

## RURAL COMMUNITIES AS AGENTS FORMING RELIGIOUS CHARACTER IN EDUCATION: A SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

*This study examines in depth the process of religious character formation in rural communities through a socio-cultural approach. In the context of Indonesian society, rural environments have great potential as agents of religious education due to strong communal ties, preservation of local culture, and high participation in religious practices. This article highlights the strategic role of the family as a primary socialization agent, religious figures as informal leaders who provide spiritual and moral guidance, and Islamic educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and madrasahs (madrasahs) as centers for the internalization of religious values. Furthermore, local cultures such as mutual cooperation (gotong royong) and deliberation (musyawarah) also serve as vehicles for the instillation of contextual moral values. Through a qualitative approach and literature review, it was found that the integration of formal and non-formal education, social control based on religious norms, and the wise use of digital media can strengthen the formation of religious character in the younger generation. This study emphasizes the importance of religious character education that is adaptive to current developments, while remaining rooted in traditional values and religious moderation. The results of this study provide a conceptual contribution to the development of community-based character education models in addressing global challenges and moral crises. However, it is important to note that social media also has a significant impact on the education and socialization process of the younger generation.*

*Keywords: Religious Character, Rural Society, Islamic Education, Local Culture, Social Control, Religious Moderation.*

### Abstract

*Penelitian ini mengkaji secara mendalam proses pembentukan karakter religius dalam masyarakat pedesaan melalui pendekatan sosio-kultural. Dalam konteks masyarakat Indonesia, lingkungan pedesaan memiliki potensi besar sebagai agen pendidikan nilai-nilai religius karena kuatnya ikatan komunal, pelestarian budaya lokal, serta tingginya partisipasi dalam praktik keagamaan. Artikel ini menyoroti peran strategis keluarga sebagai agen sosialisasi primer, tokoh agama sebagai pemimpin informal yang membimbing secara spiritual dan moral, serta lembaga pendidikan Islam seperti pesantren dan madrasah sebagai pusat internalisasi nilai keagamaan. Di samping itu, budaya lokal seperti gotong royong dan musyawarah juga berperan sebagai wahana penanaman nilai moral yang kontekstual. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif dan studi pustaka, ditemukan bahwa integrasi antara pendidikan formal dan nonformal, kontrol sosial berbasis norma agama, serta pemanfaatan media digital secara bijak, mampu memperkuat pembentukan karakter religius generasi muda. Penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya pendidikan karakter religius yang adaptif terhadap perkembangan zaman, namun tetap berakar pada nilai-nilai tradisional dan moderasi beragama. Hasil kajian ini memberikan kontribusi konseptual bagi pengembangan model pendidikan karakter berbasis komunitas dalam menghadapi tantangan global dan krisis moral. Namun, perlu diperhatikan bahwa media sosial juga memiliki dampak besar dalam proses pendidikan dan sosialisasi generasi muda.*

*Kata Kunci: karakter religius, masyarakat pedesaan, pendidikan Islam, budaya lokal, kontrol sosial, moderasi beragama.*



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## INTRODUCTION

Religious character education is increasingly important today, as the challenges of modernization and the rapid flow of globalization influence the mindsets of the younger generation. Education is not merely the transfer of knowledge, but also a means of developing morality, ethics, and spirituality aligned with religious values.<sup>1</sup> Amidst the onslaught of digital technology, strengthening religious character plays an important role so that students are not only intellectually intelligent, but also deeply rooted in morality and spirituality.<sup>2</sup> However, it should be noted that social media also has a big impact on the education and socialization process of the younger generation.<sup>3</sup>

The rural environment, with its strong family atmosphere, well-preserved local traditions, and active community participation in religious activities, provides an ecosystem that is conducive to the internalization of religious values.<sup>4</sup> The presence of religious communities living side by side with local customs provides a unique character in the process of forming children's character.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, studies on the formation of religious character in rural areas are important to find educational patterns that are appropriate to the moral needs of modern society, but remain rooted in local culture and spiritual values.<sup>6</sup>

Religious character, especially in rural environments, is formed through complex interactions between formal education, social norms, and everyday religious practices.<sup>7</sup> Rural environments that are steeped in communal values often facilitate the formation of religious character through contextual learning that involves active participation in religious and social activities.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> H. Herawati et al., "Pendidikan Karakter di Bulan Ramadhan selama Pandemi Covid-19 Melalui Pembelajaran Kontekstual," *Jurnal Obsesi Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini* 6, no. 4 (2022): 3590, <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v6i4.2448>.

<sup>2</sup> A.K. Siregar et al., "Peran Pendidikan Agama Islam Dalam Pembentukan Karakter Mulia Generasi Muda," *PESHUM Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial Dan Humaniora* 3, no. 1 (2023): 183, <https://doi.org/10.56799/peshum.v3i1.2659>.

<sup>3</sup> A.F. Basuni and T. Ningsih, "Peran Media Sosial dalam Transformasi Proses Pembelajaran dan Interaksi Sosial pada Generasi Digital," *Nusantara: Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia* 5, no. 1 (2025): 177–87, <https://doi.org/10.62491/njpi.2025.v5i1-14>.

<sup>4</sup> S. Romlah and R. Rusdi, "Pendidikan Agama Islam Sebagai Pilar Pembentukan Moral Dan Etika," *Al-Ibrah Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Keilmuan Islam* 8, no. 1 (2023): 67, <https://doi.org/10.61815/alibrah.v8i1.249>.

<sup>5</sup> G. Faulintya et al., "Pengaruh Interaksi Teman Sebaya Terhadap Tindakan Moral Pada Peserta Didik di SMP Negeri 1 Belitang," *Jurnal Citizenship* 8, no. 1 (2025): 1, <https://doi.org/10.12928/citizenship.v8i1.733>.

<sup>6</sup> F.A. Mau, "Integrating Character Education in Al-Syifa Islamic Boarding Schools: A Case Study Approach," *Edu Spectrum* 1, no. 1 (2024): 1, <https://doi.org/10.70063/eduspectrum.v1i1.30>.

<sup>7</sup> M. Mareta, "Religious Education And Adolescent Religiosity (Part 1: Urban and Rural Madrasah Aliyah Characteristics in Lombok Island)," *Jurnal Tatsqif* 19, no. 2 (2021): 192, <https://doi.org/10.20414/jtq.v19i2.4317>.

<sup>8</sup> Herawati et al., "Pendidikan Karakter di Bulan Ramadhan selama Pandemi Covid-19 Melalui Pembelajaran Kontekstual."

