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PESANTREN-BASED FORMATION OF SANTRI AS *ṬĀLIB AL-ILMI*: A CASE STUDY OF *TA'ABBUD MUTAWAHHIDIYYAH* ORIENTATION AT SABILUL MUKMININ DELI SERDANG

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji pola pembentukan santri berbasis pesantren dalam membentuk santri sebagai *ṭālib al-'ilmi* dengan orientasi *ta'abbud mutawahhidiyyah* di Pesantren Sabilul Mukminin Deli Serdang, Indonesia. Meskipun berbagai studi telah membahas pendidikan karakter pesantren, pembiasaan religius, dan internalisasi tauhid, perhatian terhadap integrasi identitas pencari ilmu, kesadaran ibadah, dan orientasi tauhid dalam kehidupan harian pesantren masih terbatas. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan analisis dokumen yang melibatkan ustaz, pengelola pesantren, dan santri. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pola pembentukan santri terdiri atas lima strategi yang saling berkaitan, yaitu pembelajaran aqidah dan ibadah, pembiasaan ibadah terstruktur, keteladanan ustaz, bimbingan mau'izhah, dan supervisi berkelanjutan. Strategi tersebut membentuk pemahaman kognitif santri tentang tauhid, kesadaran afektif dalam beribadah kepada Allah, serta kedisiplinan perilaku dalam ibadah dan kehidupan sosial. Studi ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan model pembentukan santri berbasis pesantren yang mengintegrasikan ilmu, ibadah, dan karakter berorientasi tauhid. Model ini menawarkan implikasi praktis bagi penguatan pendidikan karakter religius di lembaga pendidikan Islam tradisional.

Kata Kunci: Pembentukan Santri; *Ṭālib Al-'Ilmi*; *Ta' Abbud*; *Mutawahhidiyyah*; Pendidikan Tauhid; Pendidikan Karakter Islam



Abstract

This study examines the pesantren-based formation pattern used to shape santri as *ṭālib al-ʿilmi* with a *taʿabbud mutawahhidiyyah* orientation at Pesantren Sabilul Mukminin Deli Serdang, Indonesia. Although previous studies have discussed pesantren character education, religious habituation, and tawhid internalization, limited attention has been given to the integrated formation of knowledge-seeking identity, devotional awareness, and monotheistic orientation in daily pesantren life. This study employed a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis involving ustaz, pesantren administrators, and santri. The findings show that the formation pattern consists of five interrelated strategies: aqidah and worship instruction, structured worship habituation, exemplary conduct of ustaz, advisory guidance, and continuous supervision. These strategies shape santri's cognitive understanding of tawhid, affective devotion to Allah, and behavioral discipline in worship and social life. The study contributes to Islamic education by proposing a pesantren-based formation model that integrates knowledge, devotion, and tawhid-oriented character formation. This model offers practical implications for strengthening religious character education in traditional Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: Pesantren Formation; *Ṭālib Al-ʿIlmi*; *TaʿAbbud*; *Mutawahhidiyyah*; Tawhid Education; Islamic Character Education

INTRODUCTION

Pesantren have long served as important Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, functioning not only as centers for religious instruction but also as spaces for moral formation, spiritual discipline, and social transformation. Through communal life, religious learning, and continuous supervision, pesantren cultivate santri who are expected to embody Islamic knowledge, ethical conduct, and devotion to Allah. In this context, santri formation is not limited to the transmission of religious knowledge; it also involves the internalization of values that shape the learner's identity, behavior, and spiritual orientation (Mansyuri et al., 2023; Mujahid, 2021).

In the contemporary era, pesantren face increasing challenges in maintaining the depth of religious formation. Modernization, digital culture, social change, and shifting educational expectations have affected students' habits, moral discipline, and spiritual



awareness. These conditions require pesantren to strengthen educational patterns that integrate knowledge acquisition, worship discipline, moral conduct, and a tawhid-based worldview. Such integration is essential to ensure that santri do not merely acquire religious information but also develop as *ṭālib al-ʿilmi*, namely seekers of knowledge whose learning is directed toward worship, moral responsibility, and closeness to Allah (Huda et al., 2023; Nuha, 2024).

