

## The Pattern of Building Character for Students in Salaf and Modern Islamic Boarding Schools at East OKU Regency South Sumatra Province

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### ABSTRACT

Character education has become a critical issue amid the moral degradation of the younger generation, such as the prevalence of brawls and behaviors that deviate from norms. Islamic boarding schools, as Indonesia's oldest Islamic educational institutions, play a strategic role in shaping students' character through traditional (*salaf*) and modern approaches. This study compares the character development patterns of students at the Salaf Darul Falah Tulungsari Islamic Boarding School and the Modern Nurussalam Sidogede Islamic Boarding School in OKU Timur Regency to understand their characteristics, methods, and impacts on forming noble character. This study aims to: analyze the fundamental characteristics of both pesantren, identify the character-building patterns for students in each pesantren, and compare the character-building patterns to reveal similarities, differences, and their effectiveness in shaping students with noble character, discipline, and relevance to contemporary needs. This study employs a qualitative approach with a comparative case study design. Data were collected through observation, interviews with pesantren leaders, teachers, and students, and documentation, including vision-mission statements, organizational structures, and activity photos. Data analysis was conducted descriptively and comparatively to identify the characteristics and patterns of character building in both pesantren. The Salaf Darul Falah Islamic Boarding School implements a dual education system (classical and salaf) focusing on classical Islamic texts using sorogan and bandongan methods, alongside a culture of mutual cooperation (*ro'an*) based on the values of Iman-Islam-Ihsan. Character building is carried out through exemplary behavior of the kiai, habituation, and strict supervision, producing students with noble character, discipline, and a strong religious identity. Conversely, the Modern Nurussalam Islamic Boarding School adopts the KMI curriculum, integrating religious and general knowledge with a 24-hour holistic approach, using formal (lectures, discussions) and informal (habituation, exemplary behavior) methods, and emphasizing the Panca Jiwa culture of discipline and leadership. This results in students who are globally aware, independent, and ready to be agents of change. The comparison shows that both approaches complement each other, with Darul Falah excelling in religious tradition and Nurussalam in modern adaptation, both effectively shaping character in line with their respective visions.

**Keywords:** Building Character, Modern Islamic Boarding School, Salaf

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### INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role in shaping individuals who are ready to face and adapt to the changing times. The goal is for individuals not to be swept away by the currents of change but to be able to control and leverage that change (Maghsoodi et al. 2025). As one of the most important keys in life, education directly influences the quality of human resources (Amoaning et al. 2024). Quality education will produce individuals with strong capabilities. Therefore, the

design of education must be dynamic, continuously evolving and developing in line with the pace of human life and civilization itself (Guan et al. 2025).

Currently, education based on strong character development for students has become a major focus in educational discourse (Shim 2023). This discussion arises because the outcomes of education are often not aligned with its true goals, and this character education is a main problem in developing countries (Donkoh et al. 2023). The moral degradation among the younger generation is increasingly alarming, evidenced by the prevalence of brawls and violence involving students. Based on 2024 data, the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) received 141 reports of physical and psychological violence against students in educational environments (Putra, 2024). Many factors trigger this phenomenon of brawling. One of the main causes is the low level of character among students, which then erodes their morals and norms (Arlinda et al. 2022). This poor quality of student character pushes them to behave beyond what is considered normal.

In Islam, character or akhlak holds a significant position and is considered to have a vital function in guiding community life. As stated by Allah SWT in the Qur'an, Surah An-Nahl verse 90,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

"Indeed, Allah enjoins justice, good conduct, and giving to relatives; and He forbids immorality, wickedness, and aggression. He instructs you that you may take heed." (Q.S. an-Nahl/16:90)

Certainly, from the verse above, it is clear that the teachings of Islam and noble character education must be exemplified so that humanity can live according to the demands of Islamic law, which aims for the well-being and happiness of all people. Islam is a religion that highly upholds character (Ananda et al. 2022). The main figure who serves as the primary role model in Islam, holding the most important position, is the Prophet Muhammad SAW. As Allah says in Surah Al-Ahzab, verse 21:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

"There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and (who) remembers Allah often." (Q.S. al-Ahzab/33:21)

As revealed by Thomas Lickona, there are ten current trends that must be watched out for, as they can lead a nation to destruction. These trends include: increased violence among teenagers or society, the use of bad/non-standard language or words, the strengthening influence of peer groups (gangs) in acts of violence, an increase in self-destructive behavior such as drug, alcohol, and sexual abuse, a blurring of moral guidelines about right and wrong, a decline in work ethic, a decrease in respect for parents and teachers, a decline in individual and group responsibility, a culture of lying or dishonesty, and feelings of mutual suspicion and hatred (Lickona 2022).

In Islam, character education is a high priority. Character education that provides a good example, with the figure of Prophet Muhammad as a role model, is something that is highly recommended and even obligatory in Islam (Fauzi and Sudin 2025). Therefore, if children are accustomed to positive character traits from an early age, following the example taught by the Prophet, they will grow into resilient, confident, and strong-willed individuals as adults. Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) have unique characteristics that distinguish them from other educational or social institutions (Cahyadi 2017). These distinguishing characteristics include the physical structure of the pondok pesantren. A pondok pesantren is a complex that includes the kyai's residence, a mosque, student dormitories (asrama santri), and a school where students (santri) study (Ulya and Triyuliasari 2024). The formation of the character and behavior of students, especially within a pondok pesantren, is heavily influenced by the environment. Smith's research concludes that the dormitory environment shapes the psychological development of individual students (Nasution and Yulia 2021).

