



Contextualizing Surah Al-Baqarah Verses 30-34 in the Character Formation of Santri

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Abstract:

Character education in Islamic institutions requires the integration of scriptural values, institutional practices, and local cultural contexts. This study examined the educational values of Surah Al-Baqarah verses 30-34 and their implementation in the character formation of *santri* at Pesantren Sukahideng, Tasikmalaya, Indonesia. Using a qualitative single-case study, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, passive participant observation, and document analysis, and were analyzed through a *tafsir tarbawi* approach and thematic-interactive analysis. The findings identified four interconnected Qur'anic pillars: *tawhid*, *khalifah*, responsibility, and spirituality. These values were internalized through religious instruction, worship, classical-text learning, leadership, communal service, teacher exemplarity, discipline, and daily habituation. The Sundanese concept of *hideng* functioned as a cultural mechanism that translated these Qur'anic values into self-aware and self-regulated conduct. The study proposes a Qur'an-culture internalization model in which scriptural values are mediated through institutional practices, habituation, exemplarity, participation, and local moral language to form internalized character. The findings highlight how pesantren can maintain theological continuity while contextualizing character education within local culture and contemporary challenges.

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Introduction (مقدمة)

Contemporary education is expected to develop intellectual competence without neglecting the moral and spiritual formation of learners. This expectation has become increasingly important as young people encounter digital distraction, consumerist values, academic misconduct, online hostility, and fragmented sources of moral authority. Character education research indicates that moral development is most effective when values are embedded in institutional culture, relationships, habitual practices, and opportunities for responsible action rather than taught only as abstract concepts. Islamic education faces the corresponding challenge of maintaining its theological foundation while responding critically to changing social and

technological environments (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; Sahin, 2018; Sanzi et al., 2025).

Within the Islamic educational tradition, knowledge is not regarded as value-neutral or separated from the learner's relationship with God, other human beings, and the natural world. Education involves the cultivation of intellect, faith, ethical responsibility, and appropriate conduct. Its aim therefore extends beyond the acquisition of religious information toward the formation of persons capable of understanding truth, regulating themselves, acting responsibly, and orienting knowledge toward the common good. This integrated orientation distinguishes Islamic education from approaches that separate cognitive achievement from moral and spiritual development (Al-Attas, 1980; Bagheri & Khosravi, 2006; Halstead, 2004).

The Qur'an provides the principal epistemological and ethical foundation for this educational orientation. Surah Al-Baqarah verses 30–34 presents the creation of Adam through an interconnected account of divine authority, human vicegerency, the teaching of names, moral risk, obedience, and arrogance. From a *tafsir tarbawi* perspective, these verses can be interpreted not merely as a historical account of creation but as an educational narrative concerning what human beings are, why they possess knowledge, how they should exercise agency, and what ethical dangers accompany intellectual distinction. The passage places human cognitive capacity within a relationship of servitude and accountability to God (Al-Attas, 1980; Shihab, 2002).

This study analytically organizes the educational meanings of the passage into four interconnected pillars: *tawhid*, *khalifah*, responsibility, and spirituality. *Tawhid* provides the theological orientation that places learning within consciousness of God. *Khalifah* represents the intellectual and leadership capacity required to cultivate rather than damage the earth. Responsibility expresses the moral accountability accompanying human freedom and power. Spirituality, particularly humility and obedience, prevents knowledge from becoming a source of arrogance. These pillars should not be understood as isolated character traits because Islamic moral formation requires coherence between belief, knowledge, intention, action, and social responsibility (Bagheri & Khosravi, 2006; Halstead, 2004; Sahin, 2018).

Pesantren provide a significant institutional setting for examining how such Qur'anic values become lived educational practices. Unlike educational environments in which instruction is confined to scheduled lessons, pesantren combine religious study, worship, communal living, discipline, service, teacher exemplarity, and peer relationships within a continuous educational environment. Their pedagogical significance lies in the interaction between the authority of the *kiai*, the study of classical Islamic texts, repeated religious practices, and students' responsibility for communal life. Through this structure, knowledge and character are cultivated through instruction, imitation, habituation, participation, and service (Dhofier, 2011; Lukens-Bull, 2001; Pohl, 2006).

