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Reconstructing Children's Character Formation Through Qur'anic and Moral Education: Insights from Contemporary Kuttab Practices

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Abstract

Objective: This study aims to examine the role of Kuttab in shaping children's character through Qur'an and moral education, with a case study in Kuttab Karanganyar. The background of this research is based on the urgent need for a character education system rooted in Islamic values, as a response to the moral and ethical crisis that has hit the younger generation. Kuttab, as a traditional Islamic educational institution, offers a holistic approach to early childhood education, especially through strengthening Islamic values from an early age. **Theoretical framework:** This study refers to the theory of character formation according to Thomas Lickona, which emphasizes the aspects of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, as well as Islamic education theory, which emphasizes the integration between faith, knowledge, and charity. **Literature review:** shows that Qur'anic education and morals are important foundations in shaping children's personalities with noble character. **Methods:** The research used was a descriptive qualitative approach with case studies. Data was collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation of educators, parents, and students in Kuttab Karanganyar. Data analysis was carried out thematically. **Results:** research shows that Kuttab Karanganyar has succeeded in shaping children's character through habituation of memorizing the Qur'an, learning meaning and manners, and example from the ustadz. Character building is carried out systematically and continuously, with the support of a conducive environment and the active involvement of parents. **Implications:** This study shows that the Kuttab education model can be used as an alternative in the development of Islamic-based character education. Kuttab's advantage lies in the integration between the spiritual and moral curriculum with methods that touch the child's heart. **Novelty:** from this study is the disclosure of the mechanism of character formation in Kuttab systematically and contextually in the modern era, which has not been widely discussed in academic studies.

Keywords: kuttab, character education, moral education, early childhood, education model.

INTRODUCTION

Character education is the main pillar in building a strong and integrity-based nation's civilization. In an era of globalization full of moral and social challenges, the formation of students' character is an inevitable urgency [1]. The younger generation is faced with the rapid flow of information, cultural change, and complex value challenges, which, if not

equipped with a strong foundation of character, can lead to moral and identity crises. Therefore, education that focuses not only on cognitive aspects, but also on the formation of morals and personality, is an urgent need in the national education system [2].

In the context of Islamic education, character building cannot be separated from the teachings of the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet PBUH. Islamic education emphasizes the importance of a balance between spiritual, emotional, and social aspects in forming a whole human being [3]. Islamic values that are instilled from an early age through the education of the Qur'an and morals are the main provisions for children in facing a life full of dynamics. One of the traditional educational institutions that plays an important role in this is Kuttab. Kuttab is known as an Islamic basic education institution that focuses on the teaching of the Qur'an, memorization, and the development of manners and noble morals [4].

The revitalization of Kuttab in the modern era shows a new awareness of the importance of character education based on authentic Islamic values. Kuttab is not only a place to learn to read and memorize the Qur'an, but also a space for fostering children's character holistically [5][6]. This study took Kuttab Karanganyar as the location of the research, focusing on how this institution shapes children's character through Qur'an learning methods and moral development. This study also explores the strategies used by Kuttab Karanganyar in shaping children's personalities that are moral, disciplined, and responsible [7].

By tracing the practice of education in Kuttab Karanganyar, it is hoped that this research can make a real contribution to the development of Islamic-based character education models that are relevant to the needs of the times [8]. These findings can also serve as a reference for educators, parents, and policymakers in designing education that is oriented towards the formation of children's character from an early age [9]. Character education is one of the main focuses in efforts to build a generation with noble character and high integrity. In the midst of increasingly complex times and diverse moral challenges, character education based on religious values is very important to prepare children to be able to face the dynamics of life wisely and responsibly [10]. In the context of Islamic education, character formation through Qur'anic education and morals is the main foundation that shapes not only the spiritual aspect, but also the social behavior and personality of the individual [11].

