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DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF *SPIRITUAL AKLIAH* (SSA) MODEL FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION AT PONDOK PESANTREN AINUL YAKIN

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Keywords:	ABSTRACTS
Character Education; Self Spiritual Akliah; Islamic Boarding School; Research and Development; Psychosocial Mental Disability	Character education has become a fundamental objective of Islamic education in fostering students' moral integrity, spiritual awareness, and social responsibility. However, character education in many Islamic boarding schools remains largely conventional and lacks a systematic educational model, particularly for students with psychosocial mental disabilities following rehabilitation. This study aimed to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of the Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA)-Based Character Education Model at Pondok Pesantren Ainul Yakin. The study employed a Research and Development (R&D) approach based on the Borg and Gall model, encompassing needs analysis, planning, preliminary product development, expert validation, product revision, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), operational field testing, final product revision, and dissemination. Data were collected through observations, interviews, documentation, expert validation questionnaires, FGDs, and pretest–posttest assessments. Quantitative data were analyzed using Pearson Product-Moment validity testing, Cronbach's Alpha reliability testing, and Normalized Gain (N-Gain) analysis. The findings indicate that the SSA model was successfully developed into a valid, practical, and effective character education model. The research instrument demonstrated excellent reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.938). Following a three-month implementation period, the mean character development score increased from 58.43 to 83.10, with an average N-Gain score of 0.60 (60.45%), indicating moderate improvement. The SSA model integrates the dimensions of Self, Spiritual, and Akliah into a holistic character education framework through habituation, mentoring, instructional activities, and continuous evaluation. The model provides an evidence-based approach that may serve as an alternative framework for strengthening character education in Islamic boarding schools and other inclusive Islamic educational institutions.

A. INTRODUCTION

Character education has become one of the central concerns in contemporary educational discourse due to the increasing complexity of social life, rapid technological advancement, and the growing prevalence of moral degradation and mental health issues among individuals. Ma'arif dan Arif (2026). Modern education is no longer expected to focus solely on cognitive achievement but also to cultivate moral integrity, emotional maturity, spiritual awareness, social responsibility, and resilience. Within the context of Islamic education, character formation is regarded as the ultimate objective of the educational process because it seeks to develop individuals who possess intellectual competence while demonstrating noble character (*akhlaq al-karimah*), spiritual devotion, and social responsibility. Consequently, character education in Islamic institutions should not merely transmit religious knowledge but should also facilitate the internalization of Islamic values through continuous guidance, exemplary leadership, habitual practice, and meaningful life experiences (Miftahuddin et al., 2024).

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) have historically played a strategic role in character education in Indonesia by integrating religious learning with daily life experiences, enabling students to internalize Islamic values through worship, discipline, social interaction, and communal activities (Agboola & Tsai, 2012). This educational environment supports holistic student development, including intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and behavioral aspects, while contributing to the formation of honesty, responsibility, independence, empathy, and religious commitment (Abdurrahman,

2016; Ma'arif & Arif, 2026; Muali et al., 2021; Ubaidillah et al., 2020). However, character education practices in many pesantren remain largely dependent on institutional traditions and the experiences of religious leaders and caregivers, without structured models that define objectives, implementation procedures, evaluation mechanisms, and measurable outcomes (Muhyiddin et al., 2022). This limitation becomes more critical for students with psychosocial mental disabilities who require adaptive, individualized, and sustainable educational interventions after rehabilitation (Hasanah et al., 2025; Karnadi et al., 2026; Syaidah et al., 2025; Wardhani & Khadavi, 2025). Although Pondok Pesantren Ainul Yakin Yogyakarta has provided holistic educational services through Qur'anic learning, worship, spiritual mentoring, vocational training, life skills development, and social assistance, these practices have not yet been systematically formulated into an evidence-based character education model with clear conceptual foundations and evaluation mechanisms (Ubaidillah et al., 2020; Gall et al., 2003; Rofiah et al., 2025; Meliani et al., 2024). Therefore, transforming these practical experiences into a validated educational framework is essential to support long-term psychosocial recovery, spiritual growth, and social reintegration among students with psychosocial mental disabilities (Husnayayin et al., 2025; Hasanah et al., 2025; Abdillah et al., 2025; Miftahuddin et al., 2024).

