

Distinctive Character Education Pathways Across Pesantren Typologies: A Comparative Study Of Salaf, Modern, And Tarekat Pesantren In Central Java

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Abstract: This study examines how pesantren typologies shape pathways of character education across three pesantren in Central Java: the salaf-oriented APIK Kaliwungu Pesantren, the modern Darul Amanah Pesantren, and the tarekat-oriented Ar Rasyad Pesantren. Using a qualitative comparative design, data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation and analyzed through within-case and cross-case comparison. The findings show that character education across the three pesantren operates through shared mechanisms of religious learning, habituation, exemplary conduct, supervision, and collective life, while their functions are configured by different institutional orientations. APIK Kaliwungu connects character formation with *kitab kuning* and *adab*; Darul Amanah organizes it through structured discipline, language practices, and student organization; while Ar Rasyad integrates it with spiritual practices and self-discipline rooted in the Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah tradition. The comparison indicates that pesantren typology functions as an institutional orientation that shapes how shared educational mechanisms are organized and translated into character formation. Theoretically, this finding positions institutional orientation as a contextual dimension linking educational practices with character internalization. Practically, it suggests that character education can be strengthened by aligning character formation with the established educational identity, routines, and cultural practices of each pesantren. The study contributes a comparative perspective that shifts attention from character values as institutional outcomes toward the educational pathways through which those values are cultivated and internalized.

Keywords: Character education; pesantren typology; educational pathways.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana tipologi pesantren membentuk jalur pendidikan karakter pada tiga pesantren di Jawa Tengah, yaitu Pondok Pesantren APIK Kaliwungu yang berorientasi *salaf*, Pondok Pesantren Darul Amanah yang berorientasi modern, dan Pondok Pesantren Ar Rasyad yang berorientasi *tarekat*. Penelitian menggunakan desain kualitatif komparatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis melalui perbandingan intra-kasus dan lintas-kasus. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan karakter pada ketiga pesantren berlangsung melalui mekanisme yang relatif sama, yaitu pembelajaran keagamaan, pembiasaan,

keteladanan, pengawasan, dan kehidupan kolektif, dengan fungsi yang dikonfigurasi oleh orientasi kelembagaan masing-masing. APIK Kaliwungu menghubungkan pembentukan karakter dengan *kitab kuning* dan *adab*; Darul Amanah mengembangkannya melalui kedisiplinan terstruktur, praktik berbahasa, dan organisasi santri; sedangkan Ar Rasyad mengintegrasikannya dengan praktik spiritual dan pengendalian diri yang berakar pada tradisi Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah. Perbandingan menunjukkan bahwa tipologi pesantren berfungsi sebagai orientasi kelembagaan yang membentuk cara mekanisme pendidikan yang sama diorganisasikan dan diterjemahkan ke dalam pembentukan karakter. Secara teoretis, temuan ini menempatkan orientasi kelembagaan sebagai dimensi kontekstual yang menghubungkan praktik pendidikan dengan internalisasi karakter. Secara praktis, temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan karakter dapat diperkuat melalui keselarasan antara pembentukan karakter dengan identitas pendidikan, rutinitas, dan praktik budaya yang telah berkembang pada masing-masing pesantren. Penelitian ini memberikan perspektif komparatif yang menggeser perhatian dari karakter sebagai hasil kelembagaan menuju jalur pendidikan yang memungkinkan nilai-nilai tersebut dibentuk dan diinternalisasikan.

Kata kunci: Pendidikan karakter; tipologi pesantren; jalur pendidikan karakter

Introduction

Pesantren constitute an important component of Islamic education in Indonesia and have developed through a long historical process extending from the colonial period to the Old Order, New Order, and Reform Era (Ningsih et al., 2023; Nurdiyanto et al., 2024; Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022). This historical development has contributed to the formation of pesantren as educational institutions with distinctive traditions, authority structures, and relationships with surrounding communities (Achmadin et al., 2024; Azizah et al., 2023; Setiawan et al., 2026; Yusra Dewi Siregar, 2026). Although pesantren share several institutional characteristics, particularly the central role of the *kiai*, residential learning, and Islamic religious instruction, their educational orientations and practices have increasingly diversified (Bukhari et al., 2026; Dzikrullah et al., 2026; Wanayati et al., 2025). This diversity is particularly visible in the ways pesantren organize learning and cultivate students (*santri*) character.

Character formation in pesantren is not limited to classroom instruction. Educational activities are embedded in daily routines, relationships between *kiai*, *asatid*, administrators, and students, religious practices, institutional regulations, and patterns of social interaction (Halimah et al., 2024; Muzakki & Aziza, 2026; Najib et al., 2026). The educational orientation of pesantren therefore influences not only what students learn but also how values are practiced and internalized (Siswati et al., 2023). Previous studies have identified religious awareness (Shiddiqi & Kibtiyah, 2026), scientific awareness (Zubaidi et al., 2024), national awareness (Zukdi et al., 2021), community awareness (Fatah et al., 2025), and organizational awareness as important dimensions of pesantren education (Anas Ma'arif & Arif, 2026; Sheva Bayu Firmansyah & Zaenal Abidin, 2024). These dimensions indicate that character formation in pesantren extends beyond the transmission of religious knowledge to the development of patterns of conduct within the pesantren community.

