

Teaching Methods and Islamic Boarding School Culture: Fostering the Religious Character of Students Sustainably

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Abstract

Keywords:

Pesantren Culture;
Learning Methods;
Religious Character;
Islamic Traditions;
Sustainability
Agenda.

This study aims to identify and analyze the teaching methods and culture, and subsequently explore the religious character values of students (*santri*) at the Hidayatul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School in East Lampung, Indonesia. A qualitative case study approach was employed. Thirty-eight informants served as primary data sources, supplemented by observations and document analysis. The study highlights that the boarding school's instructional system uses traditional methods—such as *bandongan*, *sorogan*, *syawir*, and rote memorization—integrated with modern approaches like demonstrations and practical exercises to foster deep understanding, intellectual discipline, and independent learning among students. Furthermore, the school's leader plays a pivotal role in shaping the culture and religious ritual traditions essential to preserving Islamic religious heritage. The institution also utilizes social media to coordinate and monitor student activities. Through the boarding school's culture and traditions, students develop exemplary habits and practices that cultivate religious character—including tolerance, discipline in worship, moral strengthening, and a sustained sense of socio-religious responsibility.

Abstrak

Kata kunci:

Budaya Pesantren;
Metode
Pembelajaran;
Karakter Religius;
Tradisi Islam;
Agenda
Kebertahanan.

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis jenis metode pengajaran serta budaya, kemudian mengeksplorasi nilai-nilai karakter religius para santri di Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Qur'an di Lampung Timur, Indonesia. Metode penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif. Sebanyak 38 informan menjadi sumber utama penelitian, yang kemudian dilengkapi melalui observasi dan analisis dokumen. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa sistem metode pembelajaran di pesantren menggunakan model tradisional seperti *bandongan*, *sorogan*, *syawir*, dan hafalan, yang dipadukan dengan pendekatan modern seperti demonstrasi atau praktik, untuk menumbuhkan pemahaman mendalam, disiplin intelektual, dan kemandirian belajar santri. Selain itu, pengasuh berperan sebagai pembentuk budaya dan tradisi ritual keagamaan dalam pelestarian tradisi keagamaan Islam. Pesantren juga memanfaatkan media sosial sebagai sarana untuk mengoordinasikan dan memantau kegiatan santri. Melalui budaya dan tradisi pesantren, santri dapat mengembangkan metode serta kebiasaan teladan yang menumbuhkan karakter religius, termasuk sikap toleransi, disiplin dalam beribadah, penguatan akhlak, dan sikap tanggung jawab sosial-keagamaan secara berkelanjutan.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of technology, globalization, socio-cultural dynamics, and diverse teaching styles present new challenges for Islamic education in shaping the religious character of students (Erihadiana & Mahmud, 2025; Sahin, 2018). Instilling religious character values is crucial because it provides a moral and ethical foundation that enables students to act in accordance with Islamic teachings, fosters discipline, and develops a strong personality amidst the challenges of the times (Asrori et al., 2025). Religious character values not only shape good behaviors, such as honesty and responsibility, but also foster integrity, noble morals, and the ability to face increasingly complex challenges while enhancing one's identity. Adolescents or students with good character tend to be more resilient, able to make wise decisions, and contribute positively to social life in their communities (Chabibi et al., 2025). Therefore, in this modern era, cultivating religious character is crucial for raising students' awareness of increasingly complex social dynamics. This enables them to develop attitudes such as tolerance and cooperation, and serve as good role models in shaping the next generation in accordance with Islamic teachings (Subur et al., 2024).

In Indonesia, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) are Islamic educational institutions that prioritize the formation of a religious character in students, as religious values are taught through both traditional and modern educational systems (Asy'arie et al., 2024; Atus Soliha et al., 2025). *Pesantren* education possesses a unique identity that distinguishes it from other educational systems, such as schools and madrasas. These distinctive differences are evident in their teaching methods, including *sorogan* (individual study of holy texts), *bandungan* (attentive listening), and *watonan* it is an activity in which *santri* sit around a *kiai* (religious teacher) to listen to an explanation. (Ma'ruf et al., 2024). On the other hand, the culture and traditions of *pesantren* encompass respectful attitudes toward the *kiai* and teachers (*ustadz*)—such as shaking hands, sharing meals, communicating politely, dressing modestly, maintaining cleanliness, and fulfilling religious obligations—alongside respecting guests, studying diligently, and actively participating in various other religious activities (Muttaqin et al., 2024). In this way, *pesantren* education functions as an Islamic educational institution that not only fosters religious knowledge but also shapes the religious, ethical, moral, and spiritual character of students (*santri*) through daily practices grounded in Islamic values and teachings (Fitria et al., 2023; Setiawan et al., 2022).