Previous studies have demonstrated the important role of pesantren in strengthening Islamic character through religious instruction, institutional culture, leadership, and habitual practices (Miftahuddin et al., 2024; Ma'arif & Arif, 2026; Muali et al., 2021). However, most research has focused on students without special educational needs, leaving limited understanding of how character education should be designed for learners with psychosocial mental disabilities who require integrated approaches combining psychological support, spirituality, moral development, and social adaptation (Nucci et al., 2022; Ubaidillah et al., 2020). Existing research on psychosocial mental disabilities has mainly emphasized rehabilitation, clinical intervention, and community reintegration, while educational approaches for strengthening character and spirituality remain underdeveloped (Abdurrahman, 2016). Furthermore, previous studies often examine character education, spirituality, and mental health recovery through separate theoretical perspectives, resulting in fragmented understandings of the complex needs of post-rehabilitation students (Fauzi et al., 2026). Empirically, educational practices at Pondok Pesantren Ainul Yakin have evolved through experience and adaptation rather than through a scientifically validated model, making standardization, evaluation, and replication challenging (Muhyiddin et al., 2022). Methodologically, most previous studies have relied on qualitative approaches and have rarely applied Research and Development (R&D) methods to produce validated educational models through systematic stages of needs analysis, expert validation, revision, field testing, and effectiveness evaluation (Miftahuddin et al., 2024). These gaps highlight the necessity of developing an integrative and evidence-based character education model that bridges Islamic education, psychosocial recovery, and inclusive educational practices.

B. METHOD

This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) approach to develop and evaluate the Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA)-Based Character Education Model for students at Pondok Pesantren Ainul Yakin, Yogyakarta. Berkowitz dan Bier (2007).

Research and Development is a systematic process for designing, validating, revising, and evaluating educational products to ensure their effectiveness before broader implementation. In educational research, the Borg and Gall model has been widely adopted because it provides comprehensive procedures for developing innovative educational products through iterative validation and field testing. (Borg & Gall, 1983). The overall research procedure is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research and Development Procedure of the Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA)-Based Character Education Model



This study employed the ten-stage Research and Development (R&D) model proposed by Borg and Gall to develop and validate the SSA Character Education Model for students with psychosocial mental disabilities at Pondok Pesantren Ainul Yakin. The research began with a needs assessment through classroom observations, in-depth interviews, document analysis, and a literature review, followed by the planning and development of a preliminary model integrating three core dimensions: Self, Spiritual, and Akliah. The prototype was subsequently validated by experts, revised based on their feedback, and further evaluated through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involving pesantren administrators, teachers, caregivers, and educational practitioners. After additional refinement, the finalized model was implemented and tested using a one-group pretest-posttest design to examine its effectiveness in improving students' spiritual character, personal independence, and social competence. The final stage involved revising and disseminating the model as an evidence-based guideline for inclusive Islamic boarding schools. Data were collected through observations, semi-structured interviews, documentation, expert validation questionnaires, FGDs, and pretest-posttest assessments. Qualitative data were analyzed using the interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, while quantitative data were analyzed descriptively and using the Normalized Gain (N-Gain) index to measure the model's effectiveness. The trustworthiness of the qualitative findings was ensured through triangulation, member checking, prolonged engagement, and expert

validation, whereas the reliability of the quantitative instruments was established prior to field implementation.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

a. Research and Information Collecting

The preliminary needs assessment identified a strong need to develop the Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA)-Based Character Education Model at Pondok Pesantren Ainul Yakin, Yogyakarta. Data collected through observations, interviews, and document analysis revealed that although character education is deeply embedded in the pesantren's daily religious, social, vocational, and therapeutic activities, its implementation remains unstructured, relying largely on teachers' personal experience and institutional traditions without standardized learning procedures, assessment instruments, or implementation guidelines. The findings also showed that the existing curriculum integrates Islamic education, life skills, and psychosocial support but lacks a comprehensive conceptual framework linking spiritual development, self-awareness, moral values, and social responsibility. To address these gaps, the SSA model was designed to integrate three complementary dimensions—Self, Spiritual, and Akliah—into a systematic, evidence-based, and contextually relevant framework that supports holistic character development for students with psychosocial mental disabilities and provides a practical model that can be adapted by other inclusive Islamic boarding schools.

