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INTEGRATING AKHLAKUL KARIMAH VALUES FROM HILYAH THĀLIB AL-‘ILMI IN PESANTREN-BASED CHARACTER EDUCATION

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ABSTRAK

Tujuan: Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis implementasi nilai-nilai akhlakul karimah dalam kitab *Hilyah Thalib al-Ilmi* karya Syaikh Bakr bin ‘Abdullah Abu Zayd terhadap pembentukan karakter santri di Pesantren Abu Bakar Ash-Shiddiq Wahdah Islamiyah Bulukumba. **Metode:** Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. **Hasil:** Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengajaran kitab ini meningkatkan kesadaran santri terhadap akhlakul karimah, yang tercermin dalam kedisiplinan beribadah, tanggung jawab akademik, penghormatan kepada guru, dan kesantunan sosial. Internalisasi nilai dilakukan melalui keteladanan guru, nasihat, dan pembiasaan praktis, meskipun pengaruh media sosial dan budaya global menjadi tantangan utama. **Kesimpulan:** Penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa kitab klasik tetap relevan sebagai instrumen pembentukan karakter santri, namun memerlukan inovasi metode pembelajaran agar lebih kontekstual. **Implikasi:** Kontribusi penelitian ini terletak pada penguatan posisi *Hilyah Thalib al-Ilmi* sebagai referensi strategis dalam pendidikan pesantren dan menawarkan model pengembangan kurikulum karakter yang adaptif terhadap tantangan era globalisasi.

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Keywords:

Akhlakul Karimah;
Character Education;
Islamic Education;
Hilyah Thalib Al-
'Ilmi; Boarding
School

ABSTRACTS

Purpose: This study analyzes the implementation of akhlakul karimah values in the book *Hilyah Thālib al-'Ilmi* by Syaikh Bakr bin 'Abdullah Abu Zayd in shaping the character of students at Pesantren Abu Bakar Ash-Shiddiq Wahdah Islamiyah Bulukumba. **Method:** The research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through interviews, participatory observation, and documentation, and then analyzed thematically. **Result:** The findings indicate that the book effectively enhances students' discipline, responsibility, respect for teachers, and social etiquette. The internalization of values occurs through modeling, advice, and practical habituation, although social media and global culture present significant challenges. **Conclusion:** The study confirms the relevance of classical texts as instruments for character education and recommends innovative teaching methods to align with the needs of today's youth. **Implication:** The contribution of this research lies in strengthening the position of *Hilyah Thālib al-'Ilmi* as a strategic reference in Islamic boarding school education and offering a character curriculum development model that is adaptive to the challenges of the globalization era.

A. INTRODUCTION

Education constitutes a fundamental pillar in the formation of human civilization. Within the Islamic tradition, education is not confined to the transmission of knowledge (*ta'lim*), but also encompasses character formation (*ta'dib*) and spiritual purification (*tazkiyah*). These three dimensions form an integrated framework aimed at cultivating *akhlakul karimah*, which represents the core objective of the prophetic mission, as stated by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): "*Indeed, I was sent to perfect noble character*" (HR. Ahmad). Consequently, character education grounded in moral and spiritual values is an essential and normative aspect of Islamic education.

In contemporary Indonesia, character education has emerged as a national concern in response to increasing moral challenges among youth, including violence, substance abuse, consumerism, and the erosion of ethical values under the influence of globalization and digital culture (Pabbajah et al., 2020). Although the government has introduced the Strengthening Character Education (*Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter/PPK*) program, several studies indicate that its implementation has not yet achieved optimal results, particularly in Islamic educational institutions (Sandy, 2025).

Pesantren, as the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, possess distinctive potential in addressing these challenges. Beyond functioning as centers of religious learning, pesantren serve as environments for comprehensive character formation through a boarding system, close teacher-student relationships, spiritual discipline (*riyādah*), and the study of classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*) rich in ethical and spiritual teachings (Ningsih et al., 2024; Samsuddin, 2024). However, recent developments reveal a decreasing emphasis on certain classical texts that specifically focus on adab and moral education, partly due to curricular adjustments aligning pesantren with the national education system (Mujahid, 2021).