The diversity of pesantren makes the study of character education particularly important. Character formation is closely connected to institutional culture, educational orientation, and everyday practices through which moral values are communicated and habituated (Firmansah et al., 2026; Zainuri et al., 2025). Rather than functioning as a separate educational program, character formation is embedded in the broader educational system of pesantren (Briliana Afidah & Goffar, 2022; Zaironi & Acetylena, 2026). Religious learning, discipline, exemplary conduct, social interaction, and supervision constitute parts of this environment (Jusubaidi et al., 2024). This feature distinguishes pesantren from educational settings in which character education is more explicitly organized through formal curricular or extracurricular programs (Alamin et al., 2024).

Previous studies have also identified several practices through which character is cultivated in pesantren. Repeated daily activities, exemplary behavior of teachers and caregivers, and institutional rules contribute to the development of discipline, responsibility, independence, and other moral dispositions (Febrina et al., 2022; Firmansah et al., 2026; Islamic et al., 2024; Mahfudi & Rifa'i, 2025). Other studies emphasize religious learning and spiritual practices, including collective worship, *dhikr*, *wirid*, and spiritual habituation, in the development of moral and religious dispositions (Aisyah et al., 2025; Daniel et al., 2024; Subaidi & Noh, 2023; Suyono et al., 2026). Studies also highlight the contribution of institutional culture, social interaction, and continuous supervision to character formation (Bustami et al., 2026; Makalao et al., 2025; Mu'alina et al., 2024). Taken together, these studies demonstrate that character formation in pesantren is associated with multiple educational practices embedded in everyday institutional life.

Differences in character education can also be observed across pesantren typologies. Studies of *salaf* pesantren emphasize the role of *kitab kuning* as a major medium of religious learning and character formation (Arif et al., 2025; Ariyadi et al., 2025), while modern or *khalaf* pesantren tend to combine religious education with formal schooling (Aliyah & Saefudin, 2025), language development (Anwar et al., 2026), and structured institutional management (Tristianingrum et al., 2026). Meanwhile, studies of pesantren associated with Sufism and *tarekat* emphasize spiritual practices and religious traditions as important elements of educational life (Jumhur et al., 2024; Mahrus et al., 2026). These studies suggest that the educational orientation of a pesantren influences the ways in which character education is organized and practiced.

However, previous studies have largely examined character education within individual pesantren, specific character values, or particular educational practices, with limited comparative attention to how different pesantren typologies shape distinctive pathways of character formation. This study therefore uses the concept of character education pathways to examine how institutional orientation, dominant educational media, and everyday practices shape character formation across *salaf*, modern, and *tarekat* pesantren. The concept refers not to a separate educational program, but to the distinctive ways character education is embedded within the broader educational system of each pesantren.

This study therefore compares character education in three pesantren in Central Java: APIK Kaliwungu, Darul Amanah Sukorejo, and Ar Rasyad Pageruyung. APIK represents a *salaf*-oriented pesantren in which *kitab kuning* constitutes a dominant educational medium;

Darul Amanah represents a modern pesantren characterized by language development, structured discipline, and organized daily routines; and Ar Rasyad represents a *tarekat*-oriented pesantren in which Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah teachings and spiritual practices play a central role. The study examines how these different orientations shape distinctive character education pathways while also identifying the practices shared across the three pesantren.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative comparative design to examine character education across three pesantren typologies in Central Java: Pondok Pesantren APIK Kaliwungu as a salaf-oriented pesantren, Pondok Pesantren Darul Amanah Sukorejo as a modern pesantren, and Pondok Pesantren Ar Rasyad Pageruyung as a tarekat-oriented pesantren. The three pesantren were selected because they represent different educational orientations within a similar geographical context. The study focused on how character education is practiced and cultivated within the everyday educational environment of each pesantren, with particular attention to institutional orientation, dominant educational media, character values, and educational practices. The informants consisted of pesantren leaders, *asatidz*, and pesantren administrators who were directly involved in educational activities and character formation. Fourteen informants participated in the study: five from APIK Kaliwungu, five from Darul Amanah Sukorejo, and four from Ar Rasyad Pageruyung.

Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observations focused on daily routines, learning activities, religious practices, interactions among educators and santri, institutional discipline, and forms of supervision. Observations at APIK Kaliwungu were conducted from 7–20 October 2025, at Darul Amanah Sukorejo from 27 October–14 November 2025, and at Ar Rasyad Pageruyung from 23 November–6 December 2025. Semi-structured interviews explored the educational orientation of each pesantren, the character values emphasized, the practices used to cultivate these values, and the ways character formation was integrated into pesantren life. Documentation was used to complement the interview and observation data and included pesantren schedules, educational programs, regulations, learning materials, and relevant institutional documents. Interview data were identified using informant codes to maintain consistency in reporting and analysis.

The data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Interview, observation, and documentation data were first organized according to the main analytical categories: educational orientation, character values, dominant educational media, educational practices, and character formation. The data were then organized thematically within each pesantren to identify patterns of character education. A cross-case comparison was subsequently conducted to identify similarities and differences among the three pesantren. The comparison focused on how institutional orientation, dominant educational media, and everyday practices shaped the respective pathways of character formation. The credibility of the findings was strengthened through triangulation of data sources and collection techniques by comparing interview accounts with observations and institutional documents, as well as comparing information obtained from pesantren leaders, *asatidz*, and administrators.

