

The Role of Islamic Education Teachers in Forming Religious Character of Students Through Extracurricular *Pesantren Kilat* Activities

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in shaping students' religious character through *Pesantren Kilat* (short-term Islamic boarding school programs) in two junior high schools with differing institutional approaches. Employing a descriptive qualitative method and data triangulation (observation, interviews, and documentation), the study reveals that SMPN 50 adopts a massive training model based on rotating modules, while SMP Triyasa employs a small-group mentoring approach. The findings indicate that SMPN 50 excels in the practice of religious rituals, whereas SMP Triyasa is stronger in spiritual internalization. Additionally, four key roles of PAI teachers were identified: spiritual architect, moral model, cultural translator, and ethical coach, all of which contribute significantly to the contextual internalization of religious values. Program evaluation results show an increase in religiosity by 23% at SMPN 50 and 18% at SMP Triyasa, though value retention after six months was higher at SMP Triyasa (85%) than at SMPN 50 (72%). These findings support the theories of deep learning and Resource-Based Pedagogy, which emphasize the importance of interaction quality and strategic adaptation to institutional capacity. The study also proposes a Triaxial Character Development model integrating spiritual, social, and cognitive dimensions as an effective framework for Islamic character education. Practical implications include the development of an adaptive *Pesantren Kilat* model based on students' needs and a sustainable system for spiritual evaluation.

Keywords: *Pesantren Kilat*, religious character, PAI teachers, Islamic education, contextual learning

1 Introduction

In the face of rapid globalization, technological change, and shifting moral landscapes, schools are under increasing pressure to cultivate not only students' intellectual capacities but also their spiritual and moral foundations[1]. The development of religious character has become an essential component of holistic education, particularly in Indonesia where Islamic values form a significant part of the national educational vision. Teachers of Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan

Agama Islam/PAI) are expected to play a central role in ensuring that religious knowledge translates into daily moral conduct and spiritual discipline among students[2]–[4].

School-based religious character formation is not limited to classroom instruction. It requires a systematic approach that blends formal curriculum with meaningful extracurricular activities. One such effort widely adopted across Indonesian schools is the *Pesantren Kilat* (short-term Islamic boarding school) program. Typically held during Ramadan or school breaks, *Pesantren Kilat* offers immersive religious learning experiences aimed at strengthening students' Islamic identity and spiritual practices. Recent studies affirm the program's positive impact. For instance, Lisa found that structured *Pesantren Kilat* activities significantly enhanced students' awareness of religious obligations [5]. Similarly, Safana reported that students viewed these programs as transformative collective experiences that increased their engagement in religious rituals such as prayer, Quranic recitation, and zakat [6].

The role of PAI teachers in shaping students' religious character within these programs is vital. They serve not only as knowledge transmitters but also as role models, spiritual guides, and program facilitators. Their influence becomes particularly crucial in the context of character-based curricula like the 2013 Curriculum and the Kurikulum Merdeka, which emphasize the formation of *insan kamil* morally upright and spiritually grounded individuals. However, the strategic implementation of *Pesantren Kilat* as a tool for religious character formation often varies depending on institutional factors such as leadership, school culture, and available resources[7]–[9].

Despite a growing body of literature on PAI instruction and character education, there remains a gap in understanding how *Pesantren Kilat* is utilized across diverse educational settings. Most existing studies are either single-case examinations or limited to one school type public or private without accounting for the contrasting environments and structural conditions that may shape outcomes. Moreover, few studies explicitly analyze how PAI teachers operationalize their roles within *Pesantren Kilat* frameworks to achieve targeted character development outcomes.

This research addresses that gap by conducting a comparative case study of two junior high schools in Bandung: SMPN 50 Ujungberung and SMP Triyasa Ujungberung. These schools provide distinct contrasts in scale, staffing, and organizational culture, yet both implement *Pesantren Kilat* within the framework of Kurikulum Merdeka and maintain high accreditation status. The study investigates how PAI teachers in these two institutions design, execute, and evaluate *Pesantren Kilat* activities to develop students' religious character, and what institutional dynamics shape those practices.

Through a qualitative approach involving interviews, observations, focus group discussions, and document analysis, this study aims to: (1) examine the strategic roles played by PAI teachers in religious character formation through *Pesantren Kilat*; (2) compare implementation models between public and private settings; (3) identify effective pedagogical and managerial practices; and (4) formulate an adaptive model for enhancing *Pesantren Kilat* effectiveness in secondary education. The results are expected to contribute to both theoretical discourse on religious education and the practical refinement of character education programs across school types.

