

Character Education of Santri in Peripheral Pesantren: A Contextual Analysis Based on the Thought of Hadratus Syaikh KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari**Nizar Rafi Mutaqin¹, Asriana Kibtiyah¹, Yusuf Ahmed Muaz², Jasminto¹, Hanifuddin¹**¹ Universitas Hasyim Asy'ari Jombang, Indonesia² Ahmadu Bello University Zaria Kaduna, Nigeria**Corresponding Author:**  nizarrafimutaqin@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyse santri character education in peripheral pesantren by using the thought of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari as an interpretive lens. The study is motivated by the limited empirical research on character-education practices in peripheral pesantren and the underuse of the concept of adab as a contextual analytical framework. A qualitative descriptive-interpretive approach was employed, using a multi-site design across several pesantren in Muara Wahau District, East Kalimantan. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentary study, and were then analysed thematically through data reduction, data display, and verification. The findings indicate that character education in peripheral pesantren develops as an adab-based praxis system integrated within collective life. The values of discipline, independence, responsibility, simplicity, and social concern are internalised through the kiai's exemplarity, disciplinary habituation, and intensive pedagogical relations. These findings affirm that adab functions as both a moral foundation and a pedagogical infrastructure that continually reproduces the habitus of santri character. This study formulates a contextual, praxis-cultural, adab-based model of character education for peripheral pesantren, offering a relevant alternative to character-education approaches that are normative-administrative in orientation.

Keywords: Education Character; Peripheral Pesantren; Contextual Model; Peripheral Pesantren

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INTRODUCTION

Santri character education has become a strategic issue in contemporary Islamic education discourse, particularly as society confronts accelerated social change, value disruption, and the intensification of community fragmentation. In peripheral areas—often marked by limited access to education, inadequate supporting facilities, and weak formal social control—the challenges of adolescent character formation tend to be more complex and require approaches that are responsive to local contexts (Astuti & Winarti, 2026; Masitoh & Nisa, 2024). Empirical findings indicate that limited educational infrastructure and low levels of social supervision may contribute to weakened internalisation of discipline, responsibility, and social ethics. These conditions underscore the need for character-education models that do not rely solely on formal curricula, but are embedded within living and sustainable social structures.

In this context, pesantren emerge as community-based Islamic education institutions with socio-cultural resilience in shaping character through collective life, the exemplarity of authoritative figures, and consistent moral discipline (Akbar et al., 2022; Zainuri, 2025). The daily rhythm of santri life—from congregational worship and kitab study to *khidmah*—serves as a

relatively intensive medium for value internalisation, such that character education in pesantren does not end with cognitive attainment but emphasises the holistic formation of *adab* and personality. In other words, pesantren tend to provide an educational ecosystem that enables the repeated practice of discipline, responsibility, empathy, social cooperation, and communal care within real social relations.

This emphasis on lived experience and collective practice aligns with the notion of character education as moral practice, which positions moral practice as the foundation of character learning. Within this framework, character is not understood merely as the outcome of acquiring moral knowledge, but as the product of sustained participation in a community that consistently enacts moral and social values (Nucci, 2024). Conceptually, contemporary character-education literature likewise stresses that the effectiveness of character formation is strongly influenced by the social ecosystem in which individuals interact. The integration of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action affirms that character formation requires an intact praxis—encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions—rather than purely normative-cognitive instruction (Lickona, 1993, 2015). In the same vein, Nucci (2024) argues that moral development grows through meaningful social relationships; thus, character education becomes more effective when values are not separated from everyday life within a living moral community.

Within pesantren studies, character education is commonly understood through three main nodes: (1) the centrality of the *kiai* as a role model and normative reference, (2) a culture of discipline as a mechanism of social control, and (3) religious habituation as a means of moral formation. Numerous studies show that the exemplarity of authoritative figures and pesantren routines play a major role in the internalisation of moral-social norms among *santri* (Dian et al., 2024; Nuraeni et al., 2022; Silfiyasari & Ashif Az Zhafi, 2020). However, the dominant focus on large pesantren or urban contexts with well-established institutional structures has limited empirical understanding of character-education practices in peripheral pesantren, which operate with different social configurations, resources, and structural challenges.

