



## **CHARACTER EDUCATION BASED ON THE SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES OF MATAN MEMBERS**

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### **Abstract:**

This research aims to analyze character education based on the spiritual experiences of MATAN members. This research also aims to teach character habituation through spiritual activities, MATAN (Mahasiswa Ahli at Thoriqoh Al Mu'tabaroh An Nahdliyah) also provides lessons about the journey and struggle of Sufi figures who always connect their worldly life with the afterlife delivered by a murshid (teacher). This research method uses a descriptive qualitative research approach with a case study type of research at Nurul Jadid Paiton Probolinggo. Data collection tools in this study used observation and in-depth interviews to support the completeness of the data. The data analysis technique in this study was carried out with the stages of data collection, reduction, and conclusion of research results. From this study, it was found that the cultivation and application of character education is very effective within the scope of the pesantren. With several methods, namely the method of example, habit, advice, and story. This research shows that Islamic values are a full support in the successful implementation of character education with complete pesantren components, of course with consistent effort and full discipline.

**Keywords:** *character education, spiritual experience, MATAN*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the view of Imam al-Ghazali, the goal of education should be oriented towards achieving religious and moral (character) objectives. The emphasis should be on acquiring virtues and closeness to Allah, rather than obtaining worldly status or grandeur. Education may lead to deviation if directed towards anything other than drawing closer to Allah (Nugraha & Priatna 2024).

As moral degradation becomes more prevalent, especially in terms of attitudes and social interactions in daily life, character education becomes a significant issue. Despite having intellect and heart to align their behavior with others, people often fail to utilize them properly. Consequently, behaviors like stress, despair, alcohol consumption, free sex, brawls, skipping classes, involvement in gangs, neglecting prayers, and more emerge, leading to disturbing actions for others. Inappropriate parenting and educational approaches contribute to the above-mentioned negative behaviors. Ineffective communication results in failing to set a good example for their children. Human beings, as subjects for guidance and insight enrichment, possess elements (Nabila, Kurniasih, & Zahara 2024).

Speaking of character is crucial. Character distinguishes humans from animals. Individuals and societies that are strong both individually and socially possess good morals, ethics, and virtues (Madarik 2024). Character can be defined as the qualities or traits of the soul, morals, or ethics that differentiate one person from another, nature, or disposition. Meanwhile, character is defined in the Webster New Word Dictionary as unique qualities, moral strength, or behavior patterns found in individuals or groups.

The term "character" comes from the Greek word "charassein," meaning "to carve" (Nabila, Kurniasih, & Zahara 2024). According to Sari et al. (2024), character is values shaped through education, environmental influences, and life experiences. These values form the basis of human thoughts, attitudes, and actions. Education plays a vital role in the character-building process. How education can help build positive character in daily life; Character is personality, behavior, nature, and disposition. A set of attitudes, behaviors, and skills are referred to as character.

Education and character are closely related. Current character education is declining because the character education provided to students is not focused on the teachings given by Allah through His sharia. To align the worldly, hereafter, knowledge, deeds, and faith, spiritual education is needed, teaching taqorub ilallah (drawing close to Allah) to eliminate behaviors prohibited by sharia. One significant problem in modern education is character education, stating that national education functions to develop capabilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to enlighten the life of the nation. The goal of national education is to make students faithful and devoted to the One Almighty God, virtuous, healthy, knowledgeable, skillful, creative, independent, and good citizens (Sari et al. 2024). Character education is a religious need. Every religion provides morality or character to its followers. One of the most important pillars of Islamic teachings is morality, along with the other two pillars, namely faith and sharia. In several sayings, Prophet Muhammad SAW indicated that the main purpose of his presence in the world was to improve the noble character of humans. Through the texts of the Quran and Hadith, Islam establishes a behavioral system known as noble character (Dwiwasa & Sihotang 2024).

Therefore, the term spiritual education, which is the purification of the soul to draw closer to Allah, is used to support perfect character education in Islam. According to Sa'îd Hawwâ, the essence of spiritual education is the transformation from an impure soul to a pure soul, from reason that does not follow sharia to reason that follows sharia, from a sick and hard heart to a calm and prosperous heart, from a soul that is far from the door of Allah to a tranquil soul (Arifin, Umar, & Siregar 2024). The process of spiritual education is based on the most important and fundamental need to believe and be devoted to God as the source of work ethic, productivity, relationships, honesty, morality, and ethics (Agus Dwi Cahya et al. 2021).

Spiritual education is a conscious effort by an individual to teach spiritual sciences related to Allah. This education helps humans discover their true selves and become closer to Allah by avoiding His prohibitions and doing what He commands. As a result, people fear doing wrong even in solitude because they remember that Allah always sees what they do (Mahmudi & Fathoni 2023).

