



THE ROLE OF PESANTREN CULTURE IN THE FORMATION OF STUDENT CHARACTER EDUCATION AT AL-ANAM ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL CIANJUR

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Abstract

The culture of the pesantren is a living value system and plays an important role in the formation of the character of the students. This study aims to analyze the role of pesantren culture in shaping the character education of students at the Al-Anam Cianjur Islamic Boarding School. The research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation. The research informants included kyai, ustadz, pesantren administrators, and students. Data analysis uses the Miles and Huberman model which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation of sources and techniques. The results of the study show that the pesantren culture at Al-Anam Islamic Boarding School, which includes daily discipline, ta'dzim attitude towards teachers, mutual cooperation, simplicity, independence, and the tradition of recitation of the yellow book, plays a significant role in shaping the character of students. The character values formed include sincerity, responsibility, discipline, humility, independence, tolerance, and honesty. The culture of pesantren has proven to be an effective character education system because these values are internalized through example, habituation, and religious boarding life. This study recommends strengthening the culture of pesantren as a model of Islamic character education that is relevant to the challenges of modern education.

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A. Introduction

Character education in the last five years has become a major focus in global and national education discourses as the moral challenges faced by the younger generation increase. Various studies show that the advancement of digital technology, cultural globalization, and rapid social change have had a significant impact on student behavior, such as declining discipline, weakening social ethics, and low moral responsibility (Khoirunnisa et al., 2025; Mahmudah et al., 2025; Suwar & Endayani, 2021; Syarif, 2025). This condition confirms that education can no longer be only oriented to academic achievement, but must be directed at the formation of a comprehensive and sustainable character.

In the last five years, a number of studies have emphasized that the failure of character education is often due to the dominance of cognitive approaches in the formal education system (Muslich, 2022; Sadiyah et al., 2025). Education that emphasizes the aspect of knowledge and achievement of values tends to ignore the formation of students' attitudes and moral values (July, 2019). In fact, character cannot be formed instantly through theoretical learning, but through a long process involving example, habituation, and a conducive educational environment (Lickona, 1991). Therefore, educational institutions that have a strong value ecosystem are very relevant to be studied in the context of character education.

In the context of Islamic education, recent studies show that Islamic boarding schools have a strategic position as educational institutions that consistently instill character values based on Islamic teachings (Pratama et al., 2025; Triyono & Mediawati, 2023). Pesantren not only functions as a center for the transmission of Islamic sciences, but also as an institution for fostering the morals and spirituality of students through the culture that lives in daily life. Islamic boarding school culture includes a system of values, traditions, norms, and patterns of relationships between kyai, ustadz, and students that play an important role in shaping the personality of students holistically.

Research also shows that the strength of pesantren lies in its integral educational culture. The educational process in the pesantren lasts for twenty-four hours through boarding life, thus allowing the internalization of values to be carried out consistently and continuously (Ningsih, 2021; Perawironegoro et al., 2020). Values such as sincerity, discipline, independence, simplicity, and ukhuwah are not only taught verbally, but are practiced directly in the daily lives of students. This is what makes pesantren an effective and relevant model of character education in dealing with the moral crisis of the younger generation.

Modernization and globalization are serious challenges for the existence of Islamic boarding schools in contemporary times. The inclusion of popular culture, instant lifestyles, and individualistic values often contradicts the traditional values of pesantren that emphasize patience, hard work, and togetherness (Rahman, 2021). However, various studies show that pesantren are actually able to adapt without losing their basic identity. The pesantren still maintains its core culture as the foundation of character formation, while making limited adjustments to the development of the times (Hamid, 2017).

One of the key elements that makes the pesantren survive and be relevant is the culture of the pesantren itself. Islamic boarding school culture is a set of values, traditions, and habits that are inherited from generation to generation and become a guideline for the life of students (Hamid, 2017). The tradition of ta'dzim to teachers forms an attitude of respect and humility, solemn activities instill sincerity and responsibility, while boarding life fosters solidarity, tolerance, and social concern (Pratama et al., 2025).