From the perspective of the sociology of education, these contextual differences matter because value internalisation does not occur in a vacuum; rather, it is produced through repeated social practices within a relational field. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus explains that individual dispositions are formed through the repetition of social practices that remain stable within a particular field; values are not merely imposed from outside, but are gradually internalised through consistent social structures (Bourdieu (2017). In peripheral pesantren, communal living, tightly organised collective schedules, hierarchical *kiai*-*santri* relations, and the habituation of congregational worship can be understood as social apparatuses that reproduce a moral habitus. Recent findings further reinforce that collective-life structures may function as mechanisms of social control that strengthen value internalisation through both vertical and horizontal supervision (Ramey, 2020; Shim, 2023). In this framework, pesantren may be understood as a field that systematically produces and reproduces the moral dispositions of *santri* (Bourdieu, 1995; Habibi & Sholikha, 2025).

Beyond structural-habitus mechanisms, the participatory dimension of identity formation is also relevant for explaining how *santri* character is socially constructed. The concept of a community of practice asserts that learning and identity formation occur through active participation in a community with shared goals, norms, and values; sustained social engagement allows values to become lived experience rather than merely taught discourse (Wenger, 1999). In the pesantren context, *santri* engage in shared practices—reciting, worshipping, performing *khidmah*, and living collectively—so that values are not positioned as abstract concepts, but as participatory experiences that embody moral identity. Contemporary literature likewise emphasises that communities of practice are not only media for sharing knowledge, but also arenas for constructing shared meaning and identity through consistent interaction (Chen et al., 2022; Mar et al., 2023). Strong social bonds among *santri*, both during their studies and after graduation, also reflect a distinctive feature of communities of practice that sustain value cohesion over the long term (Novi et al., 2021; Nur et al., 2024).

On the other hand, although the thought of classical Nusantara ulama—particularly

Hadratus Syaikh KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari – is frequently cited as a source of values, its use as an empirical analytical framework for reading contemporary character-education practices remains relatively limited. In the Nusantara Islamic educational tradition, *adab* is not merely social etiquette, but an ontological and epistemological foundation for human formation. KH. Hasyim Asy'ari positions *adab* as a prerequisite for knowledge to be valid and beneficial; the student-teacher relationship is understood as both ethical and transcendent, with education oriented towards shaping inner dispositions prior to cognitive transfer (Baso et al., 2017). In this sense, *adab* may be understood as a moral infrastructure integrating vertical (divine), horizontal (social), and epistemic (scholarly) dimensions, such that *adab*-based character education is not simply a curricular programme but a value system that governs pesantren social relations. Recent literature also indicates that revitalising *adab* is relevant as a corrective to character-education approaches that are overly procedural and insufficiently grounded in religious community life (Sapitri et al., 2022; Suyono, 2024). At the same time, the concept of *adab* in KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's thought encompasses the vertical relationship with God, the epistemological relationship with knowledge and teachers, and the social relationship with others, thereby offering strong explanatory power for reading character education as a dispositional structure implanted through moral habituation (Fauzul Azmi & Siti Ardianti, 2023).

Accordingly, this research departs from two main gaps. First, empirical exploration of character-education practices in peripheral pesantren remains limited, even though such settings present specific social contexts with resource configurations, mechanisms of social control, and community dynamics that differ from large urban pesantren. Second, KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari's thought on *adab* is still more often positioned normatively as a value reference and has not been optimally utilised as an analytical lens for interpreting character-education practices contextually and on the basis of field data. By integrating perspectives on *adab* (normative-theological) (Winingsih et al., 2022), modern character education (psychological-pedagogical) (Lickona, 2022; Nucci, 2024), habitus (sociological-structural) (Bourdieu & Rooksby, 2017), and communities of practice (socio-cultural-participatory) (Wenger, 1999), this study constructs a complementary theoretical foundation to explain how peripheral pesantren can shape santri character with relative consistency through social structure and the tradition of *adab*, despite limited resources and the pressures of modernity.

Therefore, this study is directed to: (1) describe the principal character values that develop in peripheral pesantren, (2) analyse character-education strategies operating within the rhythm of pesantren life, and (3) formulate a character-education model grounded in the cultural context of peripheral pesantren through the *adab* framework of KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari. Unlike previous studies that position KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's thought normatively, this research employs it as an interpretive lens to read character-education practices empirically in peripheral pesantren contexts, thereby producing a more contextual, praxis-oriented understanding rooted in the social realities of pesantren education.

METHOD

This research was conducted in several pesantren located in Muara Wahau District, East Kalimantan, a peripheral area relatively distant from the provincial centre of government. Site selection was based on considerations of representativeness for remote-area pesantren contexts and the diversity of pesantren characteristics. The study focused on santri character-education practices, with units of analysis comprising value systems, educational strategies, and educational interactions within the pesantren environment. A multi-site approach was adopted to enable cross-site analysis and the identification of more comprehensive thematic patterns.

