Integrating Islamic Tradition and Modern Education in the Madrasah Aliyah Curriculum: Strengthening Character Education in Pesantren

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Info Artikel	Abstract
Keywords: Curriculum Integration, Character Education, Islamic Boarding Schools (*pesantren*), *Ta'dib*, Unity of Knowledge	This study explores the role of teachers in Islamic Boarding School-based Senior High Schools in curriculum integration, specifically how teachers understand and implement it, using a mixed-methods research design. In this case, the quantitative element consists of data collected through questionnaires (n=42), and the qualitative element consists of data collected through semi-structured interviews (n=8), classroom observations, and analysis of several relevant documents. The study uses descriptive statistics and thematic analysis to present the collected data. This study shows that teachers view integration as the unification of scientific knowledge with Islamic knowledge taught from the perspective of tawhid. While graduates of Islamic universities emphasize the formation of students' ethics and spirituality, graduates of public universities specifically focus on the pedagogical dimension of practice. Nonetheless, both groups of teachers contribute to promoting character education through examples, habits, and the learning context. Integration is carried out through religious worship, the moral integrity of teachers, and the Islamic approach to studying various subjects. On the contrary, its implementation is inconsistent, mainly due to a lack of individual initiative, a limited institutional framework, and the absence of systematic curriculum integration. The epistemology of Tauhidik Bakar in relation to the Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School, along with *'ta'dib* Al-Attas, pedagogically describes the unification of knowledge, or the integration of Islamic knowledge systems in the process of moral formation. It demonstrates the ability of Islamic education to integrate moral development with epistemological coherence. It serves as a model for the construction of an inter-systemic curriculum of Islamic education that is balanced between *'ilm Ahl al-Kitab* and *al-Sunnah*.
Kata Kunci: Integrasi Kurikulum, Pendidikan Karakter, Pesantren, *Ta'dib*, Kesatuan Ilmu Pengetahuan	**Abstrak** Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi peran guru di sekolah menengah atas berbasis pesantren dalam integrasi kurikulum, khususnya bagaimana guru memahami dan mengimplementasikan integrasi kurikulum, dengan menggunakan desain penelitian metode campuran. Dalam hal ini, elemen kuantitatif terdiri dari pengumpulan data melalui kuesioner (n=42), dan selanjutnya, data kualitatif dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur (n=8), observasi kelas, dan analisis beberapa dokumen yang relevan. Studi ini menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan analisis tematik untuk mempresentasikan data yang dikumpulkan. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa guru memandang integrasi sebagai penyatuan pengetahuan ilmiah dengan pengetahuan Islam yang diajarkan dari perspektif tawhid. Sementara lulusan universitas Islam menekankan pembentukan etika dan spiritual siswa, lulusan universitas negeri secara khusus fokus pada dimensi pedagogis praktik. Meskipun demikian, kedua kelompok guru berkontribusi pada promosi pendidikan karakter melalui teladan, kebiasaan, dan

konteks proses pembelajaran. Integrasi dilakukan dalam bentuk ibadah agama, integritas moral guru, dan pendekatan agama Islam dalam mempelajari berbagai mata pelajaran. Sebaliknya, implementasinya tidak konsisten dan terutama disebabkan oleh kurangnya inisiatif individu karena terbatasnya kerangka kelembagaan dan tidak adanya integrasi kurikulum yang sistematis. Epistemologi Tauhidik Bakar dalam kaitannya dengan Pesantren Tebuireng, bersamaan dengan *ta'dib* Al-Attas, secara pedagogis menggambarkan penyatuan pengetahuan, atau integrasi sistem pengetahuan Islam dalam proses pembentukan moral. Ini menunjukkan kemampuan pendidikan Islam untuk mengintegrasikan perkembangan moral dengan koherensi epistemologi dan berfungsi sebagai model untuk konstruksi kurikulum inter-sistemik pendidikan Islam yang seimbang antara `*ilm Ahl al-Kitab* dan *al-Sunnah*.

