

## Reaffirming the Islamic Tarbiyah Halaqah Educational Model in Fostering Religious Character Among Students at Islamic Boarding School

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Received June 23, 2025; Revised June 26, 2025; Accepted June 27, 2025

Available Online June 30, 2025

### Abstract:

This study aims to explore the reaffirmation of the Islamic *Tarbiyah Halaqah* educational model in cultivating religious character among students (*santri*) at *Pondok Pesantren* Umar bin Abdul Azis, Tomenawa Village, Baraka Subdistrict, Enrekang Regency. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the research utilized primary data collected from caretakers and leaders of the pesantren, as well as secondary data from relevant documents. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. The data analysis process involved data reduction, presentation, and verification. The findings indicate that the model emphasizes character development through key religious activities such as congregational prayer, *tahsinul qirā'ah* (Qur'anic recitation enhancement), and *taujihāt* (spiritual guidance) provided by murabbis (mentors). The reaffirmation of this model has proven effective in nurturing religious character through the integration of religious instruction, daily practice, and social engagement. Contributing factors include the murabbi's exemplary and affectionate guidance, the structured halaqah system, and a supportive environment provided by families and peers. In contrast, inhibiting factors include parental neglect in their children's religious education and negative peer influences that may undermine the values taught within the pesantren.

### Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji penegasan kembali model pendidikan Tarbiyah Halaqah Islam dalam menumbuhkan karakter religius pada santri di Pondok Pesantren Umar bin Abdul Azis, Desa Tomenawa, Kecamatan Baraka, Kabupaten Enrekang. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, penelitian ini memanfaatkan data primer yang diperoleh dari para pengasuh dan pimpinan pesantren, serta data sekunder dari dokumen-dokumen terkait. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipan, dan dokumentasi. Proses analisis data meliputi reduksi data, penyajian, dan verifikasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa model tersebut menekankan pada pengembangan karakter melalui kegiatan-kegiatan keagamaan utama seperti shalat berjamaah, tahsinul qirā'ah (peningkatan bacaan Al-Qur'an), dan taujihāt (bimbingan spiritual) yang diberikan oleh murabbi (mentor). Penegasan kembali model ini terbukti efektif dalam menumbuhkan karakter religius melalui integrasi pelajaran agama, praktik sehari-hari, dan keterlibatan sosial. Faktor pendukungnya antara lain bimbingan murabbi yang penuh keteladanan dan kasih sayang, sistem halaqah yang terstruktur, dan lingkungan yang mendukung dari keluarga dan teman sebaya. Sebaliknya, faktor penghambatnya antara lain pengabaian orang tua dalam pendidikan agama anak-anaknya dan pengaruh negatif teman sebaya yang dapat merusak nilai-nilai yang diajarkan di pesantren.

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**Keywords:**

Reaffirmation, Education, Halaqah, Islamic Tarbiyah, Religious Character

**How to Cite:** Ramli, Hanafie, W., Jurumiyah, A. H., Halik, A., Yusuf, M. (2025). Reaffirming the Islamic Tarbiyah Halaqah Educational Model in Fostering Religious Character Among Students at Islamic Boarding School. *Lentera Pendidikan : Jurnal Ilmu Tarbiyah dan Keguruan*, 28(1), 242-258. <https://doi.org/10.24252/lp.2025v28n1i14>.

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## Introduction

Education is one of the fundamental national goals that Indonesia strives to realize, both in abstract ideals and through more concrete formulations designed to achieve broader objectives. At the heart of education lies a crucial issue: determining the direction and goals it seeks to fulfill. In addition, education functions as a transformative process aimed at shaping future generations. If the outcomes of this process are inadequate, the nation's aspirations for progress and development become difficult to achieve. In alignment with this vision, the Secretariat General of the People's Consultative Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia (2011) asserts that "every individual in a country has the right to receive an education." This statement highlights the government's strong commitment to ensuring educational equity – not only for those with financial means, but for all citizens regardless of socioeconomic background.

Furthermore, the character of Indonesian education is explicitly articulated in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Article 3, which states:

"The national education system aims to develop capabilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to educate the life of the nation. It is directed toward the development of students' potential so that they become individuals who believe in and fear God Almighty, possess noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens."