Previous studies have established that Indonesian Islamic educational institutions negotiate continuity and change rather than simply preserve an unchanging tradition. Pesantren adapt their curricula, organizational practices, and social roles while retaining distinctive religious identities. Other studies have investigated multicultural formation, civic values, discipline, institutional authority, and the responses of Islamic schools to modern social conditions. Nevertheless, this scholarship has generally examined pesantren culture or character formation at the institutional level without tracing how a specific cluster of Qur'anic verses is interpreted into an interconnected value framework and enacted through everyday educational practices (Hasan, 2012; Isbah, 2020; Raihani, 2012).

A further issue concerns the relationship between universal religious teachings and local culture. Islamic education in Indonesia develops within diverse cultural environments in which language, symbols, etiquette, social expectations, and inherited forms of wisdom shape how religious values are understood and practised. Local wisdom can make an abstract ethical

principle socially intelligible, but it must be critically examined to determine whether it reinforces or distorts the normative objectives of Islamic education. Pesantren are particularly important in this regard because their educational cultures often emerge through a long process of interaction between Islamic scholarship and local communal traditions (Pohl, 2006; Rosidi, 2011).

Preliminary observations at Pesantren Sukahideng in Tasikmalaya revealed that the formation of *santri* character was closely associated with the Sundanese concept of *hideng*. Within the pesantren community, *hideng* referred to mature self-awareness, the ability to understand one's position and obligations, and the willingness to perform appropriate actions without continuous instruction or external surveillance. This disposition was reflected in prompt participation in congregational prayer, independent management of personal needs, collective work through the *ro'an* tradition, responsibility within the student organization, respect for teachers, refined Sundanese speech, and regulated smartphone use. However, these practices largely operated through cultural transmission and daily habituation; their systematic relationship with the educational meanings of Surah Al-Baqarah verses 30–34 had not been conceptually articulated or empirically examined.

The state of the art therefore leaves two connected gaps. First, Qur'anic educational studies frequently explain values normatively without following their translation into institutional routines, relationships, sanctions, leadership practices, and embodied conduct. Second, empirical studies of pesantren character formation often describe discipline, habituation, or local culture without reconstructing their relationship with a specific Qur'anic textual framework. The novelty of this study lies in connecting a *tafsir tarbawi* reading of Surah Al-Baqarah verses 30–34 with the empirical organization of character education at Pesantren Sukahideng and examining *hideng* as a cultural mechanism that translates the four Qur'anic pillars into everyday conduct. This approach treats sacred text, institutional practice, and local wisdom as analytically connected rather than as separate domains (Isbah, 2020; Raihani, 2012; Sanzi et al., 2025).

This inquiry is also consistent with Indonesia's legal framework. Law No. 20 of 2003 positions faith, piety, noble character, knowledge, creativity, independence, and responsibility among the central aims of national education. Law No. 18 of 2019 further recognizes pesantren as institutions that perform educational, proselytizing, and community-empowerment functions while preserving their distinctive traditions. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the philosophical conception of *tawhid*, *khalifah*, responsibility, and spirituality in Surah Al-Baqarah verses 30–34 and investigate how these values are implemented through the curriculum, religious routines, leadership structures, communal service, disciplinary practices, and *hideng* culture of Pesantren Sukahideng. The study is expected to contribute a contextually grounded model of Qur'anic character education while helping pesantren document, evaluate, and strengthen their value-internalization practices amid contemporary social and digital challenges (Republic of Indonesia, 2003, 2019).



Method (منهج)

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach with a single-case study design. Pesantren Sukahideng was treated as a bounded educational and cultural system in which Qur'anic values, pesantren traditions, leadership structures, and Sundanese local wisdom interacted in the character formation of *santri*. The design enabled the researchers to examine how the educational meanings derived from Surah Al-Baqarah verses 30–34 were translated from normative concepts into curricula, routines, relationships, disciplinary practices, and everyday conduct. A single-case study was appropriate because the phenomenon could not be meaningfully separated from the

institutional, theological, and sociocultural context in which it occurred (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Khan, 2022; Yin, 2018).