The concept of *taʿabbud mutawahhidiyyah* is central to this study. *Taʿabbud* refers to a devotional orientation in which worship becomes the foundation of daily life, while *mutawahhidiyyah* refers to monotheistic consciousness rooted in tawhid. In pesantren education, these two orientations are expected to shape santri who are knowledgeable, disciplined in worship, morally responsible, and aware of Allah's oneness in all aspects of life. Therefore, the formation of santri as *ṭālib al-ʿilmi* requires an educational pattern that combines *aqidah* instruction, worship habituation, exemplary conduct, advice, and supervision.

Previous studies have examined pesantren character education, religious habituation, role modeling, and tawhid education. These studies show that pesantren contribute significantly to moral development, religious discipline, and the internalization of Islamic values (Zakaria, 2024; Azhari & Astutik, 2024; Hasbullah et al., 2023; Priatmoko et al., 2025). Studies on values education and character education also emphasize that character formation requires the integration of cognitive, affective, and practical dimensions (Lovat & Toomey, 2023; Nucci et al., 2024). However, most existing studies tend to discuss character education in general terms and have not sufficiently examined how pesantren integrate the identity of *ṭālib al-ʿilmi*, the practice of *taʿabbud*, and the orientation of *mutawahhidiyyah* into a coherent formation pattern.

This study addresses that gap by analyzing the pesantren-based formation pattern at Pesantren Sabilul Mukminin Deli Serdang. The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to conceptualize *taʿabbud mutawahhidiyyah* as an integrated model of santri formation that connects cognitive understanding of tawhid, affective devotion, and behavioral discipline. Accordingly, this study aims to examine how Pesantren Sabilul Mukminin forms santri as *ṭālib al-ʿilmi* through *aqidah* learning, worship habituation, ustaz role modeling, advisory guidance, and continuous supervision.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pesantren-Based Formation and Islamic Character Education

Pesantren-based formation refers to an educational process that integrates religious instruction, communal life, worship discipline, moral habituation, and direct guidance from religious teachers. In pesantren, education is not confined to classroom



learning; it is embedded in the daily rhythm of students' lives. This makes pesantren a distinctive environment for character formation because values are transmitted through repeated practice, social interaction, supervision, and exemplary conduct (Dhofier, 2011; Mansyuri et al., 2023). Islamic character education in pesantren emphasizes the integration of knowledge, worship, adab, and social responsibility. The internalization of values is realized through formal instruction and daily habituation so that Islamic values are not merely understood cognitively but are also manifested in attitudes and behavior (Mujahid, 2021; Siswati et al., 2023; Maisyaroh et al., 2023).

Ṭālib al-ʿilmi as an Educational Ideal

The concept of *ṭālib al-ʿilmi* occupies an important position in Islamic education. It refers not merely to a student who receives knowledge, but to a seeker of knowledge whose learning is guided by adab, sincerity, discipline, and devotion to Allah. In this sense, the formation of *ṭālib al-ʿilmi* requires more than intellectual development. It involves the cultivation of moral responsibility, spiritual awareness, humility before knowledge, and commitment to religious practice.

Within the pesantren context, the educational ideal of *ṭālib al-ʿilmi* is formed through a living educational environment. Santri are expected to learn religious knowledge, practice worship consistently, respect teachers, live responsibly with peers, and develop a disciplined spiritual life. This ideal connects intellectual formation with moral and devotional formation.

Ta'abbud and Mutawahhidiyyah in Tawhid-Oriented Formation

The concepts of ta'abbud and mutawahhidiyyah provide the theological and spiritual orientation of this study. Ta'abbud emphasizes the internalization of worship as a way of life, while mutawahhidiyyah emphasizes the centrality of tawhid in shaping thought, attitude, and behavior. Together, these concepts indicate that santri formation should integrate knowledge, devotion, and monotheistic consciousness. A santri with *ta'abbud mutawahhidiyyah* orientation is therefore expected to understand tawhid, practice worship consistently, and demonstrate religious values in social life. This orientation is consistent with Islamic education's broader goal of forming individuals whose knowledge, worship, and conduct are integrated within a tawhid-based worldview (Nuha, 2024; Prayogo et al., 2023).