Empirical studies also show that character education in pesantren is praxis and contextual. The character of the students is formed through direct experience, not just the transfer of knowledge (Surur & Habibullah, 2025). Students learn discipline through a strict schedule of activities, learn responsibility through daily tasks, and learn honesty and simplicity through the pesantren lifestyle. This process is strengthened by the example of kyai and ustadz who function as the main role models in the lives of students.

Al-Anam Cianjur Islamic Boarding School is one of the salaf Islamic boarding schools that remains consistent in maintaining and developing the culture of the pesantren as a means of forming the character of students. This pesantren maintains classic teaching methods such as sorogan, bandongan, and the recitation of the yellow book, while instilling Islamic character values in the daily lives of students (Observation, 2025). The existence of Al-Anam Islamic boarding school in Cianjur Regency, a region known to have a strong Islamic tradition, is an interesting context to examine the role of pesantren culture in the formation of student character in depth.

In the last five years, the life of students at the Al-Anam Islamic Boarding School reflects the strong internalization of Islamic boarding school cultural values. The discipline of worship, the habits of mutual cooperation, a simple lifestyle, and a harmonious relationship between kyai, ustadz, and students form an educational environment that is full of moral and spiritual values. This environment allows character education to run naturally through habituation and continuous supervision.

Based on this description, the study of the role of pesantren culture in the formation of student character education at the Al-Anam Cianjur Islamic Boarding School has become very relevant in the context of the last five years. This research is expected to make an empirical contribution to the development of the study of Islamic character

education, as well as strengthen the position of pesantren as a model of character education based on culture and local wisdom that is able to answer the challenges of modern education.

B. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. The qualitative approach was chosen to deeply understand the culture of the pesantren and its role in the formation of student character education through the process, meaning, and experience of the research subject (Luthfiyah, 2018). The case study method is used because the research focuses on one specific social unit, namely the Al-Anam Cianjur Islamic Boarding School, which is studied intensively in the context of real-life pesantren life.

The research was carried out at the Al-Anam Islamic Boarding School in Cianjur, West Java. This location was chosen because it is a salaf pesantren that still maintains the classic tradition of pesantren and consistently instills character values through boarding life and daily religious activities.

The subjects of the study include kyai, ustadz, pesantren administrators, and students. Kyai and ustadz were chosen as key informants because of their role in instilling values and forming pesantren culture, pesantren administrators as a source of data related to education policy and management, and students as the main informants to explore direct experience in the process of character formation. The selection of subjects is carried out purposively based on the relevance and depth of information.

Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation studies. Interviews were used to explore the views and experiences of the subjects, observations were made to observe the daily life of students and the cultural practices of the pesantren, while documentation was used to complete the data in the form of archives, activity schedules, and pesantren rules.

Data analysis uses the Miles and Huberman model which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2013). The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation of sources and techniques, as well as the application of the principle of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

C. Finding and Discussion

1. Result Research

The results of the study show that the culture of the pesantren at the Al-Anam Cianjur Islamic Boarding School has a very significant role in the formation of student character education. The culture of the pesantren does not only function as a social

setting for education, but also becomes a value system that is thoroughly integrated into the daily lives of students. All student activities, whether academic, worship, social, or personal life, are directed to instill Islamic character values through habituation, example, and continuous supervision mechanisms (Observation, 2025).