The growth and development of student independence are determined by both innate and environmental factors, just like the development of the human psyche itself. Similarly, the presence of a leader (kyai) and religious teachers (ustadz) within the pondok pesantren is closely linked to the process of forming the students' personal character (Chandra 2020). In

terms of character formation, pondok pesantren are considered more capable than formal educational institutions in fostering self-reliant and responsible students (Masrur 2017). The dormitory system in pondok pesantren and the nature of life within them encourage students to independently fulfill and carry out daily life tasks (Hariyanto 2020). As an educational institution, pondok pesantren have proven successful in producing independent students, meaning they do not always depend on others to meet their life's needs.

The model of character development for students in pondok pesantren also shows a difference between traditional (salaf) and modern pondok pesantren due to varying environmental conditions. Based on interviews with administrators, the character development model at Pondok Pesantren Salaf Darul Falah Tulungsari involves a high level of involvement from administrators and managers in all student activities, both internal and external. The interaction between administrators, ustadz, and students is very intense. Exemplary behavior and an integrated curriculum are the main principles in forming the character of students at Pondok Pesantren Darul Falah (Mustofa 2025). In contrast, the character development model at Pondok Pesantren Modern Nurussalam Sidogede shows that the presence of administrators and teachers during the educational process is relatively less frequent. This is due to the impact of the established educational system, which leads to a more specialized approach to character development by specific ustadz or ustadzah. The character education of students is assigned to certain teachers or counselors, and student guidance largely occurs with the help of a structured system (Ockta 2025).

The two Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) also showed differences in the characteristics of their students. At Pondok Pesantren Salaf Darul Falah Tulungsari, the students tend to be more humble, respectful (ta'dzim), simple, independent, loyal, and obedient to the traditional teachings of the school. This is closely related to the supporting facilities and infrastructure of the pesantren's environment. Meanwhile, at Pondok Pesantren Modern Nurussalam Sidogede, the students' characters are more disciplined, critical, adaptive to the changing times, proficient in foreign languages, and independent in their thinking and actions within a structured environment. Based on the description above, the pondok pesantren, as an educational institution, is capable of producing quality human resources with strong character (Mia et al. 2023).

Character development patterns refer to a structured and systematic framework, model, or strategy used to form and develop an individual's character (Rahman and Wassalwa 2019). Character development is an efficient and effective effort, action, and activity undertaken to achieve better results (Rosad 2019). According to Ranam, character development is a conscious and planned effort to develop an individual's potential (fitrah) from the external side through the influence of a positive environment (Ranam et al. 2025). This involves the process of developing a person's character from the outside through the influence of a good environment.

According to Mangunhardjana (2021), a mentor should consider several approaches when conducting character development:

1. Informative Approach: This involves conveying information to students. In this approach, students are assumed to lack prior knowledge and experience.
2. Participatory Approach: Here, students are empowered, leading to a more collaborative learning situation.
3. Experiential Approach: This approach directly involves students in the character development process. It is considered authentic learning because it stems from personal experience and direct involvement in the situation.

Therefore, character development is a learning process aimed at developing and enhancing knowledge, skills, and attitudes to improve the capabilities of individuals or groups (Angga et al. 2022). Character development isn't limited to family and school environments but can also occur outside of them (Arifin 2017). It can be implemented through extracurricular and co-curricular activities in schools and the surrounding community.

According to Thomas Lickona, the character development model focuses on three interconnected fundamental aspects that must be nurtured simultaneously: Moral Knowing (knowing the good), Moral Feeling (desiring the good), and Moral Action (doing the good)

(Lickona 2022). These three dimensions form a strong bridge between the cognitive understanding, emotional commitment, and behavioral manifestation of a person's character.

John Dewey, a pragmatist, believed that knowledge and values are formed through an individual's active interaction with their environment (Pangestutiani and Habibah 2022). In the context of character development, John Dewey argued that character cannot be taught passively from textbooks or lectures; instead, it must grow from meaningful and reflective life experiences (Husain et al. 2024). Dewey viewed character as a totality of habits integrated within an individual. These habits are not just mechanical routines but rather ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that are formed through a series of experiences (Daulay et al. 2025).

Experience is the primary foundation of education and character development (Ariani and Ritonga 2024). Individuals learn about values like responsibility, cooperation, and justice not by being told their definitions, but by being directly involved in situations where these values are relevant and must be applied (Amma et al. 2021). For instance, they learn about justice by participating in a group where all members must have equal opportunities. Learning occurs when individuals interact with their physical and social environment. Character is formed when individuals face problems, try different solutions, and reflect on the outcomes of their actions. This process involves exploration, discovery, experimentation, and problem-solving. Experience alone is not enough; Dewey emphasized the importance of critical reflection on these experiences. Through reflection, individuals can articulate and analyze their experiences, identify patterns, and draw lessons that can be applied to future situations.

## **METHOD**

This research was conducted specifically to describe the character development patterns of students (santri) at two types of Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren): the traditional (salaf) Pondok Pesantren Darul Falah Tulungsari and the modern Pondok Pesantren Nurussalam Sidogede in OKU Timur Regency. The approach used was a qualitative descriptive field study with a comparative method, aiming to understand the differences in character development patterns within the natural context of each school (Cresswell, J. W. 2022). The main focus was on how these two institutions shape students' characters through distinct systems, curricula, and cultures. The entire research process was carried out through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis to obtain a complete and thorough picture of the phenomenon being studied.

To collect accurate data, the researchers used various qualitative techniques (Waruwu et al. 2025). Interviews were a key method, where information was gathered directly from various involved parties (P et al. 2023), including the head of the school (Pengasuh), leaders, teachers, students, and students' guardians from both pesantren. This approach allowed researchers to gain diverse and in-depth perspectives on how the character development process unfolds. In addition to interviews, direct observation was also conducted at both pesantren to witness firsthand the daily interactions and activities that are part of character formation (Ghafur 2025). Finally, documentation was used to collect data such as regulations, curricula, and other relevant records (P et al. 2023).