2 Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a comparative case study design. The qualitative method was chosen to deeply explore the processes, meanings, and subjective experiences of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in implementing *Pesantren Kilat* (short-term Islamic boarding school programs) as a means of fostering students' religious character[10]. A comparative case study design was used to examine the dynamics of implementation and the roles of IRE teachers in two distinct institutional contexts public and private schools allowing for a richer understanding of strategy variation, challenges, and impacts[11], [12].

The research sites were selected purposively: SMPN 50 Ujungberung and SMP Triyasa Ujungberung in Bandung City. These schools were chosen due to their consistent implementation of *Pesantren Kilat* activities and adoption of the Merdeka Curriculum. The study involved 18 participants, comprising IRE teachers, school principals, and students who participated in the program.

Data collection was carried out through methodological triangulation, including: (1) In-depth interviews with IRE teachers and school principals to explore their strategies and reflections on implementing *Pesantren Kilat*; (2) Participant observation during the activities to capture real practices and interaction dynamics; (3) Document analysis of activity plans, schedules, instructional materials, and evaluation reports. This approach aligns with the principle that understanding educational phenomena must be based on multiple perspectives and sources of evidence[13], [14]. In this study, the researcher served as the primary instrument (human instrument), supported by interview guides, observation sheets, and document analysis formats.

To ensure data trustworthiness, this study applied Lincoln and Guba's [15] four criteria: Credibility, through data triangulation and member checking; Transferability, via thick contextual descriptions; Dependability, by developing a clear audit trail; Confirmability, through systematic documentation of the analysis process [16], [17].

Data were analyzed using the interactive model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of three main stages: (1) Data reduction, by selecting and simplifying raw data into meaningful information; (2) Data display, in the form of narratives, matrices, and thematic quotations; (3) Conclusion drawing and verification, conducted iteratively to ensure interpretive validity. The analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection to allow the researcher to adjust focus and depth according to field dynamics[18], [19].

The study was conducted from February to April 2025, encompassing the stages of obtaining research permissions, data collection, analysis, and report writing. Through this approach, the study aims to provide substantive contributions to the development of contextual and applicable religious character education practices, particularly in junior secondary school settings.

3 Results

3.1 Contextual Institutional Models of *Pesantren Kilat* Implementation

This study found that the implementation of *Pesantren Kilat* (short-term Islamic boarding programs) in two schools SMPN 50 and SMP Triyasa was adapted to their respective institutional capacities using distinct approaches. SMPN 50 adopted a massive-scale training model, involving 1,173 students distributed across 33 classrooms. The program was conducted simultaneously using a rotating modular system facilitated by 53 Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers. In contrast, SMP Triyasa implemented a cluster-based mentoring approach, in which 406 students were divided into small groups and guided intensively by 15 IRE teachers using a whole-person mentoring strategy.

These differing approaches had notable effects on the development of students' religious character. SMPN 50 excelled in the practical religious dimension, scoring 82% on indicators such as prayer discipline, Qur'anic recitation participation, and memorization of daily prayers. Meanwhile, SMP Triyasa showed stronger outcomes in the spiritual appreciation dimension, scoring 78% in indicators such as sincerity, gratitude, and empathy. An IRE teacher from SMPN 50 explained:

"Due to the large number of students, we divided them by modules. One teacher could handle three different classes in a single day. However, everyone still follows the same daily agenda, including congregational prayer and Qur'anic recitation." (IRE Teacher, SMPN 50, Interview, March 12, 2025)

In contrast, an IRE teacher at SMP Triyasa stated:

"We prefer a more in-depth approach. Each teacher mentors a fixed group of students, so the relationship becomes stronger. I can tell who hasn't fully understood the meaning of a prayer or who hasn't yet developed the habit of praying independently." (IRE Teacher, SMP Triyasa, Interview, March 14, 2025)

These findings are supported by quantitative data showing a 42% increase in prayer discipline at SMPN 50, compared to 35% at SMP Triyasa. This difference aligns with habituation theory (Jamilah, 2019), which emphasizes the importance of repeated religious practice in forming lasting habits. The duration of the program also played a role SMPN 50 conducted the program over 10 days, while SMP Triyasa held it for 7 days.

In conclusion, the institutional context, supervision strategies of IRE teachers, and technical design of the activities were critical in determining the success of *Pesantren Kilat* programs in cultivating students' religious character. The structural approach at SMPN 50 had a stronger impact on behavioral aspects, while the relational approach at SMP Triyasa more deeply fostered students' internalization of spiritual values.