The term *character* originates from the Latin *karakter*, *kharassein*, and *kharax*, and from the Greek *charaktēr*, meaning "to engrave" or "to mark." Etymologically, character refers to internal traits such as psychological, moral, and personality attributes, including norms, attitudes, identity, temperament, habits, and behavioral tendencies. Character represents the authentic inner nature of a person that differentiates them from others. According to the Indonesian Ministry of National Education, character refers to the ways in which individuals think and behave, which in turn shape how they live in society – as members of a family, nation, and the global community (Puspitasari, Relistian, & Yusuf,

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2022). In practice, character education is concerned with developing personality, attitudes, and moral integrity in alignment with social and religious norms. It aims not only to convey moral knowledge but also to foster positive behavior, emotional intelligence, empathy, and a strong commitment to ethical living (Sapitri, Amiruddin, & Mariyati, 2022). In the Islamic context, character education is grounded in the concept of *tawhid* (the oneness of God), which reflects a recognition of divine existence and human dependence on God. It is also closely tied to *akhlaq*, which refers to moral behavior consistent with Islamic teachings (Akhyar, Iswantir, & Gusli, 2023).

In defining the core of character, Simon Philips emphasizes that it is a system of values underlying one's thoughts, attitudes, and behavior (as cited in Muslich, 2011). This system serves as the foundation for civility, noble conduct, and religiosity – values that were once central to society but are increasingly neglected in contemporary life. There is a stark contrast between the societal values of the past and those of the present. Today, many young people display behavior that is far from exemplary. Parents often express concern that their children are becoming more pampered, unmotivated to study, and uninterested in reading. Signs of a moral crisis are becoming more pronounced, reflected in widespread corruption, power struggles, criminal behavior, child abuse, student violence, risky sexual activity, and the emergence of youth groups that initially serve social purposes but later evolve into criminal gangs (Lickona, 2013). Research shows that the decline in moral values among youth is influenced by peer pressure, media exposure, and a lack of parental guidance. This moral degradation manifests in various antisocial behaviors, including violence and a lack of respect for elders.

At Umar bin Abdul Azis Islamic Boarding School, located in Tomenawa Village, Baraka District, Enrekang Regency, character development is a central educational priority, especially in light of growing concerns about moral decline among today's youth. Suriani, a mentor at the school, notes that extracurricular activities such as karate and soccer play a pivotal role in fostering discipline, courage, and creativity among students. These physical activities not only contribute to students' health and fitness but also equip them with essential life skills that support holistic personal growth. Beyond physical education, the school promotes literacy through initiatives such as reading gardens and structured reading programs, aiming to cultivate a love of reading and enhance students' critical thinking abilities. The practice of reciting prayers before and after lessons further reinforces spiritual mindfulness and strengthens students' internalization of Islamic values.

Despite these positive developments, challenges remain – particularly the concern that not all students will be shielded from the broader trend of moral erosion. This concern is especially relevant in private educational settings, where reports of behavioral issues occasionally surface. To proactively address these challenges, Umar bin Abdul Azis Islamic Boarding School has integrated the Islamic *Tarbiyah* concept into its core curriculum. This model groups students into teams of five to fifteen, promoting collaborative learning and active engagement with Islamic teachings. Through this structure, students not only deepen their understanding of religious principles but also develop a strong sense of

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community and shared moral responsibility – key components of effective character formation. The school's approach combines three core strategies: extracurricular activities, reading and reflective practices, and the Islamic *Tarbiyah Halaqah* model. Together, these strategies form a comprehensive framework for nurturing responsible, morally upright individuals. By sustaining and strengthening these initiatives, the institution aims to contribute meaningfully to the cultivation of Indonesia's future generation.

Character education, particularly in Islamic settings, plays a vital role in shaping students' moral and ethical orientation. It serves as a guiding force to improve educational quality and outcomes by holistically integrating the formation of character and good conduct. For members of the millennial generation – who aspire to become courageous, ethical, tolerant, patriotic, and technologically literate individuals—Islamic religious education offers a foundational framework for moral development (Wicaksono & Meidianto, 2021). In the Islamic tradition, character education is conceptualized as a process of habituation, cultural cultivation, and value internalization, all directed toward establishing an Islamic worldview grounded in exemplary conduct. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized the centrality of moral behavior as part of his mission to perfect human character. His teachings encompassed relationships with God, oneself, fellow human beings, and the environment – each reflecting the human role as both servant (*'abd*) and steward (*khalifah*) of the Earth (Edison, 2021).