Formation Methods: Habituation, Uswah Hasanah, Mau'izhah, and Supervision

In Islamic educational practice, formation is commonly carried out through several methods, including habituation, exemplary conduct, advice, and supervision. Habituation enables values to become part of daily behavior through repeated practice.



Exemplary conduct, or *uswah hasanah*, allows students to observe and imitate the attitudes and actions of teachers. Advisory guidance, or *mau'izhah*, provides moral and spiritual direction, while supervision maintains consistency and discipline (Bahri et al., 2023; Sanusi et al., 2024; Nurbani et al., 2023). These methods are especially relevant in *pesantren* because *santri* live in an educational environment where learning, worship, and social behavior are closely connected. The effectiveness of character formation therefore depends not only on curriculum content, but also on the consistency of daily routines, the moral credibility of teachers, and the quality of supervision within communal life.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

This study uses an integrative conceptual framework that connects five formation strategies: *aqidah* and worship instruction, worship habituation, *ustaz* role modeling, advisory guidance, and continuous supervision. These strategies are analyzed in relation to three dimensions of *santri* development: cognitive understanding of *tawhid*, affective devotion to Allah, and behavioral discipline in worship and social life. This framework enables the study to explain how *pesantren*-based formation shapes *santri* as *ṭālib al-'ilmi* with a *ta'abbud mutawahhidiyyah* orientation.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine the *pesantren*-based formation pattern used to shape *santri* as *ṭālib al-'ilmi* with a *ta'abbud mutawahhidiyyah* orientation. A case study design was selected because the research focused on a specific educational setting, namely *Pesantren Sabilul Mukminin Deli Serdang*, and sought to understand formation practices within their natural institutional context. The research was conducted at *Pesantren Sabilul Mukminin Deli Serdang*, North Sumatra, Indonesia. This site was selected because it represents a *pesantren* environment in which religious learning, communal life, worship habituation, and daily supervision are integrated into *santri* formation. The *pesantren* context allows the researcher to examine how *tawhid*-oriented character formation is practiced not only in classroom learning but also in the everyday life of *santri*. Participants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in the formation process. Based on the empirical data available in the manuscript, the study involved key informants from the categories of *ustaz* and *santri*. The current manuscript identifies four *ustaz* and two *santri* as interview sources.



Table 1. Informants Research

No	Informants <i>Ustazd</i>	Description	Informants <i>Santri</i>	Description
1	M. Irfan Siregar	Subject	Gio alkarim Sitakar	Subject
2	Sudirza Lubis	Subject	Juan Aditya	Subject
3	M Rohmat Siregar	Subject	Oka	Subject
4	M. Solihin	Subject	Habibburrahman	Subject
5	Amry Maulana	Subject	Riski Salmanta	Subject

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Observations focused on daily worship activities, Qur'anic recitation, dhikr, aqidah instruction, mentoring practices, and disciplinary supervision. Interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences and perceptions regarding the formation of ta'abbud, mutawahhidhiyyah, discipline, and religious awareness. The current manuscript indicates that interviews were conducted on April 15-16, 2026. Documents analyzed may include pesantren schedules, rules, curriculum documents, worship activity records, and student development reports. Data were analyzed using an interactive qualitative model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis began with repeated reading of interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents. The data were then coded thematically according to the main formation strategies: aqidah and worship learning, habituation, role modeling, mau'izhah, supervision, and perceived impact. These themes were further analyzed in relation to cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of santri formation.

The trustworthiness of the data was strengthened through source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from ustaz, administrators or pesantren staff, and santri. Method triangulation was conducted by comparing interview findings with observation data and relevant documents. Member checking was conducted by confirming key interpretations with selected informants. This study followed ethical principles for qualitative research. Institutional permission was obtained from the pesantren authority before data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw from the research. Informed consent was obtained before interviews. The identities of participants should be protected through the use of pseudonyms or role-based descriptions, and all data should be used only for academic purposes.



