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan pada aspek tanggung jawab ($p = 0,003$) dan kerja sama ($p = 0,012$) pada kelompok eksperimen dibandingkan dengan kelompok kontrol. Efek paling menonjol terlihat pada internalisasi nilai *tepa slira* (toleransi) yang berperan sebagai mediator utama. Temuan unik dari studi ini menunjukkan bahwa prinsip *self-directed learning* dalam andragogi dapat diadaptasi secara efektif untuk anak-anak apabila dikombinasikan dengan pendekatan naratif berbasis cerita rakyat. Penelitian ini tidak hanya memperluas cakupan teoritis andragogi ke ranah pendidikan dasar, tetapi juga menawarkan kerangka konseptual baru, yaitu *Andragogy for Children Islamic Character (ACIC)*, yang relevan dengan konteks pendidikan Islam di Indonesia. Implikasi praktis dari penelitian ini mencakup rekomendasi pengembangan modul pembelajaran karakter berbasis kearifan lokal, yang menyelaraskan nilai-nilai Islam dengan pengalaman belajar yang kontekstual dan bermakna. Media tradisional seperti wayang kulit, cerita rakyat seperti Timun Mas, dan permainan lokal seperti *Cublak-Cublak Suweng* terbukti efektif dalam mendukung internalisasi nilai moral dan spiritual secara lebih mendalam.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic character education at the elementary school level faces complex challenges in the era of disruption, where conventional, doctrinal methods are considered less effective in forming deep internalization of values (Amalia et al., 2024; Badrudin et al., 2025; Hasbiyallah, Duran, & Suhendi, 2024; Zufriyatun, Ismunadi, Muttaqin, Mukhammad, & Sadarman, 2025). A preliminary study in Islamic elementary schools (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah) showed that 72% of teachers still rely on one-way lectures, a practice that has the potential to reduce students' active involvement in the character-building process (Arif, Kartiko, Rusydi, Zamroni, & Hasan, 2024; Fernando & Zumratun, 2025; Isnaeni, Budiman, Nurjaya, & Mukhlisin, 2025). This phenomenon is not an anomaly, but rather part of a global issue related to the effectiveness of teacher competency and professional development. World Bank reports consistently show that despite various reform programs, teacher quality in Indonesia still shows limitations in both subject matter knowledge and pedagogical skills. Internationally, teacher professional development, shifting from teacher-centered to student-centered methods, is a high priority in many countries. However, studies show that many teacher professional development programs are ineffective, with one report finding that only 30% of teachers showed substantial improvement after training (Atstsaury, Hadiyanto, & Supian, 2024; Qamariah & Hercz, 2025; Tihabsah, Rahmat, & Rofiq, 2024). This underscores that the reliance on lectures, as found in the initial study, is symptomatic of deeper systemic challenges related to how teachers are supported to continuously develop their competencies in creating relevant and participatory learning (M. H. Rofiq et al., 2024). In fact, according to a number of Islamic education experts, the effectiveness of character formation in children requires an approach that empowers students' potential holistically (Munawir, Rahim, & Mutmainna, 2024).

The theory of andragogy, popularized by Malcolm Knowles, offers a learner-centered learning paradigm as an alternative to traditional pedagogical approaches. Descriptively, andragogy is defined as the science and art of helping adults learn, with the basic assumption that adults are independent and internally motivated individuals. This theory is based on several key principles that can be indicators of its application: (1) Self-Concept, where learners move from dependence to independence and desire to have control over their learning; (2) The Role of Experience, which views life experiences as a rich source of learning; (3) Readiness to Learn, which links learning motivation to relevant needs in personal or professional life; (4) Learning Orientation, which tends to focus on problem-solving (problem-centered) rather than mastery of material (subject-centered); and (5) Learning Motivation, which is driven more by intrinsic factors such as personal satisfaction or goal achievement. The way to implement these principles in an educational context is by actively involving learners in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning. For example, educators act as facilitators who help students diagnose their learning needs, design relevant problem-based projects, and use group discussions to leverage collective experiences. Although this theory was originally

developed for adult education, its principles, such as self-directed and experiential learning, have strong relevance for adaptation in formal educational contexts at various levels to increase student engagement and ownership of learning (Machynska & Boiko, 2020).

