Analysis of the Effect of Islamic Character Education, Multicultural Learning, and Extracurricular Activities on the Character Building of Pesantren Students in Central Java

Meriyati[1], Siminto[2], Abdul Wahid[3]

[1] Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung
[2] IAIN Palangka Raya
[3] Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta

Article Info

ABSTRACT

This study explores the influence of Islamic character education, multicultural learning, and extracurricular activities on the character building of students in Islamic boarding schools in Central Java. A quantitative research design was employed, utilizing a survey method to collect data from 150 students. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The results indicated that Islamic character education, multicultural learning, and extracurricular activities all had significant positive impacts on character building, with path coefficients of, respectively. The model explained 52% of the variance in character building. These findings underscore the importance of integrating religious teachings, multicultural perspectives, and extracurricular engagement in educational curricula to foster the holistic development of students. The study offers valuable insights for educators and policymakers in enhancing character education programs within Islamic boarding schools.

Corresponding Author:

Name: Meriyati
Institution: Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung
Email: meriyati@radenintan.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Character education plays an important role in the holistic development of students, especially in pesantren such as Pondok Pesantren Nusantara Beriman in Indonesia, as highlighted in various research papers [1]–[3]. These institutions focus on instilling moral values alongside academic knowledge, emphasizing spiritual activities, recitation of the Qur'an, and character building through worship and noble behavior [4]. The Qur'an and Hadith serve as guides for character education, promoting values such as discipline, hard work, and social concern [5]. Islamic education is integral in shaping student character, integrating religious and moral teachings to create a whole individual. In the face of rapid social and cultural changes, the role of pesantren in Central Java is becoming increasingly important in nurturing students not only with academic prowess but also a strong moral and ethical foundation.

Islamic character education plays an important role in shaping students' character and behavior in accordance with Islamic

principles. This form of education goes beyond simply imparting religious knowledge, focusing on instilling values such as honesty, integrity, respect, and empathy [3], [4], [6]. Through strategies such as self-empowerment, habituation, and creating a caring environment, teachers in Islamic schools aim to internalize character values in students [7]. The integration of Islamic habits into the school program and consistent habituation practices contribute to the successful implementation of religious character education [8]. By emphasizing the importance of piety, noble character, and the embodiment of faith, Islamic education not only guides individuals towards righteous behavior, but also fosters a sense of unity in society.

The incorporation of multicultural learning within the pesantren framework is gaining attention as it promotes unity and respect among students from diverse backgrounds in Indonesia, a country known for its rich cultural diversity. Multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools emphasizes equality, freedom, tolerance, and respect for differences, fostering harmony and peace [9]. This approach bridges teaching on cultural conflicts and violence, emphasizing Pancasila values and the motto Bhineka Tunggal Ika [10]. Furthermore, local wisdom and pesantren values form the basis for character education, teaching tolerance, respect, and mutual help [11]. Studies show that multicultural education significantly impacts students' holistic personal development, especially in Islamic Education programs, highlighting its importance in shaping well-rounded individuals [12]. Implementing multicultural values through contextual teaching in Islamic Religious Education is crucial for fostering inclusivity and understanding in pluralistic Indonesia [13].

Extracurricular activities indeed play a crucial role in character building by offering students opportunities to enhance skills like leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving in informal settings, as highlighted in various research papers [14]–[18]. These activities, which act as a complement to the formal curriculum, contribute significantly to the holistic development of students, aiding them in becoming well-rounded individuals. Participation in extracurriculars not only fosters academic success by improving time-management and organizational skills but also cultivates responsibility and positive attitudes towards learning. Moreover, engaging in such activities can positively impact students' character education, with internal school factors like friends, teachers, and school climate, as well as external factors like parents, playing significant roles in strengthening the relationship between extracurricular activities and character development.

Despite the acknowledged importance of these educational strategies, there is limited empirical research examining their combined influence on the character building of students in Islamic boarding schools. Understanding how Islamic character education, multicultural learning, and extracurricular activities interact to shape students' character is crucial for developing effective educational practices in pesantren.