The collected data was then analyzed using the four-stage model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana. The first stage was Data Collection, where all information from interviews, observations, and documentation was compiled ("*Étapes à Suivre Dans Une Analyse Qualitative de Données Selon Trois Méthodes d'analyse*" 2015). Next, Data Condensation was performed, which is the process of simplifying and focusing the data to highlight key points. Afterward, the data was presented in the form of Data Presentation, such as tables or narratives, to facilitate understanding. The final stage was Conclusion Drawing (Verification), where the researchers formulated systematic and factual conclusions based on the processed data, thus outlining the differences in character development patterns between the traditional and modern pesantren (Wahyuni and Fitriani 2022).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT PATTERN OF SANTRI AT DARUL FALAH TULUNGSARI SALAF ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL EAST OKU REGENCY SOUTH SUMATRA PROVINCE

The character development model at the Salaf Pesantren Darul Falah Tulungsari in East OKU Regency focuses on three main pillars: Ta'lim (teaching religious knowledge), Tarbiyah (personality and mental development), and Ta'dib (moral and etiquette education). Ta'lim provides the foundation of religious knowledge through the teaching of traditional Islamic texts (kitab kuning), fiqh, tafsir, and hadith. Tarbiyah shapes discipline and mental resilience through daily routines such as congregational prayers (shalat berjamaah) and community service (ro'an). Meanwhile, Ta'dib instills the values of noble character (akhlakul karimah) through the exemplary conduct of the kyai and the habitual practice of good manners (adab). This information is based on the results of an in-depth interview with the head of the pesantren, who explained that:

*"Pembinaan karakter santri di Darul Falah didasarkan pada tiga pilar utama pendidikan Islam yang telah diwariskan ulama salaf, yaitu Ta'lim, Tarbiyah, dan Ta'dib. Ketiga pilar ini menjadi fondasi dalam membentuk kepribadian santri yang utuh".(wawancara12/06/2025)*

These three pillars are integrated into the motto of Iman-Islam-Ihsan, which emphasizes the development of students (santri) who are spiritually strong, possess noble character, and contribute positively to society. This is consistent with the statement from the pesantren leader, who explained that:

*"Kami mempertahankan tradisi pendidikan salaf yang menitikberatkan pada kesinambungan ajaran leluhur, namun tetap mengadaptasi perkembangan zaman. Moto pesantren kami 'Iman-Islam-Ihsan' menjadi ruh dalam setiap aktivitas pembinaan".(Wawancara12/06/2025)*

The results of the observation show that the three pillars of character development are implemented consistently in the students' daily activities. Ta'lim is carried out through the teaching of religious sciences, including Arabic, fiqh, tafsir, hadith, and other auxiliary sciences. It features a structured schedule of religious text studies from morning to night, and traditional teaching methods like sorogan and bandongan are maintained. Tarbiyah development is conducted through daily routines and disciplinary rules, with strict supervision of the students' daily behavior. Ta'dib involves instilling good manners in interacting with teachers, fellow students, and the community, and developing noble character (akhlakul karimah) through role modeling and habituation. This demonstrates that Darul Falah successfully preserves its traditional (salaf) heritage while adopting modern elements to produce students who have noble character, are disciplined, and are ready to face the challenges of the times (Isti'anah et al. 2025). The character development model for students at Darul Falah Salaf Pesantren is aligned with various theories of character education and previous research findings, particularly those focused on the role of traditional Islamic educational institutions like pesantren. The holistic approach applied by Darul Falah, which integrates Ta'lim, Tarbiyah, and Ta'dib (Maulindah et al. 2024), reflects a deep understanding of character formation that is not only cognitive, but also affective and psychomotor.

Thomas Lickona's theory of character education (Lickona 2022), which emphasizes three main components-moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action is highly relevant to the development model at Darul Falah. Ta'lim, with its teaching of religious sciences, serves as the foundation for moral knowing, providing students with an understanding of Islamic values and principles. Tarbiyah, through habituation and routine, cultivates moral feeling (the love and commitment to these values) and moral action, which is manifested in disciplined and moral daily behavior. Research by Hidayat on the implementation of a character education model at Pondok Pesantren Pabelan, Magelang, shows that pesantren inherently apply this comprehensive approach, where a conditioned environment and effective supervision contribute to the internalization of character values (N. Hidayat 2016).

The development methods include role modeling, habituation, supervision, and a system of rewards and punishments, all aimed at internalizing values such as honesty, sincerity, equality, and independence. The dual educational program (formal and salaf) along with

extracurricular activities like arts, sports, and vocational training, strengthens students' characters, making them adaptive and socially conscious. This is consistent with the statement from the head of education and instruction regarding the character development model at Pondok Pesantren Darul Falah Tulung Sari, as follows:

"Kami menerapkan metode yang telah terbukti efektif dalam tradisi pesantren salaf: keteladanan, pembiasaan, nasihat, pengawasan, serta sistem reward and punishment yang mendidik". (Wawancara, 08/07/2025)

The headmaster of the Diniyah added:

"Metode pembiasaan menjadi kunci utama dalam pembentukan karakter. Santri dibiasakan untuk konsisten dalam ibadah berjamaah, membaca kitab, dan berperilaku santun dalam kehidupan sehari-hari." (Wawancara 12/07/2025)

The exemplary behavior of the kyai and teachers at Darul Falah is the core of effective character education. This is supported by research from Hadiri & Aliyah (2025), which underscores the importance of role models in character formation within pesantren. The kyai and teachers don't just transfer knowledge; they also become role models who inspire students to practice noble values (Hadiri and Aliyah 2025).