Results

Pesantren Formation Pattern at Sabilul Mukminin

The findings indicate that the formation of santri at Pesantren Sabilul Mukminin Deli Serdang is implemented through an integrated pattern combining aqidah instruction, worship habituation, ustaz role modeling, advisory guidance, and continuous supervision. These strategies are embedded in the daily life of the pesantren and are directed toward shaping santri as *ṭālib al-ʿilmi* with a *taʿabbud mutawahhidiyyah* orientation. The formation pattern does not operate as a single activity. Rather, it is distributed across learning activities, worship routines, teacher-student interaction, and communal discipline. Through this pattern, santri are guided to understand tawhid, practice worship consistently, and develop religious conduct in daily life.

Role of Ustaz in Shaping Mutawahhidiyyah Character

The role of the ustaz is central in the formation process. Ustaz function not only as teachers but also as mentors, supervisors, and moral examples for santri. Interview data show that ustaz guide students in both academic and daily religious life. They provide instruction in aqidah, supervise worship practices, give advice, and model attitudes such as sincerity, discipline, humility, and reliance on Allah. Santri reported that the presence of ustaz helped them feel guided, disciplined, and more aware of their religious responsibilities. The persuasive approach used by ustaz made students more receptive to direction and advice. This indicates that the relational dimension between ustaz and santri is an important element in shaping mutawahhidiyyah character.

Formation of Taʿabbud through Worship Habituation

The formation of taʿabbud is carried out through structured worship habituation. Santri are guided to perform congregational prayers, Qurʿanic recitation, dhikr, and other religious activities according to a fixed schedule. These activities are not treated merely as ritual obligations, but as repeated practices intended to develop spiritual awareness and worship discipline. Several santri stated that continuous habituation made worship feel more natural and necessary in their daily lives. The repetitive nature of worship activities helps santri move from external discipline toward internal awareness. This finding shows that habituation is a key strategy in strengthening taʿabbud orientation.

Aqidah and Worship Learning as Cognitive Foundation

Aqidah and worship learning serve as the cognitive foundation of the formation process. Through religious instruction and the study of Islamic materials, santri are introduced to the meaning of tawhid, the purpose of worship, and the relationship between faith and conduct. The findings show that santri's understanding of worship



becomes stronger when ritual practices are accompanied by theological explanation. The pesantren therefore does not separate knowledge from practice. Aqidah learning provides the conceptual basis for worship, while worship practice strengthens the internalization of aqidah. This relationship allows santri to connect what they learn with what they practice in daily pesantren life.

Mau'izhah, Supervision, and Discipline

The pesantren also applies mau'izhah, supervision, and discipline as reinforcement strategies. Ustaz provide advice through personal interaction, group guidance, and daily reminders. Supervision is conducted during worship activities, learning sessions, and communal life. When students violate rules or neglect worship discipline, ustaz provide correction and guidance. This pattern shows that supervision functions not only as control but also as moral and spiritual mentoring. Through continuous supervision, santri are encouraged to maintain consistency between religious understanding, worship practice, and daily behavior.

Impact of Formation on Santri's Spiritual, Moral, and Social Character

The formation process has several perceived impacts on santri. In the spiritual dimension, santri show greater consistency in performing worship. In the moral dimension, they demonstrate discipline, responsibility, and respect toward teachers and peers. In the social dimension, pesantren life encourages cooperation, concern for others, and collective responsibility. These findings suggest that the formation pattern at Pesantren Sabilul Mukminin integrates spiritual, moral, and social dimensions of Islamic education. The impact of the formation process is not limited to ritual observance, but also extends to the development of character and social conduct within communal life.

Table 2. Integrated pattern of santri formation at Pesantren Sabilul Mukminin

Formation Strategy	Empirical Practice	Formation Dimension	Perceived Impact
Aqidah and worship instruction	Learning tawhid, worship procedures, and meanings of worship	Cognitive	Stronger understanding of tawhid and worship
Worship habituation	Congregational prayer, Qur'anic recitation, dhikr, daily routines	Affective and behavioral	Worship discipline and spiritual awareness



Ustaz role modeling	Exemplary conduct in sincerity, discipline, humility, and tawakkul	Affective and social	Internalization of religious values through example
Mau'izhah and guidance	Personal advice, group reminders, mentoring interaction	Moral and spiritual	Improved religious awareness and responsibility
Supervision and discipline	Monitoring worship, learning, and communal conduct	Behavioral	Consistency of religious practice and social conduct