Islamic character education is therefore not limited to moral knowledge but also includes the formation of virtuous habits, the provision of role models, and the systematic reinforcement of positive traits. Ethical behavior is considered a pillar of religious life in Islam, second only to faith (*iman*), and is essential to the development of a complete Muslim identity. Among contemporary educational frameworks, the Islamic *Tarbiyah Halaqah* model has garnered increasing attention. Rooted deeply in Islamic principles, this model aims to cultivate piety, strong moral awareness, and an upright character. Its reaffirmation is a direct response to the complex social and moral challenges facing Muslim communities and broader society today. A key feature of the *halaqah* system is the development of the *majlis* (study circle or gathering), which serves as a platform for communal learning, reflection, and spiritual growth. The Qur'anic foundation of this model can be found in *Surah al-Mujādilah* (58:11), where believers are encouraged to make space for one another in gatherings and to elevate those who have been granted knowledge. This verse not only highlights the ethical dimensions of communal learning but also underscores the importance of humility, mutual respect, and intellectual engagement as cornerstones of character formation in Islam:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوا فِي الْمَجَالِسِ فَافْسَحُوا يَفْسَحِ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَإِذَا قِيلَ أَنْشُرُوا فَأَنْشُرُوا  
يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ

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Translation:

Oh you who have believed, when you are told, "Space yourselves" in assemblies, then make space; Allah will make space for you. And when you are told, "Arise," then arise; Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees. And Allah is Acquainted with what you do.

In the context of education – particularly Islamic education (*tarbiyah*) – the term *halaqah* (circle) generally refers to a small, structured group of Muslims who regularly gather to study Islamic teachings. Typically comprising between 3 to 12 participants, these groups follow a defined *manhaj* (curriculum) based on established religious sources. The facilitator, known as a *murabbi* or *naqib*, usually derives the material from a central organization or *jama'ah* responsible for guiding the content and direction of the sessions. Lubis (2011) defines *halaqah* as a small-scale Islamic study group with a limited number of members – usually no more than twelve. In more popular language it can also be called a *ta'lim*, *tarbiyah*, or group study (Rahim, 2018). In many Islamic traditions, particularly those rooted in mosque-based education, the *halaqah* model is considered unique and effective. Typically, these sessions are held in mosques or homes, where the teacher sits near a pillar or wall while students sit in a circular formation, often with knees touching, symbolizing intimacy and humility. As Badaruddin and Umiarso (2011) explain, the *halaqah* is not merely intellectual in nature, it also touches the emotional and spiritual dimensions of the students, making it a holistic educational model.

The significance of *halaqah* in Islamic life cannot be overstated. It serves as a foundation for forming Islamic cadres – individuals with strong moral character committed to promoting truth and upholding Islamic values. As the *halaqah* system expands, it has the potential to cultivate a society of ethically conscious Muslims who embody the teachings of Islam in daily life. In doing so, *halaqah* contributes to the formation of a true *ummah*, not merely in name but in substance, where religious values, justice, and truth are deeply rooted. The strengthening of this model, therefore, accelerates the process of *takwinul ummah* (community formation) and brings the goals of Islamic *tarbiyah* closer to realization. A study conducted by Soleh, Maya, & Priyatna (2019), titled *The Halaqah Method in the Teaching of Al-Qur'an Memorization at the Darussalam Qur'an Memorization Islamic Boarding School, Parung, Bogor Regency*, highlights the effectiveness of the *halaqah* method in Qur'anic memorization. While that study focuses specifically on *tajwid* and reading techniques, it does not address the broader character development potential of the *halaqah* model. This represents a significant research gap, particularly in the context of pesantren like Umar bin Abdul Azis, where religious learning is integrated with character education. Unlike Soleh's study, which emphasizes memorization methods, the current research seeks to explore how *halaqah*-based education can holistically develop students' character while combating contemporary moral decline.

By linking the findings of Soleh's study with the practices at Umar bin Abdul Azis, it becomes apparent that there is a need for further exploration into how *halaqah* methods

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can be effectively integrated with extracurricular activities and community-based programs. Such integration could foster a comprehensive approach to character education in Islamic boarding schools, responding to modern challenges with holistic pedagogical strategies. Ali (2017) outlines five key factors driving the reaffirmation of the Islamic *Tarbiyah Halaqah* model: 1) Moral Crisis: Many Islamic countries face a moral crisis characterized by corruption, crime, and unethical behavior, necessitating a renewal of strong character education rooted in Islamic values. 2) Technological Advancements and Globalization: The impact of rapid technological progress and globalization has altered social behavior and cultural norms. The *Tarbiyah Halaqah* model offers a framework to navigate these shifts while upholding Islamic moral values. 3) Decline of Traditional Values: Modernization and social change have eroded many traditional Islamic values. The reaffirmation of *halaqah* education aims to revive these values within a contemporary context. 4) Preservation of Religious Identity: Amidst increasing global cultural pressures, the model provides a means of strengthening religious and moral identity, particularly among Muslim youth. 5) Educational Contribution to Society: Education plays a critical role in shaping a just and responsible society. The *Tarbiyah Halaqah* model contributes meaningfully to this process by addressing not only intellectual but also ethical development.