Observational results indicate that the method of exemplary conduct (Uswah Hasanah) is implemented by the kyai and religious teachers (ustadz) who provide direct examples of behavior. Senior students also serve as role models for their juniors, and exemplary conduct is evident in time discipline, worship, and manners. The method of habituation (habit training) is carried out through consistent practices such as mandatory five-time congregational prayers, reading the Qur'an after every Maghrib and Fajr prayer, kissing the teacher's hand upon meeting, and showing reverence (ta'dhim) for religious texts and writing tools. This consistent habituation, such as congregational prayers and reading religious texts, aligns with the findings of Oktari and Kosasih (2019), who highlighted how pesantren instill religious and independent character through structured daily routines. This habituation forms positive habits that ultimately internalize the students' character permanently.

This is reinforced by a document study and observations during the research, which showed a daily routine schedule that supports student character development:

Table 1. Darul Falah Tungsari Santri Activity Schedule

No	Waktu	Kegiatan
1	04.00 - 05.30;	Shalat Subuh berjamaah, wirid, dan tilawah
2	05.30 - 06.30	Sorogan Al-Qur'an dan kitab
3	06.30 - 07.00:	Persiapan dan sarapan
4	07.00 - 12.00	Kegiatan madrasah formal
5	12.00 - 13.00	Shalat Dzuhur dan istirahat
6	13.00 - 15.30:	Istirahat dan kegiatan bebas terpimpin
7	15.30 - 17.00	Pengajian kitab (bandongan)
8	17.00 - 18.30	Shalat Ashar dan kegiatan ekstrakurikuler
9	18.30 - 19.00	Persiapan shalat Maghrib
10	19.00 - 20.00	Shalat Maghrib, wirid, dan tilawah
11	20.00 - 21.30	Pengajian malam dan bahtsul masail
12	21.30 - 22.00	Shalat Isya dan persiapan istirahat

The head of the Islamic boarding school explained the structure of the educational program at Darul Falah:

"Kami menjalankan sistem pendidikan ganda: formal dan salaf. Hal ini dimaksudkan agar santri memiliki fondasi agama yang kuat sekaligus kemampuan adaptasi dengan perkembangan zaman." (Wawancara, 08/07/2025)

The integration of formal and salaf education, as well as extracurricular activities and student organizations at Darul Falah, demonstrates the pesantren's adaptation to the demands of the times without abandoning its traditional roots. A study by (Silfiyasari and Zhafi 2020) affirms the role of pesantren in character education during the globalization era, where pesantren must be able to serve as both a relevant religious and social educational institution.

With its vocational programs and student organizations, Darul Falah equips students with life and leadership skills, which align with the needs of modern society. This is also supported by research (Mau 2024) which found that modern pesantren integrate character education with academic and moral curricula to produce competent and moral graduates.

Regarding the contribution of salaf pesantren to the development of a disciplined character, (Nihayati et al. 2021) studied character education for discipline at the Bahjatur Roghibiin Integrated Salaf Pesantren in Kudus, showing that salaf pesantren play a significant role in instilling discipline. This is relevant to the findings at Darul Falah, which emphasizes high discipline through consistent attendance at diniyah school and congregational worship. Furthermore, Widodo's study on the management of character development in salafiyah pesantren identifies various forms of character development from pesantren activities, affirming that the salaf pesantren curriculum, though traditional, remains effective in shaping character (Widodo 2025).

Overall, the character development model at Darul Falah Salaf Pesantren confirms and enriches previous theories and research on character education in pesantren. The integrated approach, role modeling, habituation, and adaptation to the needs of the times make Darul Falah a relevant model for producing a generation that is faithful, has noble character, and is ready to contribute positively to society.

Theoretically, the Darul Falah character development model is strongly rooted in the classical Islamic education philosophy that emphasizes the integration of knowledge (Ta'lim), self-development (Tarbiyah), and social ethics (Ta'dib). This concept is in line with Ibn Khaldun's view on the importance of malakah (an internalized disposition or habit) which is formed through repetition and practice. In the context of Darul Falah, daily routines such as congregational prayers, reading traditional texts, and polite interaction are forms of practice that systematically build a positive character malakah. This is in accordance with the affirmation from the head of the pesantren, who stated:

*"Pengajian kitab menjadi ruh pendidikan pesantren. Melalui kitab kuning, santri tidak hanya memperoleh ilmu, tetapi juga memahami metodologi berpikir ulama salaf yang akan membentuk karakter keilmuan mereka". (Wawancara, 08/07/2025)*

Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism can also be applied, where character learning occurs through the students' social interactions with the kyai, teachers, and fellow students, as well as through participation in collective activities like ro'an (mutual cooperation) (Pribadi 2020). The structured pesantren environment becomes a zone of proximal development for students to internalize character values with guidance from those more experienced.

In addition, character education theories developed by Western figures like Thomas Lickona (moral knowing, moral feeling, moral action) and Kevin Ryan (a comprehensive approach involving all aspects of school life) find strong resonance in the practices of Pondok Pesantren Darul Falah. Ta'lim provides moral knowing, while Tarbiyah and Ta'dib cultivate moral feeling and encourage moral action. The pesantren's holistic approach, which includes a formal curriculum, extracurricular activities, and dormitory life, inherently implements a comprehensive model of character education, long before this concept became popular in modern education (Witro et al. 2020). This demonstrates that salaf pesantren have a rich and relevant theoretical framework, even if it is not always formulated in modern Western terminology.

The character development model at Darul Falah has significant implications. First, this approach strengthens the identity of the salaf pesantren as a relevant institution for character education in the modern era. Second, the integration of formal and salaf curricula allows students to compete in the professional world without losing their religious values. Third, extracurricular activities and student organizations train leadership and social skills, which support community development. Fourth, this approach can serve as a model for other pesantren to combine tradition and modernity in character education.