The study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive-interpretive research type. The data collected comprised primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly through the researcher's interactions with informants in the field, whereas secondary data derived from pesantren documents, activity archives, and internal institutional policies. A qualitative approach was selected because it can capture meanings, values, and character-education processes that cannot be measured quantitatively (Morrow, 2005).

Data sources included the kiai/caregivers, ustadz, santri, and pesantren managers. Informants were selected purposively on the basis of their roles, experience, and direct involvement in the character-education process. The kiai and ustadz were positioned as key informants, while santri and managers served as supporting informants. Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to obtain rich data relevant to the research focus (Sugiyono, 2021).

Data collection was undertaken through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentary study. Interviews were used to elicit informants' perspectives, experiences, and character-education strategies. Participant observation was conducted to understand santri daily practices and the dynamics of character education directly. Documentary study was used to strengthen and verify field findings.

Data analysis was carried out simultaneously and continuously through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Pentang, 2023). Data were analysed thematically by comparing findings across sites to identify general patterns and contextual variations. Data validity was maintained through source and method triangulation, as well as peer debriefing to ensure the credibility of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This approach enabled the derivation of a conceptual model of character education for peripheral pesantren.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From the collection and analysis of data, research findings were obtained and are discussed as follows.

1. Research findings

Table 1 below presents the research findings summarised from multiple data sources.

Table 1. Summary of research data findings

Focus of Findings	Key Findings	Indicators /Field Manifestations	Literature Support	Implications for Character Education
Kiai Authority Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The kiai occupies a central position within the pesantren's social structure; decisions, value policies, behavioural exemplarity, and moral sanctions derive from the kiai as the santri's normative reference. ● The kiai-santri relationship is direct, intensive, and personal, enabling close pedagogical interaction. 	Santri treat the kiai's decisions as their primary reference; the kiai's exemplarity becomes the standard for collective behaviour; moral sanctions and value direction come from the kiai; pedagogical interaction is personal.	The kiai's exemplarity constitutes the principal character-education strategy and strengthens the internalisation of discipline and compliance with pesantren social norms (Dian et al., 2024; Silfiyasari & Ashif Az Zhafi, 2020).	Kiai authority functions as a centre of value legitimacy and moral control, thereby strengthening character formation through consistent exemplarity and normative reference.
Collective Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Santri life is organised through a strict schedule (cong- 	Compliance with the daily schedule; participation in congregational	Discipline as a habitus practice through repetition and vertical-horizontal	Collective discipline functions as a sustainable

Focus of Findings	Key Findings	Indicators /Field Manifestations	Literature Support	Implications for Character Education
	regational worship, kitab study, <i>khidmah</i>) that cultivates respect for rules and shared respon-sibility. ● Discipline is understood as a habitus practice formed through repeti-tion and through vertical and horizontal social control.	worship, study circles, and <i>khidmah</i> ; super-vision among santri (horizontal) and by management (vertical); discipline as a routinely formed habit.	social control (Nuraeni et al., 2022). ● Pesantren regulations effectively produce a religious character that is disciplined, responsible, and independent (Kusuma et al., 2021; Yanwari et al., 2026).	character-formation instrument because values are instilled through habits and social mechanisms, not merely through formal rules.
Daily-Life Rhythm	● Values such as <i>tawadhu'</i> (humility), obedience, simplicity, and responsibility are integrated into santri daily activities (academic life, worship, social interaction). ● Character formation occurs through value habituation in real social contexts, becoming a stable disposition.	Humility in social relations; obedience to rules/authority; simplicity in lifestyle; responsibility in tasks and interactions; values appear consistently in daily activities.	Character formation through habituation/repetition of values in real social contexts, producing stable individual dispositions (B. Arifin et al., 2023).	Integrating values into daily routines increases the likelihood that values become enduring character, as they are nurtured through repeated practice and social experience.
Patterns of Value Internalisation	● Santri compliance is formed through collective awareness; shared life nurtures solidarity and moral responsibility. ● Value internalisation occurs through shared practice rather than formal instruction alone, and is visible in social solidarity,	Compliance driven by shared solidarity among santri; cooperation in collective activities; moral responsibility within the community; values reflected in social action rather than merely normative statements.	Internalising religious-cultural values such as <i>ukhuwah Islamiyyah</i> and simplicity significantly enhances santri moral character in social contexts (Nurul 'Aini et al., 2022; Nurul Azizah et al., 2023).	Character emerges as a product of social relations and shared practice; solidarity and cooperation can be positioned as key indicators of successful value internalisation.