Table 1. Islamic boarding school culture and character formation of students at Al-Anam Islamic Boarding School Cianjur

Yes	Elements of Islamic Boarding School Culture	Form of Implementation in Islamic Boarding Schools	Character Values Formed	Impact on Santri
1	Daily Discipline	Structured activity schedule from dawn to night, obligation to attend worship and study	Responsibility, discipline, perseverance, self-control	Students are used to respecting time, consistently carrying out obligations, and having a high work ethic
2	Ta'dzim to the Teacher	Manners of speaking, respect for kyai and ustadz, obedience to the teacher's advice	Humility, courtesy, appreciation for knowledge	A respectful attitude, good social ethics, and moral awareness are formed
3	Mutual Cooperation and Togetherness	Community service, joint worship activities, pesantren social activities	Solidarity, empathy, ukhuwah Islamiyah	Students have social concern and the ability to work together
4	Simplicity	Simple lifestyle, limited facilities, lifestyle control	Gratitude, simplicity, self-control	Students are not consumptive and are able to live according to their needs
5	Independence	Managing personal needs, daily tasks, and social responsibilities	Independent, confident, responsible	Students are able to make decisions and are not dependent on others
6	Yellow Book Studies	Bantongan and sorogan method, gradual and deep learning	Patience, diligence, honesty, love of knowledge	Students value the learning process and have the character of lifelong learners
7	The Example of Kyai and Ustadz	Examples of modesty, discipline, sincerity, and consistency	Sincerity, integrity, moral consistency	Character values are internalized through real examples

Various studies have confirmed that effective character education is not only instructional education, but education that lives in the institution culture (school culture). In the context of Islamic boarding schools, this culture is manifested in the culture of Islamic boarding schools that regulates the way of thinking, behaving, and acting of all Islamic boarding school residents (Perawironegoro et al., 2020). The findings of this study strengthen the view that pesantren is a social and moral laboratory that forms the character of students holistically through religious and disciplined boarding life.

2. Discussion

a. Daily Discipline as the Foundation for Character Building

One of the main findings of this study is that the daily discipline of students is an important foundation in the formation of the character of responsibility, perseverance,

and self-control. The life of students at the Al-Anam Islamic Boarding School is governed by a strict and structured schedule of activities, starting from dawn to night. Students are accustomed to waking up early, carrying out congregational prayers, attending recitations, independent study, and carrying out hygiene and social tasks regularly (Interview, 2025).

The discipline applied is not understood by students as a form of coercion, but as part of worship and the process of self-formation. Students understand that obedience to the rules of the pesantren is a form of obedience to religious values and a means of practicing patience and consistency. In this context, discipline functions as a mechanism for internalizing values, rather than simply an external control.

Table 2. Daily discipline schedule for students of Al-Anam Islamic Boarding School
Cianjur

Time	Daily Activities of Santri	Character Values Formed
03.45 – 04.15	Wake up early and prepare for prayer	Discipline, self-control
04.15 – 05.00	Fajr Prayer in Congregation and Wirid	Responsibility, religiosity
05.00 – 06.00	Morning recitation / muroja'ah	Perseverance, love of knowledge
06.00 – 07.00	Environmental cleanliness and preparation for learning	Responsibility, Mutual Cooperation
07.00 – 12.00	Book study and recitation activities	Discipline, patience, focus
12.00 – 13.00	Zuhur prayer in congregation and rest	Obedience, self-control
13.00 – 15.30	Self-study / self-discipline	Self-Reliance, Honesty
15.30 – 17.30	Asr prayer and joint activities	Solidarity, tolerance
17.30 – 18.30	Maghrib prayers and recitations	Discipline, love of knowledge
18.30 – 20.00	Isha prayer and night recitation	Perseverance, consistency
20.00 – 21.30	Evening study / daily evaluation	Responsibility, self-reflection
21.30	Night's rest	Self-control, life balance

The results of character education research emphasize that effective discipline is a discipline based on moral awareness, not punishment alone. Findings at the Al-Anam Islamic Boarding School show that daily discipline associated with worship values is able to shape the character of students in a more profound and sustainable way (Interviews and Observations, 2025). Students not only obey the rules while in the pesantren, but also bring the value of this discipline in social life outside the pesantren.

b. Ta'dzim to Teachers and the Formation of Humble Character

The value of ta'dzim to teachers is one of the most prominent pesantren cultures at the Al-Anam Cianjur Islamic Boarding School. Ta'dzim is not only interpreted as formal respect, but as an inner attitude that reflects humility, manners, and appreciation for

knowledge. Students are taught the manners of speaking, how to behave, and the ethics of interacting with kyai and ustadz on every occasion (Interview, 2025).