Table 1. Research Informants

Code	Pesantren	Status	Informant
APIK-PL-01	APIK Kaliwungu	Pesantren Leader	KH. Solahudin Humaidulloh Irfan
APIK-AT-01	APIK Kaliwungu	Asatid	M. Amirul Fahani
APIK-AT-02	APIK Kaliwungu	Asatid	Ya'kub
APIK-PA-01	APIK Kaliwungu	Pesantren Administrator	Misbahul Ulum
APIK-PA-02	APIK Kaliwungu	Pesantren Administrator	Agung Ibrahim
DA-PL-01	Darul Amanah Sukorejo	Pesantren Leader	KH. Mas'ud Abdurrahman
DA-AT-01	Darul Amanah Sukorejo	Asatid	M. Arif
DA-PA-01	Darul Amanah Sukorejo	Pesantren Administrator	M. Fatwa
DA-PA-02	Darul Amanah Sukorejo	Pesantren Administrator	Zaenur Rofiqin
DA-PA-03	Darul Amanah Sukorejo	Pesantren Administrator	Budi Prasetyo
AR-PL-01	Ar Rasyad Pageruyung	Pesantren Leader	KH. Mawardi Nasoha
AR-AT-01	Ar Rasyad Pageruyung	Asatid	Zaenal Abidin
AR-AT-02	Ar Rasyad Pageruyung	Asatid	Muhyidin
AR-AT-03	Ar Rasyad Pageruyung	Asatid	Ahmad Saefudin

Source: Field Data, 2025

Results and Discussion

Result

Character Education Models in Three Pesantren

The findings show that character education across the three pesantren is organized through different dominant educational orientations. Although APIK Kaliwungu, Darul Amanah Sukorejo, and Ar Rasyad Pageruyung share a common concern with the formation of *akhlakul karimah*, the empirical data indicate that character values are introduced and reinforced through different educational environments. At APIK, character formation is closely connected with *kitab kuning* learning and religious habituation. At Darul Amanah, it is embedded in language practices, institutional discipline, and structured daily routines. At Ar Rasyad, it is closely associated with *dhikr*, *wirid*, and other spiritual practices derived from the Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah tradition. These patterns suggest that the differences among the three pesantren lie primarily in the pathways through which character values are cultivated rather than in the general objective of moral formation.

At APIK Kaliwungu, character education is oriented toward the formation of santri with *akhlakul karimah*, spiritual resilience, social solidarity, simplicity, and readiness to

contribute to pesantren and society. The model emphasizes obedience to Allah, devotion to parents, social concern, environmental responsibility, honesty, responsibility, patience, piety, and sincerity. The pesantren leader and *asatid* explained that these values are developed through religious habituation, exemplary conduct, and the integration of cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions in everyday pesantren life (APIK-PL-01, Interview, 6 October 2025; APIK-AT-01, Interview, 18 October 2025).

Kitab kuning constitutes the principal foundation of character education at APIK. It provides religious, moral, and ethical references through texts such as *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim*, *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, *Bidayatul Hidayah*, *Akhlakul Banin*, *Tanbihul Mughtarrin*, *Hilyatul Awliya'*, and *Nashaihlul Ibad*. These texts introduce values of adab, humility, sincerity, *muraqabah*, discipline, responsibility, social concern, and leadership. The learning process employs *bandongan*, *sorogan*, memorization and understanding of Arabic texts, and *musyawarah*, which cultivate perseverance, independence, critical thinking, and respectful communication. The pesantren leader and *asatid* emphasized that knowledge from *kitab kuning* provides the foundation for practicing Islamic teachings and developing character in everyday life (APIK-PL-01, Interview, 6 October 2025; APIK-AT-01; APIK-AT-02, Interview, 18 October 2025).

The model is further reinforced through the roles of the *kyai*, *asatidz*, and *pengurus* in guiding, supervising, and regulating santri activities. Santri are expected to maintain proper adab toward teachers, prioritize learning, participate in pesantren activities, and develop themselves through productive activities. Activities outside the pesantren require permission from the pesantren and parents, must not interfere with learning, follow the pesantren schedule, and should not create negative effects for the pesantren or others. These arrangements train santri to manage their activities, obey regulations, and develop responsibility and independence (APIK-PA-01; APIK-PA-02, Interview, 12 October 2025).

Overall, the APIK model integrates *kitab kuning*, religious knowledge, habituation, exemplary conduct, spiritual practice, learning discipline, and institutional regulation. The model therefore seeks to produce santri who are knowledgeable in Islamic teachings while possessing *akhlakul karimah*, independence, responsibility, spiritual awareness, social concern, and readiness to contribute positively to society (APIK-PL-01, Interview, 6 October 2025; APIK-AT-01; APIK-AT-02, Interview, 18 October 2025; APIK-PA-01; APIK-PA-02, Interview, 12 October 2025).

Picture 1. Religious Learning Activity at APIK Kaliwungu Pesantren



Source: Documentation at APIK Kaliwungu, 2025

At Darul Amanah Sukorejo, character education is directed toward the formation of santri who are religious, disciplined, independent, knowledgeable, and socially responsible. The educational model combines Islamic values, discipline and independence, Arabic and English language development, and spiritual education. The pesantren leader, explained that character education aims to develop santri with noble character, discipline, broad knowledge, and a balance between religious and general knowledge. He identified Islamic values, discipline and independence, language mastery, and spiritual education as the main elements of character formation (DA-PL-01, Interview, 26 October, 2025). *Asatid* similarly stated that character education provides santri with preparation for community life by developing religiosity, honesty, tolerance, discipline, independence, social concern, environmental concern, and responsibility (DA-AT-01, Interview, 2 November, 2025).