The case contained several embedded units of analysis: the four Qur'anic values of *tawhid*, *khalifah*, responsibility, and spirituality; the pesantren curriculum and study of classical Islamic texts; religious habituation; student leadership; communal service; discipline; teacher exemplarity; digital-device regulation; and the Sundanese concept of *hideng*. Examining these interconnected units enabled the study to move between textual interpretation and empirical practice while maintaining Pesantren Sukahideng as the principal case.

Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted at Pesantren Sukahideng in Sukarama District, Tasikmalaya Regency, West Java, Indonesia. The site was purposively selected because it is a historically established *salafiyah* pesantren that continues to teach classical Islamic texts while adapting its educational practices to contemporary conditions. The pesantren also maintains a distinctive character-development culture associated with the Sundanese concept of *hideng*, which emphasizes self-awareness, independence, understanding of one's obligations, and responsible action without continuous external supervision.

Participants were selected purposively according to their knowledge of and involvement in the pesantren's educational and character-development practices. The key informants included the *kiai* or pesantren leader, *asatidz* who taught Qur'anic exegesis, theology, jurisprudence, logic, and Sufism, student-organization and dormitory administrators, and senior and junior *santri*. Including participants with different responsibilities and lengths of experience enabled the researchers to examine institutional intentions, instructional processes, organizational practices, and students' lived experiences from multiple perspectives (Patton, 2015).

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, passive participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews with the *kiai* and *asatidz* explored their interpretation of Surah Al-Baqarah verses 30–34, the philosophical foundations of the four value pillars, the meaning of *hideng*, and the translation of these ideas into educational practices. Interviews with student administrators and *santri* examined their experiences of religious habituation, classical-text learning, leadership, communal work, discipline, ethical relationships, and regulated smartphone use. Follow-up questions were used to clarify differences between formally articulated values and participants' daily experiences.

Passive participant observations covered the daily rhythm of pesantren life, including congregational prayers, *sorogan* and *bandongan* learning, student-organization activities, dormitory interaction, the *ro'an* communal-work tradition, teacher-student etiquette, disciplinary procedures, and smartphone regulation. Particular attention was given to whether students acted only after being instructed or demonstrated the self-regulated conduct associated with *hideng*. Detailed field notes recorded activities, interactions, language use, gestures of respect, institutional settings, and situations that either supported or challenged the dominant pattern.

Documentary evidence included the pesantren curriculum, learning schedules, written regulations, institutional history, student-organization documents, character-development guidelines, archival materials, and relevant sermons or instructional texts delivered by the *kiai*. The Qur'anic passage and selected works of exegesis and Islamic educational thought were also examined to establish the conceptual meanings of *tawhid*, *khalifah*, responsibility, and spirituality. The combination of interview, observational, and documentary evidence enabled the researchers to compare institutional discourse with enacted practices.

Textual and Empirical Data Analysis

Analysis was conducted in two interconnected stages. The first stage involved a *tafsir tarbawi*-oriented reading of Surah Al-Baqarah verses 30–34. The verses were examined in relation to divine knowledge, human vicegerency, the teaching of names, the possibility of human destructiveness, and the contrasting responses of the angels and Iblis. From this analysis, four sensitizing categories were developed: *tawhid* as theological orientation, *khalifah* as intellectual and leadership capacity, responsibility as moral and social accountability, and spirituality as humility, obedience, and proper conduct.

The second stage analyzed the field data iteratively using the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014), comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were first organized according to participant group and educational activity. The data were then coded deductively using the four Qur'anic pillars and inductively to capture themes emerging from the field, including *hideng*, *muraqabah*, *sorogan*, *bandongan*, student leadership, *ro'an*, educational sanctions, linguistic etiquette, teacher exemplarity, and digital filtering.