These findings contribute to the development of a salaf pesantren-based character education model that integrates Ta'lim, Tarbiyah, and Ta'dib with the motto of Iman-Islam-Ihsan. The novelty of this research lies in: (1) The documentation of the dual approach

(traditional and modern) at Pesantren Darul Falah, which has rarely been studied specifically in the East OKU region. (2) The emphasis on the values of equality and community through congregational prayers as a means of character education. (3) The integration of vocational activities for student independence, which adds a practical dimension to moral education. This research enriches the literature on character education in salaf pesantren and provides a reference for the development of adaptive pesantren curricula in the global era.

## **2. CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT PATTERN FOR SANTRI AT NURUSSALAM SIDOGEDE MODERN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL EAST OKU REGENCY SOUTH SUMATRA PROVINCE**

The Nurussalam Sidogede Modern Islamic Boarding School in East OKU Regency demonstrates a comprehensive and integrated model for student (santri) character development. Sidogede's educational system implements the KMI (Kulliyatu al-Mu'allimin) curriculum, which emphasizes the learning of Arabic and English, as well as the simultaneous integration of religious and general knowledge. The Islamic Boarding School Secretary explained:

*"Kurikulum KMI yang kami terapkan tidak memisahkan antara ilmu agama dan umum. Setiap mata pelajaran, bahkan matematika dan sains, selalu dikaitkan dengan nilai-nilai Islam dan pembentukan akhlak". (Wawancara, 20/07/2025)*

The dormitory administrator added:

*"Yang membedakan kami dengan sekolah umum adalah setiap pembelajaran bernuansa iman dan akhlak. Misalnya ketika belajar sejarah, kami tidak hanya menghafalkan tahun dan peristiwa, tetapi mengambil hikmah dan nilai kepemimpinan dari tokoh-tokoh Islam". (Wawancara, 20/07/2025)*

This research indicates that the success of character development at this pesantren is based on several key pillars: a curriculum that is balanced between religious and general knowledge, a 24-hour dormitory education system, strict discipline, and exemplary conduct from the founders and teachers. The pesantren's vision to produce strong, globally-minded leaders with noble character (akhlakul karimah) serves as the foundation for all development activities. This aligns with the view of (Eliyanto et al. 2021) that pesantren are highly effective institutions for developing student character. In doing so, Nurussalam Sidogede affirms its role as a national center for forming students with exemplary character, discipline, and a broad perspective.

The holistic educational system at Sidogede, particularly through the KMI Curriculum which emphasizes Arabic and English alongside the simultaneous integration of religious and general knowledge, ensures that learning is not only cognitive but also affective and psychomotor. The full-day school model, which is continued with dormitory activities, creates a sustainable learning environment where every moment is an opportunity for character development. The integration of formal classroom education with dormitory life ensures that character values like faith and morality are embedded in every subject and daily activity (Nasith et al. 2023). The success of this system is reflected in Sidogede's alumni, who are spread across various fields as educators, community leaders, and national figures, demonstrating that the character development applied has successfully shaped individuals ready to contribute to society.

The character development model at Pondok Modern Nurussalam Sidogede can be analyzed through various relevant theories and previous studies. The holistic and integrated approach applied by Sidogede, which combines formal and informal education, aligns with the concept of character education that emphasizes the importance of a conducive environment and consistency in habituation (Ni'am and Arafah 2024). A study by Fahrudin highlights a character development model for students in pesantren education that emphasizes early character formation through the pesantren culture, which creates a disciplined and noble life for students (N. Hidayat 2016). This is highly relevant to the findings at Sidogede, which implements a 24-hour dormitory system as a continuous learning arena.

Within the formal pesantren environment, character formation is carried out through structured learning using modern pesantren methods. The leadership staff from the interview explained:

"Di kelas, guru menggunakan metode yang beragam seperti ceramah, diskusi, tanya jawab, penugasan, dan praktik langsung. Yang terpenting, setiap metode tersebut selalu diselingi dengan penanaman nilai-nilai moral dan kepemimpinan". (Wawancara, 20/07/2025)

The Islamic boarding school leadership emphasized the importance of a life-based approach to learning:

"Kami menerapkan life education dimana setiap aspek pembelajaran diarahkan untuk menumbuhkan jiwa keikhlasan, kesederhanaan, semangat belajar, dan kreativitas santri. Ini yang membuat pembelajaran di Sidogede berbeda dengan sekolah pada umumnya." (Wawancara, 10/07/2025)

The results of the syllabus documentation show that every subject contains explicit character education content, both in its learning objectives and its evaluation process. Dormitory life serves as the primary laboratory for student (santri) character formation. The dormitory administrator explained:

"Di asrama, santri dibiasakan dengan rutinitas ketat sehari-hari. Semua kegiatan ibadah dilakukan secara berjamaah dan tepat waktu. Ini secara bertahap menanamkan kedisiplinan dan kesalehan dalam diri mereka." (Wawancara, 10/07/2025)

A student's guardian provided a testimony about their child's change:

"Saya melihat perubahan yang signifikan pada anak saya setelah mondok di Sidogede. Dia menjadi lebih disiplin, mandiri, dan yang paling saya syukuri adalah akhlaknya semakin baik. Di rumah dia selalu bangun untuk shalat Subuh tanpa dibangunkan." (Wawancara, 10/07/2025)

Role modeling is an important pillar in character development. The Pesantren Secretary explained:

"Para kyai dan ustadz di sini tidak hanya mengajar, tetapi juga memberikan contoh konkret dalam berperilaku, berjuang, dan beribadah. Mereka hidup bersama santri 24 jam, sehingga setiap perkataan dan sikap mereka terserap langsung oleh santri." (Wawancara, 10/07/2025)