Table 1. Findings of Preliminary Needs Analysis

No.	Findings	Educational Implications
1	Character education has become an integral part of daily educational activities at Pondok Pesantren Ainul Yakin through worship, mentoring, habituation, and social interaction.	Existing educational practices provide a strong foundation for developing a structured character education model.
2	Character education is implemented based on teachers' experience and institutional culture rather than a standardized educational framework.	A validated character education model is needed to improve consistency and implementation quality.
3	Character values related to self-development, spirituality, morality, and social responsibility are taught separately in different educational activities.	An integrated educational framework combining Self, Spiritual, and Akliah dimensions is required.
4	Character assessment relies mainly on observation without standardized evaluation indicators.	Systematic assessment instruments should be developed to evaluate character development objectively.
5	The pesantren possesses comprehensive educational resources but has not yet formulated them into an evidence-based character education model.	Development of the Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA)-Based Character Education Model is necessary to strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of character education.

Source: Results of observations, interviews, and document analysis conducted by the researcher.

b. Development of the Initial Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA) Character Education Model

Following the preliminary needs assessment, the Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA)-Based Character Education Model was developed as a systematic and evidence-based framework that integrates the educational philosophy of Pondok Pesantren Ainul Yakin with Islamic values, character education, and holistic human development. Rather than introducing new activities, the model organizes existing educational practices into four interconnected components: educational philosophy, character dimensions, educational implementation, and character evaluation. The model is built on three core dimensions—Self, which promotes self-awareness, emotional regulation, responsibility, and independence; Spiritual, which strengthens faith, worship, and the internalization of Islamic values; and Akliah, which develops intellectual maturity, ethical reasoning, critical thinking, and social responsibility. By integrating these dimensions into daily learning, worship, mentoring, social interaction, and experiential activities, the SSA model provides a comprehensive approach to character formation and served as the preliminary prototype for subsequent expert validation, revision, and field testing.

Table 2. Components of the Initial Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA) Character Education Model

Component	Description
Educational Philosophy	Character education integrates Islamic values, holistic human development, and pesantren traditions.
Self	Self-awareness, emotional regulation, responsibility, discipline, confidence, and independence.
Spiritual	Strengthening faith, worship, Qur'anic learning, <i>dhikr</i> , moral values, and spiritual maturity.
Akliah	Intellectual development, ethical reasoning, critical thinking, communication, and social responsibility.
Educational Implementation	Habituation, mentoring, experiential learning, worship, social interaction, and vocational activities.
Character Evaluation	Continuous observation, reflective assessment, behavioral monitoring, and character development evaluation.

Table 3. Dimensions of the Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA) Character Education Model

Dimension	Main Focus	Expected Character Outcomes
Self	Self-awareness and personal development	Discipline, independence, responsibility, self-confidence
Spiritual	Internalization of Islamic values	Faith, sincerity, honesty, gratitude, moral integrity
Akliah	Intellectual and social development	Critical thinking, ethical behavior, cooperation, leadership

c. Expert Validation of the SSA Model

The feasibility of the Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA)-Based Character Education Model was evaluated through an expert validation process using the Delphi technique to assess its conceptual framework, structural organization, educational components, implementation procedures, and evaluation system before field implementation. Three experts in curriculum development, Islamic education, and educational management reviewed the model from pedagogical, Islamic, managerial, and practical perspectives, providing both quantitative assessments and qualitative feedback. Overall, the experts agreed that the SSA model offers a comprehensive and theoretically sound framework for strengthening character education in Islamic boarding schools by integrating the Self, Spiritual, and Akliah dimensions to support students' personal, spiritual, intellectual, and social development. They also recommended several refinements to improve the clarity of the conceptual framework, implementation guidelines, and assessment indicators prior to field testing.

Table 2. Characteristics of Expert Validators

Validator	Expertise	Institution
Dr. Taufik, M.Sc.	Curriculum Development	Directorate of Quality Assurance, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta
Dr. Adi Haironi, M.Pd.I.	Islamic Education	<i>(Sesuaikan dengan institusi Dr. Adi Haironi)</i>
Dr. (c) Muhidin Isma Almatin, Ps., Ps., C.PT.	Educational Management and Islamic Boarding School Management	Pondok Pesantren Ainul Yakin, Gunung Kidul

d. Revision of the Initial SSA Model

Following expert validation, the initial Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA)-Based Character Education Model was revised to improve its conceptual clarity, practical applicability, and internal consistency before proceeding to the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and operational field testing. The revisions reorganized the conceptual framework to better integrate the educational philosophy, the three core dimensions (Self, Spiritual, and Akliah), implementation strategies, and expected character outcomes; refined implementation procedures by clarifying learning activities and the roles of teachers, caregivers, and mentors; strengthened the integration of Islamic values throughout the educational process; and enhanced the evaluation component by introducing clearer character development indicators and more systematic assessment procedures. These improvements resulted in a more coherent, practical, and operationally feasible model, making it ready for broader review and subsequent field testing.