Coded data were displayed in thematic matrices linking each Qur'anic value to its interpretation, internalization process, institutional practice, and observed character manifestation. The researchers also examined relationships among the four values rather than treating them as independent categories. Conclusions were developed by comparing participants' accounts with observations and documents, examining convergent and contrasting evidence, and repeatedly returning to the original data. This procedure supported an integrated interpretation of how Qur'anic teachings and Sundanese local wisdom interacted within the pesantren's character-development system.

Trustworthiness and Research Ethics

Trustworthiness was established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was strengthened through source triangulation across the *kiai*, *asatidz*, student administrators, and *santri*, as well as method triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents. Member checking was conducted by returning interview summaries and provisional interpretations to key informants for confirmation or correction. Interpretations were also discussed with peers and relevant experts to examine their theological, cultural, and methodological coherence (Nowell et al., 2017; Shenton, 2004).

Transferability was supported through detailed descriptions of the pesantren's institutional history, educational traditions, cultural setting, daily routines, and value-internalization practices. Dependability was maintained by documenting participant selection, interview development, observational procedures, coding decisions, and theme construction. Confirmability was addressed by connecting each interpretation to evidence from interviews, field observations, or institutional documents and by distinguishing participants' explanations from the researchers' analytical interpretation.

Formal permission was obtained from the pesantren leadership before data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality procedures, and their right to withdraw. Informed consent was obtained before interviews and observations, with appropriate consent and assent procedures applied to participants who had not reached legal adulthood. Participants' names were replaced with role-based codes, identifying information was removed from the report, and observations were conducted without disrupting religious instruction or communal activities.

Result (نتائج)

Philosophical Construction of the Four Qur'anic Value Pillars

The *tafsir tarbawi* analysis of Surah Al-Baqarah verses 30–34 produced an integrated educational framework consisting of *tawhid*, *khalifah*, responsibility, and spirituality. The passage was interpreted as an educational narrative concerning divine authority, human identity, the capacity for knowledge, moral freedom, social responsibility, and the danger of arrogance. Rather than presenting four independent virtues, the verses constructed a relationship between what human beings believe, what they know, how they exercise authority, and how they conduct themselves before God and other people.

The value of *tawhid* was derived primarily from the divine declaration that God knows what His creatures do not know. This statement established the limits of human knowledge and positioned learning within recognition of divine omniscience. Educationally, *tawhid* required students to orient their pursuit of knowledge toward worship, correct their intentions, acknowledge the provisional character of human understanding, and avoid treating intellectual achievement as a source of absolute authority.

The value of *khalifah* emerged from the appointment of humanity as vicegerent on earth and the teaching of names to Adam. The teaching of names was interpreted as the foundation of human conceptual, linguistic, and intellectual capacity. Human leadership was therefore associated with the responsible use of knowledge rather than physical strength or unrestricted power. Within this framework, intellectual development, critical reasoning, leadership, and the capacity to manage communal life were treated as educational responsibilities.

Responsibility was identified through the angels' concern that human beings might cause corruption and bloodshed. The passage acknowledged the destructive possibilities of human agency while simultaneously presenting human beings as morally accountable actors. Responsibility consequently involved control of personal impulses, recognition of the consequences of one's choices, protection of social harmony, and care for the surrounding environment. Education was understood as a process that directs human freedom toward constructive rather than destructive action.

Spirituality was interpreted through the contrast between the angels' obedience and Iblis's refusal to bow before Adam. Iblis's fall demonstrated that knowledge and proximity to religious authority do not protect an individual from moral failure when they are accompanied by arrogance. Spirituality therefore functioned as an ethical safeguard for intellectual achievement. The four values formed a sequence in which *tawhid* provided orientation, *khalifah* developed capacity, responsibility directed action, and spirituality protected knowledge and authority from arrogance.