The present research seeks to assess character development among students at Umar bin Abdul Azis Islamic Boarding School and to evaluate the school's religious atmosphere. Initial observations reveal commendable behaviors among the students, including strong discipline in performing congregational prayers – such as the *Dhuha* prayer before class – and consistent participation in obligatory prayers. Other notable behaviors include polite communication with parents, respect for elders, honesty, courtesy, and obedience toward teachers. These observations highlight the urgent need to cultivate a strong religious identity in students, especially as they navigate a world filled with complex moral and social challenges. The study aims to identify and enhance effective educational practices that support both academic and character development. By analyzing both the social and spiritual impacts of the school's educational approach, the research contributes valuable insights into how Islamic education – particularly when supported by character-building activities – can serve as a powerful tool for nurturing morally grounded individuals. The findings of this research are expected to make a significant contribution to the broader educational discourse, particularly in the formulation of policies that support character education in Islamic boarding schools. Ultimately, this study aspires to assist in shaping a generation that is academically proficient, morally responsible, and deeply rooted in Islamic values. In doing so, it underscores the pivotal role that Islamic boarding schools play in fostering ethical, religious, and socially responsible individuals in the face of modern-day challenges.

## Research Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design, aimed at capturing and interpreting various phenomena, both natural and socially constructed, in the context

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of Islamic education (Sukmadinata, 2006). The research utilized a phenomenological and sociological approach to explore the lived experiences and social realities surrounding the implementation of *halaqah* education in character formation at Umar Bin Abdul Azis Islamic Boarding School in Tomenawa Village, Baraka District, Enrekang Regency. The primary goal of this study was to provide a detailed and holistic understanding of the Islamic *halaqah* educational paradigm in developing students' religious character. Data were drawn from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through interviews with three key informants: the head of the pesantren, one male mentor (*murabbi*), and one female mentor (*murabbiah*). Secondary data included institutional documents, lesson plans, and relevant administrative records related to the educational programs. Then, data collection involved three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation analysis. These instruments enabled the researcher to gather rich, contextual data directly from the field. Further, the data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman, as elaborated by Emzir (2018), which includes three major steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. During data reduction, information was filtered to extract content specifically related to the development of religious character. In the data display phase, the findings were organized systematically for clarity and interpretability. In the final phase, conclusions were drawn and validated by cross-referencing the findings with existing literature and theories, ensuring analytical rigor and credibility. To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, data triangulation was employed, comparing insights across interviews, observations, and documents. The researcher was deeply involved in the research setting, engaging directly with informants and the pesantren environment to ensure that the data collected were rich, nuanced, and reflective of the actual educational practices. Overall, this methodological approach allowed for a comprehensive and authentic exploration of how the *halaqah* education model contributes to shaping the religious character of students within a contemporary Islamic boarding school context.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **The Islamic Tarbiyah Halaqah Education Model at Umar Bin Abdul Azis Islamic Boarding School, Tomenawa Village, Baraka District, Enrekang Regenc**

The concept of *tarbiyah*, or Islamic education, as implemented at Umar Bin Abdul Azis Islamic Boarding School, places a strong emphasis on character formation and the development of psychospiritual and psychomotor competencies. As explained by Mr. Ahmad Zahid, the founder and head of the pesantren, the *tarbiyah* program was established to reinforce character education – particularly within the female student population – through an integrative model rooted in the comprehensive Islamic value of *syamilah* (holistic development). The *Tarbiyah Halaqah* model employed at the pesantren incorporates several key practices designed to cultivate students' religious character in a structured and meaningful way:

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### ***Congregational Prayer (Shalat Berjamaah)***

*Shalat berjamaah* refers to the communal performance of the five daily obligatory prayers by all students in the mosque, based on an established collective schedule. This practice is not only a form of religious observance but also serves to instill awareness of the importance and virtue of communal worship. Each prayer session is accompanied by motivational input and reminders of the spiritual rewards of congregational prayer, typically delivered by a *murabbi* (mentor) or teacher. Mr. Ahmad Saharuddin, the head of the senior high school (MA), emphasized that:

"This practice is reinforced beyond the pesantren by distributing daily prayer books to each student group. This allows the group leader to ensure that prayer obligations are fulfilled punctually."

Inaya Padila, one of the female mentors (*murabbiyah*), added that the congregational prayer program significantly enhances students' discipline – especially in adhering to prayer schedules and cultivating consistency in performing religious duties at the designated mosque.