The results of the study show that the practice of ta'dzim consistently forms the character of humility, manners, and ethical awareness of students. Students are used to putting manners before knowledge, as is the classic principle of Islamic education. This value is the main differentiator between pesantren-based character education and character education in formal institutions that tend to be cognitively oriented.

In the perspective of contemporary Islamic education, ta'dzim is understood as a part of moral education that is rooted in the spiritual relationship between teacher and student. In the last five years, the study of Islamic education has emphasized that the moral crisis of the younger generation is caused by the loss of manners for teachers and moral authority. The findings of this study show that the pesantren culture is still able to maintain the adab tradition as a solid foundation for character education.

c. Mutual Cooperation, Simplicity, and the Formation of Social Character of Students

The culture of mutual cooperation and togetherness is an important element in the formation of the character of students at Al-Anam Islamic Boarding School. Students are accustomed to working together in various activities, such as maintaining the cleanliness of the pesantren environment, preparing religious activities, and being involved in social community activities. Boarding life requires intense interaction between students, so that the values of solidarity, care, and Islamic ukhuwah grow naturally in their daily lives.

The results of observations show that the practice of mutual cooperation forms the character of caring, empathy, and social responsibility. Students learn to understand that life is not lived individualistically, but requires cooperation and sensitivity to others. This value is becoming increasingly relevant in a modern society that tends to prioritize individualism (Observation, 2025). These findings are in line with the development of the study of character education in the last five years which emphasizes the importance of *social-emotional learning* as an integral part of personality formation (Addzaky et al., 2025). Islamic boarding schools, in this case, have long practiced social-emotional education through a culture of togetherness and mutual cooperation, even before the concept was widely discussed in modern educational discourse.

In addition to mutual cooperation, the values of simplicity and independence are also consistently instilled in the Al-Anam Islamic Boarding School. Students are accustomed to living with simple facilities, managing their personal needs independently, and not overly dependent on others. This lifestyle forms a tough, independent, and responsible character in dealing with various life situations.

The results of the interviews show that many students have experienced significant changes in their outlook on life after living in the pesantren. They become more grateful, not

consumptive, and able to control their desires (Interview, 2025). Simplicity is not understood as a limitation, but rather as a moral and spiritual exercise to organize attitudes and behaviors (Scott, 2024). These findings strengthen the study of contemporary character education which emphasizes the importance of anti-consumerism education and strengthening independent character, where pesantren have advantages through simple living practices that are carried out consistently and internalized in the lives of students.

d. The Study of the Yellow Book and the Formation of the Character of Love of Knowledge

The tradition of recitation of the yellow book through the bandongan and sorogan methods not only serves as a means of transmitting Islamic knowledge, but also as a vehicle for character formation. The learning process that requires patience, perseverance, honesty, and consistency trains students to love knowledge and appreciate the learning process.

Table 3. Recitation of the Yellow Book and the Formation of the Character of Student Love of Science at Al-Anam Islamic Boarding School Cianjur

Yes	Books Studied	Recitation Methods	Learning Process	Character Values Developed	Impact on Students' Learning Attitude
1	Ta'lim al-Muta'allim	Bandongan and Sorogan	Explanation of the meaning of manners demanding knowledge, repetition of material, meaning of bare Arabic texts	Love of knowledge, sincerity, humility	Students understand the importance of manners in learning and respecting knowledge
2	Fath al-Qarib	Stuttgart	Gradual and systematic fiqh learning	Perseverance, patience, discipline	Students are used to deep learning and are not in a hurry
3	Safinatun Najah	Stuttgart	Understanding the basics of worship and Islamic law	Responsibility, consistency	Santri have the awareness to carry out worship correctly
4	Tafsir Jalalain	Stuttgart	Contextual and gradual interpretation of Qur'anic verses	Love of knowledge, reflectiveness, patience	Students are used to thinking deeply and not just textual
5	São Paulo, São Paulo	São Paulo	Practice reading and understanding nahwu independently in front of the teacher	Discipline, honesty, independence	Students learn to be responsible for their own learning process
6	Imrithi	São Paulo	Strengthening of the Arabic language structure with a gradual level of difficulty	Perseverance, thoroughness, consistency	Students have high fighting power in learning tools