INTRODUCTION

The integrative method is fully in line with the objectives of the Indonesian education system, as set out in Law No. 20/2003 on the National Education System. (Azra, 1999; Basyit, 2017). The merging of curriculum results in the enfolding of Islamic education's principles and the needs of today's society . The concept of linking religion and science in Islamic education rests on the foundational epistemological principle of tawhid (divine unity), which conceptualizes all forms of knowledge as interrelated and sharing a single divine source (M. N. Al-Attas, 1980) notes that Islamic education cores *ta'dib*, or the nurturing of proper behaviour or manners, as the central purpose of Islamic education as an attempt to unite reason, ethics, and faith harmoniously (Al-Faruqi, 1982).

Abdullah presents his integration-interconnection paradigm, while (Kuntowijoyo, 2004) introduces his prophetic social science and (Khoiriyah et al., 2023) proposes his knowledge tree model (M. A. Abdullah, 2017). The three approaches offer different ways to integrate divine revelation with human reasoning and scientific research. (Bakar, 1991) establishes tauhidic epistemology. He seeks to unify scientific reasoning with his spiritual viewpoint while eliminating the divide between sacred knowledge and secular understanding. He proposes that *wahy* (divine revelation), 'aql (intellect), and *tajribah* (empirical experience) serve as knowledge sources. He introduces the integration-interconnection paradigm from (M. A. Abdullah, 2017) which recommends uniting religious beliefs with non-religious elements.

All perspectives support the need for curriculum integration, which exists as an epistemological and ethical requirement in Islamic education. To translate this foundation into measurable educational outcomes, this study adopts (Lickona, 1996) model of character education as an analytical lens, examining moral knowledge, feelings, and actions across cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains. The *pesantren* are identified as institutions most ready to actualize this mutual moral vision, as sites where character development and cognitive development are pursued simultaneously (Solihin et al., 2020). They claim that "*Pesantren* are laboratories for moral and intellectual development *"where"* spirituality and academic activities are integrated into the routines of the children within these educational environments".

According to Aziz, utilizing an integrated curriculum can increase students' academic literacy skills as well as spiritual development, while demonstrating evidence that an integrative learning approach assists in developing good moral character and social awareness (Arif et al., 2024; Aziz et al., 2023). Specifically in the Indonesian context, studies in higher educational Islamic institutions noted different models of integration and interconnection among religion, society, and nature within disciplinary subjects (Muhyi, 2018). However, empirical research at the Madrasah Aliyah level within *pesantren* remains scarce, with little attention given to how teachers perceive,

enact, and negotiate the practical challenges of curriculum integration in their daily classroom practices. (Ismania, 2016).

Under these circumstances, the study intends to examine teachers' perceptions and actions regarding curriculum integration in Madrasah Aliyah situated in a *pesantren* atmosphere. The process of integration is understood as a combined educational and philosophical one that connects the Islamic tradition and modern education to enhance students' character formation. This study is intended to give answers to these specific questions: (1) What is the teachers' perception of curriculum integration in the context of the pesantren? (2) How do the integrative teaching methods promote character education? (3) What is the relationship between curriculum integration and students' ethical reasoning and character formation?.

METHOD

The research employs a mixed-methods approach, using an explanatory sequential design to answer the research questions. The design enables researchers to use statistical methods to describe relationships, yielding a deeper understanding of teachers' experiences and their contexts. The design starts with a quantitative phase, after which the research proceeds. The quantitative phase evaluates how teachers view the integration and implementation of character education into the curriculum. The quantitative phase results serve as the basis for the subsequent qualitative phase, which we use to understand our findings.

The researchers employed a validated 39-item questionnaire to assess teachers' views on curriculum integration. The questionnaire items primarily examined ethical reasoning, preservation of Islamic values, and character development. The complete curriculum integration framework included items that assessed how religious knowledge connected to modern knowledge. However, some items were modified for clarity, most demonstrated content validity greater than 0.80, as assessed by V Aiken. (Aiken, 1985). The instrument achieved a good Cronbach's alpha of 0.75, according to Nunnally & Bernstein (1994), based on data from a preliminary study involving 34 respondents. The Slovin formula reported by ((Sugiyono, 2015) showed that 42 teachers from *Madrasah Aliyah Salafiyah Syafi'iyah* Tebuireng met the minimum sample size requirement because they constituted 68.9% of the total 61 teachers. The researchers used SPSS to analyze the data, yielding descriptive statistics and variable interpretations (George & Mallery, 2003).

