



## Strategies of Islamic Religious Education in Shaping the Religious Character of Students at Pondok Pesantren Ruqoba Al-Atsary

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### Abstract:

Islamic religious education in pesantren plays a crucial role in shaping the religious character of students. This study aims to analyze the strategies of Islamic religious education implemented at Pondok Pesantren Ruqoba Al-Atsary in fostering students' religious character. The research employed a descriptive qualitative method with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that the applied strategies include classical Islamic text (kitab kuning) learning, reinforcement of Qur'an memorization (tahfidzul Qur'an), habituation of daily worship, role modeling by kyai and teachers, as well as disciplinary supervision. These strategies effectively nurture religious values such as faith, obedience in worship, noble character, and social responsibility among students. Furthermore, the study highlights the relevance of these strategies in addressing contemporary challenges posed by globalization and digital culture, which often undermine the moral foundations of youth. The results also contribute to the theoretical discourse on Islamic education by emphasizing the integration of knowledge, practice, and values. Practically, they provide a model for pesantren and other Islamic educational institutions to strengthen religious character formation. Thus, Islamic religious education strategies at Pondok Pesantren Ruqoba Al-Atsary serve not only to preserve tradition but also to respond adaptively to modern challenges in building a pious and responsible Muslim generation.

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## Introduction (مقدمة)

Islamic religious education plays a fundamental role in shaping the character of the younger generation. Within the framework of national education, Islamic religious education is not merely a subject taught in schools, but also a process of internalizing Islamic values that guide learners to possess strong faith, noble character, and a way of life aligned with Islamic teachings. These values serve as the foundation for the formation of religious character. Religious character is crucial in today's era, marked by rapid globalization, technological advancement, and complex socio-cultural challenges.

Globalization has brought significant changes to the mindset, behavior, and lifestyle of society, particularly the youth. Open access to information through social media presents both opportunities and threats. On the one hand, technological advancement supports learning processes and broadens students' horizons. On the other hand, the uncontrolled flow of unfiltered information may trigger moral crises, degradation of ethics, and an individualistic mindset. Deviant behaviors, declining discipline in religious practices, and diminishing respect toward teachers and parents are among the problems emerging from weak religious foundations. In this context, Islamic religious education in pesantren becomes highly relevant and strategic.

Pesantren, as traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, play a central role in preserving Islamic scholarship and fostering moral and character development among students. Historically, pesantren have not only transmitted religious knowledge but also emphasized the importance of morality, discipline, and service to society. Through their boarding school system, pesantren provide a religious environment conducive to character formation. The uniqueness of pesantren lies in its learning model, which emphasizes mastery of classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), Qur'an memorization (*tahfidzul Qur'an*), religious practices, and the habituation of Islamic values in daily life.

Pondok Pesantren Ruqoba Al-Atsary, located in Berbah, Sleman, Yogyakarta, is one such pesantren that places Islamic religious education at the core of its system. This pesantren focuses on nurturing students through *diniyah* programs, Qur'an memorization, and structured daily religious activities. With the vision of nurturing a generation of Muslims who are knowledgeable, virtuous, and beneficial to society, Ruqoba Al-Atsary implements integrated strategies of Islamic religious education. Researching these strategies is crucial to understanding how the pesantren instills religious values in its students amid the challenges of the digital era.

Several previous studies have addressed character education in pesantren. For instance, Dhofier (2011) asserts that pesantren serve as centers of moral education through methods of role modeling, habituation, and teaching classical texts. Nata (2014) emphasizes that Islamic education effectively shapes Muslim personalities when carried out in a controlled and continuous environment. More recent studies suggest that the integration of information technology into pesantren learning presents both opportunities and challenges in maintaining students' religiosity. However, research specifically focusing on the strategies of Islamic religious education at Pondok Pesantren Ruqoba Al-Atsary remains limited, leaving room for deeper exploration.

Moreover, religious character is not formed instantly but through a long, systematic, and consistent educational process. According to Lickona (2013), effective character education must involve cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions, and must be practiced in real life. Within the pesantren context, religious character education is realized through the integration of formal learning, reinforcement of worship practices, role modeling by *kyai* and teachers, as well as discipline in daily routines. Pondok Pesantren Ruqoba Al-Atsary has its own distinctive features in implementing these strategies, which differentiates it from other pesantren.