Arabic and English are used as important parts of daily educational activities at Darul Amanah. Santri are required to practice Arabic and English in their daily communication, while language activities include vocabulary learning, religious discussions, and public speaking. Pesantren leader explained that language development is one of the main elements of the pesantren's educational model, alongside Islamic values, discipline, independence, and spiritual education (DA-PL-01, Interview, 26 October, 2025). Daily activities are organized through a structured schedule that includes congregational prayer, tahajud, Qur'an learning, study sessions, and recording vocabulary and daily activities. Pesantren Administrator described these activities as part of the daily organization and supervision of santri life (DA-PA-01, DA-PA-02, and DA-PA-03, Interview, 2 November, 2025).

Character formation is also practiced through the pesantren's *Pancajawa*: sincerity, simplicity, self-reliance, religious brotherhood, and freedom. These values are reflected in daily religious practices, communal activities, mutual assistance, environmental cleaning, respectful communication, and student leadership through the Organisasi Siswa Darul Amanah (OSDA). Pesantren leader and *asatid* explained that the *Pancajawa* guides the life of the pesantren through sincerity, simplicity, self-reliance, brotherhood, and freedom (DA-PL-01 and DA-PA-01, Interview, 26 October, 2025). Pesantren Administrator described student participation in communal work, organizational activities, and social programs as part of daily pesantren activities (DA-PA-02 and DA-PA-03, Interview, 2 November, 2025).

Picture 2. Religious Learning Activity at Darul Amanah Sukorejo Pesantren



Source: Documentation at Darul Amanah Sukorejo, 2025

At Ar Rasyad Pageruyung, character education is centered on the spiritual and moral formation of santri through the teachings of the Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah tarekat. The educational orientation emphasizes noble character, spiritual closeness to Allah, self-

purification, and social responsibility. The pesantren leader, explained that santri are introduced to the teachings of Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah through *wirid* and *dhikr* practices, without *baiat* as a prerequisite. These practices are intended to develop noble character, a purified heart, and closeness to Allah through intellectual, moral, and spiritual education in daily life (AR-PL-01, Interview, 19 November, 2025). *Asatid* stated that the model also emphasizes *dhikr*, *adab*, and *muraqabah* as part of the formation of noble character and spiritual awareness (AR-AT-01, Interview, 23 November, 2025).

The character formation process is practiced through regular spiritual activities and daily religious learning. Santri participate in morning and evening *dhikr* and *wirid*, alongside general school education, madrasah diniyyah, Qur'anic learning, and *kitab kuning* studies. Pesantren leader explained that these routines are part of the effort to develop discipline, *adab*, and spiritual awareness among santri (AR-PL-01, Interview, 19 November, 2025). *Asatid* were also involved in explaining the religious learning and spiritual practices implemented in the pesantren (AR-AT-01, AR-AT-02, and AR-AT-03, Interview, 23 November 2025).

Character education at Ar Rasyad also includes social and communal activities that cultivate responsibility, cooperation, and concern for others. The teachings of Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah are introduced gradually through religious learning and habituation, with emphasis on *adab*, spiritual practice, and responsibility in everyday life. Pesantren leader explained that the educational process seeks to develop santri who have good character, spiritual awareness, and the ability to contribute positively to others (AR-PL-01, Interview, 19 November, 2025). *Asatid* similarly emphasized that the formation of santri involves not only spiritual development but also social concern and usefulness to others (AR-AT-01, Interview, 23 November, 2025).

Picture 3. Religious Learning Activity at Ar Rasyad Pageruyung Pesantren



Source: Documentation at Ar-Rasyad Pageruyung, 2025

The comparison indicates that character formation across the three pesantren is embedded within their broader educational systems rather than organized as a separate program. The dominant educational basis in each institution determines the context in which character values are encountered, practiced, and reinforced. In this sense, *kitab kuning* at APIK, language practices at Darul Amanah, and spiritual practices at Ar Rasyad function not merely as educational instruments but as recurring environments through which character formation takes place. The comparison therefore suggests that the distinctive feature of

pesantren character education lies in the integration of character formation into the institution's everyday educational culture.

Implementation of Character Education in Three Pesantren

The implementation of character education at APIK Kaliwungu Pesantren is carried out through religious learning, daily activities, habituation, and guidance by the *kiai*, *asatidz*, and pesantren administrators. *Kitab kuning* constitutes an important basis of character education at the pesantren. The pesantren leader explained that character education is integrated into the study of fiqh, akhlak, tafsir, and hadith. *Bidayatul Hidayah*, for example, teaches daily manners, while fiqh provides guidance for social relations and justice (APIK-PL-01, Interview, 6 October 2025). A pesantren administrator similarly stated that character education is integrated into the study of tafsir, hadith, fiqh, and akhlak, with emphasis on honesty, patience, responsibility, and *adab* (APIK-PA-01, Interview, 12 October 2025).

The implementation is also carried out through various learning activities. The *asatid* explained that these activities include *bandongan*, *sorogan*, *musyawarah*, *takror*, and *muhafadzah*. The learning materials include Arabic grammar, fiqh, ushul fiqh, hadith, tafsir, tasawuf, tauhid, and *tarikh*. At higher levels, santri are also required to memorize *nadzom*, including Alfiyah Ibn Malik. The *asatidz* explained that memorization is accompanied by understanding of the learning materials (APIK-AT-01; APIK-AT-02, Interview, 18 October 2025). Character education is also practiced through religious activities and daily routines. The pesantren leader explained that santri participate in congregational prayer, *tabajjud*, *dhuba*, Qur'an recitation, *istighosah*, Yasin, al-Waqiah, al-Mulk, and al-Muzammil, as well as voluntary fasting (APIK-PL-01, Interview, 6 October 2025). A pesantren administrator stated that daily pesantren life also trains santri to perform their own tasks, maintain cleanliness, respect the *kiai*, and follow pesantren regulations (APIK-PA-01, Interview, 11 October 2025).