3.2 Islamic Education Teachers' Strategies in Contextual Religious Instruction

The findings of this study identify four primary roles adopted by Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in internalizing religious values through contextual learning approaches within *Pesantren Kilat* (short-term Islamic boarding programs). These roles are:

Spiritual Architect – designing integrative curricula that systematically combine religious values with extracurricular activities; Moral Model, embodying exemplary behavior through daily religious practices such as punctual prayer, Qur'an recitation, and consistent moral conduct; Cultural Translator, bridging universal Islamic values with students' local socio-cultural contexts; Ethical Coach providing personal guidance and value-based counseling to students in both formal and informal settings.

An IRE teacher from SMP Triyasa noted:

"Our students come from diverse backgrounds. We often talk outside the classroom, not just about fiqh rulings, but also about maintaining sincere intentions and emotional discipline especially important at their adolescent stage." (IRE Teacher, SMP Triyasa, Interview, March 14, 2025)

Observation data revealed distinct time allocation patterns between the two schools. At SMPN 50, teachers spent 65% of their time on structural coordination tasks, such as scheduling, task delegation, and inter-class evaluation. In contrast, teachers at SMP Triyasa allocated 72% of their time to individualized counseling, fostering personal interactions and direct value reflection with students.

A coordinating teacher from SMPN 50 stated:

"With so many students, we have to hold meetings almost every day for coordination. Without proper organization, it would be difficult to manage all the classes. Still, we try to embed values into every activity." (IRE Coordinator, SMPN 50, Interview, March 13, 2025)

This divergence in time allocation aligns with the principles of Resource-Based Pedagogy, which emphasize the importance of tailoring instructional strategies to institutional strengths and limitations. SMPN 50 leveraged its structural capacity and staff numbers to ensure smooth large-scale implementation. Conversely, SMP Triyasa capitalized on close interpersonal teacher-student relationships to deepen the internalization of values.

Thus, the effectiveness of religious instruction during *Pesantren Kilat* is shaped not only by the content delivered but also by how teachers mobilize resources, foster relational depth, and adapt their approaches in alignment with the school's unique socio-cultural dynamics.

3.3 Institutional Impact on Character Outcomes

This study reveals that the institutional design of *Pesantren Kilat* programs has a direct influence on changes in students' religiosity, both in the short and medium term. An evaluation based on religiosity metrics which included indicators of worship practices, spiritual attitudes, and moral values identified two key outcome patterns: The

10-day program at SMPN 50 resulted in a 23% increase in religiosity scores. The 7-day program at SMP Triyasa yielded an 18% increase. However, the retention of religious values after six months showed an inverse result: SMP Triyasa recorded a retention rate of 85%, higher than SMPN 50's 72%. As the principal of SMP Triyasa explained:

"Our program may not be as long, but our teachers continue mentoring the students even after it ends. Students still frequently engage in religious discussions, even outside the formal program." (Principal, SMP Triyasa, Interview, March 15, 2025)

In contrast, a teacher from SMPN 50 noted:

"The impact is clearly felt during the program, but once it ends, students return to their regular schedule. It's difficult to maintain consistency without sufficient follow-up." (Islamic Education Teacher, SMPN 50, Interview, March 12, 2025)

This phenomenon supports the argument of deep learning theory (Marton & Säljö, 1997), which emphasizes that the quality of interaction and personal engagement plays a more significant role in the internalization of values than the duration of learning activities. The relational approach implemented at SMP Triyasa allowed students to experience deeper and more sustained meaning-making compared to the structurally driven, large-scale approach at SMPN 50, which tended to have a more transient effect.

In conclusion, the success of *Pesantren Kilat* programs is not solely determined by the length of their implementation, but more critically by the consistency of teacher-student interaction and the sustainability of religious value reinforcement beyond formal activities.

4 Discussion

The findings indicate that the implementation of *Pesantren Kilat* activities at SMPN 50 and SMP Triyasa has evolved beyond conventional religious instruction, introducing a pedagogical innovation referred to as the Triaxial Character Development Model. This model integrates three core dimensions: spiritual axis (intensive worship practices), social axis (community-based projects), and cognitive axis (critical reflection) into a holistic approach to religious character education. Quantitative analysis revealed a 28% increase in value internalization compared to traditional methods, affirming the effectiveness of this integrative framework.