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents.

Demographic Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	14	33.3%
Male	28	66.7%
Educational background		
State Islamic University (UIN/IAIN/STAIN)	10	23.8%
General University	21	50%
Universities under the Islamic boarding school system (*Pesantren*)	11	26.2%
Teaching Experience		
Less than 1 year	2	4.8%
1–5 years	5	11.9%
5–10 years	6	14.3%

More than 10 years	29	69%
Level of Education		
Bachelor	28	66.7%
Magister	14	33.3%
Doctoral	0	0%

Source: Questionnaire Data, 2025

The data collection process required extensive interviews with teachers and curriculum designers, as well as school principals, and focus group discussions with six students from various academic levels. The research team recorded and transcribed all interview sessions. The research used member checking. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) Moreover, method triangulation is used to establish data credibility. The researcher collected data on character education practices through direct observations of classroom activities and non-academic programs, including language and journalism clubs. The researcher used observational data to conduct thematic analysis, following the framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results
Teachers' Perception of Curriculum Integration

Demographic data reveal that 66.7 percent of teachers at the school identified as male. Most participants (69%) had more than ten years of teaching experience. The majority of participants held a bachelor's degree (S1), while about one-third held a master's degree. The participants had diverse educational backgrounds and professional experiences. The participants demonstrated varying levels of teaching experience and academic credentials, enabling them to share diverse insights into curriculum integration and character education at the Pesantren level.

A total of 42 teachers from *Madrasah Aliyah Salafiyah Syafi'iyah* (MASS) Tebuireng were involved in the study, demonstrating a wide variety of educational and professional backgrounds. The survey participants were involved in shaping, teaching, and developing students' characters. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Teachers' Perceptions of Curriculum Integration
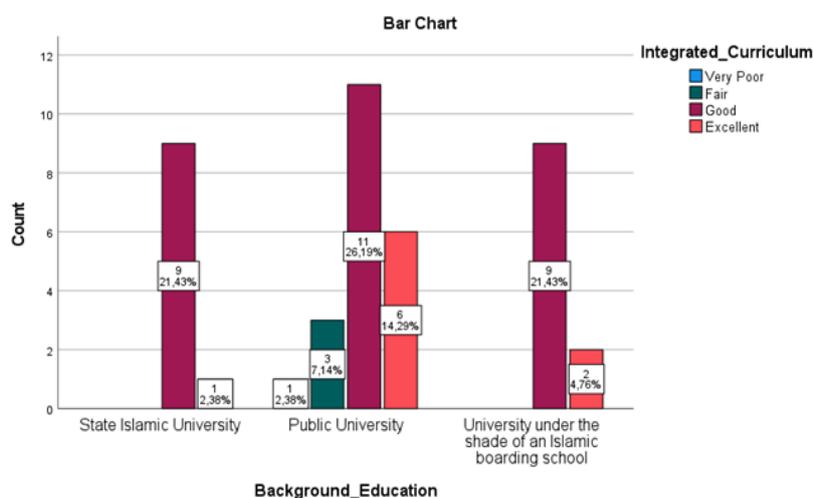
Source: Data Collection, 2025

As illustrated in Figure 1, nearly all educational backgrounds share a positive perception regarding the integrated curriculum. Among teachers who graduated from public universities, the highest ratings were recorded: 26.19% considered the curriculum good, and 14.29% excellent. Teachers from State Islamic Universities and universities affiliated with Islamic boarding schools followed the same pattern, with 21.43% rating the curriculum as good and 4.76% as excellent.

The curriculum is intended to reflect both Islamic tradition and modern education. The employment of alumni supports the pesantren's vision of the pesantren as the primary teachers, deeply rooted in Islamic values. Their conviction is that a firm religious foundation will make the integration not only theoretical but also a part of both instructional design and daily educational practices. One teacher narrated this:

> *"We are obligated to teach the local curriculum because it is our hallmark, but we remain committed to combining the national curriculum with. We manage the implementation ourselves, especially the lesson hours."* (Interview, September 2025).