7	Bidayatul Hidayah	Stuttgart	Strengthening morals and ethics of daily life	Simplicity, self-control, love of knowledge	Students practice moral values in the life of the pesantren
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The results of the study show that this traditional learning method forms the character of students who are diligent, disciplined, and not instantaneous. Students learn to understand knowledge gradually and deeply, not just chasing quick results. This value is very relevant to the criticism of instant culture in modern education.

In recent research, Islamic education research confirms that tradition-based learning methods have high pedagogical value in character formation (Scott, 2024). The findings at the Al-Anam Islamic Boarding School reinforce the view that educational modernization does not have to eliminate tradition, but can strengthen it as a source of value.



Diagram 1. Character formation through the study of the yellow book

This diagram shows the intensity of the formation of student character values through the tradition of recitation of the yellow book at the Al-Anam Cianjur Islamic Boarding School (Dokumentasi, 2025). The most dominant character value is the love of knowledge, followed by discipline, perseverance, and patience. Meanwhile, the values of honesty, independence, responsibility, and humility are also formed albeit with a lower intensity. This shows that the recitation of the yellow book not only functions as a means of transferring Islamic knowledge, but also as an effective medium for the formation of the character of students.

e. Exemplary as the Key to Success in Character Education

One of the most important findings in this study is that the example of kyai and ustadz occupies a central position in the success of student character education at the Al-Anam Cianjur Islamic Boarding School (Interview and Observation, 2025). Example not only serves as a method of education, but is at the heart of the entire process of internalizing values. Students do not just receive grades through lectures, written rules, or normative advice, but through direct observation of the behavior of educators in daily life. What kyai and ustadz do, how they speak, behave, worship, and interact is the main reference for students in shaping their personality.

In the context of pesantren life which is communal and lasts for twenty-four hours, the intensity of interaction between students and educators is very high. Kyai and ustadz are not only present as teachers in classrooms or recitation assemblies, but also as central figures in the social and spiritual life of students. Their presence in congregational prayers, recitation activities, informal interactions, and daily activities in the pesantren environment make the example real and sustainable. Students learn sincerity from the way they serve selflessly, learn discipline from the consistency of the ustadz in carrying out activities, and learn simplicity from the lifestyle of educators who are far from over-the-top.

The results of the study show that students are more likely to accept and internalize character values when these values are consistently displayed by kyai and ustadz. When educators show honesty, humility, patience, and responsibility, students are encouraged to emulate these attitudes naturally. This process takes place without coercion, because students view kyai and ustadz as figures who have moral and spiritual authority. Thus, example functions as a medium for character learning that is implicit but very effective.

Various studies and studies of character education also confirm that example is the most effective method in internalizing values (Rangkuti, 2025). Character education that only emphasizes cognitive aspects such as knowledge of moral values is considered less successful if it is not accompanied by concrete examples. Moral values are not sufficiently understood theoretically, but must be lived and experienced. The findings of this study strengthen this view, because it shows that pesantren consistently implement exemplary-based education as the main foundation for the formation of student character.

Exemplary in Islamic boarding schools does not stand alone, but is integrated with a culture of habituation and a conducive environment. Kyai and ustadz not only provide examples of good behavior, but also create a pesantren climate that supports the growth of character values. A religious, disciplined, and manner-filled environment strengthens the process of internalizing exemplary values. Students not only see examples of kindness, but also live in a system that demands consistency between values, speech, and actions.

f. Theoretical Synthesis and Relevance of Character Education

Theoretically, the findings of this study are in line with the concept of character education in an Islamic perspective that emphasizes the formation of morals through

example (uswah hasanah), habituation (ta'wīd), and a supportive environment (Fawziah, 2019). In the Islamic tradition, the Prophet Muhammad PBUH is positioned as the main role model in the formation of the morals of the people, as affirmed in the Qur'an that the Prophet is a good role model. This principle is adopted in the pesantren education system, where kyai and ustadz play the role of exemplary figures who become moral references for students.