In the digital-virtual era, *pesantren* must preserve their deeply rooted culture and traditions while adapting to technological advancements in a careful and balanced manner. Amidst this transformation, *pesantren* continues to play a vital role as a center for Islamic education, making significant contributions to shaping a generation characterized by noble character and broad horizons, while simultaneously upholding the authority of religious scholarship (Tohari, 2024). A study also revealed that the culture of Islamic boarding schools has its own unique characteristics. Research by (Oktavia, 2023), It emphasizes that *pesantren* culture and traditions—such as the *rihlah ilmiah* (scholarly journey)—involve traveling from one place to another. Practicing a *tarekat* (Sufi path) is understood as a way to return to Allah through the acquisition of specific knowledge. Study sessions focusing on classical texts (*kitab kuning*) and unvocalized Arabic texts serve as primary learning resources (Damanhuri et al., 2025). Additionally, foreign languages (English and Arabic) are part of the tradition, alongside communication training within the *pesantren* setting (Syarifuddin & Sukari, 2025; Rahmi et al., 2024). Research by (ASRORI et al., 2025), emphasizes social, religious, and

communal traditions — such as visiting graves, cooperation, community-based practices, family values, sincerity, simplicity, self-reliance, and so forth.

The integration of *pesantren* culture and teaching methods is the most effective factor in shaping the character of *santri*. Various activities within *pesantren* educational institutions are complemented by religious practices (Nisa & Ikhwan, 2026). Daily religious routines include congregational prayers, Quranic recitation and study, the reading of holy verses, the chanting of *shalawat* (invocations of blessings upon the Prophet) and religious poetry, *bahtsul masail* discussions (Islamic legal studies), Quran memorization, and various other practices. These activities foster the development of a religious character, as *santri* learn not only through cognitive engagement but also through habituation and the emulation of role models in their daily lives (Ashari et al., 2022; Lubis et al., 2024; Muhyiddin et al., 2022). The use of the *sorogan* and *bandongan* methods has been proven to hone students' discipline, perseverance, independence, and respect for their religious teachers. This classical learning method can also increase empathy, concern, and moral sensitivity (Aziz et al., 2026; Asyiah et al., 2025). The combination of traditional and modern methods implemented by *pesantren* has proven effective in harmonizing the intellectual and spiritual development of the *santri*. Therefore, the learning methods used in Islamic boarding schools not only convey Islamic religious knowledge but also instill comprehensive and sustainable religious character values (Fatahillah et al., 2023; S. Susanto et al., 2023).

Previous studies have generally emphasized teaching methods, institutional culture, and character formation as distinct, independent areas of focus. Discussions regarding teaching methods have largely centered on traditional learning formats, curriculum maintenance, strengthening literacy in classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), and enhancing language proficiency. Research on *pesantren* culture has addressed local wisdom, Islamic identity, *santri* traditions, and the dynamics of *pesantren* in the face of modernization. Meanwhile, studies on character have primarily focused on character education, religious moderation, and the cultivation of religious behavior. This landscape indicates a research opportunity to examine teaching methods and *pesantren* culture within an interconnected framework. Consequently, this study offers a novel contribution by integratively examining teaching methods, *pesantren* cultural forms, and religious character values. The approach aims to understand the processes of habituation, role modeling, educational interaction, and the daily lives of *santri* in the sustainable cultivation of religious character.

This study aims to (1) identify the types of teaching methods used in *pesantren*, (2) identify the forms of *pesantren* culture, and (3) analyze the religious character values embedded in the implementation of these teaching methods and cultural practices. Strengthening the religious character of *santri* underscores the strategic role of *pesantren* as a space for shaping a generation capable of acting as agents of change and prepared to face various future challenges. This research was conducted at *Pesantren Hidayatul Qur'an* in Batanghari, East Lampung. The study is expected to enrich the literature and broaden understanding regarding the role of *pesantren* in comprehensively shaping student character. Furthermore, the research findings are intended to serve as a reference for the sustainable development of learning models for Islamic educational institutions at both national and international levels.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a qualitative case study design. A qualitative approach was chosen to reveal real-world conditions in the field by obtaining direct data from relevant sources on objectively occurring symptoms and events (Woodside, 2010). This study was conducted at the *Pesantren* Hidayatul Qur'an in Batanghari, East Lampung, over four months from March to July 2025. A qualitative approach was employed to describe the research conditions or subjects in detail, comprehensively, and authentically within the natural setting of the boarding school environment relevant to the topic.

Primary data for this study were obtained through observation, structured interviews, and document analysis conducted at *Pesantren* Hidayatul Qur'an. Meanwhile, secondary data were collected from various sources, including the Islamic boarding school curriculum, book reports, journal articles, and websites. A total of 38 informants were selected as the primary data sources obtained through direct interviews with 1 Kiai and the head of the *pesantren*, five teachers (*ustadz*), four administrators (male and female), and two dormitory supervisors. In addition, the researchers conducted two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involving 26 students (both male and female) as informants, who provided further insights into the teaching methods and culture within the *pesantren*. Each interview session lasted one hour to obtain in-depth information regarding the relationship between culture and learning methods in developing religious character. Data were then obtained through interviews, corroborated by observations and analysis of relevant documents.

This research uses triangulation of sources, methods, and theories to maintain the credibility of the data obtained. The researcher also applies a data analysis model (Miles et al., 2014). The first stage, data reduction, involved selecting, focusing, and analyzing the primary data obtained from the three field sources. This process aims to categorize relevant information in alignment with the research objectives. The second stage—data presentation—involves organizing and structuring the data into a narrative format based on interview findings, subsequently reinforced by observational data and documents to identify emerging patterns. The third stage entails reviewing the reduced and presented data to generate a comprehensive, concise, and systematic interpretation of the culture and teaching methods implemented in *pesantren* to foster religious character in *santri*.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Learning Methods in Islamic Boarding Schools

The learning system at *Pesantren* Hidayatul Qur'an employs classical methods, which are still maintained in daily teaching activities. The traditional model is still considered effective in preserving the *pesantren* scholarly traditions, structuring student learning patterns, and systematically transferring knowledge.

