

## CHARACTER EDUCATION IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MODERN BOARDING SCHOOL AND GENERAL BOARDING SCHOOL

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**Abstract (In English).** This study aims to compare the implementation of character education within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum as practiced in modern pesantren and boarding school pesantren. The Merdeka Curriculum was developed as a response to 21st-century educational challenges, emphasizing the Pancasila Student Profile, which consists of six key dimensions: faith and piety, global diversity, cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, and creativity. Character education is embedded in various subjects, particularly Religious Education and Civic Education, and reinforced through school culture and habituation. Boarding school models, including pesantren-based institutions, offer a conducive environment where academic learning and character formation are integrated within a residential setting. This qualitative study employs a library research method by analyzing books, scientific journal articles, and policy documents related to character education and curriculum implementation. The study presents a comparative analysis of character education practices in modern pesantren and general boarding schools. It highlights that modern pesantren emphasize spiritual and moral values through religious-based habituation and kyai leadership, while boarding schools implement structured, programmatic approaches to foster discipline and personal development. The synthesis of both models offers valuable insights for strengthening character education in line with the holistic goals of the Merdeka Curriculum.

**Keywords:** Character Education, Merdeka Curriculum, Modern Pesantren, Boarding School, Pancasila Student Profile

**Abstract (In Bahasa).** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membandingkan implementasi pendidikan karakter dalam kerangka Kurikulum Merdeka sebagaimana yang dipraktikkan di pesantren modern dan pesantren berasrama. Kurikulum Merdeka dikembangkan sebagai respons terhadap tantangan pendidikan abad ke-21, dengan menekankan Profil Pelajar Pancasila, yang terdiri dari enam dimensi utama: iman dan taqwa, keberagaman global, kerja sama, kemandirian, penalaran kritis, dan kreativitas. Pendidikan karakter tertanam dalam berbagai mata pelajaran, khususnya Pendidikan Agama dan Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan, dan diperkuat melalui budaya dan pembiasaan sekolah. Model sekolah berasrama, termasuk



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*lembaga berbasis pesantren, menawarkan lingkungan yang kondusif di mana pembelajaran akademik dan pembentukan karakter terintegrasi dalam lingkungan tempat tinggal. Penelitian kualitatif ini menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan dengan menganalisis buku, artikel jurnal ilmiah, dan dokumen kebijakan yang terkait dengan pendidikan karakter dan implementasi kurikulum. Penelitian ini menyajikan analisis komparatif praktik pendidikan karakter di pesantren modern dan sekolah berasrama umum. Hal ini menyoroti bahwa pesantren modern menekankan nilai-nilai spiritual dan moral melalui pembiasaan berbasis agama dan kepemimpinan kyai, sementara sekolah berasrama menerapkan pendekatan terstruktur dan terprogram untuk menumbuhkan disiplin dan pengembangan pribadi. Sintesis kedua model tersebut menawarkan wawasan berharga untuk memperkuat pendidikan karakter sejalan dengan tujuan holistik Kurikulum Merdeka.*

**Kata Kunci:** Pendidikan Karakter, Kurikulum Merdeka, Pesantren Modern, Pondok Pesantren, Profil Santri Pancasila

## A. INTRODUCTION

The urgent call for character education has emerged as one of the fundamental pillars in the national education agenda in Indonesia. The Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System underscores that education should be directed toward the development of students' full potential, forming individuals who are devout, morally upright, healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent, and responsible citizens<sup>1</sup>. However, despite the clear normative framework, the actual implementation of character education in Indonesian schools still faces significant challenges. This is evident in the ongoing moral issues plaguing society, such as corruption, intolerance, violence, bullying, and drug abuse involving youths, which reflect a discrepancy between policy and practice.

The government responded to this challenge through the Character Education Strengthening (*Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter/PPK*) initiative, integrated into the broader educational reform. This program aligns with *Nawa Cita*, the national development vision initiated by President Joko Widodo, which places character revolution at its core. The PPK movement was formally institutionalized through Presidential Regulation No. 87 of 2017, mandating that character education be realized through collaboration between schools, families, and communities, in line with the principles of the National Movement for Mental Revolution (*Gerakan Nasional Revolusi Mental/GNRM*)<sup>2</sup>

The philosophical foundation for character education in Indonesia can be traced back to the thoughts of Ki Hajar Dewantara, the father of Indonesian education. His assertion that "education must be in harmony with the nature and development of children" reflects the necessity of holistic education that balances cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and moral development<sup>3</sup>. Character education, in this sense, is not merely a set of values taught in classrooms but a comprehensive formation of personality, cultivated through consistent habituation, meaningful interaction, and exemplary modeling.