Table 1. Philosophical construction of the four value pillars

Qur'anic element	Value pillar	Educational meaning	Anticipated character orientation
Divine knowledge beyond created knowledge	<i>Tawhid</i>	Theological orientation and epistemic humility	Sincerity, religious awareness, and humility in learning
Appointment of humanity and teaching of names	<i>Khalifah</i>	Intellectual capacity and responsible leadership	Critical reasoning, independence, and leadership
Possibility of corruption and bloodshed	Responsibility	Moral accountability for human freedom	Self-regulation, social concern, and environmental care
Obedience of the angels	Spirituality	Adab, obedience, and	Respect, humility, and

and arrogance of Iblis		protection from arrogance	ethical use of knowledge
Relationship among the four elements	Integrated Qur'anic framework	Alignment of belief, knowledge, action, and adab	Holistic character formation

Internalization of Tawhid through Worship and Muraqabah

At Pesantren Sukahideng, *tawhid* was introduced through the study of classical theological texts at different learning levels. Materials such as *Aqidat al-Awam*, *Tijani al-Darari*, and *Fath al-Majid* were used to establish the doctrinal foundations of faith. Teachers did not limit these lessons to the memorization of definitions or verses. They connected theological concepts with the intention underlying study, worship, communal service, and the management of everyday responsibilities.

The concept of *muraqabah*, or awareness of being continuously observed by God, formed the principal bridge between theological knowledge and personal conduct. The *kiai* and *asatidz* emphasized that learning, cleaning, organizing activities, and serving other members of the pesantren could become acts of worship when conducted with appropriate intentions. Through this interpretation, ordinary activities acquired a transcendental orientation and became occasions for developing internal rather than merely externally enforced discipline.

Observation of congregational prayer illustrated this internalization process. When the call to prayer was heard, *santri* generally stopped their activities, prepared themselves, and moved toward the mosque without continuous verbal commands from dormitory administrators. This pattern appeared across different daily situations, including periods when students were resting, conversing, washing clothes, or completing other tasks. The consistency of this response indicated that worship routines had become embedded in the temporal organization of pesantren life.

Participants connected this behaviour with the concept of *hideng*. A spiritually *hideng* student was described as someone who recognized a religious obligation and responded appropriately without waiting for surveillance, threats, or punishment. In this sense, *hideng* did not replace the theological meaning of obedience. It provided a locally intelligible expression of self-awareness through which the value of *tawhid* became visible in conduct.

The findings indicated that the internalization of *tawhid* occurred through the interaction of doctrinal instruction, repeated worship, teacher reminders, environmental structure, and self-regulation. Compliance was not entirely independent of institutional rules, but the strongest manifestation appeared when students acted appropriately before direct supervision was applied. The empirical indicator of *tawhid* was therefore not limited to knowledge of doctrine; it included sincerity of intention, responsiveness to worship, and awareness of moral accountability.

Table 2. Internalization of tawhid at Pesantren Sukahideng

Internalization process	Pesantren practice	Observed manifestation	Character meaning
Doctrinal instruction	Study of classical theological texts	Understanding of faith and divine authority	Theological commitment
Intention formation	Connecting study and service with worship	Academic and communal activities framed as devotion	Sincerity
Habituation	Regular congregational prayer	Prompt response to the call to prayer	Religious discipline
Spiritual monitoring	Cultivation of <i>muraqabah</i>	Appropriate conduct beyond direct supervision	Self-regulation

Cultural reinforcement	Interpretation through <i>hideng</i>	Action without repeated commands	Internalized religious awareness
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Actualization of Khalifah through Intellectual and Leadership Formation

The value of *khalifah* was implemented through an educational structure that combined mastery of classical texts with practical leadership. Knowledge was treated as a prerequisite for responsible authority. Students were expected not only to understand religious rules but also to develop the linguistic, logical, and interpretive competencies required to explain texts and respond to problems encountered within the pesantren community.

The *sorogan* method placed individual students in an active intellectual position. Students read unvowelled Arabic texts before a teacher, determined their grammatical structure, translated them into Sundanese or Indonesian, and explained their meaning. Errors in reading or interpretation were immediately examined. This process required preparation, concentration, linguistic reasoning, and the confidence to present one's understanding directly before an authoritative teacher.