Character education, especially religious education, goes beyond the mere transfer of information; it involves the internalization of values and the habituation of consistent behavior.<sup>9</sup> In this context, the formation of religious character requires collaborative efforts from various parties, including families, educational institutions, and local communities, in order to create an environment conducive to the moral and ethical development of individuals.<sup>10</sup> The main focus of this research is to analyze how the dynamics of rural communities influence the formation of religious character, by considering the role of local traditions and the role of peers in encouraging moral behavior.<sup>11</sup>

The intervention of moral development theory as proposed by Lawrence Kohlberg can provide a framework for understanding the stages of individual moral development in the dynamics of character education in rural environments.<sup>12</sup> The importance of character education is not only limited to cognitive intelligence, but also includes continuous moral and ethical development, along with the rapid development of information and technology.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, this study will also explore how Islamic education, through the teaching of moral and ethical values, can make a significant contribution in shaping the character and morals of individuals in rural communities.<sup>14</sup>

Character education integrated into Islamic educational institutions, such as Islamic boarding schools, is crucial because it emphasizes comprehensive moral and ethical development, not only academically but also in everyday behavior.<sup>15</sup>

Islamic religious education, through the teaching of morals, ethics, and Islamic values, equips the younger generation with a framework for developing good and responsible behavior, including guidance on piety, justice, and empathy which are essential for building a positive personality.<sup>16</sup> Thus, Islamic religious education functions as the main pillar in the formation of

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<sup>9</sup> F.I. Ikrom and S. Arifin, "Impelementasi Pembiasaan Membaca Juz Amma Untuk Membentuk Karakter Religius Peserta Didik," *Humanistika Jurnal Keislaman* 8, no. 1 (2022): 37, <https://doi.org/10.55210/humanistika.v8i1.757>.

<sup>10</sup> Faulintya et al., "Pengaruh Interaksi Teman Sebaya Terhadap Tindakan Moral Pada Peserta Didik di SMP Negeri 1 Belitang."

<sup>11</sup> Faulintya et al., "Pengaruh Interaksi Teman Sebaya Terhadap Tindakan Moral Pada Peserta Didik di SMP Negeri 1 Belitang."

<sup>12</sup> Faulintya et al., "Pengaruh Interaksi Teman Sebaya Terhadap Tindakan Moral Pada Peserta Didik di SMP Negeri 1 Belitang."

<sup>13</sup> Herawati et al., "Pendidikan Karakter di Bulan Ramadhan selama Pandemi Covid-19 Melalui Pembelajaran Kontekstual."

<sup>14</sup> T.W. Abadi, "Aksiologi: Antara Etika, Moral, dan Estetika," *Kanal Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 4, no. 2 (2016): 187, <https://doi.org/10.21070/kanal.v4i2.1452>.

<sup>15</sup> Mau, "Integrating Character Education in Al-Syifa Islamic Boarding Schools: A Case Study Approach."

<sup>16</sup> Siregar et al., "Peran Pendidikan Agama Islam Dalam Pembentukan Karakter Mulia Generasi Muda."

strong morals and ethics in individuals, instilling values such as justice, honesty, politeness, patience and generosity.<sup>17</sup>

The importance of character education is also emphasized in a broader scope, where social interactions and the role of parents have a significant influence on the formation of values and norms that apply daily.<sup>18</sup> In addition, peers also have a big influence in shaping a person's moral behavior and actions, where social, moral, and emotional support from social groups can shape individuals to care about each other in every decision.<sup>19</sup>

Overall, the formation of religious character in rural areas is not a simple process, but rather a collaborative effort involving families, educational institutions, religious leaders, local communities, and peer influence. The dynamic interaction between these social factors forms a strong moral foundation for the younger generation, while also strengthening their identity amidst rapid social change.<sup>20</sup>

Islamic education, particularly through Islamic boarding schools and formal religious-based institutions, is the main key to ensuring that Islamic values can be fully internalized in students.<sup>21</sup> Strengthening religious character is increasingly relevant in responding to the challenges of the digital era, where spiritual values need to be used as a guide in every decision-making.<sup>22</sup>

By utilizing the theory of moral development, as proposed by Kohlberg, the process of religious character education in rural areas can be understood as a gradual stage that must be consistent and continuous.<sup>23</sup> Ultimately, religious character education not only aims to shape spiritually devout individuals, but also to produce a generation capable of upholding the values of justice, honesty, social concern, and ready to face global challenges with a strong religious identity.<sup>24</sup>

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research employed a qualitative approach with library research. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the meaning, processes, and sociocultural

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<sup>17</sup> Romlah and Rusdi, "Pendidikan Agama Islam Sebagai Pilar Pembentukan Moral Dan Etika."

<sup>18</sup> Herawati et al., "Pendidikan Karakter di Bulan Ramadhan selama Pandemi Covid-19 Melalui Pembelajaran Kontekstual."

<sup>19</sup> Faulintya et al., "Pengaruh Interaksi Teman Sebaya Terhadap Tindakan Moral Pada Peserta Didik di SMP Negeri 1 Belitang."

<sup>20</sup> Herawati et al., "Pendidikan Karakter di Bulan Ramadhan selama Pandemi Covid-19 Melalui Pembelajaran Kontekstual."

<sup>21</sup> Mau, "Integrating Character Education in Al-Syifa Islamic Boarding Schools: A Case Study Approach."

<sup>22</sup> Siregar et al., "Peran Pendidikan Agama Islam Dalam Pembentukan Karakter Mulia Generasi Muda."

<sup>23</sup> Faulintya et al., "Pengaruh Interaksi Teman Sebaya Terhadap Tindakan Moral Pada Peserta Didik di SMP Negeri 1 Belitang."

<sup>24</sup> Romlah and Rusdi, "Pendidikan Agama Islam Sebagai Pilar Pembentukan Moral Dan Etika."

context underlying the formation of religious character in rural areas. This method aligns with Sugiyono's perspective, which explains that qualitative research is used to examine the conditions of natural objects, where the researcher is the key instrument. In this research, literature review is one of the primary data collection techniques. Literature review is conducted by reviewing, critically reading, and interpreting various written sources relevant to the research focus. Data analysis is inductive, and research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization.

### **The Concept of Rural Society**

Rural communities in Indonesia have distinct social characteristics from urban communities. One key characteristic is strong communal ties, where collective norms, social solidarity, and traditional values serve as primary guidelines for daily behavior.<sup>25</sup> This condition makes the countryside a conducive social space for instilling moral and religious values, because social support and community supervision take place intensively.<sup>26</sup>

In this context, local religious institutions such as mosques and prayer rooms (surau) serve as centers of moral and spiritual education. The presence of religious and traditional leaders strengthens the legitimacy of the noble values being instilled, ensuring that character education takes place not only formally in schools but also in everyday social interactions.<sup>27</sup> Islamic religious education, in particular, is not limited to providing a normative understanding of religious teachings, but also guides the internalization of ethical values, empathy, and morals that provide provisions for facing the dynamics of modern life.<sup>28</sup> Thus, rural areas can be seen as unique social laboratories in supporting the formation of a strong, relevant, and contextual religious character.

Rural societies are often characterized by communal and cohesive social structures, where collective norms and traditional values play a central role in guiding individual behavior.<sup>29</sup> These characteristics make rural communities an ideal environment for deeply instilling religious and moral values, given the strong social support and intensive community supervision.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> H.M. Daud et al., "Influence of The Social Environment on Development of Students' Morals and Characters: Future Issues and Challenges," *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development* 12, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarped/v12-i2/17540>.

<sup>26</sup> Faulintya et al., "Pengaruh Interaksi Teman Sebaya Terhadap Tindakan Moral Pada Peserta Didik di SMP Negeri 1 Belitang."

<sup>27</sup> Aris Kusmiran Winandar et al., "Model Pembelajaran Kontekstual Berbasis Budaya Lokal Dalam Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Di Papua," *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan* 9, no. 4 (2023): 627–37.

<sup>28</sup> S. Lestari et al., "Membangun Karakter Islami Melalui Pembelajaran Inovatif Pai: Implementasi Kontekstual, Research Based Learning, Problem Based Learning, Dan Quantum Theaching," *Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Pendidikan Indonesia* 4, no. 1 (2025): 78, <https://doi.org/10.31004/jpion.v4i1.327>.