This research differs from previous studies and is relevant to the current study titled "Religious Character Education Based on Spiritual Training." Religious character education based on spiritual training is based on the concept of Ary Ginanjar Agustian, namely ESQ Way 165, where one ihsan is the process of purifying emotions, the six pillars of faith are the process of mental development, and the five pillars of Islam are the process of creating personal resilience (Noviyanti, Yuniarti, & Lestari 2023).

This study concludes that character values based on the local wisdom of Masade adherents teach the essence of human beings as creatures entrusted with the task of preserving the Earth, creating good relationships between humans and God, and fostering good relationships between human beings. The Masade adherents teach their followers to happily respect traditions that have developed in society based on moral, ethical, and ritual principles. Masade education evaluates the success of its followers based on the application of moral values or mutual respect in society. This is a unique and good type of character education. According to the Masade adherents, character education based on local wisdom is the right choice to overcome the moral decadence issues occurring (Putri 2013).

The uniqueness of this research is reflected in Maulida Luthfi Azizah's study titled "Implementation of Character Education Through Religious Activities at MI Muhammadiyah Braja Asri Sub-District Way Jepara East Lampung Regency," which

shows that religious activities are carried out at MI Muhammadiyah Braja Asri using a habituation method conducted regularly and structured. Religious activities include the five S's: Smile, Greetings, Greetings, Politeness, and Courtesy. They also include lining up to read student pledges and shake hands, praying together, performing Dhuha and Dhuhr prayers, memorization review, and Hajj rituals. Religious, disciplined, and responsible values are instilled in the school (Putri 2013), and according to (Rifkiana 2021), the Role of MATAN in Shaping Self-Concept (Study on Student Members of MATAN at the State Islamic University Walisongo Semarang)" found that activities organized by MATAN help shape students' self-concept.

Globalization has disrupted mental development and adolescent development worldwide. Worse yet, globalization, especially social media, has damaged the morals of adolescents, especially in Indonesia. Such globalization factors do not contribute to the better development of adolescents. Instead, they cause losses and unrest for parents and the surrounding community as a result of the negative behavior of adolescents.

For current students, university is not a place to enhance their status and improve their position as ideal individuals through serious study. Over time, university seats are intended to be prestigious places. Therefore, Habib Luthfi bin Ali bin Yahya and KH. Dimiyati Rois were enthusiastic about establishing a study forum and spiritual organization called MATAN (Mahasiswa Ahli at Thoriqoh Al Mu'tabaroh An Nahdliyah). According to Irfan Hanafi, a member of MATAN, MATAN stands for Mahasiswa Ahli at Thoriqoh Al Mu'tabaroh An Nahdliyah, an organization of youth (students) consisting of followers and practitioners of Sufi paths in an effort to synergize spiritual depth and intellectual sharpness in the souls of young people that will later influence the behavior of each individual in daily life. This forum was founded because they were concerned about the behavior of students who lacked awareness to contemplate and accustom themselves to spiritually based activities. MATAN (Mahasiswa Ahli at Thoriqoh Al Mu'tabaroh An Nahdliyah) is an organization based on nationalism, spirituality, and intellectuality (Nurachman & Anshori 2023). According to Agus Dwi Cahya et al. (2021), in addition to teaching character development through spiritual activities, MATAN also imparts lessons about the journeys and struggles of Sufi figures who always connect their worldly life with the hereafter, as conveyed by a murshid (teacher).

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The approach applied in this research study is a qualitative approach, specifically an analytical descriptive research method that produces findings of natural phenomena obtained based on non-statistical data. A case study, also known as "case studies," is a type of research that conducts in-depth exploration of individuals, groups, organizations, activity programs, etc., over a specific period. The goal of a case study is to obtain a complete and in-depth understanding of the subject, generating data that is then analyzed to develop theories (Farida 2008).

In line with the exploratory and descriptive approach, the purpose of this research is to acquire in-depth, factual, and accurate knowledge about the facts and relationships between phenomena related to the examined object. This study aims to collect data from members of MATAN (Mahasiswa Ahli at-Thoriqah al Mu'tabaroh an-Nahdliyah) at Nurul Jadid University in Paiton Probolinggo to provide a qualitative overview of the implementation of spiritually-based character education in the context.

Data in this research are obtained through non-participatory observation, structured interviews, and documentation. The gathered data from observation, interviews, documentation, and literature analysis are then analyzed using data reduction and analysis strategies, including identification and conclusion of various processed information from the obtained data. Data presentation is done in a simple and systematic manner for easy understanding.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Character Education Based on the Spiritual Experiences of MATAN Members at Nurul Jadid University, Paiton Probolinggo, has been concluded that character

education based on the spiritual experiences of MATAN members is a process of learning and character formation rooted in their own experiences, packaged in MATAN's spiritual activities such as the study of religious texts, spiritual focus (tawajjuhan), recitation sessions (hujakan), training in thoriqohan or tasawuf, and pilgrimage to saints. Subsequently, character education based on the spiritual experiences of MATAN members is implemented through four methods: the exemplary method, the advice method ('ibrah), the storytelling method, and the habituation method. These methods are applied to strike a balance between religion and worldly life in the teachings of Imam Al-Ghazali, who emphasized the inseparable roles of teachers and students in shaping the students' personalities for the better (Iverson & Dervan n.d.).