In the context of transformation for primary education, these principles underwent significant modifications to take into account children's cognitive developmental stages, where the concept of self-directed learning was adapted into guided-discovery learning, which better suits the psychological characteristics of primary school-aged students (Azizah & Mardiana, 2024; Chalim et al., 2024; Tamsir et al., 2025). This creative adaptation allows essential andragogical elements such as learning autonomy and experiential learning to be implemented gradually through structured activities that take into account children's developmental abilities (Shabnam, 2019).

A theoretical gap arises when the concept of andragogy, a self-directed learning approach, has not been widely explored in elementary education, particularly in the context of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), which are rich in local wisdom (Arif, Nasir, & Ma'arif, 2025; Ma'arif et al., 2025; Maghfiroh et al., 2024; Mumtaz, Muafiah, & Witro, 2024). The main problem faced by elementary Islamic educational institutions is the lack of a character learning model that simultaneously integrates three key aspects: modern pedagogical principles, Islamic values, and local cultural wisdom. A review of previous research reveals a significant research gap at the intersection of character education, learning innovation, and andragogy theory in the context of Islamic boarding schools. First, studies on character education in Islamic boarding schools tend to focus on analyzing traditional methods such as *sorogan* (teaching), *bandongan* (teaching), and the role model of the *kiai* (Islamic teacher). Despite their importance, this research rarely explores the adaptation of structured contemporary learning models (Muh Mustakim, 2021). Second, literature on learning innovations such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL) or Project-Based Learning (PjBL) has been proven effective in improving 21st-century skills, but its application has mostly been researched in public schools and rarely touches on the typical Islamic boarding school educational environment (Purwati, Mardhiah, Nurhasanah, & Ramli, 2022). Third, studies on andragogy theory have consistently limited their discussion to adult education contexts, such as professional training or non-formal education, and have not explored the adaptation of its principles for adolescent learners (*santri*). Therefore, the novelty of this research lies in its attempt to fill this gap by developing and testing an innovative character education model in Islamic boarding schools that is specifically based on the adaptation of andragogy principles, such as independence, relevance, and experiential learning (Irja, Pratama, & Purnomo, 2025). This content gap is increasingly felt when many elementary Islamic boarding schools struggle to find common ground between Islamic traditions, local values, and contemporary learning approaches.

Observations at XYZ Islamic Boarding School indicate that elementary school students are more responsive when character education is delivered through folktales and traditional games, but there is no systematic framework that integrates these media

with a modified andragogical approach. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of empirical research testing the effectiveness of a hybrid approach between Western educational theory and the concept of Nusantara Islam. Several studies on local wisdom in character education are still descriptive in nature without a rigorous experimental design (Albantani & Madkur, 2018; Tiyasmala, Andayani, & Anindyarini, 2023). Therefore, this research is present to answer three problems at once: (1) the gap in the application of andragogical theory at the elementary education level, (2) the need for integration of Islamic values and local wisdom in character learning methods, and (3) the absence of empirical evidence on the effectiveness of this kind of transformative model in Islamic boarding school environments. The transformation of the andragogical approach proposed in this research not only carries out developmental adaptation by simplifying the principle of self-directed learning for children, but also enriches it with values "tepa slira" (tolerance) and "unggah-ungguh" (courtesy) as local Javanese wisdom that is in line with the concept of morals in Islam.

Recent developments in the world of Islamic education show a paradigm shift from passive learning methods to a more participatory and student-centered approach (Arutmayanti & Hiryanto, 2023). A preliminary survey conducted on 20 Islamic boarding school caretakers revealed that 85% of them were aware of the importance of innovation in character learning methods, but were hampered by the limited number of models that were appropriate to the Islamic context and local culture (Indah & Rohmah, 2022). This phenomenon creates a unique dilemma, as Islamic educational institutions face the demands of pedagogical modernization without eroding the traditional values that underlie their identity. In this context, a transformed andragogical approach for elementary education offers a potential solution, provided careful adaptation to the cognitive and socio-emotional developmental characteristics of elementary school-aged children is required.