The implementation is supported by pesantren regulations and supervision. Pesantren administrators explained that santri are required to follow the pesantren schedule, participate in activities, attend through daily attendance, and obtain permission when leaving the pesantren. They also explained that santri from different regions are placed together in the dormitories and participate in collective activities (APIK-PA-01; APIK-PA-02, Interview, 12 October 2025). An *asatid* explained that teachers supervise santri directly and provide examples through their own behavior. Teachers are expected to become role models in their daily interactions with santri (APIK-AT-01, Interview, 18 October 2025). Pesantren administrators also described activities involving cooperation, mutual assistance, cleanliness, and social concern among santri. The *asatid* further explained that santri participate in *musyawarah* and activities such as *kaligrafi*, *rebana*, *silat*, and IT training (APIK-PA-01; APIK-PA-02; APIK-AT-01; APIK-AT-02, Interview, 2025).

In contrast to the salaf-oriented pattern found at APIK Kaliwungu, the implementation of character education at Pesantren Darul Amanah is carried out through the integration of formal learning, pesantren activities, daily routines, and guidance by the *kiai*, *asatid*, and pesantren administrators. The pesantren leader explained that morning school activities and pesantren programs are organized in a balanced manner, while another *kiai* stated that character education emphasizes understanding the reasons for doing good, developing love for goodness, and practicing good values in daily life (DA-PL-01; DA-PL-

02, Interview, 2025). Character education is implemented through religious activities, academic learning, and daily routines. The pesantren leader explained that santri participate in congregational prayer, Qur'an recitation, *zikir*, *tahajjud*, *puasa* sunnah, and other religious activities. The *asatid* and administrators also explained that santri are trained to complete assignments, maintain cleanliness, manage daily activities, and follow pesantren regulations (DA-PL-01; DA-AT-01; DA-PA-01, Interview, 2025).

The implementation is supported by habituation, exemplary behavior, and supervision. The *asatid* and administrators explained that habituation includes routine religious activities, greetings, cleanliness, good conduct, and participation in programmed pesantren activities. The pesantren leader, *asatid*, and administrators also provide examples of behavior for santri to follow. Supervision is conducted through monitoring participation in religious activities, learning, and daily routines. Santri who violate regulations may receive warnings, assignments, or other sanctions, while appreciation is also given to santri who demonstrate positive behavior (DA-AT-01; DA-PA-01; DA-PA-02, Interview, 2025).

Character education is also practiced through organizational, social, and extracurricular activities. The administrators explained that santri participate in organisasi Siswa Darul Amanah (OSDA) activities, including leadership selection, candidate debates, and *musyawarah*. Santri also participate in sports, arts, scientific activities, graphic design, and other extracurricular programs. Social activities include community service, assistance for disaster victims, fundraising, and other charitable activities. The *asatid* and administrators further explained that santri are trained to respect teachers, greet them, listen when they teach, and maintain good relationships in daily interactions (DA-AT-01; DA-AT-02; DA-PA-01; DA-PA-02, Interview, 2025).

Meanwhile, the implementation of character education at Ar Rasyad involves activities related to *tarekat* education, religious learning, worship habituation, and daily pesantren life. The pesantren leader explained that students' education is conducted through formal and non-formal activities from morning until evening. The *asatid* and administrators further explained that these activities include religious learning, *kitab kuning* studies, *tarekat* practices, worship activities, and other pesantren activities (AR-PG-01; AR-AT-01; AR-PS-01, Interview, 2025). The *tarekat* activities followed by the students include *mujahadah sholawat ummi*, *tawajuban*, *tawashul*, *zikir jabr*, *zikir sirr*, voluntary fasting, voluntary prayers, *manaqib*, *Maulidurrasul* recitation, and *istighosah*. The pesantren leader and *asatid* explained that these activities are conducted according to the schedule established by the pesantren, with specific arrangements for students who are unable to participate (AR-PG-01; AR-AT-01, Interview, 2025).

Character education is also implemented through formal and non-formal learning. The *asatid* explained that formal education is provided through MTs, MA, and *Madrasah Diniyyah*, while non-formal education includes the study of *kitab kuning*. The books taught include *Tafsir Jalalain*, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, *Adab al-Syuyukh wa al-Tullab*, *Fiqh al-Wadib*, *Safinatun Najah*, *Fathul Qorib*, *Mutashor Jiddan*, and *Ihya' Ulumuddin*. The study of these texts is conducted through *bandongan*, *sorogan*, *musyawarah*, and religious study sessions (AR-AT-01; AR-AT-02, Interview, 2025).

The pesantren leader, *asatid*, and administrators also explained that students are habituated to maintaining proper *adab* in their interactions with the *kiai*, teachers, and fellow students. These practices include greeting others, showing respect to teachers, listening when teachers explain lessons, maintaining polite conduct, requesting permission when leaving the pesantren, and following pesantren activities and regulations. The administrators also explained that students are given responsibilities related to cleanliness, pesantren activities, and worship (AR-PG-01; AR-AT-01; AR-PS-01, Interview, 2025). In addition to religious activities, students participate in social activities, *musyawarah*, and activities that develop independence. The *asatid* and administrators explained that students are involved in cleanliness activities, cooperation among students, religious activities, and social activities. Students are also trained to manage their personal needs, organize their study time, and complete assigned tasks (AR-AT-02; AR-PS-01, Interview, 2025).