The curriculum also clearly aligns religious and general subjects, with proportional hours allocated to each to provide a balanced experience of learning between ilmiah (intellectual) and *amaliah* (practical). Activities like *sorogan*, *bandongan*, and *bahtsul masail* complement general education programs such as multimedia, science, and journalism, reinforcing how Islamic knowledge applies in modern-day contexts.

For most teachers, integrating curriculum means balancing intellectual competence with moral and spiritual grounding. That means knowledge must not be divided into non-secular and secular domains but must be unified within an Islamic worldview.

> *"Actually, every lesson we learn has religious values. So, there is no need to compartmentalize, for example, by saying religious knowledge is more important than general knowledge. In my opinion, general knowledge is already connected to religion"* (Interview, September 2025).

From this perspective, it points out that from the epistemological standpoint of the pesantren, there is no dichotomy between religious and general science. As such, teachers at Tebuireng consider integrating the curriculum both a pedagogical and a moral obligation, producing graduates who are intellectually capable and spiritually grounded. Without integrating all knowledge into a single epistemological system, the teachers emphasize that each subject, both religious and general, must be instilled with Islamic values to develop moral character and ethical conscience.

Character Education Implementation

The research overview of the integration of character values in the curriculum of pesantren-based schools shows that the main method is learning content (52.4%), followed by school programs (33.3%), classroom rules (7.1%), and other methods (7.2%). Current-month reports show that students express the highest interest in moral and ethical value development through History and Chemistry and Ushul Fiqh lessons, as History classes teach students patriotism, empathy, and national identity. In contrast, Chemistry classes teach students environmental ethics alongside accuracy and discipline, and Islamic Jurisprudence classes teach students the values of honesty, respect, and social responsibility.

Table 2. Integration of Character Values

Integration Medium	Percantage
Through learning content	52.4%
Through school programs	33.3%
Through classroom rules	7.1%
Othes	7.2%

Source: Data Collection, 2025

The results show that educational materials teach both intellectual material and ethical principles to students. Teachers observed that students learn to connect their academic studies with ethical values during their teaching sessions. Students develop discipline and teamwork skills through their participation in *duha* prayers, foreign language programs, academic competition training, and student organization activities. Classroom rules accounted for 7.1% of the reported integration practices, through which teachers applied classroom rules to classroom activities, while teachers used instructional and extracurricular activities for their integration practices.

The teachers at *Pesantren Tebuireng serve as the main leaders, conducting character education programs, teaching students, and demonstrating* Islamic values through their everyday activities. The process of character education yields its strongest results when students demonstrate their internalized virtues through their actions rather than learning about virtues as theoretical concepts. Teachers serve dual roles: they share knowledge with students, and their personal conduct sets a standard for students' moral development. Student character development depends on teachers who show their dedication to teaching values through their ongoing practice and their genuine commitment to education. As one teacher said:

"*First, let us get back to ourselves. We as individuals must be able to practice first, and we must develop character because character determines destiny and can be formed through good habits*" (Interview September 2025).

The core of character education depends on teachers' personal integrity, which their moral coherence sustains as they model honesty, discipline, and respect for students who learn these values through observation and imitation. Character formation in practice is implemented at Tebuireng through traditional pesantren pedagogies such as sorogan and bandongan, which are juxtaposed with routine worship activities, including congregational prayers and Qur'an recitation. The teacher also highlighted that daily activities of worship and moral discipline become fundamental in reshaping students' moral character. One teacher highlighted:

Beyond traditional means, classroom approaches also adopt an integrative approach, infusing the values of truthfulness, hard work, and self-discipline across all subjects. The teacher's awareness of the moral consequences reflects a strong pedagogical awareness. Teachers worry that, in the process of modernization, moral erosion may occur if the pursuit of knowledge is not grounded in ethical principles. As one teacher commented:

"*General knowledge in life cannot provide ethical guidance, hence the importance of integrating religious and public knowledge as a balanced need.*" (Interview September 2025).

The statement shows the awareness of the potential moral of modernization and the need for Islamic ethic integration into modern disciplines by teachers and students. Students believe that their learning will be more meaningful when the teacher relates the modern subject to Islamic teaching. They realize that such an integration makes their learning of the moral and ethical dimension of knowledge more solid, toward a balance between intellectual development and spiritual formation.