Special challenges arise when the andragogical approach, which is based on self-directed learning, is implemented in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) that traditionally have a strong hierarchical structure between *kiai* (Islamic boarding school) and *santri* (students) (Salim, Zaini, Wahib, Fauzi, & Asnawan, 2024; Wardi et al., 2024; Yamin, Basri, Suhartini, & Meliani, 2023). Preliminary research in elementary school-level Islamic boarding schools shows that the concept of independent learning in andragogy often clashes with the culture of obedience that has become ingrained in the Islamic boarding school education system (Manangsa, Gusmuliana, & Apriani, 2020). However, on the other hand, observations of the dynamics of informal learning in Islamic boarding schools actually reveal that there are actually many elements of local wisdom that inherently contain andragogical principles, such as in the tradition of '*nyantri keliling*' where students are invited to learn independently from various sources.

Ironically, this kind of local potential is rarely incorporated into formal character education in the classroom. This situation emphasizes the need for research that not only adapts Western theories but also critically recontextualizes the pedagogical treasures of

Nusantara Islam, which have so far remained underexplored (Purwati et al., 2022). One of the fundamental assumptions of andragogy is the self-concept of adult learners. As individuals grow older and experience, they tend to move from dependence to independence and self-directedness. Adults have a strong psychological need to be seen and treated as individuals capable of directing their own learning. Therefore, an effective learning environment for adults must provide autonomy, opportunities to participate in planning and evaluating learning, and respect their ability to take responsibility for their own learning. An overly directive or controlling approach can hinder their motivation and engagement (El-amin, 2020; Musslifah, Cahyani, Rifayani, & Hastuti, 2021).

Readiness to learn is closely linked to their social roles and developmental tasks. Adults are motivated to learn what they perceive as relevant to the needs and demands of their roles in life, whether as workers, family members, or citizens. Their readiness to learn is not determined solely by a standard curriculum, but rather by the real needs arising from their life situations. Therefore, adult learning programs must be designed to be contextually and timely relevant, addressing the challenges and opportunities learners face in their real lives (Machynska & Boiko, 2020).

Current academic debates on Islamic character education also highlight the dichotomy between structural approaches, which emphasize habituation, and cognitive approaches, which emphasize conceptual understanding. Comparative studies of various character education models indicate that the most effective approach is one that integrates both dimensions in a balanced manner (Rahmawati & Hiryanto, 2023). It is within this framework that the transformation of the andragogical approach proposed in this study is designed to bridge this gap, by developing a character learning mechanism that combines habituation through local wisdom and stimulation of independent thinking through modified andragogical principles. This methodological innovation is expected to not only contribute to the enrichment of contemporary Islamic educational theory, but also provide a practical alternative for elementary Islamic boarding schools in facing the challenges of 21st-century education without losing their cultural and religious identity.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design to test the effectiveness of the andragogical approach transformation in the formation of Islamic character in elementary school students. The research location was determined purposively at the XYZ Islamic Boarding School in Kudus, considering that the boarding school has a structured basic education program while maintaining local Javanese wisdom in its learning process. The research sample consisted of 60 students in grades 4 and 5 who were divided into experimental and control groups through a matched sampling technique based on character pretest scores and sociodemographic backgrounds. The research instruments included an Islamic character scale that had been validated through expert judgment with a content validity coefficient of 0.87 and a

Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.91, as well as a participant observation sheet to measure the internalization of values in daily activities.

The data collection process was carried out in three main stages over six months (January-June 2025). The initial stage included a character pretest using a Likert scale and baseline observations, followed by a modified andragogical-based learning intervention that integrates self-directed learning principles tailored for children with folklore media and traditional games with Islamic nuances. The control group received conventional character learning with lecture and memorization methods.