Discussion

The main finding of this study is that Pesantren Sabilul Mukminin forms santri as *ṭālib al-ʿilmi* through an integrated pattern of aqidah instruction, worship habituation, ustaz role modeling, advisory guidance, and continuous supervision. These strategies work together to shape santri's cognitive understanding of tawhid, affective devotion to Allah, and behavioral discipline in worship and social life. This finding indicates that pesantren-based formation is not a single instructional process, but a holistic educational ecosystem. The formation of *ta'abbud mutawahhidhiyyah* can be interpreted as a process of integrating knowledge, worship, and character. Aqidah instruction provides the theological foundation, while worship habituation transforms religious knowledge into repeated practice. Ustaz role modeling gives concrete examples of how tawhid values are lived, and supervision ensures consistency in behavior. This integration demonstrates that pesantren education operates through both formal and informal mechanisms of value internalization.

These findings are consistent with broader theories of character education, which emphasize the integration of moral knowledge, moral feeling, and moral action (Lovat & Toomey, 2023; Nucci et al., 2024). In the pesantren context, this integration appears through the relationship between religious instruction, spiritual habituation, and communal discipline. The findings also support previous studies on pesantren education that highlight the importance of role modeling, habituation, supervision, and religious environment in shaping santri character (Mujahid, 2021; Bujuri et al., 2023; Sanusi et al., 2024; Nurbani et al., 2023). The novelty of this study lies in the conceptualization of *ta'abbud mutawahhidhiyyah* as an integrated orientation in santri formation. While previous studies have often discussed pesantren character education in general terms, this study specifically explains how the identity of *ṭālib al-ʿilmi* is shaped through the combination of devotional practice and tawhid-based consciousness. This contribution is significant



because it frames pesantren education not only as moral formation but also as the development of a monotheistic learning identity.

Theoretically, this study contributes to Islamic education by offering a formation model that connects tawhid education, worship habituation, and character development. Practically, the findings suggest that pesantren should strengthen structured daily routines, teacher role modeling, personal mentoring, and supervision systems to ensure that religious values are internalized consistently. The model may also be useful for other Islamic educational institutions seeking to integrate knowledge, worship, and character formation. The global relevance of this study lies in its contribution to discussions on faith-based education and religious character formation. Many religious educational institutions face similar challenges in maintaining spiritual discipline and moral identity amid modernization and digital cultural change. The pesantren model examined in this study shows how communal life, teacher mentorship, and repeated devotional practices can support holistic religious formation.

Nevertheless, this study has limitations. First, it focuses on a single pesantren, so the findings cannot be generalized to all pesantren contexts. Second, the study relies on qualitative data and does not quantitatively measure changes in students' religious character or worship discipline. Third, the study has not compared Pesantren Sabilul Mukminin with other pesantren that may apply different formation models. Future research should conduct comparative studies and develop measurable indicators for assessing *ta'abbud mutawahhidiyyah* formation among santri.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the formation of santri as *ṭālib al-'ilmi* with a *ta'abbud mutawahhidiyyah* orientation at Pesantren Sabilul Mukminin Deli Serdang is carried out through an integrated pesantren-based formation pattern. This pattern consists of aqidah and worship instruction, structured worship habituation, exemplary conduct of ustaz, advisory guidance, and continuous supervision. Together, these strategies shape santri's understanding of tawhid, devotional awareness, worship discipline, and moral-social responsibility. The main contribution of this study lies in its conceptualization of *ta'abbud mutawahhidiyyah* as an integrated model of Islamic character formation. The study shows that pesantren education does not merely transmit religious knowledge but forms a knowledge-seeking identity rooted in devotion to Allah and monotheistic consciousness. This contribution enriches the literature on Islamic education, particularly in relation to pesantren-based formation, tawhid internalization, and holistic religious character development. Future research should examine similar formation patterns in different pesantren contexts and employ mixed-method approaches to measure the development



of santri's worship discipline, tawhid understanding, and moral behavior. The key message of this study is that the formation of *ṭālib al-'ilmi* requires an educational environment where knowledge, worship, role modeling, supervision, and communal discipline are integrated into daily life.

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