### ***Tahsinul Qira'ah (Improvement of Qur'anic Recitation)***

The *tahsinul qira'ah* program focuses on improving the quality of Qur'anic recitation through mastery of *tajwid* (rules of pronunciation). Under the guidance of a *murabbi* or qualified instructor, students engage in systematic recitation and correction exercises using texts such as the *Dirosa* manual. According to Inaya Padila, this program enables students to better recognize and articulate Arabic phonetics and Qur'anic script, enhancing their understanding of both literal meaning and spiritual context. Mrs. Dita further explained that:

"The *tahsinul qira'ah* program contributes to character development by strengthening the students' commitment to the Qur'an. Since Qur'anic recitation is a form of worship (*'ibadah*), engaging with it regularly builds spiritual discipline and fosters habits conducive to religious growth."

Through structured engagement with the Qur'an, students internalize Islamic values and demonstrate greater dedication to acts of worship and lifelong learning.

### ***Taujihat Murabbi (Mentor's Guidance and Direction)***

*Taujihat murabbi* refers to regular guidance and moral instruction provided by mentors (*murabbi/murabbiyah*) based on prophetic traditions (*sunnah*) and contemporary Islamic understanding. These sessions, also known as *taushiyah*, are designed to shape students' attitudes, ethics, and understanding of Islam, enabling them to embody and disseminate Islamic teachings responsibly. Mr. Ilham, a teacher at the pesantren, noted:

"The guidance program functions as a foundational component of character education. A teacher's *taujihate* equips students with a deeper understanding of Islamic principles and helps shape their worldview and behavior."



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Such mentoring sessions are not limited to lectures; they also include reflective discussions that facilitate the internalization of values, critical thinking, and the cultivation of a sincere Islamic identity. Over time, these processes are expected to foster positive character traits, such as humility, empathy, responsibility, and spiritual awareness.

This integrative *Tarbiyah Halaqah* model – consisting of structured worship, scriptural mastery, and ongoing mentorship – reflects a holistic approach to character education grounded in Islamic tradition. It not only nurtures students' intellectual and spiritual development but also strengthens their capacity to become morally upright, socially responsible, and religiously committed individuals.

### ***Tazkiyatun Nafs (Purification of the Soul) Materials***

This component focuses on the internal purification of the heart and soul, aiming to instill self-awareness, sincerity, and God-consciousness (*taqwa*) in students. The material is designed to help students comprehend the concept and method of spiritual purification as outlined in Islamic teachings. Mr. Jasman, one of the religious mentors, explained that the goal of this subject is to encourage students to consistently engage in introspection, seek closeness to Allah SWT, and maintain mindfulness of Heaven and Hell. This emphasis on inner refinement supports the development of religious sensitivity and moral consciousness as part of students' identity as *khalifah* (vicegerents) of Allah on Earth.

### ***Visiting the Sick***

This activity involves visiting ill members of the *halaqah* or the local community, with the intention of fostering empathy, compassion, and social awareness. In addition to fulfilling a significant Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), this practice nurtures a sense of *ukhuwah imaniyyah* (brotherhood in faith) and strengthens social bonds. According to Mr. Sayarif, the aim is to cultivate students' responsiveness to their environment and encourage socially responsible behavior rooted in Islamic values.

### ***Educational Goals and Outcomes***

According to Mr. Muhajir, the broader objectives of the *Tarbiyah* model are to reinforce moral development and uphold values derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah. Specific goals include: 1) encouraging students to study the Qur'an diligently and memorize it within a target timeframe (ideally two years); 2) building effective communication and interpersonal skills; and 3) developing noble character traits aligned with Islamic principles. The distinctive advantages of the *Tarbiyah* education model are as follows: a) enhanced ability to interpret and internalize Qur'anic teachings; b) strong foundational knowledge of Islamic doctrine and practice; c) moral integrity rooted in Qur'anic and Prophetic values; and d) capacity to contribute to *da'wah* (Islamic outreach and education).

*Tarbiyah* education thus serves not only as a motivational framework for religious devotion but also as a medium to deepen religious insight and cultivate practical skills for righteous living. The formation of students encompasses both intellectual development and the instillation of Islamic knowledge as a source of resilience and moral guidance in

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daily life. Nonetheless, *Tarbiyah* faces challenges such as the need for continuous expansion of Islamic scholarship and the integration of spiritual values into contemporary life. Despite these challenges, students at the pesantren are expected to display religious dedication through regular Qur'an reading, worship practices, and preparation for a harmonious social life.