Focus of Findings	Key Findings	Indicators /Field Manifestations	Literature Support	Implications for Character Education
	cooperation, and heightened moral awareness.			

Source: Results of the researchers' data analysis (processed)

DISCUSSION

a. Configuration of Santri Character Values in Peripheral Pesantren

This study offers a distinctive contribution by positioning *adab* not merely as a normative ethical concept but as a lived pedagogical infrastructure operating empirically within peripheral pesantren. Unlike prior studies that tend to treat KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari's thought as a doctrinal reference, this research mobilises *adab* as an interpretive analytical lens to examine actual educational practices (Azizah, 2021; Fuadi, 2020). In this sense, the study advances an original perspective that character education in peripheral pesantren is not programme-based, but emerges as a praxis-cultural system embedded in everyday social relations.

The findings indicate that santri character education in peripheral pesantren develops as an integrated value system rooted in daily life, encompassing *adab*, discipline, independence, responsibility, simplicity, and social concern. These values are not transmitted through formal curricula alone but are internalised through continuous collective practice. This confirms that character formation is constructed through repetitive social engagement within a morally regulated community, aligning with the notion of moral praxis (Lickona, 1993, 2022; Nucci, 2024).

From the perspective of KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari's thought, these findings demonstrate strong relevance to the concept of *adab* education as the primary foundation of knowledge. Peripheral pesantren, despite their limitations, exhibit an authentic praxis of *adab* education, where values emerge organically from communal living rather than formal pedagogical design. This reinforces the argument that effective character education depends more on value consistency and moral exemplarity than on institutional completeness.

b. *Adab* Education as the Pedagogical Core of Peripheral Pesantren

Field findings show that the relationships among kiai, ustadz, and santri are personal, close, and sustained, forming a pedagogical space where exemplarity (*uswah*) becomes the principal instrument of character education. This finding is consistent with previous studies emphasising the central role of kiai leadership in shaping santri character (Dian et al., 2024; Nuraeni et al., 2022; Silfiyasari & Ashif Az Zhafi, 2020). Similarly, the importance of moral exemplarity aligns with broader character education literature that highlights the integration of moral knowing, feeling, and action (Lickona, 2015).

However, this study extends prior research by demonstrating that in peripheral contexts, relational intensity becomes a decisive factor in strengthening value internalisation. Unlike more bureaucratised institutions, peripheral pesantren enable deeper pedagogical engagement due to their simpler social structures. Within KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari's framework, this reflects the principle that educators function as moral agents whose conduct carries greater transformative power than formal instruction (M. Z. Arifin et al., 2022).

c. Discipline and Habituation as Mechanisms of Character Internalisation

The findings further demonstrate that santri character education operates through collective disciplinary habituation, including structured daily routines of worship, study, and communal activities. This supports previous research indicating that pesantren discipline effectively cultivates responsibility and independence (Kusuma et al., 2021; Yanwari et al., 2026) and aligns with Bourdieu's concept of habitus, whereby dispositions are formed through repeated social practice (Bourdieu, 1995; Bourdieu & Rooksby, 2017).

The consistency of these findings with earlier studies may be attributed to the shared structural characteristics of pesantren as moral communities, where discipline, leadership, and religious habituation function as core mechanisms of character formation (Aryadiningrat et al., 2023). However, the differences observed in this study are likely influenced by contextual factors,

particularly the peripheral setting, limited resources, and stronger communal interdependence. These conditions intensify social interaction and reinforce collective responsibility, thereby enhancing the internalisation of values.

From KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari's perspective, this process reflects the concept of *riyadhah* (habituation), whereby *adab* is embedded through continuous practice (Fuadi, 2020; Zahro' & Aminah, 2021).. Thus, character education in peripheral pesantren is inherently embedded within daily life, distinguishing it from programme-based approaches that are often detached from learners' lived experiences.

d. The Contextuality of Peripheral Pesantren and the Relevance of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's Thought