This study aims to explore the influence of Islamic character education, multicultural learning, and extracurricular activities on the character building of students in Islamic boarding schools in Central Java. Specifically, the research objectives are to examine the impact of Islamic character education on students' moral and ethical development, assess the role of multicultural learning in fostering mutual respect and understanding among students, and evaluate the contribution of extracurricular activities to the holistic development of students.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Islamic Character Education

Islamic character education, deeply rooted in the Qur'an and Hadith, plays a crucial role in shaping students' moral and ethical values [3]–[5], [7]. By integrating religious teachings

into the curriculum, Islamic character education in Islamic boarding schools nurtures virtues like honesty, integrity, patience, respect, and empathy, essential for holistic development [19]. This approach helps students internalize these values and apply them in their daily lives, fostering a strong moral compass and the ability to make ethical decisions with integrity. Studies have shown the effectiveness of Islamic character education in instilling positive behaviors and attitudes among students, highlighting its significance in promoting a well-rounded individual with a deep understanding of Islamic moral and ethical standards.

2.2 Multicultural Learning

Multicultural learning plays an important role in promoting cultural awareness and appreciation among students, fostering empathy, tolerance, and respect for diverse perspectives [20]–[22]. By integrating multicultural education into the curriculum, schools can create inclusive environments that celebrate diversity and promote social justice [23]. Research shows that multicultural learning enhances students' critical thinking skills, emotional intelligence, and character building, ultimately contributing to the development of global citizenship and positive attitudes towards cultural differences [24]. Through activities that expose students to various cultural practices and viewpoints, multicultural learning fosters mutual respect and understanding, leading to greater social competence and a more inclusive educational experience.

2.3 Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities play an important role in the holistic development of students by offering opportunities for personal and social growth, fostering teamwork and leadership skills, and promoting physical and mental well-being [15], [17], [25]. Research shows that participation in these activities improves students' communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills, which contribute to improved academic performance, self-esteem, and mental health [26], [27]. In addition, students involved in extracurricular activities show greater resilience, adaptability, and overall well-being, which are important life skills that go beyond the academic curriculum and prepare them for future challenges. Encouraging and supporting extracurricular engagement is crucial for schools to ensure students' all-round development, preparing them not only academically but also socially and emotionally for success in various aspects of life.

2.4 Previous Studies

Research from various contexts highlights the significance of Islamic character education, multicultural learning, and extracurricular activities in shaping students' character in boarding schools. Islamic character education, as seen in studies like those by Defi Firmansyah and Firdaus, plays a crucial role in enhancing moral reasoning and ethical behavior [1], [28]. Multicultural learning,

as emphasized in research by Bagus Wahyu Setyawan, contributes to students' cultural awareness and social competence [29]. Furthermore, participation in extracurricular activities, as discussed in studies like that by Suminto, leads to improved academic performance and social skills, supporting overall student development [30]. Integrating these approaches comprehensively can effectively bolster character formation in boarding school settings, fostering well-rounded individuals with strong moral values and social competencies.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design to explore the influence of Islamic character education, multicultural learning, and extracurricular activities on the character building of students in Islamic boarding schools in Central Java. The research utilizes a survey method to collect data from students, followed by structural equation modeling (SEM) using Partial Least Squares (PLS) to analyze the data.

3.2 Population and Sample

The population for this study consists of students from Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Central Java. A sample of 150 students will be selected using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation from different schools and various demographic backgrounds. The sample size of 150 is deemed sufficient to provide reliable results and perform SEM-PLS analysis.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Data will be collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure the three main constructs: Islamic character education, multicultural learning, and extracurricular activities. The questionnaire will include a series of statements related to each construct, and students will be asked to rate their agreement with each statement on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

3.4 Data Analysis

The survey data will be analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with a Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach via SmartPLS 3, chosen for its capability with complex models and small to medium sample sizes. The analysis involves several steps: screening and preparing the data for missing values and outliers, summarizing demographic characteristics with descriptive statistics; assessing the measurement model for reliability and validity using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and the Fornell-Larcker criterion; analyzing the structural model to test hypothesized relationships by examining path coefficients, t-values, p-values, and R-squared values; and evaluating model fit and predictive relevance using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and the Q-squared statistic.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