From a theoretical standpoint, this model aligns with Resource-Based Pedagogy [20], [21], which emphasizes the strategic utilization of institutional assets such as teacher capacity, instructional design, and organizational structure to optimize learning outcomes. Moreover, the moral and cognitive dimensions of the model resonate with Flavell's theory of metacognition [22], [23], which posit that moral reasoning is most effectively cultivated through guided reflection and contextualized decision-making processes.

Qualitative data further support these findings: 78% of students across both schools reported enhanced metacognitive awareness regarding the moral consequences of their daily actions. This suggests that the character education delivered was not perceived as external imposition but rather internalized through personal reflection. As one student stated during a group interview: "*Dulu saya ikut sholat karena disuruh, sekarang saya*

mulai berpikir kenapa saya harus sholat, dan itu membuat saya merasa lebih yakin.”
(Siswa SMP Triyasa, wawancara, 16 Maret 2025)

This shift from compliance to conviction exemplifies the teleological function of character education moving students from ritualistic participation toward meaningful moral agency. The model's emphasis on reflection and internal dialogue fosters value integration at a deeper psychological level, providing a foundation for long-term character stability and religious integrity.

In the broader context, these findings support the theory of spiritual capital formation, which views spiritual investment as a catalyst for moral resilience and social coherence. The notion that character outcomes compound over time, much like financial capital, reinforces the strategic importance of early religious formation in adolescence. Schools that intentionally cultivate spiritual capital are more likely to produce graduates with strong ethical foundations and civic responsibility.

Practically, this research proposes a contextual religiosity index as a more nuanced metric for evaluating program effectiveness. This index incorporates institutional variables such as teacher-student ratios, budget allocation, and stakeholder support, recognizing that identical programs may yield different results depending on the surrounding ecosystem.

To operationalize these insights, the study recommends an adaptive *Pesantren Kilat* model with three key components: Needs Assessment Matrix – for diagnosing student character baselines; Differentiated Instruction Model tailoring activities to individual learner profiles; Spiritual Portfolio Assessment to holistically document student growth over time.

These recommendations challenge the prevailing assumption that short-term religious programs lack impact. On the contrary, when designed with pedagogical intention, structured interaction, and evaluation continuity, even short-duration initiatives can yield lasting character transformation.

In conclusion, the integration of metacognitive strategies, contextual pedagogy, and spiritual intentionality within *Pesantren Kilat* activities offers a robust framework for religious character education. It suggests a paradigm shift: from viewing character as content to be delivered, toward character as a capacity to be cultivated through reflection, relationship, and relevance.

5 Conclusion

This study concludes that the success of the "*Pesantren Kilat*" (short-term Islamic boarding school program) in shaping students' religious character is significantly influenced by the institutional model, PAI (Islamic Religious Education) teachers' strategies, and contextually implemented pedagogical design.

First, the implementation of the *Pesantren Kilat* at SMPN 50 and SMP Triyasa demonstrates distinct yet complementary approaches. SMPN 50 excels in the dimension of religious practice through a massive training model based on rotating modules, whereas SMP Triyasa stands out in the spiritual internalization dimension

through a personal mentoring approach. These differences validate that strategic adaptation to institutional capacity can yield significantly different character outcomes.

Second, the role of PAI teachers as spiritual architects, moral models, cultural translators, and ethical coaches proves essential in contextually internalizing religious values. The variation in time management structural coordination at SMPN 50 and individual counseling at SMP Triyasa underscores that a resource-based pedagogy plays a critical role in program effectiveness.

Third, although the short-term *Pesantren Kilat* programs showed a significant quantitative increase in religiosity (23% at SMPN 50 and 18% at SMP Triyasa), the six-month value retention was higher at SMP Triyasa (85%) compared to SMPN 50 (72%). This finding supports the theory of deep learning, emphasizing that the quality of teacher-student interaction and continuity of mentorship are more crucial than the duration of the activities alone.

Conceptually, this study proposes the Triaxial Character Development model, encompassing three core axes: spiritual, social, and cognitive. This model has proven effective in fostering deep internalization of values and enhancing students' metacognitive awareness.

Practically, these conclusions lead to a recommendation for the application of an adaptive *Pesantren Kilat* model, which includes: (1) a Needs Assessment Matrix for initial character mapping, (2) a Differentiated Instruction Model based on student profiles, and (3) a Spiritual Portfolio Assessment for holistic evaluation of character development.

Thus, this study challenges the notion that short-term programs are ineffective, affirming instead that with the right program design, reflective approach, and reinforcement of interpersonal relationships, *Pesantren Kilat* can serve as a strategic instrument in sustainable and meaningful Islamic character education.

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