An important finding of this study is the ability of peripheral pesantren to contextualise character education within local socio-economic realities. Santri are not only shaped as individuals with personal piety but also as socially responsive members of the community, as reflected in values such as cooperation, simplicity, and social concern (Harahap, 2025; Winingsih et al., 2022). This finding extends previous literature by demonstrating that KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari's thought can function as a contextual analytical framework rather than merely a normative reference. The study contributes theoretically by integrating four major perspectives – *adab* (normative-theological), character education (psychological-pedagogical), *habitus* (sociological-structural), and communities of practice (socio-cultural-participatory) – into a unified framework. This integration bridges fragmented theoretical approaches and provides a more holistic understanding of character formation in pesantren contexts. Empirically, the study fills a significant gap by focusing on peripheral pesantren, which have been largely underrepresented in previous research (Astuti & Winarti, 2026; Masitoh & Nisa, 2024). Conceptually, it advances an *adab*-based, praxis-cultural model of character education that extends the relevance of classical Islamic educational thought into contemporary practice.

e. An *Adab*-Based Model of Character Education for Peripheral Pesantren

Based on the synthesis of findings, this study formulates an *adab*-based, lived-praxis model of character education characterised by four key elements: (1) *adab* as the core value, (2) exemplarity of *kiai* and *ustadz*, (3) collective disciplinary habituation, and (4) contextual adaptation to local realities. This model offers an alternative to character education approaches that are predominantly normative and administrative.

In practical terms, the findings suggest that effective character education does not require sophisticated infrastructure but depends on value consistency, moral exemplarity, and integration within daily social practices. For policymakers and educational practitioners, particularly in marginal areas, strengthening relational pedagogy and communal discipline may yield more sustainable outcomes than formal programme expansion. Academically, this study opens avenues for further research on contextual models of Islamic education, including comparative studies between peripheral and urban pesantren. Future research may also explore the adaptability of the *adab*-based model in formal educational institutions or hybrid learning environments. From a policy perspective, the findings highlight the importance of recognising peripheral pesantren as strategic sites for character education development, rather than marginal institutions.

1) Conceptual Model Diagram

The *adab*-based character-education model for peripheral pesantren may be depicted as a layered system centred on *adab* as the core value, surrounded by pedagogical mechanisms and social contexts that interweave as follows:

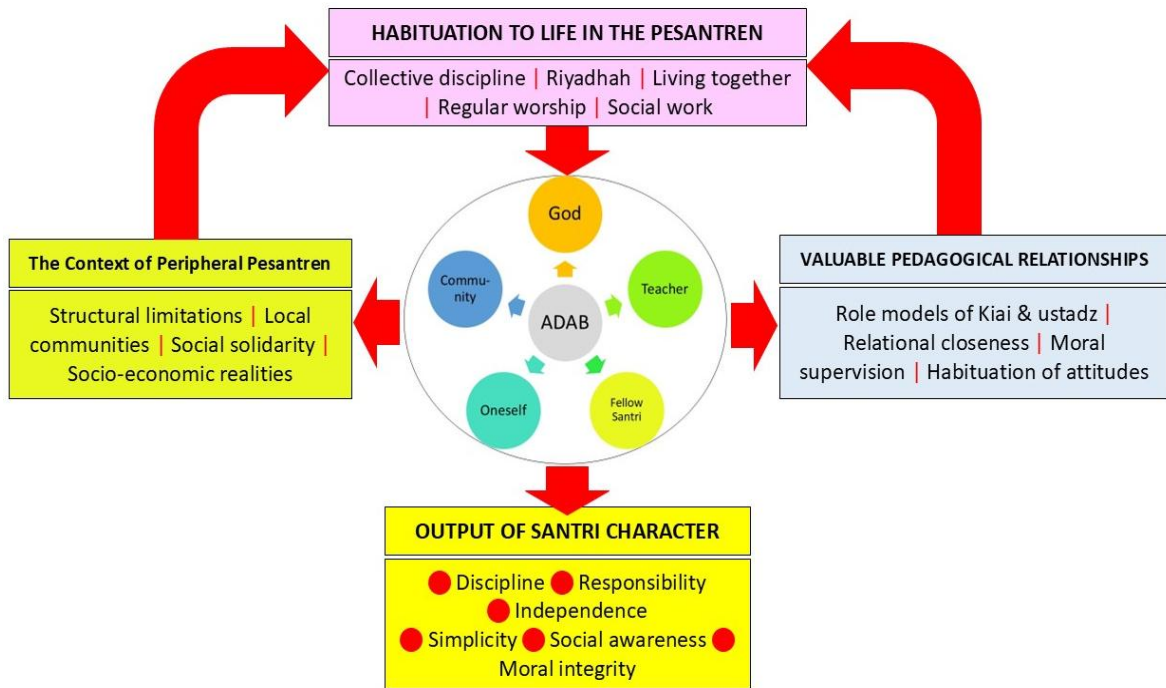


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of *Adab*-Based Character Education in Peripheral Pesantren