Kuttab is a traditional Islamic educational institution that plays an important role in introducing and educating children with the basics of the Qur'an and morals from an early age. This institution has a long history as a center for learning the Qur'an and Islamic values rooted in the tradition of classical Islamic boarding schools [12]. In the current modern era, Kuttab has been revitalized as an alternative to basic education that emphasizes the holistic development of children's character through a Qur'anic approach [13]. This research takes a case study at Kuttab Karanganyar, an educational institution that actively applies Qur'anic learning methods and moral development in early childhood [14]. The focus of this research is to explore how the role of Kuttab in shaping children's character through Qur'an education and morals, and how learning strategies are applied in supporting these goals. By understanding the role and contribution of Kuttab in the formation of children's character, it is hoped that this research can provide an empirical picture that is useful for the development of Islamic-based character education models that are relevant to today's needs. In addition, the results of this research can also be a reference for educators, parents, and policymakers in improving the quality of children's character education in Indonesia [15].

This study offers a significant contribution to the discourse on Islamic character education by reconstructing the pedagogical role of contemporary kuttab as a holistic model that integrates Qur'anic instruction with structured moral formation. Unlike previous studies that often focus on either memorization of the Qur'an or general moral education, this research highlights the dynamic interplay between cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions in shaping children's character. The novelty of this study lies in its emphasis on kuttab not merely as a traditional institution, but as a revitalized educational framework that adapts classical Islamic pedagogy to contemporary challenges while maintaining its foundational

values. Furthermore, this research provides empirical insights into how value internalization is systematically cultivated through daily routines, teacher exemplification, and consistent reinforcement across learning environments. It also underscores the strategic role of integrating family involvement with institutional education, creating a coherent and sustainable model of character development that extends beyond formal settings [16].

The implications of this study are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it enriches the literature on Islamic education by proposing a comprehensive framework for character formation rooted in Qur'anic values and moral pedagogy. Practically, it offers a replicable model for educators and policymakers seeking to strengthen character education in early childhood contexts. By demonstrating the effectiveness of kuttab-based approaches, this study advocates for the inclusion of faith-based character education as a complementary component within broader educational systems, particularly in addressing contemporary moral challenges [17].

LITERATURE REVIEW

Character Education in an Islamic Perspective

Character education is a structured process to instill noble values in students so that they grow into individuals with morals, responsibility, and integrity. In the Islamic view, character education is not just a moral effort, but part of the prophetic mission of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), as he said: *"Indeed, I was sent to perfect noble morals."* (HR. Ahmad). Therefore, character formation is inseparable from the teaching of Islamic values sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith [18][19]. According to Zubaedi, Islamic character education emphasizes the importance of harmony between faith, knowledge, and charity as the basis for forming a whole human being [20].

The Concept and Role of Kuttab in Islamic Education

Kuttab is a traditional Islamic educational institution that has existed since the time of the Prophet and developed widely during the Caliphate. Initially, Kuttab functioned as a place to learn to read, write, and memorize the Qur'an for early children [21]. According to Nasution (1999), Kuttab became the initial foundation of the classical Islamic education system before the establishment of formal madrasas. In the contemporary era, Kuttab has been revitalized with a more systematic and structured approach, especially in fostering children's character [22]. The main emphasis remains on tahfizhul Qur'an, the development of manners, and the practice of daily worship. Modern kuttab also integrates Qur'anic values with character-based educational methods [23].



Figure 1. Character Formation

Qur'an and Morals Education as the Foundation of Character

The Qur'an is the main source of Islamic teachings that not only guides ritual aspects but also organizes ethics, social behavior, and personality. Effective Qur'an education not only teaches memorization, but also an understanding of its meaning, values, and implementation in daily life [24]. Meanwhile, morality reflects the results of understanding the values of the Qur'an in concrete actions [25].

Kuttab Karanganyar in the Context of Character Education

Several studies show that Kuttab Karanganyar is a model of Islamic educational institutions that are effective in shaping children's characters. Integrated learning between recitation, tahfidz, adab, and daily worship habits creates an educational environment that is conducive to character development [26]. Children are built to not only understand the content of the Qur'an, but also to imitate the morals of the Prophet in daily social interactions. The learning strategies carried out are contextual, based on teacher examples, and time discipline, which are the keys to the success of character education in this institution [27].