Overall, *pesantren* Tebuireng never viewed character education as a separate subject, but rather integrated it into every aspect of learning and life. This integrative method reveals the pesantren's continual consciousness that the engagement with contemporary knowledge has to be carried out based on Islamic values, which would therefore make education not only up-to-date but also a moral identity.

Challenges and Opportunities to Combine Islamic Tradition and Modern Education

The longitudinally inherent Islamic values of the pesantren tebuireng have accommodated even the modern educational requirements. The curriculum is a very active process in the school; the compatibility between the custom and the new poses both hurdles and advantages for the educational sector in its development. The head of the school asserts that students are to acquire command of both the sacred and secular sciences, whereas the designers argue that combining the two will not allow culture to be uprooted.

This is a clear indication that a strategic openness towards innovation is aligned with the principle of *Al-Muhafadzah 'Ala Al-Qadim, Al-Shalih, Wa Al-Akhdzu Bi Al-Jadid Al-Ashlah. Al-Shalih, Wa Al-Akhdzu Bi Al-Jadid Al-Ashlah*, which means such an approach: keeping the good old practices alongside adopting the new good ones. The interplay is seen and recognized between religion and science as a pedagogical value, and the same is true when students, through their studies of mathematics and natural science, come to know that the subject can be viewed from an Islamic perspective, which makes the unity of knowledge and the moral aspect of learning stronger. The *pesantren* education shapes the character of its graduates to be religiously attuned and, at the same time, world competitive.

> "*The Islamic boarding school is in fact very much open to innovations, especially with the government's encouragement and support in the regulation area. We will try to evolve, but we will not give up our roots, namely, Islamic traditions.*" (Interview, September 2025).

The process of sustaining curriculum reform needs leadership as its essential component. Effective leadership navigates the tension between traditional teaching methods and modern pedagogical demands while helping the institution achieve permanent, transformative changes. The success of the integration depends on two factors: curriculum design and transformative leadership, which create operational changes through cultural innovation, collaborative work, and shared ethical objectives.

The implementation process still faces challenges, despite progress. Interview data shows that teachers use different methods to teach Islamic values across various school subjects. Teachers who lack religious competence, as well as those who follow traditional teaching methods, face greater challenges than other teachers when they try to incorporate spiritual elements into their secular teaching environments. Senior teachers who reject new teaching methods, together with technological advancements, show a conflict between their educational background and current teaching practices. Individual teachers drive the implementation of Islamic values in schools because of their personal dedication, which exists outside of existing institutional systems.

> "*So there is a lack of design, if there is a guide, when the subject appears, the teacher already knows that this is really planned. The values that go into this map are planned. For example, in this chapter, the values that come in, the verses of the Al-Quran here, are really systematized. Systematized, arranged*" (interview September 2025).

Based on the findings, there is a general lack of systematic guidelines in supporting curriculum integration. While teachers indicate that they need strong standardized frameworks for curriculum maps, Islamic values support specific subjects. Because institutional support was lacking, integration became increasingly uneven and dependent on personal interpretation. Overall, there are still challenges in the practical implementation. However, the vision of integration in Pesantren Tebuireng is well-developed and supported by institutional backing. The practical depends on factors such as the teacher's commitment, strong instructional leadership, and the availability of structured institutions to improve the quality and spiritual integrity of Islamic education across Indonesia, as well as on changes in the education landscape.

Relationship between Curriculum Integration and Students' Ethical Reasoning and Character Formation. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between curriculum integration and students' ethical reasoning and character formation. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. **Correlation between Curriculum Integration**

Variables	r	p	N
Curriculum Integration – Ethical Reasoning	.173	.273	42
Curriculum Integration – Character Formation	.401**	.009	42

Note. Pearson correlation test. $p < .01$.

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between curriculum integration and students' outcomes. The results showed a significant positive correlation between curriculum integration and character formation ($r = .401$, $p = .009$). However, the relationship between curriculum integration and ethical reasoning was not statistically significant ($r = .173$, $p = .273$).