<sup>29</sup> Daud et al., "Influence of The Social Environment on Development of Students' Morals and Characters: Future Issues and Challenges."

<sup>30</sup> Faulintya et al., "Pengaruh Interaksi Teman Sebaya Terhadap Tindakan Moral Pada Peserta Didik di SMP Negeri 1 Belitang."

The formation of religious character in rural communities is also inseparable from the crucial role of local religious institutions, such as mosques or prayer rooms (surau), which actively organize various religious activities and moral education for all levels of society. These institutions, often supported by religious and traditional leaders, serve as centers for transmitting noble values and ethical behavior rooted in religious teachings and local culture.<sup>31</sup>

In addition, Islamic religious education also actively contributes to shaping and influencing social change, not only as an understanding of religious teachings, but also regarding the values, ethics, and principles that guide individuals in living their daily lives.<sup>32</sup> This approach seeks to produce individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also have noble morals and an integrated personality, in line with the goal of Islamic education to perfect human morals.<sup>33</sup> Through this process, the values of faith, piety, and social concern are internalized from an early age, forming a solid foundation of religious character.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, the formation of religious character in rural areas is the result of a complex interaction between social, cultural, and religious educational factors. Communal rural social structures facilitate the internalization of values due to strong social control and collective support.<sup>35</sup> The active involvement of religious institutions, community leaders, and families strengthens the process of transmitting moral values that are rooted in religious teachings and in harmony with local traditions.<sup>36</sup>

Islamic education in this context functions not only as a spiritual instrument, but also as a means of building social awareness, ethics, and empathy which are important in community life.<sup>37</sup> If implemented consistently, religious character education in rural areas will produce a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also has moral integrity, social awareness, and a personality that is balanced between religious values and the demands of the times.<sup>38,39</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>31</sup> Winandar et al., "Model Pembelajaran Kontekstual Berbasis Budaya Lokal Dalam Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Di Papua."

<sup>32</sup> M. Fathurrohman, "Pendidikan Islam Dan Perubahan Sosial," *Tadris Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 2 (2014): 249, <https://doi.org/10.19105/jpi.v8i2.394>.

<sup>33</sup> Lestari et al., "Membangun Karakter Islami Melalui Pembelajaran Inovatif Pai: Implementasi Kontekstual, Research Based Learning, Problem Based Learning, Dan Quantum Theaching."

<sup>34</sup> I. Ilmi et al., "Islamic Educational Values as the Core of Character Education," *EDUTECH Journal of Education And Technology* 7, no. 2 (2023): 406, <https://doi.org/10.29062/edu.v7i2.633>.

<sup>35</sup> Daud et al., "Influence of The Social Environment on Development of Students' Morals and Characters: Future Issues and Challenges."

<sup>36</sup> Winandar et al., "Model Pembelajaran Kontekstual Berbasis Budaya Lokal Dalam Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Di Papua."

<sup>37</sup> R. Seprya and H. Hariati, "Dinamika Pendidikan Agama Islam dalam Membentuk Akhlak Mulia pada Anak Usia Dini di Taman Kanak-Kanak," *Journal of Education Research* 5, no. 1 (2024): 485, <https://doi.org/10.37985/jer.v5i1.886>.

<sup>38</sup> Lestari et al., "Membangun Karakter Islami Melalui Pembelajaran Inovatif Pai: Implementasi Kontekstual, Research Based Learning, Problem Based Learning, Dan Quantum Theaching."

<sup>39</sup> Ilmi et al., "Islamic Educational Values as the Core of Character Education."

strengthening the role of families, schools, and rural communities in religious character education is a strategic step to build a just, harmonious, and competitive society in the modern era.

### **Religious Character: Definition and Dimensions**

Religious character education is one of the most important aspects in developing individuals with integrity and noble morals. In the context of Indonesia's pluralistic society, religious character serves not only as a personal guideline for daily life but also as a social foundation that maintains harmony, tolerance, and cohesion within society.<sup>40</sup> Religious character is not merely a formal adherence to religious teachings, but also involves integrating the values of faith, piety, and noble morals into actual behavior. In other words, religious character is a system of values that guides one's thinking, attitudes, and actions.<sup>41</sup>

The importance of religious character education is increasingly prominent in the digital age, where the rapid flow of information often brings both positive and negative impacts. The younger generation needs a solid moral foundation to avoid falling into ethical degradation, individualism, or a spiritual identity crisis.<sup>42</sup> Religious character education in an Islamic perspective views morals as the core of moral development, which is based on the Al-Qur'an, Hadith, and the example of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.<sup>43</sup> Through this approach, education not only develops intellectual intelligence, but also forms a complete personality that is able to face the dynamics of the times without losing noble values.

Religious character is defined as a set of traits and behaviors that reflect an individual's spiritual beliefs, which are manifested in moral and ethical actions based on the teachings of the religion they adhere to.<sup>44</sup> This character formation not only involves cognitive aspects, but also affective and psychomotor aspects, which are integrated through life experiences and education.<sup>45</sup>

Character formation also includes the expression of values that have taken root in the mind and heart, resulting in attitudes of caring, integrity, respect, compassion, and various other virtues.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Herawati et al., "Pendidikan Karakter di Bulan Ramadhan selama Pandemi Covid-19 Melalui Pembelajaran Kontekstual."

<sup>41</sup> E. Gusliana and Nurlela, "Islamic Religious Education In Shaping Character In Higher Education," *Jurnal Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah AL-IBDA* 2, no. 2 (2022): 12, <https://doi.org/10.54892/jpgmi.v2i02.244>.

<sup>42</sup> S. Aprilia and M. Makhful, "Peran Guru Akhlak dalam Membentuk Karakter Religius Peserta Didik di SMP Muhammadiyah 3 Purwokerto," *Proceedings Series on Social Sciences & Humanities* 9 (2022): 18, <https://doi.org/10.30595/pssh.v9i.642>.

<sup>43</sup> I. Ismail, "Character Education Based on Religious Values: an Islamic Perspective," *Ta Dib Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 21, no. 1 (2016): 41, <https://doi.org/10.19109/td.v21i1.744>.

<sup>44</sup> K. Bisri, "Model Keberagamaan Santri Urban Semarang," *Kontemplasi Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 7, no. 1 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.21274/kontem.2019.7.1.72-96>.

<sup>45</sup> Aprilia and Makhful, "Peran Guru Akhlak dalam Membentuk Karakter Religius Peserta Didik di SMP Muhammadiyah 3 Purwokerto."

<sup>46</sup> Herawati et al., "Pendidikan Karakter di Bulan Ramadhan selama Pandemi Covid-19 Melalui Pembelajaran Kontekstual."