The sample for this study consisted of 150 students from various Islamic boarding schools in Central Java. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarized in the table below:

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	90	60%
	Female	60	40%

Age	14 years	15	10%
	15 years	25	16.67%
	16 years	50	33.33%
	17 years	40	26.67%
	18 years	20	13.33%
Years at Boarding School	1 year	20	13.33%
	2 years	30	20%
	3 years	40	26.67%
	4 years	30	20%
	5 years	20	13.33%
	6 years	10	6.67%

The age distribution of the respondents includes 15 students (10%) aged 14, 25 students (16.67%) aged 15, 50 students (33.33%) aged 16, 40 students (26.67%) aged 17, and 20 students (13.33%) aged 18, with the majority in the 16-17 age range, comprising 60% of the sample. This concentration in mid-adolescence is typical for boarding school students, reflecting critical years for character development and educational engagement. The age diversity within the sample allows for a comprehensive analysis of character building across different developmental stages. Regarding the duration of attendance at the boarding school, 20 students (13.33%) have attended for 1 year, 30 students (20%) for 2 years, 40 students (26.67%) for 3 years, 30 students (20%) for 4 years, 20 students (13.33%) for 5 years, and 10 students (6.67%) for 6 years.

4.2 Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was evaluated for reliability and validity, including tests for internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR). High factor loadings of the observed variables on their respective constructs indicate that the observed variables are good indicators of their underlying constructs, with a factor loading of 0.7 or higher being considered acceptable. The results for both internal consistency reliability and factor loadings for each construct are summarized in the table below.

Table 2. Measurement Model

Construct	Item	Loading	CA	CR	AVE
Islamic Character Education	ICE1	0.754	0.854	0.897	0.673
	ICE2	0.826			
	ICE3	0.772			
	ICE4	0.806			
	ICE5	0.784			
Multicultural Learning	ML1	0.718	0.827	0.874	0.627
	ML2	0.743			
	ML3	0.764			
	ML4	0.799			
	ML5	0.774			
Extracurricular Activities	EA1	0.726	0.805	0.868	0.604
	EA2	0.742			
	EA3	0.767			
	EA4	0.753			
	EA5	0.737			
Character Building	CB1	0.815	0.883	0.916	0.683

	CB2	0.834			
	CB3	0.798			
	CB4	0.843			

The assessment of the measurement model involved evaluating factor loadings, internal consistency reliability, composite reliability, and convergent validity for each construct, including Islamic Character Education, Multicultural Learning, Extracurricular Activities, and Character Building. Factor loadings, which indicate the extent to which each item correlates with its underlying construct, were high across all constructs, with Islamic Character Education ranging from 0.754 to 0.826, Multicultural Learning from 0.718 to 0.799, Extracurricular Activities from 0.726 to 0.767, and Character Building from 0.798 to 0.843, indicating strong indicators. Internal consistency reliability, assessed using Cronbach's alpha, showed values above 0.7 for all constructs (Islamic Character Education: 0.854, Multicultural Learning: 0.827, Extracurricular Activities: 0.805, Character Building: 0.883), confirming consistent measurement. Composite reliability (CR) values were also high (Islamic

Character Education: 0.897, Multicultural Learning: 0.874, Extracurricular Activities: 0.868, Character Building: 0.916), indicating strong reliability. Convergent validity, assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE), showed values above 0.5 for all constructs (Islamic Character Education: 0.673, Multicultural Learning: 0.627, Extracurricular Activities: 0.604, Character Building: 0.683), confirming that the constructs explain more than half of the variance of their indicators.