The urgency of this study becomes more evident when considering the moral challenges faced by today's youth. National surveys indicate a decline in ethical standards among teenagers, such as increasing deviant behaviors, misuse of technology, and decreasing adherence to religious teachings. In such circumstances, pesantren serve as the last stronghold for safeguarding religious values and morality. Therefore, examining the strategies of Islamic religious education at Pondok Pesantren Ruqoba Al-Atsary is relevant for offering an alternative model of religious character education.

Furthermore, this research not only describes educational programs but also analyzes the strategies concretely implemented by the pesantren to shape students' religious character. These strategies include teaching *kitab kuning*, implementing Qur'an memorization programs, habituating worship, role modeling by *kyai* and teachers, and enforcing discipline. This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these strategies contribute to cultivating religiosity among students.

Thus, this research holds two major significances. First, from a theoretical perspective, it contributes to enriching the literature on Islamic religious education in pesantren, particularly regarding strategies for shaping religious character. Second, from a practical perspective, the findings can serve as a reference for other pesantren, Islamic educational institutions, and education practitioners in developing effective models of character education suited to contemporary needs.

The purpose of this research is to analyze the strategies of Islamic religious education in shaping the religious character of students at Pondok Pesantren Ruqoba Al-Atsary. The research focuses on how these strategies are designed, implemented, and evaluated in the students' daily lives. The findings are expected to answer a fundamental question: to what extent do Islamic religious education strategies in pesantren address the challenges of the digital era and shape a generation of Muslims with strong religious character?

Ultimately, this article aims to contribute to strengthening Islamic religious education in Indonesia. By presenting a case study of Pondok Pesantren Ruqoba Al-Atsary, this study emphasizes the importance of strategies that not only teach religious knowledge but also instill religious values through habituation, role modeling, and consistent supervision. This aligns with the broader mission of Islamic education, namely to nurture *insan kamil*—a complete individual who is faithful, pious, knowledgeable, virtuous, and beneficial to humanity.



## Method (منهج)

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to explore and analyze the strategies of Islamic religious education in shaping students' religious character at Pondok Pesantren Ruqoba Al-Atsary. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to understand social and educational phenomena in depth within their natural setting. The focus was on describing the educational strategies implemented, the process of habituation, and their impact on students' religious character.

### Identify Subsections

This research method is organized into several subsections, namely: (1) research design, (2) participant characteristics, (3) data collection techniques, and (4) data analysis techniques. These subsections are structured to provide a systematic description of the research steps so that the study can be scientifically accountable.

### *Participant (Subject) Characteristics*

The participants of this study were individuals directly involved in the process of Islamic religious education at Pondok Pesantren Ruqoba Al-Atsary, namely:

1. Kyai: the pesantren leader and central figure who provides religious role modeling.
2. Ustadz/Ustadzah (Teachers): educators responsible for teaching classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), Qur'an memorization (*tahfidzul Qur'an*), and *diniyah* lessons.
3. Students (Santri): both boarding (*mukim*) and non-boarding (*kalong*) students, aged between 13–20 years, who participate in the pesantren's educational and habituation programs.
4. Pesantren Administrators: individuals responsible for supervision, discipline, and the management of students' daily activities.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, considering their direct involvement in Islamic religious education strategies and the development of students' religious character.

### *Research Design*

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at portraying strategies of Islamic religious education in shaping students' religious character. A qualitative design was chosen because it is suitable for exploring educational and social phenomena in depth within their natural context.

The research process consisted of the following stages:

1. Data Collection through observation of students' activities, in-depth interviews with the *kyai*, teachers, and students, as well as documentation of the pesantren's educational programs.
2. Data Analysis using Miles & Huberman's interactive model, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.
3. Data Validation was ensured through triangulation of sources, methods, and time, so that the research findings remain scientifically valid.

Through this design, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the strategies of Islamic religious education implemented at Pondok Pesantren Ruqoba Al-Atsary in shaping the religious character of its students.