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<sup>1</sup> "Undang-Undang (UU) No. 20 Tahun 2003 Sistem Pendidikan Nasional," n.d.

<sup>2</sup> "Peraturan Bupati (PERBUP) Kabupaten Padang Pariaman Nomor 16 Tahun 2017 RENCANA KERJA PEMERINTAH DAERAH KABUPATEN PADANG PARIAMAN TAHUN 2018," n.d.

<sup>3</sup> Musa Pelu, "Pancadarma Taman Siswa: A Philosophical Reflection of Ki Hajar Dewantara's Thought on The Perspective Of Religious-Humanist Education," *Journal of History Education and Religious Studies* 1, no. 1 (2020): 11–20.

Character itself has been defined in various ways. According to Doni Koesoema, character is closely related to a person's personality, shaped by both innate disposition and environmental influence, particularly during the early stages of life<sup>4</sup>. This definition underscores the importance of educational settings in shaping behavior, habits, and value orientation. Educational institutions thus serve not only as centers of knowledge but as ecosystems of character formation.

The emergence of the Independent Curriculum (*Kurikulum Merdeka*) in 2022 by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (*Kemendikbudristek*) represents a paradigm shift in Indonesian education. The curriculum responds to various challenges—including learning loss during the COVID-19 pandemic, limited autonomy of teachers, and rigid learning models—by offering a student-centered, flexible, and contextual approach<sup>5</sup>. A central feature of the Merdeka Curriculum is the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (Pancasila Student Profile), which integrates character development across all learning domains through six core dimensions: (1) faith and piety to God Almighty, (2) global diversity, (3) cooperation, (4) independence, (5) critical reasoning, and (6) creativity<sup>6</sup>.

Despite its potential, the implementation of character education within the Independent Curriculum often remains symbolic and superficial, with practices not yet internalized by learners. Schools may include character themes in lesson plans or extracurricular activities, but without consistent reinforcement through school culture, peer influence, and adult role models, these efforts fail to bring about meaningful behavioral change. This concern has been highlighted in recent studies that call for character education to be embedded structurally and culturally, not merely administratively<sup>7</sup>.

In this context, boarding schools emerge as promising alternatives. Unlike day schools, boarding schools provide a residential and immersive learning environment that allows for continuous character formation. Boarding school systems typically offer a structured schedule, close mentorship, and strong peer interactions, all of which are conducive to internalizing values like discipline, cooperation, responsibility, and integrity<sup>8</sup>.

Indonesia has a long tradition of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), which have played a central role in the education of both religious knowledge and moral values. *Pesantren* integrates academic and religious learning, and character education is implemented through daily routines, communal prayers, dormitory life, and the strong influence of the *kyai* or spiritual leader. The modern *pesantren* model has evolved by incorporating general education curricula and

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<sup>4</sup> Doni Koesoema, "Pendidikan Karakter; Strategi Mendidik Anak di Zaman Global," 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Kemendikbudristek, "Tahapan Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Di Satuan Pendidikan," 2022, <https://kurikulum.kemdikbud.go.id/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Tahapan-Implementasi-Kurikulum-Merdeka.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Kemendikbudristek, "Profil Penguatan Pelajar Pancasila," accessed July 6, 2025, [https://kurikulum.kemdikbud.go.id/file/1679308669\\_manage\\_file.pdf](https://kurikulum.kemdikbud.go.id/file/1679308669_manage_file.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Nikmah Sistia Eka Putri, Fatimah Setiani, and Muhammad Sandy Al Fath, "Membangun Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Kurikulum Merdeka Menuju Era Society 5.0: Building Character Education Based On The Merdeka Curriculum Towards Society Era 5.0," *Pedagogik: Jurnal Pendidikan* 18, no. 2 (2023): 194–201.