The *bandongan* method supported a complementary form of learning. Students listened to the teacher's reading and interpretation, annotated their texts, and connected explanations with established scholarly traditions. Studies of Arabic grammar, morphology, logic, and Islamic legal theory provided analytical tools for understanding the structure and implications of classical texts. Teachers also used questions to test whether students could move beyond literal translation and justify an interpretation.

Intellectual formation was extended into student leadership through the Pesantren Sukahideng Student Organization. Student administrators were entrusted with planning activities, coordinating dormitory routines, managing selected financial and logistical responsibilities, and supporting the enforcement of regulations. The *kiai* and *asatidz* maintained supervisory authority but allowed student administrators to address practical problems and learn from the consequences of their decisions.

The findings showed that *khalifah* was not reduced to holding an organizational position. It involved a combination of knowledge, interpretive competence, service, decision-making, and accountability. The movement from reading a difficult text to managing communal responsibilities connected intellectual ability with social usefulness. The pesantren consequently treated leadership as a form of entrusted service rather than personal privilege.

Table 3. Actualization of khalifah through learning and leadership

Developmental domain	Educational practice	Student activity	Character manifestation
Linguistic competence	<i>Sorogan</i>	Reading, parsing, translating, and explaining texts	Accuracy and intellectual independence
Scholarly understanding	<i>Bandongan</i>	Listening, annotating, and connecting explanations	Respect for scholarly tradition
Logical reasoning	Logic and Islamic legal-theory studies	Analyzing arguments and interpreting rules	Critical and systematic thinking
Practical leadership	Student organization	Planning, coordinating, and solving communal problems	Leadership and managerial confidence
Accountable authority	Guidance from the <i>kiai</i> and <i>asatidz</i>	Exercising limited authority under supervision	Leadership as service

Formation of Responsibility through Independence, Ro'an, and Educational Discipline

Responsibility was cultivated first through the management of personal needs. Students

were expected to wash their clothes, maintain their sleeping areas, organize their study schedules, manage personal expenses, and prepare learning materials without household assistance. These repeated obligations required them to anticipate needs and experience the consequences of neglecting daily responsibilities.

Personal independence was connected with communal accountability through room duties, activity schedules, and shared regulations. A student's failure to complete an assigned task affected roommates and the broader pesantren environment. Responsibility was therefore not defined as individual self-sufficiency alone. It involved awareness that personal choices contributed to either the order or disruption of communal life.

The *ro'an* tradition provided the clearest collective expression of this value. During scheduled communal work, junior and senior students cleaned classrooms, bathrooms, drainage areas, courtyards, and other shared facilities. Senior students generally participated directly rather than limiting themselves to giving instructions. Their participation provided a visible example that service and environmental care were collective obligations across levels of authority.

Disciplinary responses were designed to connect violations with educational restoration. Students who were late, neglected assigned duties, or violated selected regulations could be required to recite parts of the Qur'an, memorize passages from instructional texts, or perform additional service. Physical violence was not presented as the principal disciplinary mechanism. The intended process was recognition of error, acceptance of consequences, corrective action, and reintegration into the community.

The findings indicated that responsibility was internalized through a progression from personal independence to communal service and moral accountability. The local concept of *hideng* strengthened this progression by valuing students who recognized what needed to be done without waiting for repeated orders. Responsibility became visible when students maintained themselves, protected shared facilities, assisted others, and corrected their conduct after a violation.

Table 4. Formation of responsibility in pesantren life

Responsibility domain	Practice	Learning experience	Character outcome
Personal responsibility	Managing clothing, finances, schedules, and personal spaces	Experiencing the consequences of daily choices	Independence
Shared responsibility	Room duties and activity schedules	Connecting personal conduct with communal order	Social accountability
Environmental responsibility	<i>Ro'an</i> communal work	Maintaining shared facilities with other students	Environmental care
Corrective responsibility	Educational sanctions	Acknowledging and repairing violations	Moral accountability
Internal motivation	<i>Hideng</i> culture	Acting without repeated commands	Initiative and self-discipline

Spirituality, Adab, Hideng, and Digital Self-Regulation

Spirituality functioned as the ethical culmination of character formation at Pesantren Sukahideng. The refusal of Iblis to obey the divine command was interpreted as a warning that knowledge could become destructive when accompanied by pride. Consequently, the pesantren placed *adab* before the display of intellectual superiority. A student's mastery of classical texts

was not considered complete when it was disconnected from humility, obedience, and respect.