### **Result (نتائج)**

The findings of this study reveal that Pondok Pesantren Ruqoba Al-Atsary implements various strategies of Islamic religious education that significantly contribute to the formation of students' religious character. These strategies can be categorized into five main aspects:

#### Classical Islamic Text (*Kitab Kuning*) Learning

The pesantren prioritizes the study of classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*) as a means of deepening students' understanding of Islamic jurisprudence, creed, morality, and daily practices. Teachers (*ustadz*) employ a combination of lecture, *bandongan*, and *sorogan* methods. This

strategy not only enhances intellectual comprehension but also instills a sense of respect for Islamic scholarly traditions. Students reported that this activity strengthened their religious awareness and provided practical guidance for daily worship and social interaction.

#### Reinforcement of Qur'an Memorization (Tahfidzul Qur'an)

Another central strategy is the intensive memorization of the Qur'an. Students are guided in structured memorization programs that involve daily recitation, repetition, and peer evaluation. The pesantren emphasizes both the quantity and quality of memorization, ensuring that students not only memorize but also internalize Qur'anic values. This process nurtures spiritual discipline, patience, and perseverance, which are integral to religious character development.

#### Habituation of Daily Worship

Daily routines such as congregational prayers, Qur'an recitations, *dzikir*, and religious gatherings are designed to habituate students to consistent worship practices. These activities are compulsory and closely monitored by teachers and administrators. The habituation approach ensures that religious practices become part of students' daily lives rather than occasional rituals. Students acknowledged that such routines strengthened their sense of obedience, discipline, and consistency in worship.

#### Role Modeling by *Kyai* and Teachers

The role of the *kyai* and teachers is pivotal in shaping students' religious character. Their attitudes, lifestyle, and interactions serve as practical examples for students. The *kyai* is perceived not only as a religious leader but also as a moral role model whose behavior reflects the values taught in the classroom. Students stated that they were inspired to emulate their teachers' sincerity, humility, and dedication to religious practices, which reinforced their own moral development.

#### Disciplinary Supervision

The pesantren implements a strict disciplinary system covering time management, attendance in religious activities, and adherence to ethical codes. Violations are addressed through corrective measures such as advice, additional assignments, or light sanctions. This system fosters responsibility, respect for rules, and awareness of moral consequences. The students gradually develop self-control and accountability, which are essential components of religious character.

#### Overall Impact on Students' Religious Character

The integration of these strategies effectively nurtures key aspects of religious character among students, including:

1. Faith and Spiritual Awareness: strengthened through Qur'an memorization and daily worship.
2. Obedience and Discipline: developed through structured routines and strict supervision.
3. Noble Morality (*Akhlak Karimah*): cultivated through role modeling and learning of classical texts.
4. Social Responsibility: instilled through communal worship and pesantren activities that emphasize cooperation and service.

The findings indicate that the strategies implemented at Pondok Pesantren Ruqoba Al-Atsary are not only effective in preserving traditional Islamic values but also in preparing students to face modern challenges with strong religious character.

Table 1. Findings on Strategies of Islamic Religious Education in Shaping Students' Religious Character

| Strategy                                      | Implementation   | Impact on Religious Character   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Kitab Kuning Learning</b>                  | Teaching classical texts using <i>bandongan</i> and <i>sorogan</i> methods                     | Strengthens knowledge of Islamic law, creed, and morality; nurtures respect for tradition             |
| <b>Qur'an Memorization (Tahfidzul Qur'an)</b> | Daily recitation, repetition, peer evaluation, and teacher guidance                            | Builds discipline, patience, and spiritual awareness; internalizes Qur'anic values                    |
| <b>Habituation of Daily Worship</b>           | Compulsory congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation, <i>dzikir</i> , and religious gatherings | Fosters obedience, worship consistency, and commitment to religious practices                         |
| <b>Role Modeling by Kyai and Teachers</b>     | Teachers and <i>kyai</i> exemplify sincerity, humility, and devotion                           | Inspires imitation, shapes noble character ( <i>akhlak karimah</i> ), and strengthens moral awareness |
| <b>Disciplinary Supervision</b>               | Monitoring attendance, punctuality, and ethical behavior with corrective measures              | Develops self-control, responsibility, and accountability in students                                 |