DISCUSSION
Teachers' Perceptions of Curriculum Integration

The integration of curriculum in the context of the *pesantren* is thoroughly described in this section of the study, and teachers from *Madrasah Aliyah* are the ones who practice it. The *pesantren* system shows its connection to religious and secular subjects through technical aspects that extend beyond regular educational practices, demonstrating new ways of understanding knowledge. The existing research about Islamic education identifies tawhidic philosophy as the fundamental base for integrated teaching. (M. N. Al-Attas, 1980) (Al-Faruqi, 1982), but this research shows that teachers use their daily classroom activities to put integrated teaching into practice. The process of integration exists as a religious belief system that educational institutions use to implement doctrinal teachings.

This also reflects an understanding and practice of curriculum integration as the teacher's moral and ethical responsibility. This definition of curriculum integration as a moral obligation imposed on the teacher reflects the transformation of Islamic education, which (Prof. Azyumardi Azra, 2017) The stated was the result of educational institutions in Indonesia's efforts to accommodate modern scholarship alongside the religious tradition of the populace. (M. N. Al-Attas, 1980) defines knowledge integration as a unified existence which originates from divine truth, but our research findings show that the pesantren environment uses this unity to create contextualized tawhidic praxis. This study develops existing theoretical frameworks by demonstrating that integration functions as an active process that people establish through their interactions with structural conditions.

The study results show that Madrasah Aliyah teachers working in pesantren schools have developed positive attitudes toward curriculum integration, which they evaluate as good or very good. Teachers described integration as a method that connects religious studies with contemporary academic disciplines, seeing it as a pathway that unites religious beliefs with scientific research, thereby establishing teaching as a dual practice that includes both scholarly and religious activities (Fogarty & Stoehr, 2008). The concept of education uniting moral and intellectual development, which he presented, remains consistent with Al-Attas's tawhidic epistemology and Al-Faruqi's Islamic knowledge reconstruction framework. (Tasdemir & Gazo, 2020).

The actual results show that real-world integration is more complex because it depends on specific contextual conditions that extend beyond the limits of philosophical definitions. Educational institutions use everyday teaching methods, such as role modeling, value habituation, and teacher-student interactions, as their primary means of implementing integration in the classroom. (Sirojuddin, Maskuri, & Ghoni, 2025). The *pesantren* environment demonstrates that integration functions as a social practice that teachers create through their professional actions and through the values of their educational establishment. The research results demonstrate tawhidic theory through their application of philosophical concepts, which create specific teaching methods. (A. W. Abdullah, 2022).

The diverse educational backgrounds of teachers create additional complexities in understanding educational outcomes. Teachers who studied at Islamic universities focused on developing spiritual and ethical values, while their counterparts from public universities concentrated on teaching methods. (Sirojuddin, Maskuri, Ghoni, et al., 2025). The two groups maintained that knowledge and morality should remain interconnected, yet their different professional backgrounds showed that knowledge integration develops across diverse professional contexts. (M. A. Abdullah, 2014; Aziz et al., 2023). The study disproves the belief that Islamic curriculum integration follows a single method because tawhidic epistemology exists as a practice that varies with different situations. The *pesantren* context helps develop the theory because it reveals how educational philosophy clashes with actual teaching methods, which require students to practice both fixed educational standards and flexible teaching techniques.

Character Education Implementation

The implementation of character education at Tebuireng school relies on a comprehensive educational system that integrates Islamic values with everyday religious practices and formal educational methods. Teachers serve dual roles as they teach students and demonstrate ethical behavior through their daily actions. The established pattern shows similarities to (Lickona, 1996) and (Kilpatrick, 1993) theories about modeling behavior and building habits, according to the research findings, showing that *pesantren* practices generate results beyond the impact of individual educators. Teacher behavior serves as the primary method for character development, but 24-hour socio-religious settings create an environment in which individuals practice and share values that others track and support.

The existing educational systems that use sorogan and bandongan alongside contemporary teaching approaches prove that traditional religious education methods remain unchanged for everyone who studies them. The research results show that current methods of teaching, which (Silfiana, 2020) support, still work today, but their purpose has changed from protecting traditions to serving as cultural symbols that validate new technologies. The relationship between tradition and modernization functions as a partnership because both elements support each other. The

approach to integration needs a new conceptual framework. (Abidin, 2012) which should establish pedagogical hybridity as the process through which historical practices create educational value while contemporary methods increase educational relevance and effectiveness.