This orientation was embodied through everyday gestures and language. Students kissed teachers' hands, lowered their posture when passing in front of the *kiai* or *asatidz*, and used refined Sundanese speech when communicating with older or respected members of the community. These practices were not treated merely as ceremonial etiquette. Participants understood them as exercises in regulating the ego and recognizing the moral dimensions of knowledge and authority.

The study of practical Sufism reinforced these embodied practices. Texts such as *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* and *Kifayat al-Atqiya'* were used to discuss intention, respect for teachers, self-purification, humility, and the dangers of pride. Teachers connected textual explanations with situations occurring in classrooms, dormitories, organizations, and peer relationships. Spirituality was thus taught through texts, exemplified by teachers, and rehearsed through daily interaction.

Digital-device regulation represented a contemporary extension of this ethical formation. Smartphone use was restricted during ordinary dormitory and learning periods and permitted only at designated times or for approved purposes. The restriction was accompanied by educational guidance concerning online games, pornography, hostile communication, public displays of worship or wealth, and the pursuit of online praise. Weekly reflection forums connected the Qur'anic account of arrogance with students' potential behaviour in digital environments.

Across these practices, *hideng* operated as a cultural mechanism connecting the four Qur'anic pillars. A *hideng* student demonstrated religious awareness, intellectual readiness, responsibility, and respectful self-regulation without depending on constant external control. The finding did not suggest that rules and supervision were unnecessary. Instead, it showed that the intended endpoint of pesantren discipline was the gradual transformation of external regulation into internal moral awareness.

Table 5. Spirituality, adab, and digital self-regulation

Spiritual formation	Pesantren mechanism	Behavioural manifestation	Contemporary relevance
Humility before knowledge	Warning against the arrogance of Iblis	Avoidance of intellectual superiority	Ethical use of knowledge
Respect for teachers	Hand-kissing and respectful bodily gestures	Recognition of scholarly and moral authority	Preservation of <i>adab</i>
Respectful communication	Refined Sundanese language	Politeness and regulation of speech	Ethical social interaction
Self-purification	Study of practical Sufism and reflection	Control of pride and personal impulses	Emotional and spiritual regulation
Digital discipline	Restricted smartphone access and contextual guidance	Controlled use and awareness of online risks	Reduction of distraction and cyber-arrogance
Integrated <i>hideng</i>	Internal awareness across daily practices	Appropriate action without continuous commands	Internalized character



Discussion (مناقشة)

The findings indicate that Surah Al-Baqarah verses 30–34 offers an integrated anthropology of education in which belief, knowledge, authority, responsibility, and humility cannot be separated. The four-pillar framework prevents character education from being reduced to behavioural compliance because each visible practice is connected to a theological and ethical orientation. *Tawhid* establishes the purpose of knowledge, *khalifah* develops human capacity, responsibility directs that capacity toward constructive action, and spirituality regulates the ego that accompanies knowledge and authority. This interpretation is consistent with Islamic educational thought that rejects the separation of intellectual development from faith and *adab* (Al-Attas, 1980; Bagheri & Khosravi, 2006; Halstead, 2004).

The internalization of *tawhid* shows that doctrinal instruction became educationally significant when it was connected to intention, repeated worship, and self-awareness. Students' prompt participation in congregational prayer illustrated the movement from formal regulation toward internal motivation, although institutional routines continued to support that movement. This finding reinforces character-education research emphasizing that values are strengthened through coherent culture, repeated practice, relationships, and institutional expectations rather than through verbal instruction alone. It also extends Sahin's (2018) argument that Islamic education must connect religious meaning with the learner's lived formation rather than confine religion to the transmission of information (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; Sahin, 2018).