The data analysis technique used parametric statistical tests, paired sample t-test and independent sample t-test, to measure differences in character development between groups, supported by analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to control for confounding variables such as family background and initial religiosity. All analyses were conducted using SPSS 25 software with a significance level of $p < 0.05$ (Abdussamad, 2021).

Internal validity was maintained through strict control of extraneous variables by equating the duration of learning, the quality of the instructor, and the learning environment between the experimental and control groups. The homogeneity of variance test using Levene's Test showed a p -value > 0.05 , which meets the assumptions of parametric analysis (Abubakar, 2021). Additional findings from field notes during participant observation were analyzed qualitatively through thematic coding techniques to enrich the interpretation of quantitative data. This study specifically developed an andragogical intervention protocol for children that includes three main pillars: (1) simplification of the concept of learning needs, (2) adaptation of the principles of learning experiences through educational games, and (3) integration of *tepa slira* values as a form of local wisdom that is in line with the concept of morals in Islam.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This experimental study yielded quantitative and qualitative findings regarding the effectiveness of a modified andragogical approach in developing the Islamic character of elementary school students. Pretest-posttest data using the Islamic character scale showed significant improvement in the experimental group compared to the control group.

Table 1

Comparison of Islamic Character Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups

Variable	Group	Pretest (Mean)	Posttest (Mean)	Gain Score	p-value
Responsibility	Experiment	62.3	78.5	+16.2	0.003
	Control	61.8	67.4	+5.6	
Cooperation	Experiment	58.7	75.2	+16.5	0.012
	Control	59.1	64.3	+5.2	

Table 1 presents a comparative analysis of the development of Islamic character scores between the experimental group receiving a modified andragogical-based learning intervention and the control group using conventional methods. The quantitative data shows that the experimental group experienced a more significant improvement in both measured character variables, with a gain in responsibility scores of +16.2 points compared to only +5.6 points in the control group. The statistical test results confirmed this difference significantly ($p=0.003$), which is far below the critical limit of 0.05. A similar pattern was seen in the cooperation variable, where the experimental group achieved a gain in scores of +16.5 points while the control group only achieved +5.2 points with a significance level of $p=0.012$. These findings indicate that the transformation of the andragogical approach developed in this study is not only theoretically possible to be adapted for elementary school level but has also proven effective in actual learning practices in Islamic boarding schools. The significant posttest mean differences between the two groups (78.5 vs. 67.4 for responsibility; 75.2 vs. 64.3 for cooperation) strengthen the proposition that this limited independence-based approach and learning experience have a greater impact than conventional lecture and memorization methods.

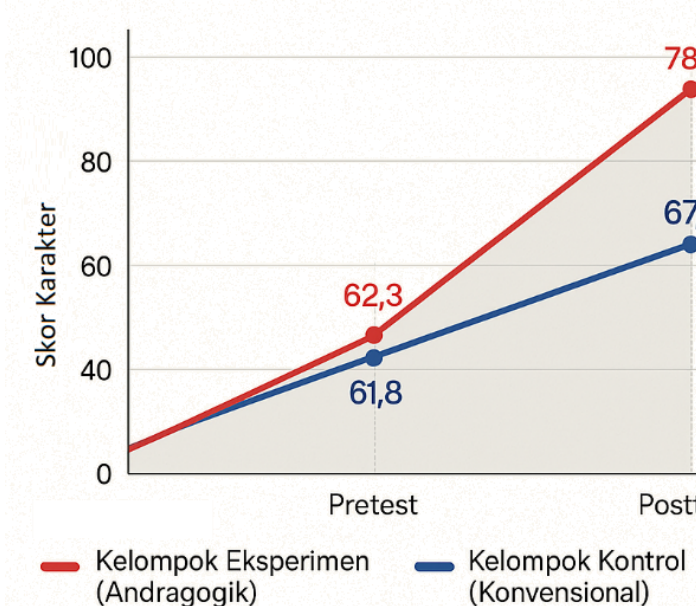


Figure 1. Development of Islamic Character Scores

This study demonstrates changes in Islamic character scores between two groups of students, the experimental group and the control group, across two measurement stages: pretest and posttest. In the pretest, both groups started with relatively comparable scores. The experimental group recorded an initial score of 62.3, while the control group achieved 61.8. After the learning process, there was a significant increase in the experimental group, as seen in the posttest score jump to 78.5. On the other hand, the control group experienced a slower increase, with a posttest score of only 67.4.