This concept is in line with the view that character education is broader than just developing cultural values and national character, but also seeks to foster positive and good moral strength in students.<sup>47</sup> In character education from an Islamic perspective, this is paired with moral education, which comes from the Al-Qur'an and Hadith, and makes the Prophet Muhammad SAW the main role model.<sup>48</sup> This educational model focuses on the development of the whole person, where religious knowledge is translated into daily life practices that uphold morality and ethics.<sup>49</sup>

Religious character is an essential foundation for developing a person with faith, piety, and noble character. Religious character has comprehensive dimensions encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, so it relates not only to an intellectual understanding of religious teachings but also to the appreciation of spiritual values and their application in daily life.<sup>50</sup>

In the context of Islamic education, the formation of religious character is the main pillar in realizing educational goals that are not only oriented towards academic achievement, but also the development of a complete personality.<sup>51</sup> By presenting the example of the Prophet Muhammad SAW and the values of the Qur'an and Hadith, religious character education is expected to produce a generation that has moral intelligence, social empathy, and strong spiritual integrity.<sup>52</sup>

In the era of globalization and digitalization, the existence of religious character is becoming increasingly urgent to ward off moral crises, ethical degradation, and the negative influence of instant culture that often appears among the younger generation.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, religious character education must continue to be strengthened both in families, educational institutions, and social environments in order to create a generation that is resilient in facing modern challenges, while still adhering to religious and moral values.

## Factors Influencing the Formation of Religious Character in Rural Communities

### 1. Family as the Initial Foundation

Religious character education from an early age is a crucial foundation for developing individuals with noble character and high morals. In rural communities, the family plays a primary role in the internalization of religious values, emphasizing the importance of role

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<sup>47</sup> Gusliana and Nurlela, "Islamic Religious Education In Shaping Character In Higher Education."

<sup>48</sup> Ismail, "Character Education Based on Religious Values: an Islamic Perspective."

<sup>49</sup> D. Arti et al., "Penguatan Nilai-Nilai Karakter Melalui Pendidikan Agama Islam," *Learning Jurnal Inovasi Penelitian Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran* 4, no. 3 (2024): 671, <https://doi.org/10.51878/learning.v4i3.3183>.

<sup>50</sup> Aprilia and Makhful, "Peran Guru Akhlak dalam Membentuk Karakter Religius Peserta Didik di SMP Muhammadiyah 3 Purwokerto."

<sup>51</sup> Arti et al., "Penguatan Nilai-Nilai Karakter Melalui Pendidikan Agama Islam."

<sup>52</sup> Herawati et al., "Pendidikan Karakter di Bulan Ramadhan selama Pandemi Covid-19 Melalui Pembelajaran Kontekstual."

<sup>53</sup> Gusliana and Nurlela, "Islamic Religious Education In Shaping Character In Higher Education."



models, cultivating religious habits, and ethical behavior in daily life.<sup>54</sup> This character education process is not only a transfer of knowledge, but also the formation of attitudes, values, and life skills that are integrated into children's daily lives.

Parents, as the first and foremost educators, play a vital role in providing examples of discipline, contentment, and religious obedience which form the basis for children's moral development.<sup>55</sup> In rural environments, family role models are reinforced by high social cohesion, so that the inculcation of religious values can occur more consistently and be monitored.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, strong character education from an early age is believed to be able to prevent the decline of the nation's morals and prepare a resilient generation to face the challenges of the times.<sup>57</sup>

In rural environments, families play a vital role in internalizing religious and moral values from an early age through direct teaching, role models, and the habituation of daily worship and ethical behavior.<sup>58</sup> Parents play the role of the main stimulator of Islamic character values, teaching children about discipline, contentment, and obedience to religious rules.<sup>59</sup> In addition, education provided in the family directly shapes the child's personality through role models and daily habits, where the good or bad examples of parents will influence the development of the child's soul.<sup>60</sup>

Character education from an early age is very important to instill the right values in children so that they can internalize them well and develop the social and emotional skills expected by local cultural values and the religion they adhere to.<sup>61</sup>

The presence of character education from an early age can also overcome the much-discussed moral problems, where low character values can lead to a decline in the nation's morals.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, collective efforts from families, communities, and educational institutions

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<sup>54</sup> S. Arifin and E. Maghfiroh, "Role Model For Educators As An Alternative In The Establishment Of Islamic Character," *Al-Risalah* 13, no. 2 (2022): 542, <https://doi.org/10.34005/alrisalah.v13i2.2082>.

<sup>55</sup> Herawati et al., "Pendidikan Karakter di Bulan Ramadhan selama Pandemi Covid-19 Melalui Pembelajaran Kontekstual."

<sup>56</sup> P.A. Antara et al., "Pengaruh Model Pembelajaran Kontekstual Terhadap Kemampuan Membaca Permulaan Anak," *Mimbar Ilmu* 24, no. 2 (2019): 221, <https://doi.org/10.23887/mi.v24i2.21263>.

<sup>57</sup> F. Fitriyani et al., "Upaya Guru Dalam Menanamkan Pendidikan Karakter Di TPQ Al-Huda Desa D. Tegalrejo Kecamatan Tugumulyo Kabupaten Musi Rawas," *EL-Ghiroh* 20, no. 2 (2022): 75, <https://doi.org/10.37092/el-ghiroh.v20i02.386>.

<sup>58</sup> Arifin and Maghfiroh, "Role Model For Educators As An Alternative In The Establishment Of Islamic Character."

<sup>59</sup> Herawati et al., "Pendidikan Karakter di Bulan Ramadhan selama Pandemi Covid-19 Melalui Pembelajaran Kontekstual."

<sup>60</sup> Antara et al., "Pengaruh Model Pembelajaran Kontekstual Terhadap Kemampuan Membaca Permulaan Anak."

<sup>61</sup> Herawati et al., "Pendidikan Karakter di Bulan Ramadhan selama Pandemi Covid-19 Melalui Pembelajaran Kontekstual."

<sup>62</sup> Fitriyani et al., "Upaya Guru Dalam Menanamkan Pendidikan Karakter Di TPQ Al-Huda Desa D. Tegalrejo Kecamatan Tugumulyo Kabupaten Musi Rawas."

are crucial in stemming these negative impacts and ensuring the formation of a strong religious character in the next generation. In addition to family, the environment and peers also influence religious moral values in life.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, the family, school and community environment are integratedly responsible for children's character education, with the family bearing the primary and first responsibility.

Overall, the family is the primary pillar in children's religious character education, especially in rural areas. Parents are not only teachers but also role models who influence their children's personalities through their daily behavior.<sup>64</sup> Early character education implemented through role models, supervision, and religious habits has proven effective in building children's personalities with integrity, discipline, and noble morals.

However, this process cannot be achieved solely through the role of the family. The school environment, community, and peers also play a significant role in strengthening or weakening religious values instilled from an early age.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, collaboration between families, educational institutions, and local communities is crucial to shaping a generation that is religious, moral, and ready to face global challenges while adhering to the noble values of religion and culture.<sup>66</sup>

## 2. The Role of Religious Figures and Religious Institutions

In rural communities, religious leaders and religious institutions play a crucial role in guiding the community toward a religious and moral life. The presence of religious figures such as kyai (Islamic clerics), ustadz (Islamic teachers), or traditional leaders serves not only as teachers but also as informal leaders with significant influence on community social life.<sup>67</sup> In informal leadership theory, a leader does not always obtain authority through formal structures, but rather from trust, charisma, and exemplary behavior demonstrated in everyday life.

This informal leadership is what gives religious figures a strategic position in guiding the norms, values, and social behavior of rural communities. Simultaneously, religious institutions such as Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), mosques, and surau (prayer rooms) serve as centers for learning religious values and spaces for strengthening social ties. Through

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<sup>63</sup> Y. Nelisma and I. Irman, "Proses Konseling Terhadap Nilai Nilai Moral Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an," *Ristekdik Jurnal Bimbingan Dan Konseling* 7, no. 2 (2022): 227, <https://doi.org/10.31604/ristekdik.2022.v7i2.227-233>.