One such text is *Hilyah Thālib al-‘Ilmi* by Shaykh Bakr bin ‘Abdullah Abu Zayd, a seminal work that elaborates the ethics of seeking knowledge and the moral responsibilities of students. The book emphasizes values such as sincerity, humility, discipline, respect for teachers, responsibility, and proper social conduct—values that remain highly relevant for contemporary character education. Despite its importance, *Hilyah Thālib al-‘Ilmi* has not been sufficiently examined as a practical foundation for character education within pesantren contexts.

Islamic-based character education in pesantren continues to be regarded as relevant for safeguarding the nation’s moral foundation; however, its implementation faces various challenges. Several studies indicate that instructional methods in many pesantren remain largely traditional, emphasizing rote memorization and textual comprehension, which limits their adaptability to contemporary developments and constrains the cultivation of students’ critical thinking skills (Ernawati, 2023; Anggraini & Kamid, 2024). Consequently, the adoption of contextual and participatory learning innovations has become an urgent necessity (Irfana et al., 2023). Nevertheless, studies that specifically examine the role of *Hilyah Thālib al-‘Ilmi* as a foundation for character education in pesantren remain very limited, despite the text’s rich articulation of *akhlakul karimah* values that are highly relevant in addressing the challenges of globalization.

Previous studies have made important contributions to the examination of moral education values; however, they have not sufficiently addressed the integration of *Hilyah Thālib al-‘Ilmi* into character education. For instance, Ansori and Fanani (2017) conducted a comparative study of Bakr Abu Zayd’s *Hilyah Thālib al-‘Ilmi* and Abdul Qadir bin Abdul Aziz’s *Al-Jāmi ‘fi Talab al-‘Ilm al-Sharīf*. Their findings concluded that both works are consistent with the Qur'an and Sunnah in establishing standards of moral good and evil. Specifically, *Al-Jāmi ‘fi Talab al-‘Ilm al-Sharīf* emphasizes sincerity of intention, optimal use of time, prioritization of branches of knowledge, careful selection of references, perseverance in learning, and patience in both seeking and teaching knowledge. In contrast, *Hilyah Thālib al-‘Ilmi* places greater emphasis on the etiquette of students, including viewing knowledge as an act of worship, adhering to the methodology of the *salaf al-ṣāliḥ*, maintaining consciousness and fear of Allah, striving for excellence, demonstrating seriousness in learning, recording knowledge in writing, and avoiding reprehensible traits such as envy, resentment, prejudice, association with innovators, and the pursuit of unlawful matters.

Fauji (2021) examined Bakr Abu Zayd’s educational concept by highlighting the importance of *adab*, the role of teachers, and the *talaqqī* method. However, the study primarily focused on comparing these concepts with Student-Centered Learning (SCL), rather than directly analyzing the integration of *Hilyah Thālib al-‘Ilmi* in shaping students’ character. Similarly, Hamdi et al. (2022) explored the etiquette of students in the same text and its implications for Islamic Religious Education (PAI), identifying

values such as respect for oneself, teachers, and peers. Nevertheless, their study remained theoretical and did not investigate the empirical application of the text in pesantren settings. Another study by Linaa et al. (2023) examined the use of *Hilyah Thālib al-‘Ilmi* through a *tazkiyatun nufūs* approach and demonstrated its effectiveness in enhancing students' spiritual awareness, learning motivation, and social interactions. However, this research was limited to female students and focused primarily on individual spirituality, without addressing the institutional dimension of character education.

Based on these studies, several research gaps can be identified. First, there remains a lack of empirical research on the implementation of *Hilyah Thālib al-‘Ilmi* in character education within pesantren. Second, only a limited number of studies have connected the content of this classical text with the demands of modern education, which requires students not only to possess noble character but also adaptive skills. Third, concrete and contextual strategies for integrating this text into the pesantren education system are still rarely discussed.

In response to these gaps, the present study offers several points of novelty. First, it provides a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the moral values contained in *Hilyah Thālib al-‘Ilmi*. Second, it focuses on the empirical implementation of these values in shaping students' character at Pesantren Abu Bakar Ash-Shiddiq Wahdah Islamiyah Bulukumba. Third, it seeks to formulate integrative and contextual strategies to enable *Hilyah Thālib al-‘Ilmi* to function as an effective instrument for strengthening students' character in line with the dynamics of contemporary education. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the integration of *akhlakul karimah* values derived from *Hilyah Thālib al-‘Ilmi* into pesantren students' character education, not only by identifying the values embedded in the text but also by analyzing their empirical implementation, the challenges encountered, and strategies to enhance pesantren-based character education so that it remains relevant in the modern era.

B. METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to enable an in-depth examination of a single, bounded system—namely, the implementation of character education based on *Hilyah Thālib al-‘Ilmi* at Pesantren Abu Bakar Ash-Shiddiq Wahdah Islamiyah Bulukumba. A case study design is considered appropriate because it allows for a comprehensive exploration of educational practices, actors, and contextual factors within a real-life setting. Pesantren Abu Bakar Ash-Shiddiq Wahdah Islamiyah Bulukumba was purposively selected as the research site for three main reasons. First, the pesantren explicitly integrates *Hilyah Thālib al-‘Ilmi* into its character education curriculum. Second, it represents a pesantren that combines classical Islamic texts with contemporary educational structures. Third, the pesantren has a well-established boarding system that enables continuous character formation through formal instruction, dormitory supervision, and daily religious practices, making it a relevant and exemplary case for this study. Primary data were collected through in-

depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Secondary data in the form of relevant literature were used to strengthen the theoretical framework related to Islamic character education and the role of classical texts in pesantren education (Creswell, 2015).

Research Participants

The research participants consisted of educators and students who were directly involved in the teaching and learning of *Hilyah Thālib al-‘Ilmi* at the pesantren. Educators were selected based on their institutional roles in character education, while students were chosen to represent different levels of study in the *Ulya/MA* program. A summary of the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Participants

No.	Positon	Quantiy
1	<i>Pesantren</i> leaders and senior teachers	3
2	Subject and dormitory teachers	3
3	Administrative staff	1
4	Students (<i>santri</i>)	6
Total		13

Key informants included pesantren leaders and senior teachers responsible for teaching *adab* and supervising character education, while student participants provided firsthand perspectives on the learning process and its impact on their character development.

Research Procedures

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Interviews focused on teaching strategies, challenges in implementing *Hilyah Thālib al-‘Ilmi*, and perceived impacts on students' character formation (Guerra & Noll, 2021). Observations were carried out during classroom instruction, student-teacher interactions, and extracurricular activities related to character education. Documentation included lesson plans, pesantren curricula, learning materials, and evaluation records to ensure data triangulation (Rashid et al., 2019).

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Miles et al., 2018). Relevant data were selected and coded during the reduction stage, then organized into descriptive narratives and thematic categories. Conclusions were drawn by interpreting the findings in light of Islamic character education theories and prior pesantren-based studies (Khilmiyah, 2016; Kimball, 2019).

Research Ethics

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research process. All participants provided informed consent prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage of the study. To ensure confidentiality, personal identities were anonymized where necessary, and all data were used solely for academic purposes.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings indicate that *akhlakul karimah* constitutes a central element in shaping the character of students at Pesantren Abu Bakar Ash-Shiddiq Wahdah Islamiyah Bulukumba. The core values emphasized include honesty, discipline, patience, responsibility, and respect for teachers, which are consistently manifested in students' learning activities, religious practices, and social interactions. As one student stated, "At this pesantren, we are taught not only religious knowledge but also how to be honest, disciplined, and respectful toward teachers in our daily lives" (Muhammad Dihya, 1st Year Ulya/MA).

Character education based on *Hilyah Thālib al-‘Ilmi* serves as the primary reference for moral development in the pesantren. The text is taught through teacher role modeling, intensive guidance, and the habituation of proper conduct in students' daily lives. The internalization of values is not limited to cognitive understanding but is deliberately directed toward the formation of attitudes and observable behavior. This was affirmed by a student who remarked, "The teachers do not merely explain the content of the book; they also provide direct examples of how *adab* should be practiced" (Muhammad Fari Ibnu Mansur, 1st Year Ulya/MA).