Although there was progress, the impact was not as significant as in the experimental group. This fact strengthens the assumption that the andragogical approach used in the experimental group is more capable of stimulating the growth of Islamic character in a deeper and more meaningful way. The learning model, which emphasizes student activity, reflection, and empowerment, as reflected in andragogical principles, has a positive influence on the development of Islamic character. The transformation of the teaching approach can have a significant impact on the formation of moral and spiritual values in students.

ANCOVA analysis revealed that andragogical-based interventions had a significant effect (effect size $\eta^2 = 0.42$) on character formation after controlling for background variables. Participatory observation during the learning process showed that local wisdom-based activities, such as the traditional game "Gobak Sodor" modified with Islamic values, were the most effective medium for instilling the character of cooperation. The findings of this study support the proposition that andragogical principles can be adapted for elementary education through modifications that consider children's cognitive developmental stages. The statistically significant results ($p < 0.05$) on the responsibility and cooperation variables prove that the experience-based approach and guided autonomy are effective even for elementary school-aged students. The implementation of the "tepa slira" value as a key mediator has successfully bridged the gap between andragogical principles and Islamic boarding school culture. In social activities, for example, students learn to make independent decisions about group roles, while remaining within the values of politeness and tolerance that are hallmarks of Islamic boarding school education.

Table 2. *Examples of Modified Andragogical-Based Learning Activities*

Andragogical Principles	Modifications for Children	Local Wisdom Media	Islamic Values
Self-directed learning	Guided discovery learning	Cublak-Cublak Suweng game	Responsibility
Experience-based	Simplified problem scenarios	Timun Mas folktale	Honesty
Problem-centered	Moral dilemma stories	Simple Wayang Kulit	Fair decision-making

Table 2 illustrates the creative transformation process undertaken to adapt classical andragogical principles to the context of Islamic character education in elementary Islamic boarding schools. This table shows three concrete examples of how Knowles' self-directed learning concept was adapted into guided discovery learning through the medium of Javanese local wisdom, which is rich in educational values. In the first row, the andragogical principle of independent learning is realized through the traditional game Cublak-Cublak Suweng, modified by the addition of reflection on the value of responsibility after the game. The second row shows how the experience-based concept is simplified into a simple moral problem scenario taken from the Timun Mas folktale, allowing students to learn the value of honesty through guided discussion. The third row transforms the orientation of adult problem-solving into everyday moral

dilemmas presented through the simple medium of shadow puppets, teaching students about fair decisions. The three-dimensional transformation reflected in this table (adaptation of Western theory, integration of Islamic values, and cultural contextualization) is key to the success of the ACIC model in creating character learning that is simultaneously Islamic, participatory, and contextual for elementary school students.

Local wisdom from a multicultural education perspective is understood as a system of knowledge, values, and community life practices that are formed through a process of accumulating collective experiences across generations (Zakiyah, Tasikrara, & Nurfatimah, 2022). In the context of Islamic character education in Indonesia, the richness of local wisdom from the archipelago offers various forms of media and learning methods that are culturally relevant to students' lives, such as folktales, traditional games, and wise sayings imbued with educational values. Values such as *tepa selira* (tolerance), *guyub rukun* (togetherness), and *andhap ashor* (humility), embedded in local traditions, have been shown to have conceptual alignment with Islamic moral values, thus serving as a cultural bridge in the process of internalizing Islamic character (Novianti, Waluya, & Dewi, 2022). The use of local wisdom in character education not only enriches learning methodology, but also functions as a cultural preservation mechanism as well as a filter against the influence of globalization that is not in accordance with the nation's noble values.