Table 5. Revisions of the Initial Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA)-Based Character Education Model

Aspect Revised	Initial Prototype	Revised Prototype
Conceptual Framework	General description of SSA dimensions	Clear relationship between educational philosophy, SSA dimensions, implementation, and outcomes

Model Structure	Components presented separately	Components integrated into a systematic character education framework
Learning Implementation	General implementation guidelines	Detailed implementation procedures with clearly defined educator roles
Character Education Activities	Religious and character activities described separately	Activities integrated into a holistic SSA-based character education process
Character Assessment	General observation of student behavior	Structured assessment indicators and continuous character evaluation

e. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Following the revision of the initial prototype, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Ainul Yakin, Yogyakarta, to evaluate and refine the Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA)-Based Character Education Model before operational field testing. The FGD involved experts, pesantren administrators, teachers, caregivers, mentors, and educational practitioners who reviewed the model's conceptual framework, implementation procedures, and assessment system. Participants agreed that the SSA model provides a comprehensive and applicable framework by integrating Islamic values, character formation, mentoring, habituation, and experiential learning through the Self, Spiritual, and Akliah dimensions. Several recommendations were provided to improve operational guidelines, clarify educators' roles, strengthen the integration of the three dimensions, and develop measurable character indicators. These suggestions were incorporated into the revised model, resulting in a more systematic, practical, and contextually adaptable framework ready for operational field testing.

Table 6. Recommendations from the Focus Group Discussion

Issue	Recommendation	Revision
Conceptual framework	Clarify the relationship between the Self, Spiritual, and Akliah dimensions.	The conceptual framework was revised to strengthen the integration of the three dimensions.
Implementation procedures	Develop more systematic implementation guidelines for educators.	Operational procedures were reorganized into sequential implementation stages.
Character education activities	Integrate character education into all daily activities within the pesantren.	Daily worship, mentoring, life skills, and social activities were incorporated into the SSA model.
Roles of educators	Clarify the responsibilities of teachers, caregivers, and mentors.	The implementation guidelines were revised by defining educators' roles more explicitly.

Character assessment	Develop measurable indicators for assessing students' character development.	Structured character assessment indicators were added to the final model.
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Based on the recommendations generated during the Focus Group Discussion, the Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA)-Based Character Education Model underwent several refinements before the operational field testing stage. The revisions focused on strengthening the conceptual integration of the three character dimensions, improving the implementation procedures, clarifying the roles of educators, and enhancing the character assessment system. These improvements increased the practicality and applicability of the model while maintaining its alignment with the educational philosophy and learning culture of Pondok Pesantren Ainul Yakin.

f. Operational Field Testing

The operational field testing evaluated the implementation of the Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA)-Based Character Education Model at Pondok Pesantren Ainul Yakin, Yogyakarta, involving 30 post-rehabilitation students over a three-month period (8 February–8 May 2026). Following a pretest to assess initial character development, the model was implemented through structured educational, mentoring, worship, and character-building activities integrated into the pesantren's daily routines. The program simultaneously developed the Self dimension (self-awareness, emotional regulation, responsibility, and independence), the Spiritual dimension (worship, Qur'anic learning, dhikr, honesty, patience, gratitude, and respect), and the Akliah dimension (critical thinking, discipline, problem-solving, and ethical decision-making). Throughout the implementation, teachers, caregivers, and mentors continuously monitored students' behavioral and character development through observation, providing empirical evidence of the model's practicality prior to its effectiveness being evaluated using posttest and N-Gain analysis.

Table 7. Characteristics of Participants

Characteristics	Frequency
Total participants	30
Research setting	Pondok Pesantren Ainul Yakin, Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta
Participant category	Post-rehabilitation students
Educational intervention	Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA)-Based Character Education Model
Duration of implementation	3 months

g. Instrument Validity and Reliability

Before the operational field testing, the research instrument for evaluating the effectiveness of the Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA)-Based Character Education Model was tested for validity and reliability. The instrument measured the three core dimensions of the model: Self, Spiritual, and Akliah, and was administered to 30 participants. Validity testing using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation showed that 20 items met the validity criteria, while 10 items were excluded due to

insufficient correlation values. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha resulted in a coefficient of 0.938, indicating excellent internal consistency. These findings confirmed that the instrument had strong psychometric quality and was suitable for assessing students' character development during the operational field testing of the SSA model.