The process of integrating Islamic values into general subjects through trigonometry-based prayer-time calculations and biological links to Qur'anic teachings poses difficulties for Al-Attas's theory of *ta'dib*. *Ta'dib* requires both moral and spiritual development, yet research shows that integration functions both as epistemological development and as practical implementation. Daily problem-solving activities serve as a practical method for applying Islamic knowledge beyond its conceptual framework. (M. N. Al-Attas, 1980). The actual practice of integration shows greater practical application to real-world situations than the typical philosophical definitions indicate. The *pesantren* experience shows that Islamization of knowledge involves more practical teaching methods than theoretical study methods, which students use during their daily academic activities at pesantren educational institutions. (Ahmad et al., 2023).

The current curriculum reforms at educational institutions demonstrate how their ideal educational methods clash with their actual educational practices. The academic community supports educational modernization through moral values, which teachers implement through distinct teaching methods that yield different outcomes. (S. M. N. Al-Attas, 1993); (Pare & Sihotang, 2023). Fullan argues that organizations require ongoing assistance to implement comprehensive transformations, whereas research shows that Islamic schools must balance religious authority, traditional customs, and professional guidelines. The process of curriculum integration requires both technical skills and management abilities because it involves cultural elements and theological discussions. Existing change theories need to be adapted because they do not account for the faith-based elements of Islamic educational environments.

The results demonstrate that the character education system at *Pesantren* Tebuireng goes beyond existing theories and curricula in character education. The educational system presents an integration model that combines three essential elements. The first element requires moral behaviour to be demonstrated through shared community experiences instead of being restricted to classroom settings. (Ahmad et al., 2023; Sirojuddin, Maskuri, Ghoni, et al., 2025). The second element establishes a teaching method that blends traditional educational practices with contemporary learning techniques. The third element requires knowledge to be obtained through the implementation of practical situations rather than through theoretical methods. The *pesantren* education system offers a unique perspective that enriches ongoing debates about character development and educational program changes. The study demonstrates that religious educational institutions create new theoretical understanding that goes beyond existing established educational frameworks (A. W. Abdullah, 2022; Ismania, 2016).

Relationship between Curriculum Integration and Students' Ethical Reasoning and Character Formation

The theoretical framework shows that curriculum integration in pesantren functions through active traditionalism, which uses religious values to guide modern development. The Islamic moral framework determines how students should study mathematics and science, rather than using secular methods in modern education. The tauhidic perspective on knowledge holds that all knowledge exists as a single, complete system that encompasses both ethical and spiritual truth (Bakar, 1991). The process of integration creates two benefits: it improves academic skills

and makes students more morally upright, thereby developing the special religious and social abilities that define pesantren graduates.

The results of the study show that structural constraints make it difficult to sustain integration operations. The Islamic values that teachers apply in their subjects demonstrate that educational integration depends on individual teachers' efforts rather than on institutional frameworks. Teachers who have deep religious beliefs create spiritual elements in their classrooms, while other teachers find it hard to connect Islamic views with regular academic subjects. (Tasdemir & Gazo, 2020). The institutional philosophical agreement leads to inconsistent classroom teaching practices because it does not yield uniform educational methods. The study results demonstrate how educational institutions fail to achieve their ideal curriculum standards, which leads to implementation difficulties, a common problem that educational systems face during their transformation processes (Fullan, 2016).

The two essential components that enable effective coordination of operations between two institutions are leadership and institutional backing. The process of successful integration demands shared organizational values, structured curriculum maps, specific guidelines, and professional development programs that enable teachers to translate theoretical concepts into practical teaching methods. The process of integration requires complete system support, as its absence leads to disjointed execution that depends on individual understanding. (Adamu, 2003; Aziz et al., 2023). The finding extends classical curriculum theory, which maintains that educational institutions should use curriculum as their tool to connect educational philosophy with classroom implementation. (Beauchamp, 1975) because it demonstrates that pesantren integration needs organizational support to achieve more than basic dedication to its goals.