Comparative Patterns of Character Education Across the Three Pesantren

The comparison of field findings indicates that character education in the three pesantren is embedded in their respective educational systems and everyday institutional life. Shared practices include religious learning, habituation, exemplary conduct, supervision, and participation in collective activities. These practices cultivate values such as discipline, responsibility, respect, sincerity, independence, and social awareness, although their organization and emphasis vary across institutions (APIK-PL-01; APIK-AT-01; APIK-PA-01; DA-PL-01; DA-AT-01; DA-PA-01; AR-PL-01; AR-AT-01, Interview, 2025). The comparison further identifies distinctive educational pathways underlying these shared practices. APIK Kaliwungu centers character formation on *kitab kuning* and traditional Islamic learning. Darul Amanah Sukorejo emphasizes language development, structured discipline, and organized student activities. Ar Rasyad Pageruyung integrates character formation with *dhikir*, *wirid*, and Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah practices. The similarities and variations identified from the field data are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparative Patterns of Character Education Across Pesantren Typologies

Aspect	Similarities	APIK Kaliwungu	Darul Amanah Sukorejo	Ar Rasyad Pageruyung
Islamic foundation	All three are grounded in Islamic values and <i>akhlakul karimah</i> .	—	—	—
Role of educators	<i>Kiai</i> , <i>asatidz</i> , and administrators provide guidance, supervision, and exemplary conduct.	—	—	—

Habituation	Character is developed through repeated religious and daily activities.	—	—	—
Character values	All emphasize responsibility, discipline, respect, and social concern.	<i>Adab</i> , sincerity, humility, spiritual awareness	Discipline, independence, communication, leadership	<i>Adab</i> , sincerity, spiritual awareness, social responsibility
Dominant educational orientation	—	Salaf-oriented	Modern-oriented	Tarekat-oriented
Dominant educational medium	—	<i>Kitab kuning</i>	Arabic–English language and structured programs	<i>Dhikr</i> , <i>wirid</i> , and tarekat practices
Main formation practices	Religious learning, routine activities, supervision, and communal activities	<i>Bandongan</i> , <i>sorogan</i> , <i>takror</i> , <i>muhafadzah</i> , <i>musyawarah</i> , <i>worship habituation</i>	Arabic-English practice, structured routines, <i>Pancajiva</i> , OSDA, religious activities	<i>Dhikr</i> , <i>wirid</i> , <i>mujahadah</i> , <i>tawajuhan</i> , <i>manaqib</i> , <i>worship habituation</i>
Distinctive pathway	—	Religious knowledge → habituation → character	Structured interaction → discipline → character	Spiritual practice → spiritual awareness → moral conduct → character

Source: Field Data, 2025.

Discussion

Character Formation Pathways across Pesantren Typologies

The comparison of the three pesantren shows that differences in pesantren typology are reflected primarily in the pathways through which character is cultivated rather than in fundamentally different moral objectives. Discipline, responsibility, respect, sincerity, independence, and social concern are found across the three institutions, but these values are embedded in different educational arrangements. At APIK Kaliwungu, character formation develops through the relationship between Islamic textual learning, *adab*, and everyday conduct. At Darul Amanah, it is shaped through structured discipline, language practices, collective activities, and student responsibilities. At Ar Rasyad, spiritual exercises provide an important basis for cultivating self-discipline, spiritual awareness, and moral conduct. These findings support previous studies showing that character education in pesantren is closely related to institutional traditions and educational culture (Ahmad Munawir et al., 2025; Arifin et al., 2023; Sabiq & Takdir, 2026). The comparison, however, shows more specifically that

institutional orientation influences the way similar character values are translated into everyday educational practice. (Imamah et al., 2024; Siregar et al., 2026).

The distinctive pathways are particularly visible in the dominant practices of each pesantren. Previous studies have identified *kitab kuning* as an important medium for transmitting religious knowledge and moral values in *salaf* pesantren (Arif et al., 2025; Ariyadi et al., 2025; Sani & Muhammad Kashif Majeed, 2025; Widodo et al., 2023). The findings at APIK extend this understanding by showing that character formation is shaped not only by the moral content of the texts but also by the learning relationships surrounding their transmission. Discipline, respect, patience, and responsibility are developed through sustained participation in practices such as *bandongan*, *sorogan*, *musyawarah*, and the wider authority structure of pesantren life. A different pattern appears at Darul Amanah, where character is cultivated through repeated participation in an organized institutional environment.