Observations show that mentors are always present in every student activity, from congregational prayers and shared meals to evening study sessions, so that role modeling is visible in every activity. This aspect of exemplary conduct (uswatun khasanah) is a crucial pillar at Nurussalam Sidogede, where the founders and teachers (asatidz) serve as concrete examples of behavior, dedication, and worship. This is supported by research from Hidayat & Hidayat, who discussed character development through role modeling and habitual practice at pesantren. They found that the exemplary conduct of teachers has a significant impact on student character formation (W. Hidayat and Hidayat 2024). Furthermore, the emphasis on strict discipline and routines at Sidogede, such as waking up early for voluntary night prayers (qiyamul lail) and congregational prayers, reflects findings from Sinta (2025) on the effectiveness of the ta'zir (punishment) system in improving student discipline in pesantren (Sinta 2025), though Sidogede places more emphasis on positive habituation and role modeling than on punishment. The integrated curriculum at Sidogede, which balances religious and general knowledge with a strong focus on Arabic and English, demonstrates the pesantren's effort to produce students with a global perspective. This aligns with research by Syaharuddin & Astuti, who analyzed curriculum implementation at modern pesantren and found that a comprehensive curriculum contributes to character development practices (Syaharuddin et al. 2024). A study by Lestari, Baharudin, & Budiman also highlights the role of Islamic Boarding Schools (IBS) in character formation, showing that pesantren play a crucial role in shaping student character through various integrated programs (Lestari et al. 2024).

Furthermore, the leadership development program is a primary focus in student character formation. The Leadership Staff explained:

"OPPM melibatkan santri senior dalam mengelola kegiatan harian pondok. Mereka diberi tanggung jawab penuh untuk mengatur adik-adik kelasnya. Ini melatih jiwa kepemimpinan dan tanggung jawab mereka." (Wawancara, 10/07/2025)

Leadership programs such as the Organisasi Pelajar Pondok Modern (OPPM) and the Penataran Manajemen dan Organisasi (PMK) at Sidogede, which aim to train students (santri) to become leaders, are supported by research that demonstrates the importance of leadership education in pesantren. Fauzi & Sudin conducted a comparative analysis of character education within the merdeka curriculum framework between modern boarding schools and pesantren,

which can provide insight into how Sidogede's leadership programs contribute to the formation of a leader's character (Fauzi and Sudin 2025). Research by Khayati also emphasizes the role of pesantren as a solution to child violence through a holistic approach to character education, showing that pesantren like Sidogede with a focus on strong character formation can produce responsible and empathetic individuals (Khayati 2025).

Theoretically, the character development model at Pondok Modern Nurussalam Sidogede can be explained through Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes the importance of learning through observation and imitation ("Social Learning Theory of Aggression" 2017). The exemplary conduct of the founders and teachers (asatidz) at Sidogede, who live with students 24 hours a day and serve as concrete examples of behavior, dedication, and worship, is highly consistent with this concept. Students internalize values of sincerity, honesty, and discipline by directly observing the behavior of their teachers and mentors. In addition, Habituation Theory (Fauza et al. 2023) is also relevant, where the habituation of strict daily routines such as qiyamul lail (voluntary night prayer), congregational prayers, and evening study gradually shapes disciplined and pious character in students. This structured and consistent environment creates positive habits that become deeply ingrained in the students.

Empirically, the success of the character development model at Sidogede is proven by tangible results, namely its alumni becoming educators, community leaders, and national figures. This shows that the education and development system implemented is effective in producing individuals who not only have a balanced knowledge of religious and general studies but also strong character and competent leadership. Data from research reports indicate that scheduled religious and leadership programs reinforce religious values and social responsibility, while the continuous instilling of discipline and exemplary conduct produces students who are disciplined, independent, and possess noble character. The previously cited studies, such as those by Fachrudin and Hidayat & Hidayat (Fachrudin 2020; W. Hidayat and Hidayat 2024), provide empirical evidence from other pesantren that support the effectiveness of similar methods in character formation.

Non-empirically, the philosophy of "100% religious and 100% general knowledge" espoused by Sidogede reflects the view that a balanced education between spirituality and intellect is key to forming a complete individual (Suhifatullah 2024). The vision to produce strong leaders with noble character (akhhlakul karimah), and even a global perspective, is an idealism that goes beyond mere academic achievement. It is a commitment to the formation of a whole person who has moral integrity and is prepared to contribute to the progress of the community and the nation. The motto "ready to lead, ready to be led" also demonstrates non-empirical values of humility, responsibility, and a willingness to serve, which are essential foundations for ethical leadership.

The implications of the character development model at Pondok Modern Nurussalam Sidogede are extensive, both for the world of education, society, and individual development. For the world of education, the Sidogede model can serve as an important reference for other educational institutions, especially pesantren, in designing effective character development curricula and programs. The integration of formal and informal education, as well as the emphasis on role modeling and habituation, are strategies that can be replicated to produce graduates who are not only academically intelligent but also possess high moral integrity. These implications also include the importance of creating an environment that supports holistic character formation, not just through classroom learning.

For society, Sidogede's success in producing alumni who become educators, community leaders, and national figures has positive implications for the development of quality human resources. Alumni with noble character and a broad perspective can become agents of change who bring positive impacts to various sectors of life. This also shows that pesantren, as a traditional educational institution, play a strategic role in preparing the younger generation to face global challenges while remaining steadfast in religious and moral values (Nafsaka et al. 2023). The social implication is the creation of a more civilized and responsible society, supported by individuals who have undergone an intensive process of character development.

For individual development, the Sidogede development model shapes students into disciplined, independent, responsible individuals with strong spirituality. The 24-hour dormitory environment, with its strict routines and well-organized supervision, instills good habits that will benefit them throughout their lives. The leadership, teamwork, and entrepreneurial skills honed through various programs also equip students with relevant skills for the future (Subni 2024). The personal implication is the formation of a solid self-identity, self-confidence, and a readiness to face various life challenges with an excellent character.