Table 1. Literature Review on Character Education and Kuttab

Theme	Key Concepts	Main Focus	Educational Implications
Character Education in Islamic Perspective	Integration of faith, knowledge, and action; moral responsibility; prophetic mission	Character education as a holistic process rooted in Islamic teachings, emphasizing moral integrity and spiritual development	Encourages a balanced educational approach that nurtures cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of learners
Concept and Role of Kuttab	Traditional Islamic institution; early childhood learning; Qur'anic literacy and memorization	Kuttab as a foundational system for teaching basic religious knowledge and shaping early character through structured learning	Provides a model for integrating classical Islamic pedagogy into modern educational contexts
Qur'anic and Moral Education	Qur'an as a source of ethical guidance; moral internalization; behavioral transformation	Emphasis on understanding and practicing Qur'anic values in daily life, not merely memorization	Supports the development of value-based education that links knowledge with real-life application
Contemporary Kuttab Practices	Revitalization of traditional education; structured character formation; integration of curriculum	Modern adaptation of kuttab focusing on holistic child development through Qur'anic and moral frameworks	Demonstrates the relevance of faith-based education in addressing current moral challenges
Kuttab in Character Formation Context	Habituation, teacher exemplification, and discipline; integration of adab and worship	Practical implementation of character education through daily routines and social interaction	Highlights the importance of consistent practice, role modeling, and environmental support in shaping children's character

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of Kuttab in shaping children's character through Qur'an and moral education in Kuttab Karanganyar.

Location and Research Subject

The research was conducted at Kuttab Karanganyar, an Islamic educational institution that is active in fostering children's character through learning the Qur'an and morals [28]. The subjects of the study include teachers, Kuttab managers, as well as students and parents of students involved in the educational process in Kuttab [29].



Figure 2. Morning Ceremony

Data Collection Techniques

Data is collected through several techniques, including:

- Participatory observation, namely, the researcher directly observes the learning process and character development activities in Kuttab.
- In-depth interviews with teachers, managers, students, and parents to gain information related to their learning methods, perceptions, and experiences regarding character education.
- Documentation, in the form of a collection of official documents, learning notes, and teaching materials used at Kuttab.

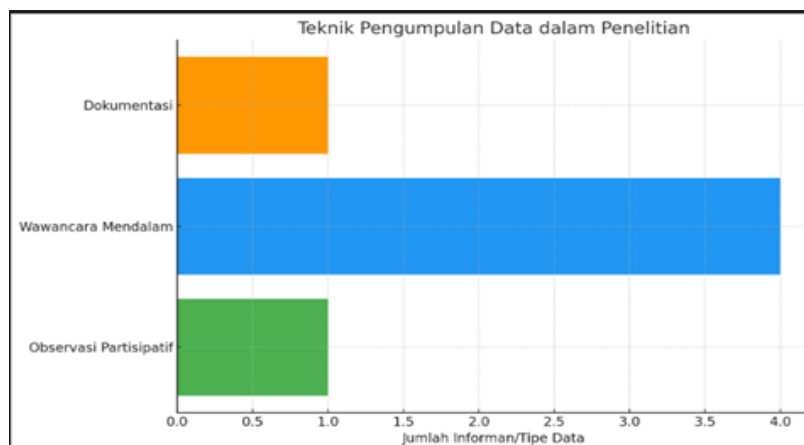


Figure 3. Data collection graph

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, namely, identifying the main themes related to the role of Kuttab in character education through the Qur'an and

morals. The analysis process includes the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and the conclusion drawn.

Data Validity

To maintain the validity of the data, this study uses Source triangulation by comparing data from various informants and data collection techniques. In addition, the researcher conducts a member check on the source to ensure the accuracy of the data obtained [30].

Table 2. Research Methods

Components	Description
Research Approach	Qualitative
Research Design	Case study
Case study	Kuttab Karanganyar
Research Subject	Teachers, Kuttab managers, students, and parents of students
Data Collection Techniques	Participatory observation (observing the learning process and character development) In-depth interviews (with teachers, administrators, students, and parents) Documentation (official documents, learning notes, and teaching materials)
Data Analysis Techniques	Thematic analysis through the following stages: Data reduction Data presentation Conclusion drawing
Data Validity	Source triangulation (comparing data from various informants and techniques) Member check (double-check with resource persons)

This method was chosen so that the research can provide a comprehensive picture of the strategy and effectiveness of the role of Kuttab Karanganyar in shaping children's character through Qur'an and moral education in a contextual and in-depth manner [31].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Kuttab Karanganyar

Kuttab Karanganyar is a non-formal educational institution that focuses on learning the Qur'an and the formation of children's morals from an early age. This Kuttab has a learning method that adapts to the character of children so that it is easier to understand the teachings of the Qur'an and moral values in daily life [32].