The combination of Islamic traditions and contemporary educational systems creates both opportunities and limitations, according to the research findings. The *pesantren* system delivers a powerful ethical foundation that enables value-centered learning, but its long-term implementation depends on the institutional framework and the abilities of leaders and teachers. The successful implementation of curriculum integration at *pesantren* requires recognition of both its philosophical nature and its organizational characteristics (Pohl, 2006). The study results show that curriculum integration positively affects student character development, whereas its connection to ethical reasoning yields weak, unmeasurable effects. The data show that pesantren integration practices produce better outcomes for student conduct and moral development than for the development of specific cognitive ethical reasoning skills (Sahin, 2018).

The unique educational environment of pesantren schools manifests in this pattern because their daily activities, teacher behavior, and religious practices serve as the main means of demonstrating their values (Wiseman & Alromi, 2003). Character development occurs through established behavioral patterns formed through everyday activities. The character education mechanism supports character development through moral behavior and practice because these two elements function as essential components of character growth (Lickona, 1996). The current research demonstrates that the action-oriented aspect of this educational environment functions as its primary element, while Lickona's equilibrium framework shows that all three moral aspects exist simultaneously.

The Islamic philosophical framework establishes educational practice through its connection to *ta'dib,* which defines education as a process that develops proper behavior and self-control before students learn theoretical concepts (S. M. N. Al-Attas, 1993). According to the Bakar tauhidic epistemology, knowledge exists as a permanent connection between human moral

development and religious growth, leading people to express their complete knowledge through their actions. The study demonstrated that curriculum integration strongly affects character development, thereby confirming the underlying philosophical beliefs, as it showed that students learn moral values through their structured everyday activities.

Tabel 4. Results of Theoretical Analysis

Aspect	Details
Research Findings	1. Teachers' Perception of Curriculum Integration: Teachers at Madrasah Aliyah in Pesantren view the integration of religious and scientific knowledge as essential, but it faces implementation challenges.
	2. Character Education Implementation: Character education is integrated into daily activities like prayers and teacher role modeling, with a focus on both moral and intellectual growth.
	3. Challenges in Curriculum Integration: Limited standardized curriculum mapping and a lack of institutional support hinder the full integration process.
Theoretical Analysis	1. The study connects tawhidic epistemology *(the integration of religious and secular knowledge)* as proposed by Al-Attas, 1980. with curriculum integration, emphasizing the blending of religious and intellectual education as a unified process.
	2. Diverse approaches from teachers based on their educational background (Islamic vs. public universities) complicate the integration of knowledge in a cohesive framework.
Contributions of the Research	1. Advances Islamic education research by showing how curriculum integration blends religious and secular knowledge.
	2. Proposes a model for balancing moral development and intellectual growth through integrated education in Pesantren.
	3. Emphasizes the importance of institutional support and structured frameworks for effective curriculum integration in Pesantren, addressing the challenges found in current practices.

Source: Data Collection, 2025

The established connection between ethical reasoning and current integration methods shows their operational limitations. Students develop moral habits through their studies, but face difficulties in obtaining opportunities to reflect on and study ethical matters in depth. The results indicate that ethical reasoning development depends on more than just habitual practice. The educational program at pesantren needs to adopt additional interactive and reflective teaching methods that work alongside existing experiential learning and role-modeling methods. The study results demonstrate that integration serves as the primary method for character development in this context, while its ethical-cognitive aspect requires additional educational development.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the integration of Islamic tradition and modern education in the Madrasah Aliyah curriculum, with a focus on how teachers perceive and implement it in Pesantren-based schools. The findings highlight that teachers view curriculum integration as the unification of religious and secular knowledge through a tawhidic perspective. Teachers contribute to character education through their daily practices, including role modeling, religious worship, and fostering both intellectual and moral growth. However, implementation is inconsistent due to a

lack of institutional support, a limited curriculum-integration framework, and reliance on individual teacher initiatives. The study also emphasizes the need to integrate Islamic values into both religious and general subjects to foster well-rounded, morally responsible students.

Despite the positive outcomes, the study faces limitations, including a lack of standardized curriculum mapping and challenges in applying spiritual elements to some subjects. Future research should focus on expanding the sample across different Pesantren to assess the impact of curriculum integration on students' ethical reasoning and character formation. Additionally, a quantitative or mixed-methods approach could be employed to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of curriculum integration in fostering both academic and moral development. Further studies should also explore how to overcome institutional barriers and support teachers in consistently applying Islamic values across the curriculum.

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