Here is an explanation of the four methods mentioned above: Firstly, the exemplary method. The results of interviews with MATAN members at Nurul Jadid University, Paiton-Probolinggo, show that the Mursyid sets a good example for them: obedience to Allah, simplicity in all things, patience and perseverance, compassion and benevolence, and humility. MATAN members will indirectly emulate the actions of a Mursyid. According to Yuliana Wardanik, Devy Habibi Muhammad, and Ari Susanti, ethical values are shaped by good examples because Mursyid, like parents, play a crucial role in shaping the character of their followers (Wardanik, Muhammd, & Susandi 2021).

Secondly, the advice method ('ibrah). The interview results with MATAN members indicate that the 'ibrah method used by the Mursyid can touch the hearts of MATAN members to always improve themselves, reflect on their actions in life, and then rectify what they have done. Mursyid's advice is usually drawn from the stories of Prophet Muhammad SAW, other prophets, auliya' (beloved of Allah), such as scholars and Sufis, and is usually delivered before or after a knowledge session in which Mursyid is present. The concept of Al Ghazali and Abdullah Nashin Ulwan regarding character education states that people are easily influenced by repeatedly spoken words. "Ibrah itself" means taking examples from past knowledge and associating it with new things (Wardanik, Muhammd, & Susandi 2021).

Thirdly, the storytelling method, as stated by Al-Ghazali and Abdullah Nashin Ulwan in the journal "Concepts of Character Education Perspective," the storytelling method should be conveyed clearly, concisely, and effectively so that students can benefit from what the teacher conveys. This method is often preferred by children (Wardanik, Muhammd, & Susandi 2021).

Fourthly, the habituation method, which involves instilling good habits in MATAN members so that they become accustomed to virtuous deeds spontaneously according to the situations they face. This is achieved through various supporting spiritual activities such as the study of religious texts, recitation sessions (dhikr and wirid), spiritual focus (tawajjuhan), pilgrimage to saints, etc. By cultivating these good habits, MATAN members can maintain mental clarity and resilience through habituation and implementation in daily life. According to Abdullah Nashin Ulwan and Al-Ghazali, direct practice is necessary for the habituation of good character, as theoretical knowledge alone will not enhance morality. Imam al-Ghazali emphasizes that good character must be formed from a young age through good habituation and practice (Wardanik, Muhammd, & Susandi 2021).

Character education based on the spiritual experiences of MATAN members at Nurul Jadid University involves the high spirit of the Mursyid, which leads to an understanding of high spiritual values. Some MATAN activities, such as the study of religious texts, the recitation of divine names 5000 times, and spiritual focus (tawajjuhan), aim to focus the Mursyid's heart on Allah and establish a spiritual connection between the Mursyid and Allah. However, there are several inhibiting factors for character education based on the spiritual experiences of MATAN members, making some members reluctant to participate. These factors include conflicting schedules with pesantren activities since most MATAN members are students residing in pesantren. Therefore, some members have to choose activities in the pesantren area because they are more important and personal, such as district board meetings with regional board officials and annual commemorations. Sometimes, the MATAN schedule also conflicts

with pesantren activities, which cannot be represented by other members. The lack of dedicated building facilities is another inhibiting factor. Although there is one building specifically allocated to MATAN, it is combined with the hadrah (Islamic chanting) room, which can compromise privacy and the effectiveness of ongoing MATAN activities. The MATAN chairman expressed that the issue of inadequate building facilities has been conveyed to the MATAN advisor and the relevant university authorities, resulting in the allocation of a separate building for MATAN activities. Adequate building facilities are also considered a supporting factor for character education based on the spiritual experiences of MATAN members to ensure the continuity of activities and meetings with agendas requiring private spaces.

## CONCLUSION

Character education based on the spiritual experiences of MATAN members (Mahasiswa Ahli at Thoriqoh Al Mu'tabaroh An Nahdliyah) is a process of learning and character formation based on the experiences of MATAN members packaged in the form of spiritual activities such as the study of religious texts, spiritual focus (tawajjuh), recitation sessions (hujakan), training in thoriqohan or tasawuf, and pilgrimage to saints. The implementation process of character education based on the spiritual experiences of MATAN members is carried out through four methods: the exemplary method, the advice method ('ibrah), the storytelling method, and the habituation method.

There are several supporting factors for character education based on the spiritual experiences of MATAN members, namely: the unwavering spirit of a Mursyid (spiritual guide) and the cultivation of positive habits packaged in the form of spiritual activities such as the study of religious texts, spiritual focus, recitation sessions, training in thoriqohan or tasawuf, and pilgrimage to saints. Meanwhile, inhibiting factors include: the presence of laziness among MATAN members, conflicting schedules with boarding school activities, and inadequate facility support.

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