The *pesantren* learning model still maintains the *bandongan* method used in teaching yellow books. Then there are *sorogan*, *syawir*, and so on. For tahfidz students, the process is more or less the same, but with greater emphasis on memorization and *muraja'ah* (a method of repeating or reviewing memorization, especially the Quran), according to the teacher's targets and mechanisms." (Interview: Kiai 2025)

The application of this method is related to the character of *pesantren*, which adhere to a combination system, allowing various traditional approaches to be practiced and delivered to students.

“In Madrasah Diniyah activities, traditional teaching methods are still maintained; this is a legacy from previous teachers and a unique identity of the Salafiyah-modern-based Islamic boarding school.” (Interview: Head of Diniyah 2025)

The *bandongan* method used in IBS is one of the most well-known aspects, as well as a unique identity of the institution, which continues to maintain hereditary traditions, especially in the study of classical books (yellow books or bald books).

“The *bandongan* method, a key characteristic of Salafi IBS, is used in the student learning process. This method is applied to two main programs: diniyah (religious study) and tahfidz (religious memorization).” (Interview: Teacher/Ustadz 2025)

Then, the *sorogan* method is one of the learning methods in Islamic boarding schools to study yellow books (gundul books), especially for those who also attend formal schools.

“In using the *sorogan* method, where students can do it with their peers or directly in front of the teacher, *santri* are given reading material and then asked to read and interpret it.” (Interview: Head of Diniyah 2025)

In addition, the deliberation method, commonly known as *syawir*, is applied in teaching and learning activities (KBM), especially in activities at Madrasah Diniyah in IBS.

“In our opinion, the *syawir* method functions to help develop knowledge by reviewing lessons or material that has been studied previously.” (Interview: Teacher/Ustadz 2025)

This explanation aligns with the researcher's observations regarding the stages of implementing the *syawir* method. First, before the discussion begins, the teacher presents material related to the previous material. Second, *santri* are allowed to explore references in their own books or other relevant books on the topic. Third, one student is appointed as the discussion leader, tasked with managing the activity. Fourth, the teacher acts as a mediator, providing guidance when a student's argument is inappropriate. Fifth, the student who leads the discussion then summarizes the results and presents them to the teacher. Sixth, the teacher closes the session by providing additional explanations and conducting an evaluation. (Observation: Researcher 2025)

On the other hand, IBS also implements memorization methods in several book studies at Madrasah Diniyah. This method is even a mandatory strategy in the Quran memorization program, as memorization is a crucial part of the students' learning process.

“So far, the memorization method is for the tahfidz program, while the diniyah program students are given the task of memorizing Arabic and English vocabulary and then Arabic grammar.” (Interview: Head of Diniyah 2025)

“Practical methods are also used in religious activities. For example, the procedures for prayer and ablution must be accompanied by hands-on practice so that students can fully understand the subject matter.” (Interview: Teacher/Ustadz 2025)

For further clarity, the findings from the data presentation above are presented by the researcher in the form of a table below.

Table 1. Forms of teaching methods in *pesantren*

Types of Learning Methods	Sub Theme	Synthesis of Findings
Islamic Boarding School (<i>pesantren</i>) Learning System	Classical (Traditional) Method	<i>Pesantren</i> maintain traditional learning models—such as <i>bandongan</i> , <i>sorogan</i> , <i>syawir</i> , rote memorization, and demonstration—as a means of preserving the tradition of Islamic religious scholarship.
	Combination of Salafism and Modernism	<i>Pesantren</i> adopt a traditional approach: tailored to class needs and allowing the freedom to choose teaching methods.
<i>Bandongan</i> Method	<i>Pesantren</i> identity	<i>Bandongan</i> : distinctive feature of the teaching method—particularly in <i>pesantren Salafiyah</i> —is the study of traditional Islamic texts (<i>kitab kuning</i>).
	Implementation in Two Programs (Diniyah and Tahfidz)	<i>Bandongan</i> : used in the <i>tahfidz</i> (memorization + traditional Islamic texts) and <i>diniyah</i> (Islamic studies) programs.
<i>Sorogan</i> Method	Implementation of Limited Sorogan	<i>Sorogan</i> used for specific subjects (<i>tajwid</i> , <i>fasholatan</i> , and <i>fiqh</i>) and not provided to all <i>santri</i> , particularly those attending formal schools.
	Sorogan Process	The <i>santri</i> submitted the results of their reading and interpreted the material directly in front of the teacher (<i>ustadz</i>).
<i>Syawir</i> Method (Deliberation)	Knowledge Development	<i>Syawir</i> helps <i>santri</i> review material, solve social problems, and find solutions based on Islamic scriptures.
	<i>Syawir</i> Stages	This consists of: presentation of material/cases, reference search, appointment of discussion leaders, role of teacher as mediator, formulation of results, final evaluation.
Memorization Method	Memorization as a Mandatory Method	Memorization is the main method of the <i>tahfidz</i> program and is also used for language material (vocabulary), <i>nahwu</i> , <i>sharaf</i> , <i>tajwid</i> .
	Strengthening Tradition	Memorization strengthens the tradition of <i>pesantren</i> learning which emphasizes mastery of texts through regular recitation.
Demonstration / Practical Method	Ritual Worship Practices	A practical approach: procedures for prayer and ablution, for a comprehensive understanding.
	Formation of Teaching Skills	The <i>santri</i> are trained to teach in front of the class as a form of evaluation and to familiarize themselves with the role of aspiring educators.