<sup>8</sup> Dina Anjani, Nurliana Cipta Apsari, and Meilanny Budiarti Santoso, "PENGARUH LINGKUNGAN BOARDING SCHOOL DALAM MEMBENTUK KEMANDIRIAN SISWA ASRAMA BINA SISWA SMA PLUS CISARUA KAB. BANDUNG BARAT," *Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat (JPPM)* 5, no. 2 (2024): 129–49.

formal structures, while maintaining the value-based learning of traditional pesantren<sup>9</sup>. Modern pesantren have institutionalized programs such as leadership training, extracurricular mentoring, and project-based learning that enhance both soft skills and moral development<sup>10</sup>.

Meanwhile, general (non-religious) boarding schools, especially those adopting international or national-plus curricula, tend to approach character education through structured programs like leadership camps, student council training, moral education subjects, and extracurricular involvement. While often lacking in religious emphasis, these schools emphasize life skills, civic engagement, multicultural values, and 21st-century competencies<sup>11</sup>. However, critics argue that such schools may struggle to deeply instill values due to the absence of spiritual dimensions and moral exemplars similar to the *kyai* role in pesantren<sup>12</sup>.

A comparative analysis between modern pesantren and general boarding schools within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum thus becomes highly relevant. This comparison can reveal the strengths and limitations of each model in delivering character education. For instance, modern pesantren may excel in spiritual and moral grounding, while general boarding schools may be stronger in systematic and skill-based formation. Understanding these differences is key to designing a hybrid, context-responsive model that can be applied across diverse Indonesian educational settings.

Several previous studies have examined character education under the Merdeka Curriculum. Ikhwanul Muslimin (2023) discussed the development of character values in madrasah through spiritual and social dimensions<sup>13</sup>. Encep Syarief Nurdin (2015) emphasized the importance of utilizing Religious and Civic Education subjects as key carriers of character values<sup>14</sup>. Vipul Bhardwaj et. al. (2025) highlighted the role of assessment in shaping character through student-centered evaluations<sup>15</sup>. M. Rodhiyana (2023) emphasized that character education should begin within the family and be supported through school-based programs like *Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5)*<sup>16</sup>. Depict Pristine Adi et. al. (2024) found that implementing environmental-based character

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<sup>9</sup> MA Achlami, "Peran Pondok Pesantren Sebagai Lembaga Pendidikan, Dakwah Dan Sosial Dalam Menangkal Radikalisme Dan Terorisme," *At-Tarbiyah: Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pendidikan Agama Islam* 1, no. 2 (2024): 118–26, <https://journal.staittd.ac.id/index.php/at/article/view/76>.

<sup>10</sup> Salman Zahidi, "PONDOK PESANTREN SEBAGAI LEMBAGA PENDIDIKAN ALTERNATIF," *KUTTAB* 1, no. 1 (2017): 50–57.

<sup>11</sup> Agus Suryadi et al., "Exploring the Leadership Model of Tgk. H. Syarifuddin, MA, at the Jannatul Firdaus Integrated Islamic Boarding School," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 16, no. 3 (2024): 3412–22.

<sup>12</sup> Achmad Zainal Arifin, "Charisma and Rationalisation in a Modernising Pesantren: Changing Values in Traditional" (University of Western Sydney, Australia 2013, n.d.).

<sup>13</sup> Ikhwanul Muslimin, "Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Karakter Di Madrasah Berbasis Kurikulum Merdeka," *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam Darussalam* 5, no. 1 (2023): 108–30.

<sup>14</sup> Encep Syarief Nurdin, "The Policies on Civic Education in Developing National Character in Indonesia.," *International Education Studies* 8, no. 8 (2015): 199–209.

<sup>15</sup> Vipul Bhardwaj et al., "Redefining Learning: Student-Centered Strategies for Academic and Personal Growth," in *Frontiers in Education*, vol. 10 (Frontiers Media SA, 2025), 1518602.

<sup>16</sup> Mu'allimah Rodhiyana, "Profil Pelajar Pancasila Dalam Perspektif Pendidikan Agama Islam," *Journal of Islamic Education Studies* 1, no. 2 (2023): 151–60, <https://doi.org/10.58569/jies.v1i2.575>.

education can effectively shape students' behavior through habituation and school culture<sup>17</sup>.

While these studies offer valuable insights, they do not compare how different educational models—specifically modern pesantren and general boarding schools—operationalize character education within the Merdeka Curriculum. There remains a research gap concerning how different institutional cultures, religious orientations, and daily routines influence students' character development in boarding settings.