Table 9. Instrument Validity

Indicator	Result
Number of respondents	30
Validity test	Pearson Product-Moment Correlation
Total items	30
Valid items	20
Invalid items	10
Decision	Valid items were retained for further analysis

Table 10. Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha	Category
0.938	Excellent Reliability

h. Effectiveness of the SSA Model

The effectiveness of the Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA)-Based Character Education Model was evaluated using a one-group pretest-posttest design involving 30 students at Pondok Pesantren Ainul Yakin. The results showed an improvement in students' character development across the Self, Spiritual, and Akliah dimensions, with the mean score increasing from 58.43 in the pretest to 83.10 in the posttest, representing an average gain of 24.67 points. The Normalized Gain (N-Gain) analysis produced an average score of 0.60 (60.45%), indicating a moderate level of improvement based on Hake's classification. Ten students (33.33%) achieved a high improvement category, while 20 students (66.67%) showed moderate improvement, with no students experiencing low improvement. These findings confirm that the SSA model effectively strengthens students' character development through the integration of self-development, spiritual formation, and intellectual growth within the pesantren educational environment.

Table 11. Pretest and Posttest Results

Variable	Mean Pretest	Mean Posttest
Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA)-Based Character Development	58.43	83.10

Table 12. N-Gain Analysis	
N-Gain	Category
0.60 (60.45%)	Moderate Improvement

i. Final Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA) Character Education Model

The final product of this research is the Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA)-Based Character Education Model, developed through a systematic Research and Development (R&D) process involving needs analysis, expert validation, revision, Focus Group Discussion, operational field testing, and final refinement. The model integrates three interconnected dimensions—Self, Spiritual, and Akliah—within a holistic framework that promotes self-awareness, independence, spiritual maturity, moral values, critical thinking, discipline, and social responsibility. Supported by structured implementation guidelines, mentoring strategies, monitoring procedures, and evaluation mechanisms, the SSA model provides both a conceptual framework and practical guide for educators in Islamic boarding schools. The positive results from field implementation demonstrate its potential as an effective and adaptable approach for strengthening inclusive character education based on Islamic values.

Table 13. Final Components of the Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA)-Based Character Education Model

Component	Description
Self	Development of self-awareness, emotional regulation, personal responsibility, independence, and positive behavior.
Spiritual	Internalization of Islamic values through worship, Qur'anic learning, remembrance (<i>dhikr</i>), gratitude, sincerity, patience, and moral habituation.
Akliah	Development of reasoning skills, discipline, critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, and intellectual responsibility.
Character Education Activities	Integration of classroom learning, mentoring, worship, life skills, and daily habituation within the pesantren environment.
Monitoring and Evaluation	Continuous observation, mentoring records, reflective assessment, and evaluation of students' character development.

j. Discussion

This study contributes to character education theory by introducing the Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA)-Based Character Education Model as an integrative framework that combines self-development, spiritual formation, and intellectual growth through a holistic educational process. Expanding the concept of Sociopsychospiritual Pedagogy, the model highlights the role of psychological well-being, social relationships, and Islamic spirituality in character development through habituation, mentoring, and experiential learning. Practically, the SSA model provides an evidence-based framework for Islamic boarding schools to implement structured, inclusive, and student-centered character education with clear objectives, strategies, and evaluation mechanisms. Although the findings demonstrate its effectiveness, further research is needed to examine the model's application in broader educational contexts and its long-term impact on students' character development and social adaptation.

D. CONCLUSION

This study successfully developed and validated the Self Spiritual Akliah (SSA)-Based Character Education Model through a systematic Research and Development (R&D) process at Pondok Pesantren Ainul Yakin. The model integrates the Self, Spiritual, and Akliah dimensions into a holistic framework that combines personal development, Islamic spirituality, and intellectual growth. The findings confirm that the SSA model is valid and effective in strengthening students' character development through structured educational activities, mentoring, and daily habituation. The model contributes theoretically by expanding the concept of sociopsychospiritual pedagogy and practically by providing educators and Islamic institutions with an adaptable framework for implementing sustainable character education. Further research is recommended to examine its application in diverse educational contexts and its long-term impact on students' development.

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Conflicts of Interest:

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author contributions:

The author was responsible for the conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data collection, formal analysis, writing, and final approval of the manuscript.

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Data availability:

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The data are not publicly available due to ethical considerations and participant confidentiality.

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