Forms of Culture in Islamic Boarding Schools

Culture and tradition within the *pesantren* play a pivotal role; the strong influence of the founder and the head of the institution shapes the character of Hidayatul Qur'an. The *Kiai* holds significant authority in guiding the institution's continuity, preserving traditions, and adapting community cultural values to ensure ongoing relevance, thereby fostering a harmonious environment.

"All the cultural practices implemented are part of an effort to realize the vision and mission of IBS while preserving the legacy of the scholars. Furthermore, various existing traditions are inherited from previous teachers." (Interview: Kiai 2025)

First, from a cultural perspective, reflected through artifacts, the physical development of *pesantren* has seen significant progress over the years. This is evident in the various renovations and additions to buildings such as mosques, dormitories, study rooms, and other facilities.

"Like the mosque, it serves as a center of religious activity and a major icon, serving as a vital part of cultural heritage and historical significance. Furthermore, the mosque's design is tailored to the results of joint deliberations and architectural design. The women's mosque, meanwhile, is unique due to its assistance from the Saudi Arabian government." (Interview: Head of Diniyah 2025)

Then there's the dormitory building at *Pesantren Hidayatul Qur'an* is divided into two: a boys' dormitory and a girls' dormitory. The dormitory is a distinctive feature of the *pesantren*, serving as both a residence and a restroom for the *santri*.

"The dormitory was originally established in 2017 and was initially intended for male *santri*. In terms of development and changes, the structure of the dormitory building remains true to the original plan, while modifications have focused on adding ornaments to enhance its appearance." (Interview: Kiai 2025)

Second, Tradition (customs). Based on the researcher's observations, language use at *Pesantren Hidayatul Qur'an* shows two main patterns. First, Javanese is used in daily interactions by the majority of the Islamic boarding school community and is used in the process of interpreting the yellow text (*pegon*) and polite language (*kromo*). Second, Indonesian, as the official language, is used in daily communication and learning activities. Third, Lampung is used by a small number of students from indigenous tribes. Fourth, Arabic and English are also used in Islamic boarding school activities. The use of Arabic is applied in activities such as speeches (*khitobah*). Meanwhile, English is used as an effort to develop students' foreign language skills on certain days (Observation: Researcher 2025).

Third, there are many religious traditions and rituals in *pesantren*, including congregational prayer, which is an obligation for every Muslim, male and female, because prayer is one of the pillars of Islam.

"The implementation of congregational prayers, especially the five obligatory prayers, must be followed by all students when they are in the *pesantren* environment." (Interview: Kiai 2025)

Then there's the tradition of *wiridan*, a communal dhikr activity after congregational prayer. In traditional *pesantren* with roots in Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), this activity is mandatory for all students, with wirid recitations following a set of guidelines.

“For *wiridan*, we do not rely on a single guide; instead, we carry out this practice in accordance with the teachings of our teachers at the *pesantren* (following long-established traditions) as well as the common customs of the local community. Thus, this recitation draws upon hadith and the recommendations of other religious scholars.” (Interview: Head of Diniyah 2025)

The next tradition is *khotmil Qur'an*, a routine activity at *pesantren*, where the Quran is read in one day and completed within a specified time.

“It is true that Quran recitation is routinely held every Sunday night in Legi and Sunday in Pon. On Sunday in Legi, it is held at the *pesantren* mosque, while on Sunday in Pon, it is held in turns at the village mosque.” (Interview: Kiai 2025)

Studying the yellow books (*kitab kuning*) is an essential part of the teaching and learning process in *pesantren*. These books, written in Arabic without vowels, are the work of classical scholars. Meanwhile, the white books, or Arabic texts with vowels (meaning), are written by contemporary scholars.

“The use of yellow books outside the *madrasah diniyah* program is left to the ustadz, while the *diniyah* curriculum has determined the list of books to be studied from the beginner school level to the Alfiyah class level. Some of these books include: *Nahwu Jawen*, *Fasholatan*, *Alala*, *Hidayatussyibyan*, *Al-Jurumiyah*, *Akhlak Lil Banin*, *Taisirul Kholaq*, *Aqidatul Awam*, *Arbain Nawawi*, *Tarikh Nabi*, *Amsilatus Tasrifiyah*, *Mabadi Fikih*, etc.” (Interview: Teacher/Ustadz 2025)

Finally, the *manaqib* dhikr. This activity is a form of collective dhikr that includes the recitation of *thayyibah* sentences, special prayers for the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani, and previous scholars. The *manaqib* dhikr aims to train students to become accustomed to devotion by praying for their parents, teachers, scholars, and the community as a way of honoring the Salafusshalih.