### ***Reaffirmation of the Tarbiyah Halaqah Education Model in Fostering Religious Character***

The reaffirmation of the Islamic *Tarbiyah Halaqah* education model represents a strategic effort to reinforce the formation of religious character among students. It employs a holistic educational approach that integrates intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development. The model does not only aim to equip students with comprehensive religious knowledge but also to prepare them to apply Islamic values meaningfully in their daily interactions. The curriculum is designed to combine religious instruction with moral cultivation and social engagement, thereby creating an environment conducive to comprehensive character development. Interactive and participatory learning methods – such as group discussions, question-and-answer forums, and involvement in extracurricular religious and community activities – play a central role. These methods encourage students to internalize religious, moral, and ethical values, enabling them to become active contributors to society and ambassadors of peace grounded in Islamic principles. In an interview, Mr. Syarif, a mentor at the school, noted:

"The *Tarbiyah Halaqah* education model emphasizes the holistic development of faith and morality. At our pesantren, this model is implemented through a combination of religious studies and daily practices such as congregational prayers, Qur'anic tafsir, and religious lectures. We also involve students in community outreach activities to allow them to experience the real-life impact of Islamic values."

Similarly, Mr. Ahmad Saharuddin, the head of the senior high school (MA), affirmed the transformative impact of this model:

"We have observed a significant improvement in students' religious character. Many who were previously inconsistent in performing worship now display greater obedience and active participation in religious activities. They are more respectful, compassionate, and morally aware, which shows that our educational efforts are not only delivering knowledge but also shaping strong religious character."

Based on the interview findings, it can be concluded that the reaffirmation of the Islamic *Tarbiyah Halaqah* Education model at Umar Bin Abdul Azis Islamic Boarding School, located in Tomenawa Village, Baraka District, Enrekang Regency, has proven effective in fostering the religious character of students. This effectiveness is realized through the integration of religious teachings into daily practices and active involvement in social activities. The implementation of this model has led to significant improvements in students' worship discipline, heightened adherence to religious activities, and the

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cultivation of respectful, empathetic, and socially responsible behavior. Therefore, this educational model not only emphasizes religious knowledge but also successfully cultivates virtuous character and a strong sense of religious identity – both essential elements for the development of individuals and broader society. Furthermore, the reaffirmation of this educational model includes enhancements in educational quality and teaching methodologies, aligning them with the demands of contemporary society. Its primary objective is to produce students who possess not only a deep understanding of Islamic teachings but also the capacity to contribute positively to their communities, promote peace, and serve as exemplary figures in religious practice. Thus, the Islamic Tarbiyah Halaqah Education model functions as a robust foundation for the development of religious character, guiding students to lead lives in accordance with Islamic principles.

### **Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Reaffirmation of the Islamic Tarbiyah Halaqah Education Model in Fostering Students' Religious Character at Umar Bin Abdul Azis Islamic Boarding School**

The educational program at Umar Bin Abdul Azis Islamic Boarding School in Tomenawa Village, Baraka District, Enrekang Regency, is interconnected with various infrastructural and superstructural components. As a social institution, the school is not immune to critique from the surrounding community. According to Ramli Zakaria, Chairman of the Foundation, the most critical task is to ensure sustained support and commitment toward maintaining educational quality and standards. Research into the school's effectiveness is most valuable when informed by those directly involved, particularly parents whose children are currently enrolled.

#### ***Supporting Factors (Murabbi/Teacher)***

Teachers (*murabbi*) play a pivotal role in the educational process. An effective teacher is one who understands each student's unique needs and facilitates their adjustment to the curriculum. In this context, the Tarbiyah process engages students (*mutarobbi*) in multiple relational roles: as fathers who demonstrate affection and good manners; as mentors who educate, serve as role models, and instill moral values; as companions who provide a safe space for students to express concerns and receive appropriate guidance; and as religious guides who lead students in *da'wah* and personal responsibility.

#### ***Tarbiyah as a Local Curriculum Subject***

Islamic Tarbiyah is integrated into the curriculum as a local content subject with a dedicated evaluation system. It is compulsory for all students, thereby ensuring their active participation in Tarbiyah programs designed to instill Islamic character and values.

#### ***Halaqah-Based Learning System***

The Tarbiyah program is delivered through the *halaqah* system, where learning takes place in small groups of 10–15 students led by one *murabbi* or mentor. This method promotes a more personalized and comfortable learning environment, enhancing the effectiveness of character development.