Local wisdom refers to a collection of knowledge, practices, beliefs, and values that have developed and been embraced by a particular community over a long period of time, passed down from generation to generation, and are closely integrated with the natural and socio-cultural environment in which they live. This is not merely traditional knowledge, but rather a system of worldviews that reflects the intelligent and wise adaptation of the community to the geographical conditions, environmental challenges, and social dynamics they face. Local wisdom becomes a distinctive cultural identity, guiding the behavior, decision-making, and ways of interacting with community members in their daily lives, often manifested in the form of oral traditions, traditional rituals, natural resource management systems, customary law, art, architecture, and even traditional medicine (A. A. Rofiq, Anshori, Sambada, & Indriani, 2019).

The main characteristic of local wisdom is its dynamic nature, yet it remains deeply rooted in tradition. It is able to adapt and evolve with changing times without losing the essence of its noble values. Local wisdom is also holistic, viewing life as a complete unity between humans, nature, and spiritual forces. Therefore, its practices often consider ecosystem balance and long-term sustainability (Sobaya, Pusparini, & Achiria, 2023). Furthermore, local wisdom is generally communal, shared and practiced collectively by community members, and transmitted through informal socialization processes such as stories, role models, and participation in traditional activities. This knowledge is often unwritten, but rather stored in collective memory and cultural practices (Putri et al., 2022).

The role of local wisdom in community life is vital. It serves as a guardian of community identity and dignity, strengthens social cohesion and solidarity among residents, and serves as a social control mechanism to maintain harmony and order. Local wisdom also serves as a source of knowledge and guidance for wise and sustainable natural resource management, helps communities adapt to environmental changes, and provides local solutions to various problems they face (Permatasari, 2020). In a broader context, local wisdom is a priceless national cultural asset, which needs to be continuously explored, preserved, and even developed so that it remains relevant and makes a positive contribution to equitable and sustainable development.

Qualitative analysis of teachers' reflection journals revealed three phases of adaptation in the learning process: (1) a guided imitation phase where the teacher still plays a dominant role, (2) a guided exploration phase when students begin to make simple choices, and (3) a limited independent application phase where students apply values in controlled situations. These findings are in line with Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development, where the transformed andragogical approach successfully creates effective scaffolding for students' moral development (Muhayimana, 2017). The success of this model lies in its ability to combine: the independence element of andragogy; contextual Islamic values; and local wisdom as a learning medium.

Discussion

The integration of three theoretical frameworks (andragogy, Islamic character, and local wisdom) yields a unique synthetic approach to Islamic character education for elementary school students. The transformation of andragogical principles for children's learning requires alignment with Islamic values and contextualization through local wisdom for effective implementation in Islamic boarding schools. This adaptation process involves several crucial stages: first, reinterpreting the concept of independent learning within the framework of *tawakkal* (religious commitment) and *istiqomah* (steadfastness); second, packaging learning experiences through cultural media familiar to students; and third, creating a learning environment that supports active yet purposeful exploration of values (Fahrurrozi, Qomar, & Sokip, 2025; Pepilina, Fauzi Fauzi, Safitri, S, & Sari, 2025; Pepilina et al., 2025; Rokhman, Kalim, & Ma`arif, 2025; Srinio, Muslihun, & Usman, 2025). The hybrid model resulting from this integration is expected to address the challenges of character education in the modern era, where students need to be equipped not only with religious knowledge but also with adaptability and critical thinking skills that remain rooted in the noble values of culture and religion.