Conceptual Model: Strategies of Islamic Religious Education at Pondok Pesantren Ruqoba Al-Atsary

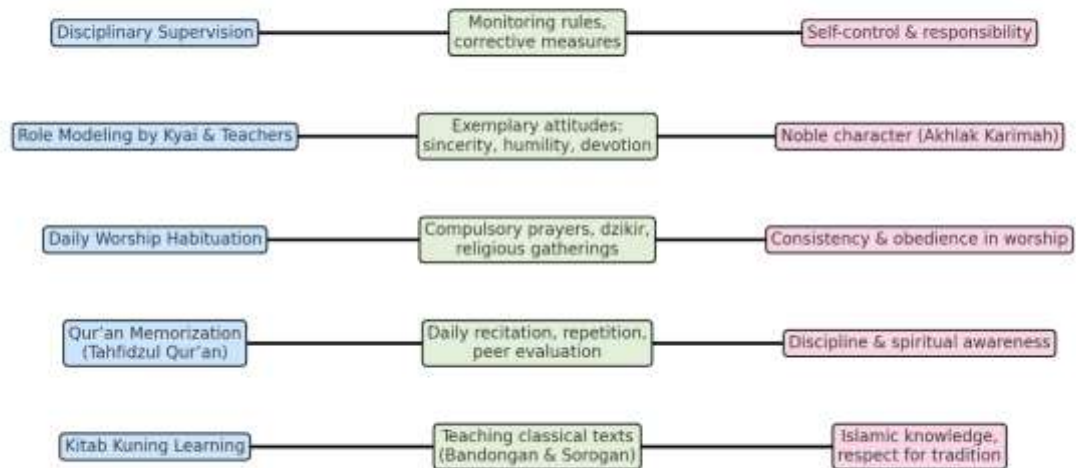


Figure 1. Conceptual Model





## Discussion (مناقشة)

The findings of this study reveal that the strategies of Islamic Religious Education implemented at Pondok Pesantren Ruqoba Al-Atsary play a vital role in shaping the religious character of students. These strategies include *kitab kuning* learning, Qur'an memorization (*tahfidzul Qur'an*), daily worship habituation, role modeling by *kyai* and teachers, and disciplinary supervision. The analysis of these findings highlights several important implications both in theoretical and practical contexts.

First, *kitab kuning* learning demonstrates the significance of classical Islamic texts in preserving the continuity of Islamic knowledge and transmitting religious values. This aligns with the view of Dhofier (2011) who argues that pesantren are guardians of Islamic intellectual heritage, ensuring that students acquire a strong foundation in jurisprudence, theology, and ethics. The mastery of *kitab kuning* not only strengthens students' religious knowledge but also cultivates respect for Islamic traditions. This is crucial in the modern era, where the erosion of religious literacy often leads to the weakening of moral values among the younger generation.

Second, the strategy of Qur'an memorization (*tahfidzul Qur'an*) is proven to enhance discipline, patience, and spiritual awareness. According to Hasanah (2016), the process of memorizing the Qur'an requires consistency, self-control, and determination, which are key aspects of character education. At Pondok Pesantren Ruqoba Al-Atsary, *tahfidz* activities are integrated into daily routines, supported by peer evaluation and teacher supervision. This not only builds memorization skills but also nurtures spiritual closeness to the Qur'an, thereby fostering obedience and sincerity in worship.

Third, daily worship habituation is an effective method to internalize religious practices into students' everyday lives. The pesantren applies obligatory congregational prayers, *dzikir*, Qur'an recitation, and religious gatherings as part of the students' daily routine. This practice is consistent with Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of repeated behaviors in shaping attitudes and values. Through habituation, worship becomes not merely an obligation but an ingrained lifestyle. The findings strengthen previous studies (Arifin, 2017) that highlight the role of religious habituation in building consistency and commitment to religious life.

Fourth, the role modeling (*uswah hasanah*) of *kyai* and teachers has a profound impact on students' moral development. Teachers' sincerity, humility, and devotion serve as practical examples for students to emulate. This confirms the prophetic tradition of education, where the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is described as the ultimate role model in character building. As noted by Nata (2013), education is not solely about transferring knowledge but also about providing moral guidance through exemplary conduct. At Pondok Pesantren Ruqoba Al-Atsary, the presence of *kyai* and teachers who embody Islamic values provides a living example of how to practice religion in daily life, shaping students into individuals with noble character (*akhlak karimah*).