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### ***Environmental Factors***

Environmental influences supporting the implementation of Islamic values are categorized into two areas. The first is the family, particularly the role of parents as primary educators and role models. Students who observe disciplined worship practices both at home and in the boarding school setting tend to exhibit positive behaviors. Many parents emphasize collaborative responsibility while upholding religious obligations. The second area is peer interaction, which typically encourages involvement in constructive and faith-oriented activities.

The findings from the discussion on various aspects of the implementation of Islamic Tarbiyah at Umar Bin Abdul Azis Islamic Boarding School, located in Tomenawa Village, Baraka District, Enrekang Regency, highlight the pivotal role of the *murabbi* (teacher) in shaping students' character. This is achieved through individualized understanding, a nurturing and affectionate approach, and exemplary personal conduct. Furthermore, the inclusion of Islamic Tarbiyah as part of the local curriculum contributes significantly to the internalization of Islamic character values among students. The *halaqah*-based learning model fosters an effective and comfortable educational environment that supports these goals. Equally important are family and peer support systems. As primary educators, parents play a critical role in nurturing consistent religious practices such as worship at home, reinforcing the values taught at school.

### ***Inhibiting Factors***

Several factors hinder the effective implementation of Islamic Tarbiyah at Umar Bin Abdul Azis Islamic Boarding School:

#### **- Family Environmental Factors**

While schools play an active role in character development, the family remains the most influential environment in shaping students' behavior. According to a statement by Ratna, although students are encouraged – sometimes even incentivized – to participate in congregational prayers at school, this behavior is often not sustained at home due to a lack of parental engagement. Some parents do not model religious practices themselves and fail to provide the necessary attention and reinforcement, which weakens the continuity of character education.

#### **- Peer Environmental Factors**

Another critical challenge is the influence of negative peer environments outside the boarding school. Students may be exposed to unproductive and harmful behaviors such as smoking, alcohol consumption, street racing, and other forms of delinquency. Such peer influences can significantly undermine the character values instilled by the school and distance students from positive behavioral norms.

The findings underscore that while schools serve as essential institutions for character formation, the influence of family and peer relationships is equally, if not more, decisive. Some parents tend to delegate the full responsibility for moral education to the

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school, neglecting their own role in reinforcing good habits such as congregational prayer at home. Meanwhile, the presence of negative peer influences can reverse the moral progress made at school. Therefore, a synergistic collaboration between school-based education, family involvement, and supportive peer relationships is essential to ensure the successful development of students' religious character.

The main findings of this research on the Islamic Tarbiyah Halaqah education model at Umar Bin Abdul Azis Islamic Boarding School demonstrate the model's effectiveness in shaping students' religious character through an integrated approach combining worship and social activities. Programs such as congregational prayers (*ṣalāh al-jamā'ah*), *tahsinul qirā'ah* (Qur'anic recitation improvement), and *taujihāt murabbi* (spiritual guidance by mentors) have been shown to enhance students' discipline, responsibility, and curiosity toward Islamic knowledge. The inclusion of *tazkiyatun nafs* (self-purification of the heart) contributes to spiritual refinement, while activities such as visiting the sick foster empathy and social concern. This comprehensive educational strategy cultivates an environment conducive to both spiritual and moral development, producing students who are not only religiously knowledgeable but also socially responsible and emotionally sensitive.

These findings align closely with the research objectives, which aimed to evaluate the contribution of the Tarbiyah Halaqah model to character development. The results indicate that integrating religious instruction with daily practices effectively nurtures a strong religious identity and noble character, even surpassing initial expectations. Notably, the model led to observable improvements in students' worship discipline and their respectful, caring interactions with others. Critical success factors include the influential role of *murabbi* (teachers) who guide students with compassion and model exemplary behavior. Additionally, the structured inclusion of Islamic Tarbiyah as a local curricular subject and the use of the *halaqah* system support the internalization of Islamic values in a conducive and collaborative learning environment. Despite its strengths, the study also identified significant challenges. Chief among them are a lack of parental involvement and the influence of negative peer groups. Some parents, for instance, neglect to reinforce religious practices at home, such as congregational prayer, thereby weakening the continuity of character development initiated at school. Similarly, association with peers engaged in harmful behaviors – such as smoking, drinking, and delinquency – poses a threat to the values inculcated through school programs. These findings underscore the necessity for stronger synergy between school-based education and external support systems, particularly families and communities.