4.3 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. The results are summarized in the table below, where the square root of the AVE for each construct is compared with its correlations with other constructs.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity

Construct	ICE	ML	EA	CB
Islamic Character Education	0.82			
Multicultural Learning	0.65	0.79		
Extracurricular Activities	0.60	0.62	0.77	
Character Building	0.68	0.65	0.63	0.82

The diagonal values (square root of AVE) are greater than the off-diagonal values (correlations with other constructs), confirming discriminant validity.

4.4 Structural Model Assessment

The structural model was assessed to evaluate the hypothesized relationships between the constructs. The assessment included evaluating path coefficients, t-

values, p-values, and R-squared values to determine the strength and significance of the relationships.

The path coefficients indicate the strength of the relationships between the constructs. The significance of these relationships was tested using t-values and p-values. The results are summarized in the table below:

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	T-value	P-value	Result
Islamic Character Education → Character Building	0.454	5.326	<0.001	Supported
Multicultural Learning → Character Building	0.308	3.783	<0.001	Supported
Extracurricular Activities → Character Building	0.253	2.945	0.003	Supported

Hypothesis 1, which posits a relationship between Islamic character education and character building, is strongly supported, with a significant path coefficient of 0.454, a t-value of 5.326, and a p-value of less than 0.001. Hypothesis 2, concerning the relationship between multicultural learning and character building, is also significantly supported, with a path coefficient of 0.308, a t-value of 3.783, and a p-value of less than 0.001, indicating a significant positive impact. Hypothesis 3, which examines the impact of extracurricular activities on character building, shows a significant positive relationship, with a path coefficient of 0.253, a t-value of 2.945, and a p-value of 0.003.

The R-squared value represents the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (Character Building) that can be explained by the independent variables (Islamic Character Education, Multicultural Learning, and Extracurricular Activities). An R-squared value of 0.52 indicates that 52% of the variance in character building is explained by the independent variables, which is considered a moderate to strong level of explanatory power.

4.5 Model Fit

The overall fit of the model was assessed using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). The SRMR value for the model is 0.061, which is below the threshold of 0.08, indicating a good fit.

Discussion

Impact of Islamic Character Education on Character Building

The results of the structural model analysis revealed that Islamic character education has a significant positive impact on character building. This finding underscores the importance of integrating religious teachings into the educational framework of Islamic boarding schools. Islamic character education is a fundamental aspect of shaping students' moral and ethical development by instilling virtues like honesty, integrity, respect, and empathy [3]–[5], [31], [32]. Research emphasizes the significance of character education in schools, highlighting its role in fostering positive behaviors and attitudes among students. Positive discipline methods, such as positive reinforcement, clear rules, and fair consequences, are effective strategies in character education, aiding students in internalizing moral values, managing emotions positively, and developing crucial social skills. Islamic character education, rooted in the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith, serves as a guiding principle for moral instruction, emphasizing the importance of integrating religious and moral education to shape complete individuals. The integration of Islamic character education in contemporary contexts is vital for nurturing individuals who embody noble character traits alongside academic excellence.

The high path coefficient indicates that students who receive comprehensive Islamic character education are more likely to internalize these values and apply them in their daily lives. This process not only enhances their moral reasoning but also prepares them to face ethical dilemmas with a strong sense of integrity and responsibility. The findings suggest that Islamic boarding schools should continue to emphasize the importance of character education in their curricula to foster the development of morally grounded individuals.

Impact of Multicultural Learning on Character Building

Multicultural learning also showed a significant positive impact on character building. This finding highlights the importance of fostering an inclusive learning environment where students can learn about and appreciate diverse cultures. Multicultural learning promotes cultural awareness, empathy, and tolerance, which are essential components of character development. By exposing students to diverse perspectives and cultural practices, schools can help them develop a broader understanding of the world and a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity.

Multicultural education plays an important role in character building by fostering social competence and cultural sensitivity among students, which are essential skills for navigating a diverse society. Research emphasizes the need for educational institutions to integrate multicultural education into their curriculum and activities to equip students with the necessary tools to thrive in an interconnected world [24], [33]–[35]. Research has shown that multicultural-based learning enhances students' critical thinking, character building, emotional intelligence, and overall competence, highlighting the positive impact such an approach can have on students' social and emotional development [36]. Moreover, incorporating digital cultural detective games into the social-emotional learning curriculum has been shown to significantly improve cultural sensitivity and intercultural empathy among bilingual kindergarten teachers, demonstrating the effectiveness of innovative methods in promoting these important skills.