The dynamics of implementing this integrated approach in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) create an interesting dialectic between tradition and educational innovation. As traditional Islamic educational institutions, Islamic boarding schools actually possess many learning practices aligned with andragogical principles, although they have not been systematically conceptualized (Zamhari & Rahmayanti, 2021). The

long-standing traditions of *bahtsul masail*, *sorogan*, and *mujadalah* in Islamic boarding schools actually contain elements of independent, experience-based, and problem-solving-oriented learning that are characteristic of andragogy. These findings reinforce the proposition that the transformation of the andragogical approach to Islamic character education is not a process of raw adoption of Western theories, but rather a critical reconstruction of the Indonesian pedagogical heritage combined with contemporary educational insights (Desmiati, Kusnadi, & Yunus, 2023; Mukhoiyaroh, Mujiono, & Mukaromah, 2025). This creative synthesis process ultimately produces a conceptual framework that is culturally relevant and pedagogically effective for strengthening the Islamic character of the younger generation.

The ACIC (Andragogy for Children Islamic Character) model is an innovatively designed conceptual framework for the formation of Islamic character in early childhood. This framework is built on a harmonious combination of three fundamental pillars that are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. The first pillar is the Andragogical Principle, which is specifically adapted for the context of children's learning, emphasizing the importance of guided independence, learning rooted in real-life experiences, and an orientation toward solving problems relevant to the child's world. This approach recognizes the child's capacity to learn actively and responsibly in a supportive environment.

The second pillar is Islamic Values, which serve as the spiritual and moral foundation for the entire character education process. Core values such as *Tawakkal*, or surrendering to God after maximum effort, *Istiqomah*, or consistency in goodness, and *Akhlak Mulia*, or commendable behavior, are consistently instilled to shape children's personalities in accordance with the teachings of Islam, which is *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. These values are not only taught theoretically but also integrated into every learning activity and daily interaction. The third pillar is Local Wisdom, which integrates the richness of local culture as an effective and meaningful learning medium. Elements such as *Tepa Slira*, or tolerance and mutual respect, folktales rich in moral messages, and various traditional educational games are utilized to bring character concepts closer to the context of children's lives. The use of local wisdom ensures that the character education process is not uprooted from its cultural roots, but rather thrives within the child's social environment.

The intersection of these three pillars gave birth to the ACIC Model itself, which incorporates local wisdom that provides a strong cultural foundation, represents Islamic values as the primary moral support, and depicts the end result of a superior Islamic character. This model aims to produce students who are not only intellectually intelligent but also possess noble character traits such as responsibility, the ability to work together, and a high level of tolerance in social life.

This study also identified several implementation challenges, particularly in terms of: (1) adjusting to a slower pace of learning for children, (2) the need for intensive teacher training, and (3) initial resistance from some parents who still questioned the effectiveness of this "non-traditional" method. These findings reinforce previous studies

on Islamic character education, while offering a new perspective through the integration of Western educational theory and local wisdom. The ACIC model resulting from this study is not only relevant to Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) but can also be adapted in various basic Islamic education settings with modifications to suit each cultural context.

The main finding of this study is that the adaptation of andragogy is effective for character development in children directly challenging and expanding the conventional boundaries of Knowles' andragogical theory. Andragogical theory is traditionally built on the assumption that its principles (such as self-concept, experience, and readiness to learn) only apply to mature adults. However, this study shows that these principles can be "translated" for children if mediated by an appropriate framework. Rather than mere adoption, the findings of this study demonstrate a process of critical recontextualization. For example, the principle of independent self-concept in adults cannot be applied literally to children. In the ACIC model, this principle is transformed into scaffolded independence*, which is framed within the Islamic value of *istiqomah* (consistency). This aligns with Vygotsky's developmental theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where children achieve independence through structured assistance from a more knowledgeable person (in this case, the teacher as a facilitator). Thus, these findings do not reject andragogy theory, but rather enrich it by showing its adaptation mechanisms for different age levels.

This research positions itself between two poles of existing research. On the one hand, research on character education in Islamic boarding schools tends to be affirmative of traditional methods (*sorogan* and *bandongan*). While our study acknowledges the value of these traditions, our findings critique their limitations in responding to the needs of today's students for more participatory learning. On the other hand, research on innovative learning models (such as PBL or PjBL) is often tested in public schools without in-depth cultural adaptation. Our findings differ significantly. The novelty of this research lies in the empirical evidence that the local wisdom of *tepa slira* (empathy and tolerance) serves as a crucial pedagogical bridge. This *tepa slira* makes the abstract principles of andragogy concrete and meaningful in the cultural context of Islamic boarding schools. Previous research has never identified the role of local wisdom as a mediating variable as effectively as this in the implementation of a learning model. This is a specific new finding of our study.