“First, the *manaqib* of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Al-Jailani (Nurul Burhan version), which is the most popular and well-known in the Islamic world, especially among Sufis. This also aims to cultivate the virtue of the parts of the karamah (charity) by reciting the *Manaqib*.” (Interview: Head of Diniyah 2025)

For further clarity, the data findings from the data presentation above are presented by the researcher in the form of a table below.

Table 2. Forms of culture within the *pesantren* environment

Sub Theme Category	Synthesis of Findings
The Role of Caregivers and Cultural Formation	<i>Pesantren</i> culture: is shaped by the authority of founders and caretakers – acting as cultural architects and vision guides – serving as a pillar for character building and a conducive learning ecosystem.
Artifacts (Physical Facilities)	Physical development: Mosque, dormitory, study room, other class facilities, which represent the spirituality and scientific values of the <i>pesantren</i> .
Everyday Language and Cultural Habits	There are five languages: Javanese is predominantly used, particularly for the meaning of the yellow books (<i>pegon</i>). This

	reflects the characteristics of Javanese <i>pesantren</i> , where Javanese serves as a traditional academic language.
	Indonesian is used as the official language and transmitter of <i>Diniyah's</i> learning materials. Functions as a uniter of students from various regions and ensures students' understanding.
	Lampung language is used by some students, integrating local values and harmonizing local culture.
	Arabic and English are used at scheduled times. Efforts to strengthen <i>santri</i> global competencies and the needs of a modern curriculum.
Religious Traditions and Rituals	Congregational prayer five times a day is mandatory for all <i>santri</i> at <i>pesantren</i> . The practice of worship serves as a foundation for character and spiritual discipline.
	<i>Wiridan</i> (prayer) is performed together after prayer, following the traditions of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and the surrounding community. It demonstrates a hybrid tradition of local practices and culture.
	The Qur'an recitation program is held once a month. Sunday <i>Legi</i> is held at the <i>pesantren</i> mosque, and Sunday <i>Pon</i> is held at the village mosque, alternating between the two.
	Study of yellow books: <i>kitab kuning</i> and white books are taught using the <i>bandongan</i> method and <i>diniyah</i> curriculum.
	Dhikr <i>Manaqib</i> with Nurul Burhan's version of the book: contains prayers to the Prophet Muhammad SAW, Shaykh Abdul Qadir, and ulama. This is a strengthening of Sufistic values, customization of adab, respect for ulama, and tawassul.

Formation of Religious Character Values in Students

Efforts to shape the religious character of students at *Pesantren* Hidayatul Qur'an are carried out through a process of internalization and habituation. All processes undertaken by the *pesantren* community are integrated into various activities and combined with traditions and learning methods.

“The transformation process at *pesantren* is not only taking place in teaching and learning activities, both in the Islamic madrasah and the Tahfidz program, but is also evident in institutional development. Furthermore, the IBS model, which was previously Salafiyah (traditional) oriented, has also evolved into a semi-modern or combined.” (Observation: Researcher 2025)

The transformation of education and learning is carried out by adapting to social dynamics, the demands of *santri's* guardians, and increasingly modern developments. These changes are formulated through joint deliberations by the entire *pesantren* community.

“*Pesantren* has been utilizing digital technology and social media as a tool for preaching and as a means to reach out to parents, the community, and alumni, ensuring that learning activities can be accessed from anywhere and online. We utilize various social media platforms (YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook) and have also established WhatsApp groups with several stakeholders, including administrators, dormitory supervisors, and parents.” (Interview: Kiai 2025)

Furthermore, the process of forming religious character in *pesantren* can be achieved through habituation. This is done by providing concrete examples or role models implemented through various activities, such as extracurricular activities.

“The implementation of extracurricular activities is the result of joint deliberations with the *pesantren* community, responding to the aspirations of the students' guardians. The *pesantren* provides facilities and space for the students to carry out these activities, while also scheduling activities to avoid conflicts with their study time or Qur'an recitation.” (Interview: *Pesantren* Administrator 2025)

The culture and traditions that have developed are the result of collective creation and agreement, including the arts, which have become an inseparable part of the life of the entire *pesantren* community, contributing to a unique cultural identity.

“*Pesantren* has contributed to educating students to develop character. Six arts are distinguished: First, the art of hadroh (*sholawat*), an Islamic art activity involving the chanting of praise and prayers to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), accompanied by the tambourine. Second, dance, a form of art that preserves traditional cultural arts with Islamic values, is performed at specific times. Third, *Khitobah*, the art of speaking or giving speeches aimed at spreading religious messages, providing Islamic advice, or presenting to the public. Fourth, the art of qiroa'ah (recitation of the Quran) is an activity carried out as an important part of preserving the authenticity of the Quran. This practice not only teaches how to recite the Quran melodiously but also how to apply tajweed rules. Fifth, calligraphy is the art of beautiful writing that emphasizes the spiritual and aesthetic aspects of Islam. It serves as a medium for developing the character of students, such as patience and precision. Sixth, the martial art of *Pencak Silat Pagar Nusa*. This develops the potential of students and instills the character values of discipline, courage, tolerance, noble character, and responsibility.” (Interview: *Pesantren* Administrator 2025)

Additionally, researchers conducted observations of the *pesantren* routine using the exemplary method. There are three activities, including (1) *Mujahadah*: a spiritual activity in the form of worship to get closer to Allah SWT, including night prayers, dhikr, and wirid to purify the heart, gain peace, and form the religious character of students, such as discipline and istiqomah. (2) Yellow book reading training: an effort to improve students' ability to understand and read Arabic books without harakat. (3) *Tasmi'* (*sima'an* or reading the Qur'an): an activity of listening to memorized readings of the Qur'an to maintain, strengthen, improve reading fluency, and test memorization abilities (Observation: Researcher 2025). For more details regarding extracurricular activities and the daily lives of students at *pesantren*, please refer to the table below.