<sup>64</sup> Herawati et al., "Pendidikan Karakter di Bulan Ramadhan selama Pandemi Covid-19 Melalui Pembelajaran Kontekstual."

<sup>65</sup> Nelisma and Irman, "Proses Konseling Terhadap Nilai Nilai Moral Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an."

<sup>66</sup> Faulintya et al., "Pengaruh Interaksi Teman Sebaya Terhadap Tindakan Moral Pada Peserta Didik di SMP Negeri 1 Belitang."

<sup>67</sup> S.N. Muyassaroh et al., "Relevance of Islamic Education in The Formation of Student Characters," *Journal of Islam and Science* 7, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.24252/jis.v7i1.13200>.

religious study groups, Islamic boarding schools (madrasah diniyah), and other collective activities, communities are provided with a space to instill and internalize religious values on an ongoing basis.<sup>68</sup>

Religious figures, such as kyai, ustadz, or traditional leaders, often serve as primary role models in rural communities, guiding communities in understanding and implementing religious teachings through lectures, religious studies, and daily life practices.<sup>69</sup> Through this role, they not only convey religious knowledge, but also internalize Islamic moral and ethical values that serve as guidelines in social interactions and individual decision-making.<sup>70</sup>

Religious institutions, such as Islamic boarding schools, mosques, or prayer rooms, function as essential centers of formal and non-formal education, facilitating the deepening of religious knowledge and the formation of behavior in accordance with Islamic law.<sup>71</sup> The programs they organize, such as regular religious studies, Islamic madrasahs, and commemorations of Islamic holidays, collectively strengthen the religious identity of the community and guide individuals towards a more meaningful life in accordance with religious guidance.<sup>72</sup>

Religious leaders and religious institutions play a significant role in shaping the religious identity of rural communities. Religious leaders serve as informal leaders who guide communities through example, charisma, and trust, enabling moral values to be firmly internalized. Meanwhile, religious institutions serve as collective platforms that provide formal and informal educational resources to strengthen religious habits.<sup>73</sup>

The collaboration between religious leaders as informal leaders, support from religious institutions, and community participation makes religious character education more relevant and contextualized to rural life. Thus, religious leaders play a role not only in the spiritual realm but also as social agents capable of driving moral change at the community level.<sup>74</sup> This combination of informal leadership and formal institutions is what enables rural communities

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<sup>68</sup> Anne Nurdiana, "Peran Orang Tua Dalam Meningkatkan Pendidikan Agama Islam Anak-Anak Mereka," *Kaipi: Kumpulan Artikel Ilmiah Pendidikan Islam* 1, no. 2 (2023): 52–59, <https://doi.org/10.62070/kaipi.v1i2.36>.

<sup>69</sup> Muyassaroh et al., "Relevance of Islamic Education in The Formation of Student Characters."

<sup>70</sup> Aprilia and Makhful, "Peran Guru Akhlak dalam Membentuk Karakter Religius Peserta Didik di SMP Muhammadiyah 3 Purwokerto."

<sup>71</sup> Nurdiana, "Peran Orang Tua Dalam Meningkatkan Pendidikan Agama Islam Anak-Anak Mereka."

<sup>72</sup> Herawati et al., "Pendidikan Karakter di Bulan Ramadhan selama Pandemi Covid-19 Melalui Pembelajaran Kontekstual."

<sup>73</sup> Nurdiana, "Peran Orang Tua Dalam Meningkatkan Pendidikan Agama Islam Anak-Anak Mereka."

<sup>74</sup> Herawati et al., "Pendidikan Karakter di Bulan Ramadhan selama Pandemi Covid-19 Melalui Pembelajaran Kontekstual."

to have a strong religious foundation, while also being able to face the challenges of modernization while maintaining a moral identity.

### 3. Local Social and Cultural Customs

Rural communities are known for their lifestyles closely tied to communal values, traditions, and local culture. These lifestyles are inextricably linked to religious values that have been internalized through generations, making rural areas ideal for the formation of religious character.<sup>75</sup> Social traditions such as mutual cooperation, deliberation, and community togetherness are not only cultural heritage, but also reflect Islamic principles of brotherhood, justice, and social concern.<sup>76</sup>

Within the framework of Islamic education, local culture is not simply preserved but utilized as an effective means to support the learning of moral and ethical values. Islamic educational institutions, particularly Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), play a crucial role in integrating tradition with religious values, thus creating harmony between social and spiritual life. Pesantren not only maintain tradition but also adapt their curriculum to the demands of the times, ensuring its relevance amidst social, economic, and technological developments.<sup>77</sup>

Local social and cultural customs in rural communities are often closely integrated with religious values, creating a behavioral framework that supports the development of Islamic character. For example, the traditions of mutual cooperation (gotong royong) and deliberation and consensus (musyawarah mufakat), common in rural areas, inherently reflect Islamic principles of mutual assistance and justice.<sup>78</sup> This phenomenon demonstrates that local cultural values are often an effective medium for internalizing religious teachings, shaping individual character that aligns with social and spiritual norms. Thus, local culture serves not only as an ancestral heritage but also as a contextual framework that strengthens religious character education in the daily lives of rural communities.<sup>79</sup>

This integration creates a social ecosystem that naturally encourages individuals to develop noble qualities such as honesty, patience, and generosity, which are the core of a strong religious character. Islamic educational institutions, such as Islamic boarding schools

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<sup>75</sup> Herawati et al., "Pendidikan Karakter di Bulan Ramadhan selama Pandemi Covid-19 Melalui Pembelajaran Kontekstual."

<sup>76</sup> Winandar et al., "Model Pembelajaran Kontekstual Berbasis Budaya Lokal Dalam Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Di Papua."

<sup>77</sup> Muh. Hanif et al., "Pesantren Resistance to Indonesia's National Curriculum to Defend Its Curriculum Model," *Revista de Gestão Social e Ambiental* 18, no. 7 (2024): e05473, <https://doi.org/10.24857/rgsa.v18n7-049>.

<sup>78</sup> Herawati et al., "Pendidikan Karakter di Bulan Ramadhan selama Pandemi Covid-19 Melalui Pembelajaran Kontekstual."

<sup>79</sup> Winandar et al., "Model Pembelajaran Kontekstual Berbasis Budaya Lokal Dalam Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Di Papua."

(pesantren), are at the forefront of this process, acting as guardians and preservers of religious values, as well as reformers of religious understanding that is relevant to current developments.<sup>80</sup> These institutions also contribute to religious moderation, guiding society to adopt middle views and avoid extremism in thought and action.<sup>81</sup>

Islamic boarding schools as communities bound by a life order with high obedience, facilitate the achievement of character education defined in their curriculum.<sup>82</sup> Although many Islamic boarding schools have integrated formal education, they often modify the national curriculum to align with their religious identity.<sup>83</sup> This approach allows for the development of a holistic religious character, where religious values are implemented in various aspects of life, including education, social, and economic.