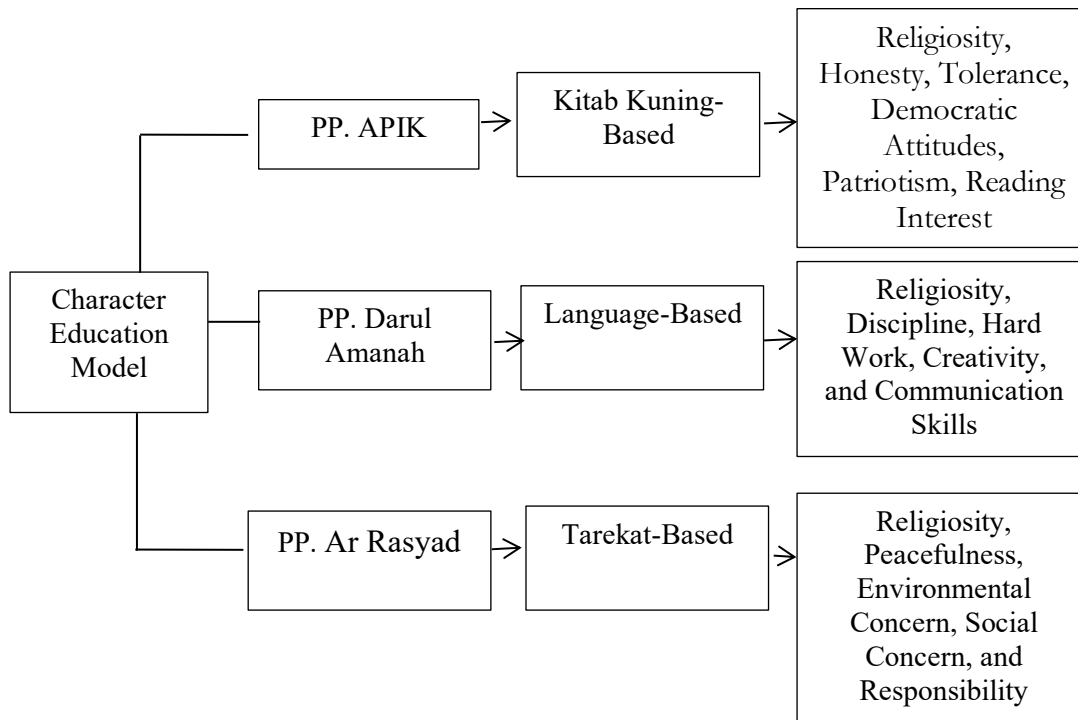
This finding is consistent with studies emphasizing language development, discipline, and institutional management in modern pesantren (Aliyah & Saefudin, 2025; Anwar et al., 2026; Riduansyah et al., 2026; Syamsu & Arifin, 2025; Tristianingrum et al., 2026; Yapono & Lamasano, 2025). At Ar Rasyad, meanwhile, the findings correspond with studies of Sufi and *tarekat*-based pesantren that identify *dhikr* and spiritual practices as important elements of moral formation (Aisyah et al., 2025; Harisatun Naila Rofiah, 2025; Jumhur et al., 2024; Mahrus et al., 2026; Nasihin et al., 2024). The present findings show that these practices also extend beyond individual spirituality by shaping *adab*, responsibility, cooperation, and concern for others in everyday pesantren life.

The comparison further indicates that similar educational mechanisms do not necessarily operate in the same way across pesantren typologies. Habituation, exemplary conduct, supervision, religious learning, and communal interaction appear in all three institutions, consistent with previous studies that identify these mechanisms as central to pesantren character education (Anam & Sofia Mendez, 2025; Hasyim & Rijal, 2026; Mahmud et al., 2022). Their educational significance, however, depends on the institutional setting in which they are embedded. At APIK, habituation is closely connected with religious learning and the cultivation of *adab*; at Darul Amanah, it is organized through discipline, communication, and student participation; while at Ar Rasyad, it is closely associated with spiritual exercises and self-awareness. This suggests that educational practices such as habituation or exemplary conduct should not be understood as isolated techniques. Their role in character formation is shaped by the broader institutional orientation that gives those practices meaning.

The findings therefore contribute to previous research by shifting attention from individual methods of character education to the broader pathways through which those methods are connected within pesantren life. The concept of character education pathways helps explain how similar moral values can be cultivated through different combinations of educational media, social relationships, routines, and religious practices. *Kitab kuning* at APIK, structured language and institutional activities at Darul Amanah, and spiritual exercises at Ar Rasyad function as different dominant contexts through which character is repeatedly encountered and practiced. The distinctive character of pesantren education, therefore, lies

not simply in the values promoted by each institution but in the way institutional orientation organizes the processes through which those values become part of the everyday conduct of santri.

Picture 4. Character Education Model three pesantren



Shared Mechanisms and Institutional Contexts of Character Internalization

Despite the differences in educational orientation, the three pesantren share several mechanisms through which character values are internalized. Religious learning, habituation, exemplary conduct, supervision, and participation in collective life are present across the three institutions. This suggests that differences in pesantren typology do not necessarily produce entirely different mechanisms of character formation. Rather, the mechanisms are broadly similar, while the institutional contexts in which they operate give them different meanings and emphases.

Habituation is one of the clearest examples. Previous studies have consistently identified repeated activities and daily routines as important mechanisms of character formation in pesantren (Djuwairiyah et al., 2023; Falah & Solehudin, 2026; Sahrandi et al., 2026). The findings of this study support this argument, but the comparison shows that habituation cannot be understood independently of its institutional context. At APIK Kaliwungu, repeated practices are closely connected to religious learning and the cultivation of *adab*. At Darul Amanah, habituation operates through a more structured system of schedules, discipline, language practice, and student responsibilities. At Ar Rasyad, repetition is concentrated more strongly in spiritual exercises intended to cultivate self-awareness and spiritual discipline. Thus, repetition functions as a shared mechanism, but what is repeatedly practiced and the dispositions expected from that practice depend on the educational orientation of each pesantren.