Table 3. Extracurricular activities and *santri* daily routines at *pesantren*

No	Extracurricular Activities	Time/Schedule	Location
1	The Art of <i>Hadroh</i> or <i>Sholawat</i>	▪ Saturday 15.30-17.30 WIB ▪ Friday night, week 1, 20.00-22.00 WIB	<i>Madrasah diniyah</i> hall boys and girls hall
2	<i>Khitobah</i> Art	Friday Night, 2nd Week, 8:00 PM - 10:00 PM WIB	Boys and girls hall
3	Dance Arts	Saturday 3:30-5:30 PM WIB	<i>Madrasah diniyah</i> classroom building, 1st floor

4	The Art of <i>Qira'ah</i>	Saturday 3:30-5:30 PM WIB	Girls' mosque and <i>diniyah</i> class
5	Calligraphy Art	Saturday 3:30-5:30 PM WIB	<i>Pesantren</i> Hall
6	Mujahadah	Done every night	Men's and women's mosques
7	Yellow Book Reading Training	Friday night 7:45-9:00 PM WIB	<i>Diniyah</i> classroom building floor
8	Tasmi' (Sima'an atau Membaca al-Qur'an)	▪ <i>Legi</i> Sunday ▪ <i>Pon</i> Sunday	Boys' and girls' mosques mosques near <i>pesantren</i>
9	Martial Arts: Pagar Nusa Pencak Silat	Friday Night (Men) 7:45-11:30 PM WIB ▪ Friday (Women) 15.30-17.45 WIB ▪ Sunday (Joint Training) 08.30-12.20 WIB	<i>Pesantren</i> field

Source: Student activity schedule at *pesantren* Hidayatul Qur'an 2025.

So far, routine activities at *pesantren* have been ongoing. Hidayatul Qur'an has been running according to the established plan. In the context of instilling religious character, this is formed through habituation methods implemented in the learning process, both in the *tahfidz* (memorization) and *diniyah* (religious recitation) programs. The following is as explained.

"It is important for students to teach tolerance, which is applied by getting them used to respecting each other's opinions during learning activities, especially when there are differences in ethnic background." (Interview: Head of *Diniyah* 2025)

"In terms of tolerance, we are taught to prioritize the importance of respecting differences of opinion and helping each other. Because we live in a boarding school with families from diverse backgrounds, including Javanese, Lampung, Sundanese, and Bugis, the students are taught to respect each other." (Interview: FGD *Santri* 2025)

Activities at Islamic boarding schools place a strong emphasis on the importance of noble morals. Through the learning process and other activities, students are encouraged to always be kind to everyone.

"Honesty is instilled in students from the moment they enter the Islamic boarding school. During orientation, they are instructed on the importance of maintaining honesty, and are taught to be humble, not arrogant, and always to respect others, regardless of their background." (Interview: *Pesantren* Administrator 2025)

"We always emphasize the importance of honesty to our students. We teach them to be honest and to be patient and sincere in helping their friends, without expecting anything in return." (Interview: Dormitory Supervisor 2025)

Furthermore, instilling a sense of responsibility and fostering social awareness in students is a crucial aspect of religious character education. These values can be practiced through daily life habits.

"As educators, we always instill a sense of responsibility as a form of concern for students when given assignments or memorizing, maintaining environmental

cleanliness, participating in cleaning activities (ro'an), helping with the construction of dormitories, and maintaining the security of personal and public property.” (Interview: Teacher/Ustadz 2025)

“During his time at IBS, he taught social awareness, for example, giving alms at the mosque on Fridays, and donating whatever he could to the orphanage charity activities, which were routinely held every Muharram month.” (Interview: FGD *Santri* 2025)

To further clarify the findings on the development of religious character, researchers present them in the table below.

Table 4. The process of religious character formation among *santri* in *pesantren*

Sub Themes	Synthesis of Findings
Internalization through Habituation	<i>Pesantren</i> Hidayatul Qur'an combines Salafi and semi-modern models in the learning process of the diniyah and tahfidz programs.
Transformation of Technology Utilization	<i>Pesantren</i> utilize digital technology (YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and WhatsApp Group) for preaching, coordinating, and monitoring student activities.
Culture, Tradition, and Art as Media	There are six Islamic arts (<i>hadroh</i> art form, Islamic dance, <i>khitobah</i> , <i>qiro'ah</i> , calligraphy, martial arts: <i>pencak silat Pagar Nusa</i>) and <i>mujadah</i> , training in reading yellow books, and <i>tasmi' al-Qur'an</i> .
The use of methods based on setting an example and habituation	Regius Character Values: ▪ Tolerance: respecting differences of opinion, fostering brotherhood, and maintaining harmony. ▪ Disciplined worship: performing religious duties (obligatory prayers, reading the Quran, and reciting the Wirid after prayers (obligatory and recommended). ▪ Noble morals: honesty, patience, sincerity, humility, gratitude, and modesty. ▪ Responsibility: caring about tasks, maintaining a clean environment, and safeguarding personal and public property.