Local social and cultural customs play a strategic role in strengthening the religious character education of rural communities. Traditions such as mutual cooperation and deliberation are not merely social activities but also means of internalizing Islamic values that are applicable in everyday life.<sup>84</sup> The blending of local culture with Islamic teachings creates a social ecosystem that encourages the development of noble morals such as honesty, patience, and generosity.<sup>85</sup>

Furthermore, the role of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) as Islamic educational institutions is crucial in maintaining the continuity of these values. Pesantren serve as guardians of tradition, as well as innovators, adapting religious understanding to the challenges of the times.<sup>86</sup> The religious moderation instilled by Islamic boarding schools also ensures that religious values can be implemented in a balanced manner, far from extreme attitudes, but still rooted in sharia.<sup>87</sup> Therefore, the integration of local culture, religious values, and Islamic boarding school education becomes a solid foundation in forming a generation that is religious, has noble morals, and is ready to face global changes with a maintained moral identity.

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<sup>80</sup> Mita Silfiasari and Ashif Az Zhafi, "Peran Pesantren Dalam Pendidikan Karakter Di Era Globalisasi," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Indonesia* 5, no. 1 (2020): 127–35, <https://doi.org/10.35316/jpii.v5i1.218>.

<sup>81</sup> L.F.A. Qolbi, "The Role of Education of Islamic Education Institutions on Religious Moderation in The Community of Perbutulan Village, Sub-District, Sumber, Cirebon District," *Devotion Journal of Research and Community Service* 1, no. 1 (2019): 39, <https://doi.org/10.36418/dev.v1i1.60>.

<sup>82</sup> A.A. Annisa, "Determining Model of Halal Lifestyle: A Study on the Role of Kopontren," *Equilibrium Jurnal Ekonomi Syariah* 9, no. 1 (2021): 153, <https://doi.org/10.21043/equilibrium.v9i1.10458>.

<sup>83</sup> Hanif et al., "Pesantren Resistance to Indonesia's National Curriculum to Defend Its Curriculum Model."

<sup>84</sup> Herawati et al., "Pendidikan Karakter di Bulan Ramadhan selama Pandemi Covid-19 Melalui Pembelajaran Kontekstual."

<sup>85</sup> Winandar et al., "Model Pembelajaran Kontekstual Berbasis Budaya Lokal Dalam Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Di Papua."

<sup>86</sup> Hanif et al., "Pesantren Resistance to Indonesia's National Curriculum to Defend Its Curriculum Model."

<sup>87</sup> Silfiasari and Zhafi, "Peran Pesantren Dalam Pendidikan Karakter Di Era Globalisasi."

#### 4. Formal & Non-formal Education

Formal and non-formal education play a strategic role in shaping the religious character of rural communities. These two educational pathways serve not only as a means of transferring knowledge but also as a medium for internalizing moral, ethical, and spiritual values derived from Islamic teachings and local traditions. In this context, Islamic boarding schools, as the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, serve as centers for the development of knowledge and guardians of religious values integrated into village life. Their deep-rooted role makes Islamic boarding schools not only educational institutions but also agents of social change, guardians of tradition, and drivers of development.<sup>88</sup> This is in line with research results that show the role of education in shaping students' social behavior.<sup>89</sup>

Madrasahs, as part of formal Islamic boarding school-based education, also expand the scope of Islamic education by emphasizing religious moderation, tolerance, and accommodation of local culture.<sup>90</sup> The integration of formal and non-formal education in rural areas, which synergizes with local wisdom, makes the process of forming religious character more contextual, applicable, and relevant to the dynamics of community life.<sup>91</sup>

Formal and non-formal education in rural communities have a significant role in shaping religious character, especially through the integration of religious curricula and relevant local values.<sup>92</sup> Institutions such as Islamic boarding schools, as the oldest educational institutions in Indonesia, play a crucial role in promoting Islamic moderation and protecting society from extreme religious conservatism, while maintaining their own distinctive characteristics.<sup>93</sup>

Islamic boarding schools are not only guardians and maintainers of religious values, but also innovators of religious understanding and motivators of local development.<sup>94</sup> This institution grew out of the community and is substantially an integral part of the rural

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<sup>88</sup> K. Hamidah and A. Chasannudin, "Mechanization of Islamic moderation da'wah in the Nahdlatul Ulama pesantren tradition," *Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah* 41, no. 1 (2021): 15, <https://doi.org/10.21580/jid.v41.1.7134>.

<sup>89</sup> Y.H.P. Utami and T. Ningsih, "Peran Pendidikan Terhadap Pembentukan Sosial Siswa di Sekolah Dasar," *Jurnal Lensa Pendas* 10, no. 1 (2025): 154–62, <https://doi.org/10.33222/jlp.v10i1.4336>.

<sup>90</sup> Puspo Nugroho and Wifda Untsa Nailufaz, "Religious Moderation And Local Religious Content Curriculum: A Study Of The Internalization Of The Religious Moderation Values In Madrasa," *Penamas* 35, no. 1 (2022): 131–46, <https://doi.org/10.31330/penamas.v35i1.537>.

<sup>91</sup> Lestari et al., "Membangun Karakter Islami Melalui Pembelajaran Inovatif Pai: Implementasi Kontekstual, Research Based Learning, Problem Based Learning, Dan Quantum Theaching."

<sup>92</sup> Winandar et al., "Model Pembelajaran Kontekstual Berbasis Budaya Lokal Dalam Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Di Papua."

<sup>93</sup> Hamidah and Chasannudin, "Mechanization of Islamic moderation da'wah in the Nahdlatul Ulama pesantren tradition."

<sup>94</sup> Silfiasari and Zhafi, "Peran Pesantren Dalam Pendidikan Karakter Di Era Globalisasi."

community, functioning as an agent of change and producing innovators rooted in the Islamic scientific tradition and transmission of values.<sup>95</sup>

Madrasahs, as formal Islamic boarding school-based educational institutions, also play an important role in mainstreaming moderate Islamic perspectives through a curriculum based on Salaf books, ensuring that the values of religious moderation are internalized in the formal education process.<sup>96</sup>

The integration of moderation values into the curriculum of Islamic boarding schools and madrasahs is carried out through various religious activities and an emphasis on accommodating local culture, in line with the principles of national commitment and tolerance.<sup>97</sup> In addition, local wisdom such as wayang kulit performances and Javanese-style mosque architecture are also used as a means of Islamic education, conveying values through cultural activities that prioritize openness and togetherness.<sup>98</sup>

A contextual approach to religious learning, including through a local culture-based curriculum, has proven effective in forming a strong and holistic Islamic character in students.<sup>99</sup> Character education through contextual learning is also implemented through collaboration between schools and parents, providing adequate learning facilities, and fostering Islamic character values. Furthermore, Islamic educational institutions play a significant role in spearheading the internalization of religious moderation values, including through local religious curriculums that focus on this aspect.<sup>100</sup>

Islamic education aims to guide individuals to understand and internalize Islamic teachings firmly, facilitating the actualization of their physical and non-physical potential in accordance with the profile of *\_ulil albab\_* described in the Quran.<sup>101</sup> Islamic religious

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<sup>95</sup> Agung Ramadhan et al., "Pergeseran Paradigma Pesantren Dan Tantangan Pengembangan Kultur Pesantren Di Era Globalisasi," *Wali Pikir: Journal of Education* 1, no. 3 (2024): 173–82, <https://doi.org/10.62555/wp.v1i3.0021>.

<sup>96</sup> Nugroho and Nailufaz, "Religious Moderation And Local Religious Content Curriculum: A Study Of The Internalization Of The Religious Moderation Values In Madrasa."

<sup>97</sup> M. Nasir and M. Rijal, "Keeping the Middle Path: Mainstreaming Religious Moderation through Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 11, no. 2 (2021): 213, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v11i2.213-241>.