The role of exemplary conduct also appears across the three institutions. The *kiai*, *asatidz*, and pesantren administrators do not function only as instructors or supervisors but also represent standards of conduct that santri encounter in their daily lives. Previous research has similarly emphasized the importance of *uswah* and educator role modelling in pesantren character education (Akmansyah & Nurnazli, 2024; Anas Ma'arif & Arif, 2026). The present findings, however, indicate that exemplary conduct operates within a broader relationship of educational authority. Santri learn not only from explicit moral instruction but also from observing how authority is exercised, how religious obligations are practiced, and how relationships are maintained within the pesantren community. Character internalization therefore takes place through everyday interaction rather than solely through the transmission of moral knowledge

Supervision and institutional discipline constitute another shared mechanism. All three pesantren establish expectations regarding participation, daily activities, interpersonal conduct, and adherence to institutional rules. However, supervision does not operate in exactly the same way across the three cases. At APIK, it is closely connected to discipline within the tradition of religious learning and pesantren life. At Darul Amanah, supervision is more visibly integrated into organized schedules, student responsibilities, and institutional programs. At Ar Rasyad, it is associated with participation in religious and spiritual routines as well as everyday pesantren obligations. These differences indicate that supervision is not simply a mechanism for controlling student behaviour. Within each institutional setting, it defines the forms of conduct considered appropriate and provides a framework through which these expectations are repeatedly reinforced.

Collective life is also central to the internalization of character across the three pesantren. Santri live, study, worship, and participate in daily activities within a shared social environment. Cooperation, responsibility, respect, and social concern are therefore not taught only as abstract values but are continually exercised through interaction with others. This finding is consistent with studies that identify pesantren culture and social interaction as important environments for moral development (Asrin & Musa, 2025; Bustami et al., 2026; Fauzi & Mokhtar, 2024; Hidayat et al., 2026). The present study further suggests that the residential character of pesantren creates continuity between learning and practice. The distinction between formal education and everyday life becomes less rigid because educational values are reinforced across classrooms, dormitories, places of worship, organizational activities, and other communal spaces.

Taken together, these mechanisms show that character internalization in pesantren is not based on a single educational practice. Religious learning, habituation, exemplary conduct, supervision, and collective life work together in shaping the everyday experiences of santri. While previous studies have generally examined these mechanisms individually, the findings of this study show their interconnected operation within the pesantren environment. Character values are therefore not only taught but continuously encountered and reinforced through participation in everyday institutional life. The comparison also suggests that shared mechanisms do not have a uniform educational function. Their contribution to character formation is shaped by institutional traditions, routines, authority structures, and educational

priorities. Character internalization develops through the institutional context in which educational practices are organized, experienced, and reinforced by santri.

Rethinking Pesantren Typology in Character Education

The comparison of the three pesantren suggests that typology remains useful for identifying institutional orientation, while its relevance to character education becomes clearer when examined through the educational pathways developed within each institution. The *salaf*, modern, and *tarekat* orientations share several character-formation mechanisms, including religious learning, habituation, exemplary conduct, supervision, and collective activities. Their differences are reflected in the way these mechanisms are organized around particular educational priorities. This finding is consistent with recent studies showing that pesantren have developed diverse institutional forms through the interaction between inherited traditions, educational modernization, and institutional adaptation (Anam & Sofia Mendez, 2025; Hidayati et al., 2025; Ikhsanudin, 2026; Muttaqin, 2025).

The findings further indicate that institutional orientation shapes the educational context in which character values are cultivated. At APIK Kaliwungu, the *salaf* orientation connects character formation closely with *kitab kuning*, religious knowledge, and *adab*. At Darul Amanah, the modern orientation organizes character formation through structured programs, language practices, discipline, and student participation. At Ar Rasyad, the *tarekat* orientation gives greater emphasis to *dhikr*, *wirid*, and spiritual habituation. Previous studies have examined these elements within particular pesantren traditions, including the role of *kitab kuning* in *salaf* pesantren, language development and institutional management in modern pesantren, and spiritual practices in *tarekat*-oriented pesantren (Malihah et al., 2026; Manaf et al., 2025; Setyani et al., 2024; Syahrudin et al., 2025). The present comparison connects these elements within a single analytical framework and shows how their character-formation function is related to institutional orientation.

This perspective also clarifies the relationship between shared mechanisms and institutional variation. Habituation, exemplary conduct, supervision, and collective interaction occur across the three pesantren, yet they are embedded in different educational traditions and daily arrangements. At APIK, these mechanisms reinforce the relationship between religious learning and *adab*; at Darul Amanah, they operate through structured discipline and organized participation, and at Ar Rasyad, they are closely connected with spiritual discipline and religious practice. Character formation therefore reflects the configuration of educational practices within each institutional setting.

The contribution of this study lies in introducing character education pathways as a comparative lens for understanding character formation across pesantren typologies. Previous research has provided evidence on particular educational practices and character-formation mechanisms, while the present study brings these elements together across *salaf*, modern, and *tarekat* settings. The comparison shows that pesantren typology provides an institutional orientation, while character education pathways explain how that orientation is translated into learning, habituation, interaction, supervision, and everyday practice. This perspective offers a more contextual understanding of character education by linking institutional diversity with the processes through which character values are cultivated and internalized by santri.

Conclusion

This study concludes that pesantren typology functions as an institutional orientation that configures distinctive pathways of character internalization. Although the three pesantren employ shared mechanisms religious learning, habituation, exemplary conduct, supervision, and collective life the meaning and function of these mechanisms are shaped by each institution's educational orientation. APIK Kaliwungu develops character through *kitab kunning* and *adab*, Darul Amanah through structured discipline, language practice, and student organization, and Ar Rasyad through spiritual practices and self-discipline. Theoretically, this finding extends the understanding of pesantren character education by positioning institutional orientation as a mediating context between educational mechanisms and character internalization. Practically, the finding implies that character education in pesantren should be developed through institutional practices that are consistent with the pesantren's educational identity, rather than through standardized character programs detached from its established culture and routines. This perspective positions pesantren typology as an analytical basis for understanding how character education is organized, experienced, and internalized within different pesantren environments.

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