The contribution of these research findings lies in presenting a character development model that has proven effective at Pondok Modern Nurussalam Sidogede, which can serve as a case study and practical reference for other pesantren. Although much research has discussed character education in pesantren, this study provides an in-depth picture of how Sidogede specifically integrates various methods-formal, informal, religious, leadership, disciplinary, and social interaction-into a synergistic whole. The novelty of these findings is the emphasis on a 24-hour life education approach that explicitly makes every aspect of the students' dormitory life a medium for character formation. This is not just a theory, but a practice that has been proven to produce alumni with excellent character.

Another novelty is the emphasis on the strict integration between formal and informal curricula, where character values are not only taught but also lived out in every activity. While many pesantren have character development programs, Sidogede demonstrates how consistency and totality in implementation, supported by strong role modeling from educators, are key success factors. In addition, this research specifically highlights how Pondok Modern Nurussalam Sidogede successfully produces leaders with noble character and a global perspective, a significant contribution in the context of modern Islamic education in Indonesia.

This research also makes a methodological contribution by presenting an in-depth case study of a modern pesantren, which allows for a richer understanding of the dynamics of character development in a dormitory environment. This complements previous studies that may have focused more on theoretical aspects or broader surveys. Thus, these findings not only enrich the body of knowledge on character education in pesantren but also offer practical guidance for pesantren managers and education policymakers to develop more effective character development programs that are relevant to the needs of the times.

### **3. COMPARISON OF SANTRI CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT MODELS AT SALAF PESANTREN DARUL FALAH TULUNGSARI AND MODERN PESANTREN NURUSSALAM SIDOGEDE EAST OKU REGENCY SOUTH SUMATRA PROVINCE**

The research findings indicate that Salaf Pesantren Darul Falah Tulungsari and Modern Pesantren Nurussalam Sidogede have different approaches to student (santri) character development, yet both are effective in instilling noble character. Darul Falah adopts a classical educational system blended with salaf traditions, focusing on the study of traditional Islamic texts (kitab kuning) through the sorogan (individual) and bandongan (group) methods (Ibrahim and Mukhsin 2025). Its curriculum is based on religious sciences like nahwu, sharaf, fiqh, and akhlak, with an emphasis on the habituation of congregational prayers, manners, and mutual cooperation (gotong royong). Character development methods include the exemplary conduct of the kyai, habituation, strict supervision, and a system of rewards and punishments. The pesantren culture is rich with Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah values, such as routine religious study and celebrating the Prophet's birthday.

In contrast, Nurussalam implements an integrative educational system based on the KMI curriculum, which combines religious sciences (Al-Qur'an, hadith, fiqh) with general sciences (mathematics, English, science). Learning takes place 24 hours a day, including intracurricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities such as leadership and entrepreneurship. Character development methods involve both formal learning (lectures, discussions) and informal learning (habituation of prayers, Qur'an recitation, and the exemplary conduct of the kyai). The pesantren culture is modern, with high discipline and the values of Panca Jiwa (sincerity, simplicity, hard work), as well as activities that support tolerance and a global perspective.

The interpretation of these findings is that both pesantren succeed in forming students with noble character, albeit with different approaches. Darul Falah emphasizes salaf traditions

to strengthen religious identity, while Nurussalam integrates a modern approach to prepare students for global challenges. This difference reflects the flexibility of pesantren in adapting their character development methods to their respective visions and contexts.

These findings are highly relevant to the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, where pesantren serve as centers for character education that instill noble values such as honesty, discipline, and tolerance. Within the social and cultural context of Indonesia, pesantren are not just religious educational institutions but also agents of character formation that can respond to modern challenges such as intolerance, radicalism, and globalization. Darul Falah's traditional approach reflects the strength of Islamic cultural heritage, which emphasizes strengthening faith and morality through the study of kitab kuning and religious activities. In contrast, Nurussalam's modern approach demonstrates an adaptation to the needs of the times, such as the development of leadership skills and a global perspective, which are important for facing competition in the global era.

Globally, character education is becoming increasingly important for shaping a generation that can handle complex moral and social challenges (Nafsaka et al. 2023). Pesantren, with both their traditional and modern approaches, offer a holistic model of character education that integrates spiritual, intellectual, and social aspects (Mu'minah 2021). These findings also align with the needs of Indonesia's national education to develop character based on Pancasila, where values such as gotong royong and tolerance, found in both pesantren, are relevant.

The research findings are supported by character education theories in the Islamic context, particularly the concept of tarbiyah, which emphasizes the formation of noble character through a holistic education that includes spiritual, intellectual, and moral aspects. The concept of a hidden curriculum—the values learned through daily routines, social interactions, and the educational environment—is also relevant to these findings. At Darul Falah, the hidden curriculum is evident in the habituation of congregational prayers and gotong royong, while at Nurussalam, it is reflected in dormitory discipline and extracurricular activities like leadership. This theory is consistent with research by Syaharuddin, who found that the implicit curriculum in pesantren is effective in instilling moderate character, such as tolerance and balance (Syaharuddin et al. 2024).

In addition, the concept of exemplary conduct (*uswah hasanah*), which is emphasized in both pesantren through the role of the kyai and teachers, is supported by educational psychology theory that highlights the importance of role models in character formation. Research by Muid et al. shows that the strategy for developing a tolerant character in pesantren involves habituation and exemplary conduct (Muid et al. 2024), which is in line with the methods at Darul Falah and Nurussalam. Other research by Zufriyatun et al. also confirms that the development of an integrated Islamic religious education curriculum can form students' religious character, supporting Nurussalam's approach of combining religious and general knowledge (Zufriyatun et al. 2025).