In addition, the findings of this study are also relevant to the evolving theory of modern character education, which emphasizes the integration between knowing the good, feeling the good, and doing the good (Lickona, 1991). Character education is not enough to only teach knowledge about values (knowing), but also to foster awareness and emotional commitment to these values (feeling), as well as encourage real practice in daily life (doing). The pesantren culture at Al-Anam Islamic Boarding School Cianjur is able to integrate these three aspects in its entirety. Students understand the value of kindness through study and advice, feel its meaning through interaction and habituation, and practice it through a structured boarding life.

The culture of pesantren has proven to be a holistic and sustainable character education system. Values such as sincerity, responsibility, discipline, humility, independence, tolerance, and honesty are not taught separately or incidentally, but are internalized consistently through all pesantren activities. The example of kyai and ustadz is the main binder that ensures that these values do not stop at the normative level, but become part of the personality of the students.

In the context of contemporary educational challenges, these findings have very strong relevance. The character crisis of the younger generation characterized by a weakening of social ethics, increasing individualism, and instant culture shows the need for a more substantial model of character education. Islamic boarding schools offer a different approach from modern formal education, with an emphasis on process, exemplary, and long-term character building. The culture of pesantren is not stuck on a mere outcome orientation, but places the formation of the whole human being as the main goal of education.

Thus, this study confirms that Islamic boarding schools, especially the Al-Anam Cianjur Islamic Boarding School, have a very strong relevance in answering the challenges of the character crisis of the young generation in the modern era. The culture of pesantren is not just a traditional heritage that needs to be maintained, but is a source of a character education model that is contextual, adaptive, and firmly rooted in Islamic values. Example as the core of pesantren education is an important lesson for the development of character education in various educational institutions, both formal and non-formal, so that education not only produces intelligent individuals, but also noble and socially responsible.

D. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that the culture of the pesantren at the Al-Anam Cianjur Islamic Boarding School plays a significant role in the formation of student character education. The culture of the pesantren does not only function as an institutional tradition, but as a value system that is integrated in all aspects of student life through a pattern of boarding life for twenty-four hours. Character values are instilled in an ongoing manner through habituation, example, and consistent supervision.

Daily discipline is the main foundation for the formation of the character of the students, who get used to the appreciation of time, responsibility, and self-control. Discipline is understood as part of worship and the process of spiritual education. In addition, the culture of ta'dzim to teachers forms a humble attitude, appreciation for knowledge, and moral awareness through relationships based on the example of kyai and ustadz. The culture of mutual cooperation and togetherness plays a role in shaping the social character of students, such as tolerance, solidarity, empathy, and collective responsibility. Meanwhile, the values of simplicity and independence form a person who is grateful, resilient, and independent through a simple lifestyle and personal responsibility. The tradition of recitation of the yellow book through the bandongan and sorogan methods not only transmits Islamic knowledge, but also instills the character of love of knowledge, patience, honesty, and perseverance. Overall, the pesantren culture at the Al-Anam Cianjur Islamic Boarding School is a holistic and contextual model of Islamic character education, which is relevant as a reference in the development of character education in the modern era.

Thus, it can be concluded that the pesantren culture at the Al-Anam Cianjur Islamic Boarding School is a holistic and contextual model of Islamic character education. The culture of pesantren is able to integrate spiritual, moral, social, and intellectual dimensions in one complete education system. This model is relevant and worthy of being used as a reference in the development of character education in the modern era, especially in the face of moral crises and increasingly complex globalization challenges.

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