The implementation of *khalifah* demonstrates that traditional pesantren pedagogy can combine textual discipline with active intellectual formation. *Sorogan* required individual accountability, while *bandongan* connected students with an established scholarly tradition. Logic and Islamic legal theory provided instruments for interpretation, and the student organization transformed intellectual capacity into leadership experience. These findings challenge assumptions that *salafiyah* education is necessarily passive or resistant to critical reasoning. They support previous research describing pesantren as institutions that negotiate continuity and adaptation while retaining their religious identity (Isbah, 2020; Lukens-Bull, 2001; Pohl, 2006).

Responsibility was formed through embodied participation rather than examination-based moral instruction. Personal independence, communal duties, *ro'an*, senior modelling, and restorative sanctions allowed students to experience the consequences of action within a shared environment. This pattern supports the proposition that effective character formation requires opportunities to practise responsibility and contribute to community life. The findings also complement studies portraying pesantren as spaces for civic and social learning, while adding environmental care and corrective responsibility as concrete dimensions of Qur'anic vicegerency (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; Dhofier, 2011; Raihani, 2012).

The spirituality and *hideng* findings reveal how universal religious teachings acquire locally intelligible forms. Respectful gestures, refined Sundanese speech, teacher exemplarity, Sufi instruction, and self-initiated service translated abstract values into a recognizable moral disposition. At the same time, smartphone regulation and reflection on online arrogance demonstrated that tradition was being used to interpret a contemporary problem rather than merely preserve past customs. This supports the understanding of pesantren as adaptive moral communities and aligns with calls for Islamic education to address digital culture without abandoning its theological and ethical foundations (Rosidi, 2011; Sanzi et al., 2025; Sahin, 2018).

The principal academic contribution of this study is the formulation of a Qur'an–culture internalization model in which textual values move through institutional structures, repeated practices, teacher exemplarity, communal participation, and local moral language before becoming self-regulated conduct. The model clarifies that *hideng* is not an additional value

competing with the Qur'anic framework; it functions as a cultural mechanism through which *tawhid*, *khalifah*, responsibility, and spirituality become intelligible and observable in pesantren life. By linking a specific Qur'anic passage with empirical educational practices and Sundanese local wisdom, the study bridges the gap between normative textual studies and institutionally grounded character-education research.



Conclusion (خاتمة)

This study concludes that the educational meanings of Surah Al-Baqarah verses 30–34 form an integrated character framework comprising *tawhid*, *khalifah*, responsibility, and spirituality. At Pesantren Sukahideng, these values were not confined to textual instruction but were embedded in worship, classical-text learning, leadership, communal service, discipline, teacher–student relationships, language, and digital-device regulation. *Tawhid* oriented learning toward God and supported self-awareness through *muraqabah*; *khalifah* connected intellectual competence with leadership as service; responsibility developed through personal independence, *ro'an*, and restorative discipline; and spirituality protected knowledge and authority from arrogance through *adab* and humility. The Sundanese concept of *hideng* connected these dimensions by expressing the intended transition from externally supervised behaviour to internally regulated moral action. The study therefore shows that pesantren character formation operates through a dynamic relationship among sacred text, institutional culture, repeated practice, teacher exemplarity, communal participation, and local wisdom.

The findings are limited by the single-case design, the culturally specific setting of a Sundanese *salafiyah* pesantren, and reliance on qualitative interpretations of textual and field data. The study did not quantitatively measure character change, compare different pesantren models, or trace the long-term conduct of graduates after leaving the institution. Future research should examine the proposed Qur'an–culture internalization model across *salafiyah*, modern, and integrated pesantren; employ longitudinal or mixed-method designs; and investigate its relationship with religious commitment, leadership, social responsibility, environmental awareness, and digital self-regulation. Pesantren Sukahideng is recommended to codify its character-formation practices into an institutional guide based on the four Qur'anic pillars and *hideng*, while strengthening dialogical learning and digital literacy. Such documentation would support leadership succession, program evaluation, and contextual adaptation without reducing a living moral tradition to rigid administrative procedures.

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