Interview and observational data reveal significant behavioral changes following students' engagement with this text. Students demonstrate greater discipline in worship and learning, increased responsibility in completing their duties, and more courteous speech and behavior. The pesantren's structured daily activities are designed to support the internalization of these values, making *akhlakul karimah* a primary indicator in evaluating students' character development. One student noted, "After studying this book, I better understand the importance of speaking politely and being responsible for my obligations" (A. Farid Wajdi, 2nd Year Ulya/MA).

The findings also show that the duration of students' involvement in learning *Hilyah Thālib al-‘Ilmi* influences the depth of value internalization. Senior students tend to exhibit stronger discipline, responsibility, and behavioral self-regulation compared to newer students. Regular evaluations through examinations, discussions, and behavioral monitoring reinforce the consistent application of *adab*. A senior student explained, "I used to procrastinate on my assignments, but after studying this book for a long time, I have become more responsible and disciplined" (Muh. Ilham, 3rd Year Ulya/MA).

At the same time, this study identifies external challenges, particularly the influence of globalization and social media, which may weaken the internalization of *akhlakul karimah*. Some students experience shifts in mindset and lifestyle due to exposure to digital culture that is not always aligned with pesantren values. In response,

the pesantren has reinforced the study of classical texts and provided guidance on maintaining Muslim identity in the digital era. As one student reflected, "After understanding the content of this book, I have become more selective in using social media and more focused on self-improvement" (Haikal, 3rd Year Ulya/MA).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that character education based on *Hilyah Thālib al-'Ilmi* functions not merely as a normative transmission of *adab* values but as an effective means of shaping students' actual behavior through role modeling, habituation, and systemic reinforcement within the pesantren environment. The internalization of *akhlakul karimah* occurs gradually and sustainably, influenced by the intensity of learning, the consistency of teacher guidance, and a structured pesantren life that supports value habituation. Nevertheless, external challenges such as globalization and digital culture indicate that classical text-based character education requires more contextual strengthening to remain relevant. These findings provide a critical foundation for further discussion, particularly in relation to Islamic character education theory, previous empirical studies, and implications for developing pesantren-based educational models in contemporary contexts.

Analysis/Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that *Hilyah Thālib al-'Ilmi* plays a central role in shaping students' *akhlakul karimah* at Pesantren Abu Bakar Ash-Shiddiq Wahdah Islamiyah Bulukumba. Core Islamic moral values—such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, patience, and respect for teachers—are not merely taught as theoretical concepts but are consistently internalized through daily learning activities, worship practices, and social interactions. These findings directly address the main research objective, namely to examine the implementation of *Hilyah Thālib al-'Ilmi* in character education and its impact on students' behavior and moral development. Empirical evidence from interviews and observations indicates significant behavioral changes among students after engaging with this classical text. Students demonstrate increased discipline in worship and study, greater responsibility toward assigned duties, and more courteous speech and conduct. Thus, *akhlakul karimah* emerges as a key indicator in evaluating students' character development within the pesantren system.

From an analytical perspective, the effectiveness of *Hilyah Thālib al-'Ilmi* in character education can be explained by three interrelated factors. First, the systematic structure of the text provides clear and practical guidance on the etiquette of seeking knowledge, enabling students to directly apply its teachings in daily life. Second, the method of teacher role modeling strengthens value internalization, as students learn *adab* not only through explanation but through lived examples demonstrated by teachers and mentors (Unang Sodikin, Endin Mujahidin, & Samsuddin, 2025). Third, the structured pesantren environment reinforces moral values through habituation, ensuring that ethical conduct becomes an integral part of students' routines. This finding aligns with character education theory, which emphasizes that moral values cannot be developed solely through cognitive instruction but must be cultivated through continuous practice and example (Husnaini et al., 2020; Ningsih et al., 2024). The pesantren system thus serves as a holistic educational space where moral formation occurs naturally and sustainably.

The results of this study are consistent with previous research highlighting the importance of classical Islamic texts in moral education. Mujahid (2021) emphasizes that

classical text-based learning remains a fundamental pillar in shaping students' morality, while Irfana et al. (2023) demonstrate that such texts foster discipline and responsibility. However, this study offers a distinct contribution by specifically examining *Hilyah Thālib al-'Ilmi* and empirically illustrating its role in cultivating students' awareness of *adab* in seeking knowledge an aspect that has received limited focused attention in earlier studies. Thus, this research not only confirms existing findings but also enriches the literature by providing contextualized empirical evidence on how a specific classical text functions within contemporary pesantren education.