Discussion

Learning Methods

The learning system at *Pesantren* Hidayatul Qur'an maintains classical methods such as *bandongan*, *sorogan*, *syawir*, memorization, and demonstrations, demonstrating the institution's consistency in preserving the tradition of Islamic scholarly authority (Juhri, 2025), emphasizes that *pesantren* are centers for the transmission of classical Islamic knowledge, prioritizing the continuity of the chain of transmission and mastery of texts. The use of traditional methods, combined with the flexibility of modern teaching, also reflects the character of combined *pesantren Salafiyah*. These institutions maintain their traditional roots while also accommodating the evolving needs of their students and changing class dynamics. In this study (Mustakim, 2021), the combination system strengthens learning effectiveness because teachers are given the freedom to choose the method most relevant to the students' ability level. The sustainability of traditional *pesantren* methods is not merely a matter of cultural conservation, but a relevant pedagogical strategy for building students' depth of understanding, intellectual discipline, and learning independence.

Various traditional teaching methods have been implemented in *pesantren* to strengthen the religious character of the *santri*. First, the *bandongan* method shows that the strengthening of religious character takes place through collective learning that places the kiai or teacher (*ustadz*) as a source of knowledge as well as an exemplary figure (Fatahillah et al., 2023; Miftahuddin & Nuruddin, 2023). In perspective (Ma'ruf et al., 2024), the *santri* not only understand the content of the book, but also observe the attitude, discipline, and manners of the teacher, which are then replicated in the life of the Islamic boarding school. This mechanism explains the growth of the value of *tawadhu*, respect for teachers, patience, and discipline. This is in line with the study (Prasetyo, 2018), placing *bandongan* as part of the culture of literacy of the yellow book and strengthening Islamic identity. Thus, its success is determined by the consistency of learning, exemplary and religious habituation.

Second, in the *sorogan* method, the formation of religious character arises because students face the teacher directly and must account for their individual learning readiness (Anwar et al., 2022). The pattern is in line with the concept of sociocultural scaffolding (Kharroubi & ElMediouni, 2024), with teacher assistance as support towards learning independence. Personal interaction allows immediate correction of reading and meaning so as to encourage honesty, responsibility, perseverance, discipline, and independence. In research by (Fatahillah et al., 2023), it was also found to strengthen patience, discipline, and responsibility. In contrast to *bandongan*, which is collective, *sorogan* presents personal accountability because the development of students' abilities is tested directly in front of the teacher.

Third, the application of the *syawir* method shows that religious character develops through dialogue, exchange of arguments, and joint resolution of religious problems (Fathurrohman et al., 2023). The social constructivism perspective explains that understanding is formed through interaction when students compare ideas as well as negotiate meaning with others (Kharroubi & ElMediouni, 2024). The need to listen to and respond to different views makes *syawir* relevant for the growth of tolerance, appreciation, intellectual humility, and social responsibility. This method's approach aims to collaboratively problem-solving to support the development of critical thinking (Ghufron & Khoiriyah, 2025). The findings were expanded by (Asrori et al., 2025), who emphasized the importance of *pesantren* education in building tolerance and inclusivity. That way, *syawir* brings together the maturity of reason with the formation of socio-religious manners.

Fourth, the use of memorization methods contributes to character formation through repetitive practice that demands consistency, self-control, and long-term commitment (Kohar & Asy'ari, 2024; Nugraha et al., 2025). The retrieval practice perspective explains that the activity of periodically recalling knowledge can strengthen retention rather than simply rereading material (Agarwal et al., 2021; Carpenter et al., 2022). In the *pesantren* environment, the mechanism goes beyond the cognitive aspect because the routine of memorizing, repeating, and depositing material is associated with *istiqamah*, discipline, patience, and responsibility (Ma'ruf et al., 2024; Setiadi et al., 2024). In a study by (Taufikin et al., 2025), it is shown that intrinsic spiritual motivation plays an important role in maintaining commitment to memorization and internalizing religious values. This means that memorization will be more meaningful for character formation if repetition is accompanied by religious understanding and encouragement from within the students.

Fifth, the method of demonstration or practice strengthens the religious character because religious teachings do not stop at conceptual understanding, but are realized

through observable and imitable actions (Hermawan & Sobandi, 2024). This is in accordance with the perspective (Lou et al., 2023; Susanti et al., 2024), on experiential learning, which places observation and concrete experience as important elements in the formation of behavior. Through direct examples in worship and religious activities, students learn accuracy, obedience, responsibility, and discipline. The use of teachers with demonstration methods in learning can support discipline, rigor, responsibility, cooperation, empathy, and obedience in worship (Jauza & Saragih, 2026; Minhatullaili, 2026). Thus, direct practice can bridge normative knowledge with action, so that religious values more easily develop into consistent habits.