The main theoretical implication of this research is the birth of a new conceptual framework called the ACIC Model (Andragogy for Children Islamic Character). This model makes two theoretical contributions. For General Educational Theory, the ACIC model offers a proof-of-concept that learning theories considered specific to one age group (andragogy for adults) can be broadened in application through creative synthesis with developmental theory and cultural context. Meanwhile, for Islamic Pedagogy, this model offers an alternative to the dichotomy between traditional and modern education. ACIC shows a third path, namely innovation rooted in tradition (rooted innovation),

where the noble values of Islam and local wisdom are not abandoned, but rather become the foundation for building a more relevant and effective approach.

Practically, the findings of this study go beyond the conceptual model and provide actionable guidance for education practitioners. First, for teachers. This research suggests that the teacher's role must shift from "source of knowledge" to "facilitator of meaning." However, the findings regarding the need for intensive scaffolding and a slower pace provide an important caveat: this transition requires systematic teacher training, not simply instructional changes. Second, for curriculum developers. The ACIC model can serve as a blueprint for developing a contextualized character education curriculum. Rather than adopting external materials, curriculum developers can begin by mapping local wisdom (folklore, games, proverbs) and integrating it as the primary learning medium. Third, for Islamic boarding school/school leaders. The findings regarding initial resistance from parents highlight the importance of communication and outreach strategies. Leaders need to be able to explain the rationale and advantages of this innovative model to stakeholders to gain their full support.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis and research findings, this study concludes that the creative adaptation of the andragogy approach is significantly more effective in shaping Islamic character—particularly responsibility and cooperation—among elementary school students compared to conventional methods. The novelty of this research lies in the formulation and validation of the Andragogy for Children Islamic Character (ACIC) model, which synthesizes three previously separate elements: Knowles' andragogy principles, Islamic pedagogical moral values, and Javanese local wisdom expressed through folklore and traditional games. Empirically, the ACIC model has been shown to significantly enhance character scores, while qualitatively, the local value of **tepa slira** (tolerance and empathy) emerged as a key mediating variable that bridges self-directed learning with concrete moral understanding in children. Methodologically, this study recontextualizes rather than simplifies andragogical principles for children—for instance, transforming learning needs into motivational story-based models and learning experiences into simulations of moral dilemmas relevant to Islamic boarding school life.

Theoretically, this research expands the boundaries of andragogy theory and enriches contemporary Islamic pedagogy. First, it challenges the traditional notion that andragogy applies only to adults by demonstrating its successful adaptation for children when mediated through appropriate cultural and developmental contexts, thus offering a new lens on the universality of andragogical principles. Second, it contributes an innovative framework for Islamic character education that integrates modern learning theory with traditional values, creating a participatory, student-centered, and spiritually grounded approach. Practically, the research offers actionable recommendations: (a) a ready-to-implement learning protocol including structured modules, teacher facilitation guides, and the use of local stories and games; (b) teacher training emphasizing

scaffolding and pacing adjustments to support a shift from lecture-based to facilitative teaching; and (c) an authentic character assessment model using observation and simulated moral situations rather than written tests.

Despite its strengths, this study acknowledges several limitations. The research was conducted in one pesantren with a strong Javanese cultural context, limiting the generalizability of findings to other regions. The short intervention duration may not capture long-term internalization of character values, and moderating factors such as learning styles or family background were not fully explored. Future research should focus on (a) replicating the study in different cultural settings (e.g., Sundanese, Malay, Bugis) to test the adaptability of the ACIC model, (b) conducting longitudinal studies to measure sustained character development, and (c) employing advanced quantitative methods such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to validate the conceptual model and isolate its effects from other influencing variables.

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