Research by Maarif et al. in Nazhruna highlights the importance of learning organizations in developing the competencies of educators in pesantren (Maarif et al. 2023), which is relevant to Nurussalam's formal and informal methods. Meanwhile, a study by Fakhurrrazi & Sebgag (2020) in Nazhruna on the teaching of kitab kuning shows that traditional methods such as sorogan and bandongan are effective for improving student comprehension (Fakhurrrazi and Sebgag 2020), which supports Darul Falah's approach.

These findings have important implications for Islamic education policy and practice, particularly in pesantren. First, the comparison between the salaf and modern approaches shows that both have strengths that can be complementary. Salaf pesantren like Darul Falah can adopt modern elements, such as an integrated curriculum and extracurricular activities, to increase the relevance of education for students. Conversely, modern pesantren like Nurussalam can maintain traditional values, such as the exemplary conduct of the kyai and religious habituation, to strengthen students' religious identity.

Second, these findings affirm the importance of integrating character education into the curriculum and daily life of pesantren. This approach can serve as a model for other educational institutions, both formal and non-formal, to develop student character based on moral and

religious values. Third, in the context of national education policy, these findings can encourage the development of curricula that combine the values of Pancasila, such as gotong royong and tolerance, with a holistic Islamic educational approach. This is important for facing global challenges like intolerance and radicalism, where strong character education can be a solution for forming a moderate and morally upright generation.

This research has several limitations that should be considered. First, the study only involved two specific pesantren in East OKU, so the findings may not be generalizable to all pesantren in Indonesia, which have a diversity of cultures, curricula, and local contexts. Second, the focus on a comparison between the two pesantren may limit a deep analysis of the unique characteristics of each, such as the internal factors that influence the effectiveness of character development. Third, this research did not explore the long-term impact of the character development approach on students after they graduate, such as its influence on their social and professional lives. Fourth, external factors such as the social, economic, and cultural environment of the surrounding community were not analyzed in depth, even though these factors can influence the character development process.

This research makes a significant contribution to the understanding of character development in salaf and modern pesantren. First, it enriches the literature on comparative education in Indonesia, especially in the context of pesantren, by highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of traditional and modern approaches. Second, these findings can serve as a reference for educators and policymakers to develop a balanced character education model that combines traditional Islamic values with the needs of modern education. Third, this research encourages further discussion on how pesantren can adapt to contemporary challenges, such as globalization and digitalization, while maintaining their religious identity. Thus, this research is not only relevant to the academic world but also has practical implications for the development of Islamic education in Indonesia.

Below is a table that summarizes the comparison of character development models at both pesantren, as a reference for a visual understanding of the findings:

Tabel 2. Comparison of coaching patterns

Aspect	Darul Falah Tulungsari salaf Islamic Borading school	Nurussalam Sidogede Modern Islamic Boarding School
Education system	Classical and salaf (sorogan, bandongan); SP, Tsanawiyah, Aliyah levels; focus on yellow books	Integrative, comprehensive, independent (KMI); Wustha, Ulya levels; combining religion and general education, 24 hours.
Curriculum	Yellow books (nahwu, fiqh, akhlak, etc.) with limited general knowledge; graded according to education level	KMI: Ulum Islamiyah, Lughoh, Amma; intracurricular, co-curricular, extracurricular; balance between religion and general.
Character Building Methods	Exemplary behavior of the kiai, habituation, supervision, punishment/reward; focus on morals through the traditions of the salaf.	Formal (lectures, discussions) and informal (habituation, role models, supervision); focus on discipline and leadership.
the culture of an Islamic boarding school	Salaf, simple, mutual cooperation (ro'an), regular religious studies, Maulid commemoration; noble moral values.	Modern, highly disciplined, culturally diverse, Five Souls; leadership activities and social service.
Core Values	Faith, Islam, Ihsan; noble character, equality, independence, limited adaptation.	Sincerity, simplicity, hard work; leadership, tolerance, global insight.

From the table above, it can be seen that Salaf Pesantren Darul Falah Tulungsari implements a classical and traditional (salaf) education system with a main focus on studying kitab kuning (traditional Islamic texts) such as nahwu, fiqh, and akhlak. Its character development heavily relies on the exemplary conduct of the kyai, daily habituation, and strict supervision with a system of rewards and punishments. The pesantren's culture is strongly rooted in simple salaf traditions, upholding noble character (akhlakul karimah), and emphasizing mutual cooperation (gotong royong) and routine religious studies.

## CONCLUSION

The research findings conclude that both Salaf Darul Falah Islamic Boarding School and Modern Nurussalam Sidogede Islamic Boarding School successfully cultivate noble character in their students, despite using different approaches.

Darul Falah uses a dual system that combines traditional salaf and modern education. Its curriculum focuses on kitab kuning (traditional Islamic texts) and character development based on three main pillars: Ta'lim (religious education), Tarbiyah (personality and mental development), and Ta'dib (moral and ethical education), which are integrated into the motto of Iman-Islam-Ihsan. Its primary methods are kyai (religious leader) role modeling, routine habit formation, and a culture of mutual cooperation (ro'an). This model successfully produces students with noble character who are disciplined, have a strong religious identity, and are adaptable to change.

Nurussalam implements a 24-hour integrated system with the KMI Curriculum, which balances religious and general subjects. Character development is based on the Panca Jiwa (Five Spirits: sincerity, simplicity, self-reliance, brotherhood, freedom) and leadership activities, such as student organizations. Its methods include both formal and informal learning, with an emphasis on high discipline and a global perspective. This model is effective in producing students who are ready to become leaders and agents of change in society.

The comparison shows that Darul Falah emphasizes salaf tradition to strengthen religious identity, while Nurussalam integrates a modern approach to prepare students for global challenges. Both schools prove that pesantren education, whether traditional or modern, plays a crucial role in forming character that is relevant to both national and global needs.

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