<sup>98</sup> S. Afiah et al., "Kearifan Lokal Sebagai Sarana Pendidikan Islam Multikultural: Studi Hidden Curriculum Di Ponpes Nurul Huda Sragen," *Profetika Jurnal Studi Islam* 21, no. 2 (2020): 212, <https://doi.org/10.23917/profetika.v21i2.13092>.

<sup>99</sup> Lestari et al., "Membangun Karakter Islami Melalui Pembelajaran Inovatif Pai: Implementasi Kontekstual, Research Based Learning, Problem Based Learning, Dan Quantum Theaching."

<sup>100</sup> Nugroho and Nailufaz, "Religious Moderation And Local Religious Content Curriculum: A Study Of The Internalization Of The Religious Moderation Values In Madrasa."

<sup>101</sup> Lestari et al., "Membangun Karakter Islami Melalui Pembelajaran Inovatif Pai: Implementasi Kontekstual, Research Based Learning, Problem Based Learning, Dan Quantum Theaching."

education specifically seeks to develop students' capacity to understand, internalize, and practice religious values as a balance to mastery of science, technology, and art.<sup>102</sup>

Formal and non-formal education in rural areas complement each other in shaping the religious character of the community. Islamic boarding schools, with their scholarly traditions, serve as guardians of religious values and reformers of Islamic thought, while madrasas integrate the values of religious moderation into the formal curriculum.<sup>103</sup> Local wisdom, such as arts, culture, and community traditions, further strengthens the learning process so that Islamic values can be internalized more easily and integrated into everyday life.<sup>104</sup>

With a contextual approach that combines religion, culture, and education, rural communities are able to produce a generation that is religious, has an Islamic character, and is also adaptive to developments in science, technology, and the arts.<sup>105</sup> Formal and non-formal education that is in line with local values and Islamic teachings ultimately not only educates individuals who are religiously devout, but also shapes the profile of a generation of *ulil albab* who are intellectually intelligent, spiritually mature, and have a high level of social responsibility.

## 5. Social Environment and Social Control

The social environment plays a fundamental role in shaping a community's religious character, particularly in rural areas, which are steeped in family and communal values. Unlike more individualistic urban communities, rural life tends to foster close social ties, allowing religious and customary norms to act as effective social controls.<sup>106</sup> This social control mechanism not only suppresses the potential for deviation, but also instills moral and religious habits through collective supervision.

In this context, communal religious practices such as *salawat* and moral praise play an important role in strengthening the religious identity of village communities.<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, socio-cultural-based character education in rural areas emphasizes the importance of the values

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<sup>102</sup> Lestari et al., "Membangun Karakter Islami Melalui Pembelajaran Inovatif Pai: Implementasi Kontekstual, Research Based Learning, Problem Based Learning, Dan Quantum Theaching."

<sup>103</sup> Ramadhan et al., "Pergeseran Paradigma Pesantren Dan Tantangan Pengembangan Kultur Pesantren Di Era Globalisasi."

<sup>104</sup> Winandar et al., "Model Pembelajaran Kontekstual Berbasis Budaya Lokal Dalam Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Di Papua."

<sup>105</sup> Lestari et al., "Membangun Karakter Islami Melalui Pembelajaran Inovatif Pai: Implementasi Kontekstual, Research Based Learning, Problem Based Learning, Dan Quantum Theaching."

<sup>106</sup> Afiah et al., "Kearifan Lokal Sebagai Sarana Pendidikan Islam Multikultural: Studi Hidden Curriculum Di Ponpes Nurul Huda Sragen."

<sup>107</sup> M. Mibtadin and Z. Habib, "Community religious expression through *sholawat* in Bangunrejo Kidul Kedunggalar Ngawi village," *Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah* 42, no. 1 (2022): 49, <https://doi.org/10.21580/jid.v42.1.10922>.



of togetherness, openness, and tolerance, which are in line with Islamic teachings on brotherhood, fraternity, and moderation in religion.<sup>108</sup> Thus, a cohesive social environment based on religiosity is able to create a conducive atmosphere for the formation of individual characters who are moral and have noble character.

The social environment in rural areas, often characterized by familial ties and mutual familiarity, naturally creates effective social control mechanisms, where religious and customary norms serve as collective guidelines for maintaining societal morality. This helps shape individual behavior to align with prevailing religious and cultural values, ensuring social harmony within the community. Thus, communal customs and intense social interactions in rural areas contribute to the collective instillation of religious and ethical values, which in turn shape strong individual characters grounded in spirituality.<sup>109</sup>

The religious nature of rural communities is also strengthened through communal religious practices, such as moral praise or selawat, which function as a medium for da'wah as well as expression and protection of local religious traditions.<sup>110</sup> The continuity of these values through daily interactions and shared rituals strengthens collective identity and mitigates the potential for social deviation, strengthening the foundation of religious character rooted in communality and tradition.<sup>111</sup>

A moderate attitude in religion, which avoids extremism, is an important foundation in forming the religious character of rural communities.<sup>112</sup> Instilling an attitude of religious moderation is crucial in the world of education, especially in rural areas, in order to create harmonious social conditions and prevent division.<sup>113</sup>

The social environment in rural areas is a key factor in the formation of religious character. The social control naturally established through close social relationships makes it easier for religious and customary values to be internalized and become guidelines for

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<sup>108</sup> Herawati et al., "Pendidikan Karakter di Bulan Ramadhan selama Pandemi Covid-19 Melalui Pembelajaran Kontekstual."

<sup>109</sup> Afiah et al., "Kearifan Lokal Sebagai Sarana Pendidikan Islam Multikultural: Studi Hidden Curriculum Di Ponpes Nurul Huda Sragen."

<sup>110</sup> Mibtadin and Habib, "Community religious expression through sholawat in Bangunrejo Kidul Kedunggalar Ngawi village."

<sup>111</sup> Herawati et al., "Pendidikan Karakter di Bulan Ramadhan selama Pandemi Covid-19 Melalui Pembelajaran Kontekstual."

<sup>112</sup> A.N. Achmad et al., "Peran Pendidikan Agama Islam dalam Memperkuat Moderasi Beragama," *Deleted Journal* 2, no. 4 (2024): 225, <https://doi.org/10.61132/jbpai.v2i4.466>.

<sup>113</sup> M. Bahar, "Internalisasi Moderasi Beragama Perspektif Islam dalam Dunia Pendidikan: Sebuah Analisis Relevansi Pendidikan dengan Pembangunan Karakter Beragama Peserta Didik," *Ijd-Demos* 4, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.37950/ijid.v4i2.279>.

behavior.<sup>114</sup> Shared religious practices such as selawat and other communal rituals strengthen collective identity, while also acting as a bulwark against moral deviation.<sup>115</sup>

Furthermore, emphasizing religious moderation is a crucial aspect in maintaining social harmony in rural communities. Moderation not only protects communities from the dangers of extremism but also strengthens solidarity and creates a peaceful and inclusive atmosphere.<sup>116</sup> Therefore, the combination of a communal social environment, social control based on religious norms, and an attitude of religious moderation is an important foundation for the formation of a strong, relevant, and contextual religious character in rural communities.