Forms of Culture

The role of the *kiai* in shaping the culture of *pesantren* demonstrates that this authority figure acts as a cultural architect, determining the direction of the educational vision and mission, the institution's identity, and the learning atmosphere (Purnomo, 2017) states that *kiai* are not only spiritual leaders but also cultural symbols that shape the mindset and behavior of students. The character of students is formed through exemplary behavior, moral guidance, and daily routines grounded in religious values. *Pesantren* culture serves not only as a social code but also as a pillar of religious character, fostering ethics, morals, integrity, and discipline. Furthermore, research (Muttaqin et al., 2024) demonstrates that *pesantren* culture is a social system that is inherited from its founders and continuously reproduced through interactions, traditions, and religious rituals. This reinforces the role of the *kiai* in creating a cultural ecosystem that makes students feel safe, comfortable, and focused.

Physical artifacts, infrastructure, and representations of Islamic values in *pesantren* show that physical facilities, such as mosques, dormitories, and study rooms, not only function as educational spaces but also as cultural artifacts that embody spirituality, discipline, and Islamic educational values (Lahmar, 2020; Sahin, 2018). In the context of *pesantren*, the mosque symbolizes the spiritual center and discipline of worship, while the dormitory fosters social control and moral conditioning. The modernization of facilities demonstrates the adaptability of *pesantren* to contemporary educational needs, as they continue to transform to meet global demands without abandoning tradition (Najmuddin et al., 2025). Infrastructure improvements impact learning motivation, living comfort, and student population growth (Fadilah et al., 2024).

The use of Javanese, especially in the context of the meaning of the yellow book (pegon), adds a unique nuance, indicating that Islamic boarding schools continue to maintain Javanese as a traditional medium (Suryani et al., 2022). Indonesian serves as the official language, illustrating that modern *pesantren* requires a national language to maintain a uniform understanding among its students. Arabic and English reflect a global orientation and the needs of a contemporary curriculum (Franklin, 2014). In addition, religious traditions such as congregational prayer, wiridan, khotmil Qur'an, and dhikr manaqib demonstrate a hybrid tradition between Sufism and the typical culture of *pesantren*, which are the centers of reproduction of Islamic traditions (Harifah & Sofa, 2024; Ristia et al., 2026).

Religious Character Value

The process of forming religious character at *pesantren* for students is carried out through internalization of habits that combine Salafi and semi-modern models in diniyah and tahfidz learning. According to (Sholikah et al., 2025), the importance of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action is emphasized, which are developed

through habituation and role modeling. Learning integrated with culture and tradition can strengthen the construction of values within *santri*. Furthermore (Muddin & Septiawan, 2022), note that the use of social media (YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp) indicates a transformation towards a cyber-pesantren model, where the digitalization of *pesantren* is effective in expanding the message of da'wah and increasing connectivity between the *pesantren* community and its guardians.

The integration of culture, tradition, and various *pesantren* schools demonstrates that character formation is achieved through a cultural approach that combines spiritual values, artistic beauty, and discipline (Fatahillah et al., 2023; Huda et al., 2024). The application of the habituation method is a highly effective strategy for cultivating religious character in students. This can be practiced through observation, imitation, and continuous practice of the teacher's actions, thus forming consistent mindsets and habits (Sholikah et al., 2025). In addition, this exemplary method highlights the crucial role of educators in fostering character traits such as tolerance, discipline in worship, noble morals, and a sense of responsibility (Ismail, 2016; Susanto et al., 2025). Thus, this positive habituation can strengthen the social and spiritual dimensions of students, thereby laying the main foundation for building a religious character in the next generation of a better nation.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights that the learning system at *Pesantren* Hidayatul Qur'an demonstrates a blend of Salafi and semi-modern teaching methods in the *diniyah* and *tahfidz* programs. Traditional methods such as *bandongan*, *sorogan*, *syawir*, and memorization remain the primary foundation of the teaching and learning process, while the integrated demonstration method aims to enable students to develop a deeper understanding of the material and learn independently. Language habits also reflect the characteristics of *pesantren*. Javanese is maintained as the primary language, while Indonesian and Lampung serve as specialized forms of communication. Arabic and English are implemented to meet the needs of modern curriculum programs and global competencies. Through exemplary behavior and habit formation, Islamic boarding schools have successfully instilled religious character traits in their students, including tolerance, discipline, noble morals, and social responsibility.

This study is limited by its focus on a single *pesantren*, thereby restricting the ability to capture the diversity of learning systems across different typologies. The data obtained were derived from very limited interviews and observations. Therefore, further research—particularly comparative studies between *Salafi* and modern *pesantren*—is recommended to identify methods for integrating traditional and modern approaches regarding the cognitive, affective, and social development of *santri*. Such research could assist *pesantren* administrators employing traditional methods in creating holistic learning experiences, modernizing management practices, and strengthening partnerships with national and international institutions, ultimately fostering sustainable improvements in educational quality. Future research is also encouraged to examine the effectiveness of various *pesantren* teaching methods in shaping religious character through longitudinal and comparative approaches involving diverse characteristics, as well as to develop an integrative model linking learning methods and culture to reinforce students' religious behavior amidst social change.

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