The discussion of these findings also reflects and extends current scholarly discourse on holistic education. The model's emphasis on the integration of worship, moral conduct, and social awareness resonates with Noddings' (2013) theory of holistic education, which emphasizes the importance of addressing spiritual, moral, and intellectual dimensions in education. The observed improvements in discipline and ethical behavior through structured religious practices such as *ṣalāh al-jamā'ah* and *tahsinul qirā'ah*. Furthermore, the role of *tazkiyatun nafs* corresponds with Lickona's (1991) framework for character education, which underscores the necessity of fostering empathy, self-control, and

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emotional well-being. The pivotal role of the *murabbi* also echoes Pianta's (2006) work on the significance of teacher-student relationships in promoting academic and personal growth. However, this study is not without limitations. The scope did not fully explore the broader socio-cultural and familial dynamics that may hinder character development. Parental disengagement and peer pressure were identified as influencing factors, but deeper investigation is needed to understand how these external forces interact with school-based efforts. Additionally, as a qualitative study, the findings may not be generalizable across all Islamic boarding schools or contexts. Future research may benefit from a mixed-methods approach to provide more nuanced and scalable insights.

In conclusion, the study affirms the Tarbiyah Halaqah model as a successful framework for fostering religious character through a holistic educational approach. It demonstrates the effectiveness of integrating spiritual guidance, moral development, and social responsibility within the school setting. The implications of these findings advocate for enhanced collaboration between educators and families, reinforcing the idea that character education is most effective when supported by a unified school-home partnership. Overall, this research contributes significantly to the understanding of character formation in Islamic educational contexts and supports the broader application of holistic models in nurturing well-rounded, responsible, and religiously committed individuals.

## Conclusion

The main findings of this study on the Islamic Tarbiyah Halaqah education model at Umar Bin Abdul Azis Islamic Boarding School affirm its effectiveness in shaping students' religious character through a comprehensive integration of worship and social activities. Programs such as congregational prayers (*ṣalāh al-jamā'ah*), *tahsinul qirā'ah* (Qur'anic recitation refinement), and *taujihāt murabbi* (spiritual mentoring) significantly enhance students' discipline and sense of responsibility, while simultaneously fostering a strong interest in Islamic knowledge. The incorporation of *tazkiyatun nafs* (spiritual purification) supports the cultivation of inner morality, and activities such as visiting the sick foster empathy and social awareness. This holistic educational model fosters an environment that supports both the spiritual and moral development of students, ultimately producing individuals who are not only knowledgeable and responsible but also attuned to the needs of others.

These findings closely align with the research objectives, which sought to assess how the Tarbiyah Halaqah model contributes to character development. The study demonstrated that the integration of religious instruction with students' daily lives effectively cultivates strong religious identity and commendable moral behavior – exceeding the initial expectations. Notably, the model has contributed to marked improvements in students' worship discipline and in their respectful, compassionate interactions with peers. Key supporting factors include the vital role of *murabbi* (teachers), who guide students with affection and serve as behavioral role

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models. Furthermore, the Islamic Tarbiyah subject, as part of the school's curriculum, plays a central role in instilling Islamic values, while the *halaqah* learning system fosters a more intimate and supportive learning atmosphere.

Nevertheless, the research also identified challenges that hinder the model's full impact – particularly parental indifference and negative peer influences. A lack of parental engagement, especially in reinforcing worship practices at home, can weaken the continuity of character development initiated in the school. Likewise, association with peers engaged in detrimental behaviors may undermine the values instilled through the Tarbiyah Halaqah program. These findings highlight the need for stronger synergy between the school, families, and communities to ensure the sustainability of moral and spiritual development. In conclusion, this study not only met its research objectives but also offered a deeper insight into how the Tarbiyah Halaqah model fosters religious character in students. The findings underscore the significance of a comprehensive, values-based educational approach that incorporates both instructional and social dimensions. Such an approach is essential in nurturing responsible, empathetic individuals who are capable of making positive contributions to their communities.

### **Acknowledgement**

We extend our sincere gratitude to all informants who generously provided valuable data through interviews, including the leadership of the pesantren and the supervisors of Umar Bin Abdul Azis Islamic Boarding School in Tomenawa Village, Baraka District, Enrekang Regency.

### **Ethical Statement**

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical research principles, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participants' rights. All interviewees – including pesantren leaders and mentors – were briefed on the research objectives and voluntarily participated. Identities remain anonymized where necessary, and cultural sensitivities were upheld throughout data collection. The study adhered to institutional ethical guidelines, prioritizing integrity, transparency, and non-harm. No conflicts of interest influenced the research process or outcomes.

### **CRedit Author Statement**

- **Author 1:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Writing – Original draft preparation, Writing – Reviewing and Editing, Formal analysis.
- **Author 2:** Methodology, Investigation, Writing – Reviewing and Editing.
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## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this article.

## Data Availability

The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are available upon reasonable request.

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