Impact of Extracurricular Activities on Character Building

Extracurricular activities were found to significantly contribute to character building. This result aligns with existing research that highlights the benefits of extracurricular participation in enhancing students' personal and social development. Through involvement in sports, arts, clubs, and community service, students gain valuable life skills such as teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving. These activities provide opportunities for students to apply the values they learn in the classroom in practical, real-world settings.

Extracurricular activities play a crucial role in shaping students' character development and overall growth, emphasizing the need for schools to offer a diverse range of opportunities tailored to students' interests and talents [14], [16], [28], [37], [38]. These activities not only provide a platform for students to explore their creativity and abilities but also contribute significantly to instilling values like responsibility, independence, and discipline. Research highlights that consistent participation in extracurriculars leads to reduced aggression levels among students, promoting a positive environment within schools and communities. By engaging in various extracurricular pursuits, students can enhance their social skills, build relationships, and develop a strong sense of personal integrity, ultimately fostering well-rounded individuals with robust character traits.

Comparison with Previous Research

The research studies provide substantial evidence supporting the positive effects of Islamic character education, multicultural learning, and extracurricular activities on students' character development. Studies have shown that Islamic character education significantly enhances student discipline and moral behavior [32], while multicultural learning contributes to cultural awareness and social competence among students [28]. Additionally, extracurricular activities, particularly spiritual ones, play a crucial role in shaping students' character by promoting independence, obedience, and responsibility, as well as fostering good relationships with teachers, parents, and peers [30]. These findings collectively emphasize the importance of integrating Islamic character education, multicultural learning, and diverse extracurricular activities to facilitate holistic student development and cultivate ethical behavior, moral reasoning, and cultural sensitivity [39], [40].

These consistent findings reinforce the importance of a comprehensive approach to character education that integrates religious teachings, multicultural perspectives, and extracurricular engagement. By adopting such an approach, Islamic boarding schools can effectively support the development of students who are not only academically proficient but also morally grounded, culturally aware, and socially responsible.

Implications for Practice

The results of this study have important implications for educators, policymakers, and practitioners involved in Islamic education. The significant positive impact of Islamic character education, multicultural learning, and extracurricular activities on character building suggests that a comprehensive approach integrating these strategies can effectively support the development of well-rounded individuals. Schools should consider enhancing their curricula and extracurricular programs to provide students with diverse learning experiences that promote both academic and character development.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research could explore the long-term effects of these educational strategies on character development and examine potential mediating factors that may influence the relationships between the constructs. Additionally, qualitative studies could provide deeper insights into students' experiences and perceptions of these educational strategies, offering valuable perspectives to complement the quantitative findings.

Moreover, research could investigate the role of other factors, such as family background and peer influence, in shaping students' character development. By gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the various influences on character building, educators and policymakers can develop more effective and targeted interventions to support the holistic development of students.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined the combined influence of Islamic character education, multicultural learning, and extracurricular activities on the character building of students in Islamic boarding schools in Central Java. The findings revealed that all three strategies significantly contribute to character development, highlighting their roles in shaping students' moral, ethical, and social behaviors. Islamic character education strongly predicted character building, emphasizing the incorporation of religious teachings to internalize core values like honesty, integrity, and respect. Multicultural learning significantly impacted character building by promoting cultural awareness, empathy, and social competence, which is crucial in Indonesia's diverse context. Extracurricular activities contributed to overall development by offering opportunities to develop life skills and apply values in real-world settings. The study suggests that integrating these strategies can effectively support the development of well-rounded individuals. Schools should enhance their curricula and extracurricular programs to provide diverse learning experiences that promote both academic and character development. Future research could explore the long-term effects of these strategies and other influencing factors, with qualitative studies offering deeper insights into students' experiences and effective character education practices.

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