Fifth, disciplinary supervision ensures that students develop responsibility, accountability, and self-control. The pesantren enforces discipline through strict monitoring of attendance, punctuality, and ethical behavior, supported by corrective measures when necessary. This resonates with the theory of behaviorism (Skinner), which posits that reinforcement and correction are essential in shaping behavior. At the same time, the approach is not merely punitive but also educative, guiding students toward moral maturity. The findings align with

Supriyadi (2019), who highlights that discipline in pesantren settings contributes significantly to building students' integrity and sense of responsibility.

From a broader perspective, these findings confirm that Islamic Religious Education in pesantren cannot be limited to formal learning in classrooms. Rather, it is a holistic approach that integrates intellectual, spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. The strategies implemented at Pondok Pesantren Ruqoba Al-Atsary illustrate a comprehensive model of education where knowledge acquisition is combined with spiritual practice, role modeling, and discipline. This multidimensional approach is essential in facing the challenges of globalization and the digital era, where students are exposed to secular influences and moral crises.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates the relevance of pesantren education in modern contexts. Although pesantren are often perceived as traditional institutions, the strategies applied at Ruqoba Al-Atsary show adaptability in addressing contemporary issues. By reinforcing Qur'anic values, moral discipline, and exemplary conduct, pesantren education offers an antidote to the moral decline caused by excessive exposure to social media, consumerism, and individualism. This confirms the argument of Azra (2002) that pesantren are not merely centers of religious learning but also cultural institutions that preserve and transmit moral and spiritual values across generations.

Another important implication is the balance between cognitive and affective domains in pesantren education. The findings indicate that while students are trained intellectually through *kitab kuning* and Qur'an memorization, equal emphasis is placed on affective development through habituation, role modeling, and discipline. This integrated approach aligns with the goals of national education in Indonesia, which emphasize the development of knowledge, skills, and character simultaneously. It also reflects the Islamic concept of *tarbiyah*, which aims at nurturing the whole person (*insan kamil*) rather than merely transmitting knowledge.

In conclusion, the strategies of Islamic Religious Education at Pondok Pesantren Ruqoba Al-Atsary have proven effective in shaping students' religious character. The combination of *kitab kuning* learning, Qur'an memorization, daily worship habituation, role modeling, and discipline creates a holistic educational environment that nurtures faith, worship, noble character, and social responsibility. These findings reinforce the enduring relevance of pesantren in the modern era and suggest that similar strategies could be adapted by other educational institutions to strengthen students' moral and spiritual development.



## Conclusion (خاتمة)

This study concludes that the strategies of Islamic Religious Education applied at Pondok Pesantren Ruqoba Al-Atsary play a significant role in shaping the religious character of students. The findings highlight five interrelated strategies: (1) *kitab kuning* learning, which strengthens students' intellectual and moral foundations through classical Islamic scholarship; (2) Qur'an memorization programs, which cultivate spiritual discipline, perseverance, and closeness to the Qur'an; (3) habituation of daily worship, which integrates religious practices into students' daily lives and fosters consistency in devotion; (4) role modeling by *kyai* and teachers, which provides living examples of sincerity, humility, and noble character; and (5) disciplinary supervision, which instills responsibility, accountability, and self-control.

These strategies collectively nurture essential aspects of religious character, including faith, obedience, noble morality (*akhlak karimah*), and social responsibility. The integration of intellectual, spiritual, and moral dimensions demonstrates that pesantren education offers a holistic approach that remains relevant in addressing contemporary challenges, especially the moral crises faced by youth in the digital era.



Therefore, it can be affirmed that the educational strategies of Pondok Pesantren Ruqoba Al-Atsary not only preserve Islamic traditions but also prepare students to embody religious values in modern society. The pesantren thus serves as a vital institution for cultivating *insan kamil*—individuals who are intellectually competent, spiritually strong, morally upright, and socially responsible.

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