The Role of Kuttab in Qur'an Education

From the results of interviews and observations, it is known that Kuttab Karanganyar plays an important role in introducing the Qur'an to children with interactive and fun teaching methods. Children are taught to recite the Qur'an with tartil and tajweed correctly [33]. In addition, teaching is carried out in stages, starting from the introduction of hijaiyah letters to being able to read short verses and daily prayers. This shows that Kuttab not only serves as a place to learn to read the Qur'an, but also builds a strong spiritual foundation in children [34].



Figure 4. Reciting The Quran Together

Character Building Through Moral Education

In addition to focusing on learning the Qur'an, Kuttab Karanganyar emphasized the importance of building children's character through moral education. Children are taught moral values such as honesty, discipline, good manners, helpfulness, and mutual respect [35]. Through daily activities and consistent habituation, children are able to internalize these values in their daily lives. Parents are also involved in this process so that character formation can continue in the family environment [36].

Case Study: Child and Parent Experiences

From interviews with several parents and children who participated in Kuttab Karanganyar, it was seen that there were positive changes in children's behavior. Children who were initially less disciplined now become more orderly in worship and social interaction [37]. Parents feel happy and helped because children can learn the Qur'an well and be guided in building good character. Some parents also appreciate the child-friendly teaching methods and moral development that are carried out consistently [38].

Obstacles and Challenges

However, there are several obstacles faced by Kuttab Karanganyar, such as limited facilities, limited learning time because children also have to attend formal school, and challenges in maintaining consistency in learning at home. However, Kuttab continues to strive to improve the quality of education by conducting training for teachers and taking a more intensive approach to parents [39].



Figure 5. Graph of the results of the discussion

Kuttab Karanganyar has a strategic role in shaping children's character through Qur'an and moral education. With age-appropriate teaching methods and continuous character development, Kuttab can make a positive contribution to the spiritual and moral development of children. The existence of Kuttab is one of the important solutions in supporting holistic and comprehensive religious education in the community [40][41].

Table 3. Results and discussion

Aspects	Description
Overview of Kuttab Karanganyar	Non-formal educational institutions that focus on learning the Qur'an and the formation of morals from an early age. The learning method is adjusted to the child's character so that it is easy to understand the teachings of the Qur'an and moral values.
Role in Qur'an Education	Teach the Qur'an gradually in an interactive and fun way. Children are introduced to hijaiyah letters so that they are able to read short verses and daily prayers with correct tartil and tajweed. Build a strong spiritual foundation.
Moral & Character Education	Inculcate moral values such as honesty, discipline, good manners, mutual help, and respect. It is applied through consistent daily habits and involves parents so that these values are internalized at home.
Case Studies (Children & Parents)	Children show positive behavioral changes, such as being more orderly and disciplined. Parents feel helped and appreciate child-friendly teaching methods and consistent moral development.
Obstacles and Challenges	Limited facilities, limited learning time due to formal schooling, and challenges of maintaining consistency of learning at home. Kuttab addresses this with teacher training and an intensive approach to parents.
Conclusion	Kuttab Karanganyar plays a strategic role in shaping children's character through Qur'an and moral education. To make a positive contribution to the spiritual and moral development of children with a holistic and sustainable approach.

Analysis

This study provides a comprehensive examination of how contemporary kuttab practices contribute to children's character formation through the integration of Qur'anic and moral education. The findings indicate that the kuttab model operates as a holistic educational system in which spiritual, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. This integration aligns with character education theories, particularly Thomas Lickona's framework, which emphasizes the synergy between moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. In the context of Kuttab Karanganyar, these three components are not taught separately but are embedded within daily learning activities and routines. The analysis shows that Qur'anic education in the kuttab is not limited to memorization (tahfidz), but extends to understanding and internalizing meanings that guide behavior. The staged learning process—from recognizing hijaiyah letters to reading and memorizing verses—creates a strong cognitive foundation. More importantly, this cognitive engagement is complemented by moral habituation practices, where children consistently apply Qur'anic values in their daily interactions. This reflects a constructivist learning approach, where knowledge is actively constructed through experience and reinforced through repetition and social context.