Source: Results of the researchers' data analysis (processed)

2) Explanation of the Conceptual Model

This model positions *adab* as the core of character education, as emphasised by Hadratus Syaikh KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari, who argues that *adab* is the primary foundation of knowledge and personality. In the context of peripheral pesantren, *adab* is not understood merely as a normative-ethical concept, but as a lived value internalised through santri daily practices. The first layer surrounding *adab* is value-laden pedagogical relations, namely educational relationships among the kiai, ustadz, and santri that are personal, morally hierarchical, and sustained. These relations constitute the primary medium for character internalisation (Hanifudin & Idawati, 2024) through exemplarity (*uswah*), moral correction, and the habituation of dispositions. The findings show that the effectiveness of character education in peripheral pesantren lies precisely in the intensity of these relations, rather than in formal teaching systems. The next layer is the habituation of pesantren life, encompassing collective discipline, *riyadhah* (self-training), the organisation of worship and study time, and santri involvement in social activities. Habituation functions as the principal pedagogical mechanism that enables *adab* to be translated into observable conduct (moral behaviour). From KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's perspective, *adab* will only be firmly embedded if it is trained consistently in everyday life (Lbs, 2020; Muali et al., 2021).. All these processes take place within the context of peripheral pesantren characterised by limited facilities, proximity to local communities, and particular socio-economic challenges. This context is not an obstacle, but a constitutive factor that shapes santri character to be more independent, simple, and strongly socially concerned. Hence, character education in peripheral pesantren is contextual and responsive to surrounding social realities. The output of this model is a holistic santri character encompassing moral, social, and spiritual dimensions, such as discipline, responsibility, independence, simplicity, and social concern. Such character is not the result of normative curricular intervention, but of the internalisation of *adab* values that live within the pesantren ecosystem.

Table 2. Conceptual Model of *Adab*-Based Character Education in Peripheral Pesantren

Model Component	Conceptual Description	Foundation in KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari's Thought	Implications for Santri Character
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<i>Adab</i> (Core Value)	The moral and spiritual value foundation of santri education	Knowledge must be preceded by <i>adab</i> as the principal foundation	Moral integrity and personal piety
Pedagogical Relations	The exemplarity of the kiai and ustadz within educational relations	Teachers as the primary exemplars shaping character	Internal discipline and ethical respect
Pesantren Habituation	Value habituation through discipline and riyadhah	<i>Adab</i> is embedded through sustained training	Responsibility and behavioural consistency
Peripheral Context	Adaptive education under socio-economic constraints	Education must be contextual and oriented towards <i>maslahah</i>	Independence and social concern
Character Output	Santri character is formed holistically	The aim of education: persons who are knowledgeable and well-mannered	Discipline, responsibility, integrity

Source: Results of the researchers' data analysis (processed)

3) Positioning the Model within Character-Education Discourse

This conceptual model affirms that *adab*-based character education in peripheral pesantren is a praxis-cultural model, rather than an administrative-programmatic one. Unlike policy-driven approaches to character education, this model emphasises value consistency, moral exemplarity, and the integration of character within santri everyday life. By employing KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari's thought as a critical lens, this model also extends the relevance of Nusantara ulama thought for reading contemporary educational practice. Peripheral pesantren are positioned not as marginal entities, but as authentic and contextual social laboratories of character education.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that santri character education in peripheral pesantren in Muara Wahau District, East Kalimantan, develops as a contextual, integrated, and lived-praxis system of *adab* education. Character education is not implemented solely through formal curricula, but through the internalisation of values within collective pesantren life. The values of religiosity, discipline, independence, responsibility, simplicity, and social concern are continuously instilled through the exemplarity of the kiai and ustadz, the habituation of daily discipline, and intensive, meaningful pedagogical relations. Using the thought of Hadratus Syaikh KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari as a critical lens, this study affirms that *adab* is the principal foundation of santri character education. Educational practice in peripheral pesantren reflects the view that knowledge and character are inseparable, and that meaningful education rests upon moral exemplarity and the habituation of values in real life. These findings indicate that peripheral pesantren possess strong pedagogical capacity despite structural limitations, and function as social laboratories of *adab*-based character education that are relevant to the challenges of contemporary moral education.

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