Despite its effectiveness, this study identifies external challenges that potentially weaken the internalization of *akhlakul karimah*, particularly the influence of globalization and digital culture. Exposure to social media and global lifestyles may shape students' attitudes and behaviors in ways that are not always aligned with pesantren values (Muhlisin, 2024). This finding contrasts with Fauji (2021), who emphasized the compatibility of classical texts with Student-Centered Learning (SCL) without fully considering the impact of external socio-cultural pressures. Such differences reflect the increasingly complex context of contemporary education, where students are continuously negotiating between traditional moral frameworks and global digital influences. This underscores the need for adaptive strategies in character education.

The implications of this research are significant for strengthening the relevance of pesantren education in the modern era. The findings affirm that *Hilyah Thālib al-'Ilmi* should remain an integral component of character education curricula due to its comprehensive moral teachings. However, to ensure continued relevance for younger generations, pedagogical innovation is necessary. Drawing on experiential and student-centered learning theories (Kolb, 1984), character education becomes more effective when students actively engage in reflection and application. In this regard, integrating classical texts with interactive and experience-based approaches is essential. As suggested by Supriadi, Taufiqurrahman, and Samsuddin (2025), digital tools such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), interactive quizzes (e.g., Quizizz, Kahoot), and social media platforms can be utilized to reinforce moral lessons creatively without compromising Islamic authenticity. Such innovations enable pesantren to maintain the substance of classical teachings while responding to the learning styles of Generation Z, fostering students who are morally grounded and socially adaptive.

Within the broader context of national education, these findings reinforce the argument that classical text-based character education can serve as a strategic response to the moral challenges facing contemporary youth. Integrating traditional moral instruction with modern pedagogical approaches aligns with Anggraini and Kamid (2024), who stress the importance of innovation without abandoning educational values. Kolb's experiential learning model (1984) further supports this synthesis, emphasizing that moral internalization is most effective when students experience, reflect upon, conceptualize, and practice values in real-life contexts. Consequently, the integration of *Hilyah Thālib al-'Ilmi* within the pesantren system emerges as a robust model for producing graduates who are knowledgeable, virtuous, and resilient in navigating the challenges of globalization.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that *Hilyah Thālib al-‘Ilmi* plays a strategic role in shaping the character of students (*santri*) at Pesantren Abu Bakar Ash-Shiddiq Wahdah Islamiyah Bulukumba. The text has proven effective in instilling core values of *akhlakul karimah*, including honesty, discipline, responsibility, respect for teachers, and social propriety. These values are internalized through an integrative educational process involving teachers' role modeling, habituation, moral guidance, and direct practice in the students' daily lives. This finding reinforces the argument that character education grounded in classical Islamic texts is not only normatively relevant but also functionally effective in fostering religious and ethical behavior amid the dynamics of modernization and globalization.

Conceptually, this study contributes by demonstrating that the internalization of moral values does not occur instantaneously but through a continuous and sustained process. This process is influenced by the intensity of instruction, the consistency of teachers' guidance, and the structured pesantren environment that supports value habituation. Accordingly, *Hilyah Thālib al-‘Ilmi* functions not merely as a teaching text but as a living pedagogical instrument within the pesantren education system.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. First, it was conducted in a single pesantren with specific institutional characteristics; therefore, the findings cannot yet be generalized broadly. Second, the study employed a qualitative descriptive approach and did not measure the impact of character education quantitatively or over the long term after students return to society. Third, the research primarily focused on internal pesantren perspectives, while students' interactions with the broader external environment were not examined in depth.

Based on these findings and limitations, this study recommends that pesantren continue to position *Hilyah Thālib al-‘Ilmi* as an integral component of the character education curriculum, accompanied by strengthened instructional strategies that are more contextual and responsive to younger generations. Future research is encouraged to: (1) examine the effectiveness of integrating interactive learning methods and digital technologies in teaching classical Islamic texts; (2) conduct comparative studies across different pesantren to identify variations in implementation and impact; and (3) undertake longitudinal studies to assess the sustainability of *akhlakul karimah* internalization in students' social lives after leaving the pesantren.

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