A significant finding of this study is the central role of teachers as moral exemplars. Teachers in the kuttab are not only facilitators of knowledge but also serve as living models of the values they teach. This aligns with social learning theory, which posits that children

learn behaviors through observation and imitation. The consistency between what is taught and what is practiced by educators strengthens the credibility of moral instruction and enhances its internalization among students. As a result, character formation becomes a lived experience rather than a purely theoretical concept. Parental involvement emerges as another critical factor in the effectiveness of the kuttab model. The collaboration between educators and families ensures that the values instilled in the classroom are reinforced at home. This continuity creates a cohesive moral environment that supports sustained character development. The findings suggest that without such alignment, the impact of educational interventions may be limited. Therefore, the kuttab model's emphasis on engaging parents represents a strategic approach to extending the scope of character education beyond institutional boundaries.

Despite its strengths, the study also identifies several challenges that may affect the sustainability and scalability of the kuttab model. Limited facilities and instructional time pose constraints on program implementation, particularly as students must balance their participation in both formal and non-formal education. Additionally, maintaining consistency in character education at home remains a challenge, highlighting the need for ongoing communication and support for parents. These limitations suggest that while the kuttab model is effective, its broader application requires careful adaptation to different contexts and resource conditions. From a broader perspective, this study underscores the relevance of integrating religious values into contemporary educational frameworks as a response to moral and ethical challenges faced by modern societies.

The kuttab model demonstrates that faith-based education, when implemented systematically and contextually, can provide a strong foundation for character development. It offers an alternative paradigm that prioritizes moral integrity alongside academic achievement, addressing gaps often found in conventional education systems. In conclusion, the analysis confirms that contemporary kuttab practices represent a viable and impactful approach to character education. By combining Qur'anic instruction, moral habituation, teacher exemplification, and parental involvement, the kuttab model creates a comprehensive ecosystem for developing well-rounded individuals. Its adaptability and value-driven orientation make it a relevant model for addressing the moral complexities of the modern era.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the reconstruction of children's character formation through Qur'anic and moral education within contemporary kuttab practices offers a meaningful and relevant contribution to current educational discourse. The findings reveal that kuttab serves not merely as a site for religious instruction, but as a holistic educational environment where cognitive, spiritual, and moral dimensions are integrated in a balanced manner. Through age-appropriate pedagogical approaches, children are guided to internalize essential values such as discipline, honesty, respect, and responsibility, which are foundational to their personal and social development. A key strength of the kuttab model lies in its ability to harmonize Qur'anic learning with practical moral application. Rather than limiting education to memorization, the learning process emphasizes understanding, habituation, and exemplary conduct. Teachers act not only as instructors but also as role models, reinforcing moral values through daily interactions. This relational and value-oriented approach enhances the effectiveness of character education, making it more deeply rooted and sustainable. Furthermore, the study highlights the significant role of parental involvement and the broader social environment in reinforcing character formation. The collaboration between educators and families ensures consistency in values taught and practiced, thereby creating a supportive ecosystem for children's moral growth. This interconnected framework strengthens the continuity of character education beyond the classroom and into everyday life. Despite certain challenges, including limited instructional

time and infrastructural constraints, contemporary kuttab practices continue to demonstrate resilience and adaptability. These limitations do not diminish their impact; rather, they highlight the importance of commitment, creativity, and community support in sustaining educational quality. The success of this model suggests that effectiveness in education is not solely dependent on material resources but also on pedagogical clarity and value-driven orientation. In conclusion, contemporary kuttab practices represent a viable and impactful model of non-formal Islamic education that contributes significantly to the development of children's character. By integrating Qur'anic teachings with moral education in a structured yet flexible framework, kuttab offers an alternative paradigm that addresses the moral and spiritual needs of modern society.

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Author Contribution

Hanifah Wafa Firdaus conceptualized the study, conducted field research, collected and analyzed data, and drafted the manuscript. Eric Salonen contributed to research design, theoretical framework development, critical revision, and language refinement. Both authors collaboratively interpreted the findings, reviewed the manuscript, and approved the final version. Each author has made a significant intellectual contribution and agrees to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this research. This study was conducted independently without any financial, commercial, or personal relationships that could be perceived as influencing the research outcomes. All interpretations and conclusions presented are solely based on academic considerations and empirical findings, ensuring objectivity, transparency, and integrity throughout the research and publication process.

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