## 6. Economic Conditions and Information Media

Economic conditions and access to information are two important factors influencing the development of religious character in rural communities. In rural social realities, limited communication infrastructure often makes communities more dependent on local religious figures as the primary source of religious understanding. This makes rural environments unique, as religious character formation occurs through intensive interaction with religious instructors, religious leaders, and community leaders who serve as moral guides.<sup>117</sup>

In an era of increasingly rapid technological development, the dissemination of religious information cannot be separated from the role of digital media. However, limited access to technology in rural communities demands an adaptive and contextual approach to da'wah. Religious instructors and community leaders are required to combine traditional da'wah methods with digital strategies to effectively convey the moderate, peaceful, and rahmatan lil alamin (mercy for the universe) values of Islam. Therefore, the integration of conventional and modern strategies in da'wah is crucial to ensure that religious character education remains relevant to the dynamics of the times. However, it is important to note that social media also has a significant impact on the education and socialization of the younger generation.<sup>118</sup>

The economic conditions of rural communities often influence their access to information media, which in turn can shape their religious views and character. Rapid technological advancements are a significant factor influencing the development of Islam,

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<sup>114</sup> Herawati et al., "Pendidikan Karakter di Bulan Ramadhan selama Pandemi Covid-19 Melalui Pembelajaran Kontekstual."

<sup>115</sup> Mibtadin and Habib, "Community religious expression through sholawat in Bangunrejo Kidul Kedunggalar Ngawi village."

<sup>116</sup> Achmad et al., "Peran Pendidikan Agama Islam dalam Memperkuat Moderasi Beragama."

<sup>117</sup> Herawati et al., "Pendidikan Karakter di Bulan Ramadhan selama Pandemi Covid-19 Melalui Pembelajaran Kontekstual."

<sup>118</sup> Basuni and Ningsih, "Peran Media Sosial dalam Transformasi Proses Pembelajaran dan Interaksi Sosial pada Generasi Digital."

necessitating appropriate follow-up to Islamic preaching to realize a peaceful Islam that is a blessing for all creation.<sup>119</sup>

Therefore, the role of religious instructors and community leaders is vital in guiding the community to understand and internalize the values of religious moderation, particularly through the adaptation of religious messages that are relevant to the local context.<sup>120</sup> Because, although the internet facilitates access to information, geographical conditions and the availability of infrastructure often limit its accessibility in rural areas, so that the role of local figures becomes increasingly central in the dissemination of contextual religious information.<sup>121</sup>

In this context, local religious leaders such as *ajengan* act as cultural intermediaries who bridge universal Islamic teachings with local traditions, ensuring that religious values are integrated with local wisdom.<sup>122</sup> Religious instructors and community leaders also need to implement missionary strategies that adapt to technological advances to ensure messages of religious moderation are effectively conveyed to rural communities. This includes the judicious use of digital platforms and social media to spread the values of tolerance and religious harmony in an increasingly heterogeneous society.<sup>123</sup>

Economic conditions and limited access to technology do not necessarily hinder the development of religious character in rural communities. Instead, through the role of local religious figures, counselors, and community leaders, the values of religious moderation can be effectively internalized through approaches aligned with local traditions.<sup>124</sup> A preaching mechanism that combines local wisdom with the use of digital technology will strengthen the reach of religious messages, while maintaining their relevance to the context of rural life.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> A.A. Agus, “Keluarga Masyarakat Pedesaan Dalam Kondisi Transisi Kehidupan Masyarakat Tradisional Menuju Masyarakat Modern,” Universitas Negeri Makassar, 2017.

<sup>120</sup> G. Ghandi, “The Importance of Religious Counselors in Building Moderate Attitudes in Moderate Villages,” *Journal of Multidisciplinary Sustainability Asean* 1, no. 2 (2024): 16, <https://doi.org/10.70177/ijmsa.v1i2.1083>.

<sup>121</sup> Herawati et al., “Pendidikan Karakter di Bulan Ramadhan selama Pandemi Covid-19 Melalui Pembelajaran Kontekstual.”

<sup>122</sup> M.T. Rahman et al., “The Strategies of Ajengans in Mediating Islam and Local Traditions in Rural West Bandung Regency,” *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas* 3, no. 1 (2023): 99, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v3i1.24108>.

<sup>123</sup> S. Samuel and E.E. Tumonglo, “Toleransi: Peran Tokoh Agama sebagai Perikat Kerukunan Umat Beragama,” *Abrahamic Religions Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 3, no. 1 (2023): 81, <https://doi.org/10.22373/arj.v3i1.14734>.

<sup>124</sup> Rahman et al., “The Strategies of Ajengans in Mediating Islam and Local Traditions in Rural West Bandung Regency.”

<sup>125</sup> Samuel and Tumonglo, “Toleransi: Peran Tokoh Agama sebagai Perikat Kerukunan Umat Beragama.”

However, it should be noted that social media also has a big impact on the education and socialization process of the younger generation.<sup>126</sup>

Furthermore, the wise use of social media and digital platforms presents a strategic opportunity to spread messages of tolerance, harmony, and peace, so that Islam can continue to be understood as an inclusive and compassionate religion of rahmatan lil alamin.<sup>127</sup> Therefore, synergy between the role of local leaders, community-based religious education, and the use of digital technology is key to building rural communities that are religious, moderate, and adaptable to global change. However, it's important to note that social media also has a significant impact on the education and socialization of the younger generation.<sup>128</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The formation of religious character in rural communities is a multidimensional process influenced by various factors, both internal and external. The family serves as the primary foundation for instilling religious values from an early age through role models, familiarization, and direct instruction. The role of religious leaders and religious institutions, such as Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), mosques, and surau (prayer houses), strengthens the internalization of moral and ethical values by providing consistent spiritual guidance and a contextualized educational curriculum.

Furthermore, local social and cultural customs, such as mutual cooperation (gotong royong) and deliberation and consensus, have proven effective in supporting religious character education. Local cultures aligned with Islamic teachings help create a social ecosystem that supports the strengthening of noble morals, moderate attitudes, and prevents the emergence of extreme behavior. Furthermore, formal and non-formal education, particularly through Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and madrasahs (Islamic schools), plays a strategic role in promoting religious moderation and maintaining a balance between science, technology, art, and spirituality.

The rural social environment, characterized by familial bonds and emotional closeness, contributes to effective social control mechanisms. Communal religious practices such as religious study groups strengthen the community's collective identity, while moderate religious practices help maintain social harmony and cohesion. Economic factors and limited access to information are indeed challenges, but the role of religious instructors, local leaders, and the adaptation of digital-

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<sup>126</sup> Basuni and Ningsih, "Peran Media Sosial dalam Transformasi Proses Pembelajaran dan Interaksi Sosial pada Generasi Digital."

<sup>127</sup> Ghandi, "The Importance of Religious Counselors in Building Moderate Attitudes in Moderate Villages."

<sup>128</sup> Basuni and Ningsih, "Peran Media Sosial dalam Transformasi Proses Pembelajaran dan Interaksi Sosial pada Generasi Digital."

based da'wah strategies can bridge these gaps and ensure that the Islamic values of rahmatan lil alamin (blessing for the universe) remain internalized in rural life.

Overall, religious character formation in rural communities is the result of synergy between families, educational institutions, religious leaders, local culture, the social environment, and the dynamics of information technology. This synergy ensures the formation of a generation that is not only spiritually religious but also possesses noble morals, a moderate attitude, and the ability to adapt to global challenges without losing its moral and cultural identity.

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