Therefore, this study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of character education in modern pesantren and general boarding schools within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum. By analyzing the curricular content, pedagogical practices, habituation strategies, and institutional cultures of both types of schools, this research seeks to identify best practices and provide practical recommendations for optimizing character education implementation in Indonesia's evolving educational landscape.

## **B. METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research method. This approach aims to examine in depth the concept, implementation, and challenges of character education in the Merdeka Curriculum, especially in the general boarding school and modern Islamic boarding school models. Data were obtained from literature sources such as scientific books, journal articles, policy documents, and relevant previous research results. Data collection techniques were carried out through literature searches in scientific databases such as Google Scholar, SINTA, and Scopus. Data analysis was carried out using the content analysis method to examine the differences and similarities in the character education approach in the two school models. As stated by Zed<sup>18</sup>, literature studies are used to build theoretical foundations and find research gaps. In this process, researchers act as the main instrument to interpret data critically and contextually<sup>19</sup>. The results of the analysis are expected to be able to provide conceptual contributions in formulating a more integrative and contextual character education model.

## **C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Principles of Character Education in the Merdeka Curriculum**

Character education is a main pillar in the Merdeka Curriculum, which aims to shape the profile of Pancasila students, namely individuals who not only excel academically but also have moral and social integrity. The dimensions of the Pancasila student profile include devotion to God Almighty, global diversity, cooperation, independence, critical thinking, and creativity. These dimensions are the basic framework for strengthening student character through a project-based learning approach, cross-subject integration, and strengthening school

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<sup>17</sup> Depict Pristine Adi et al., "The Implementation of Environment-Based Madrasah Culture in Islamic Religious Education Learning to Develop Students' Character," *Jurnal Tarbiyatuna* 15, no. 1 (2024): 85–94.

<sup>18</sup> Mestika Zed, *Metode Penelitian Kepustakaan* (Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif Kualitatif Dan R&D*, 19th ed. (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2013).

culture<sup>20</sup>.

In this context, various educational models such as modern Islamic boarding schools and Islamic boarding schools have great potential in implementing these character principles. Islamic boarding schools emphasize the internalization of spiritual and moral values through habituation, while Islamic boarding schools prioritize a structured and professional approach in student character management. Although the approaches are different, the two complement each other in forming students with strong character. This shows that the success of character education in the Independent Curriculum is highly dependent on the ability of educational institutions to contextualize these values into daily educational practices<sup>21</sup>.

Research discussing character education in the Merdeka Curriculum—particularly comparative studies between character education in modern pesantren and boarding schools—reveals that these two educational models differ in approach but complement each other in shaping students' character. The Merdeka Curriculum, as a manifestation of national education policy, aims to create a generation of Indonesians who are not only academically excellent but also strong in character. This is embodied in the dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile, which serves as the core aspect of character education. These dimensions include faith and devotion to God Almighty, global diversity, cooperation, independence, critical thinking, and creativity<sup>22</sup>.

## 2. Character Education in Modern Pesantren

Modern pesantren represent a manifestation of education based on Islamic values and boarding life, offering holistic and spiritually grounded character education. Within the pesantren environment, habits such as simplicity, sincerity, discipline, and responsibility are instilled through continuous habituation, guided by the exemplary conduct of the kyai (*Islamic Scholars*). According to Zarkasyi<sup>23</sup>, character education in pesantren does not only occur in the classroom, but also in the daily lives of the students (santri), who interact intensively within a religious environment. This enables deep internalization, as every aspect of a santri's life is considered an integral part of the educational process.

One example is a study conducted by Muhammad Fahrurrozi, which shows that the values of sincerity and independence serve as the fundamental foundations in shaping the character of santri. Santri are taught to take care of their own needs, value time, and perform religious practices in congregation, all of which are integral to the character habituation strategy. Rohman emphasizes that “the success of pesantren in shaping character cannot be separated from the nurturing role of the kyai and an educational system that does not separate knowledge from morality<sup>24</sup>.”

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<sup>20</sup> Kemendikbudristek, “Tahapan Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Di Satuan Pendidikan.”

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility* (Bantam, 1992).

<sup>22</sup> Ahmad Teguh Purnawanto, “Pendidikan Karakter Melalui Internalisasi Profil Pelajar Pancasila Dalam Kurikulum Merdeka,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Pedagogy* 16, no. 2 (2023): 103–15.

<sup>23</sup> Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, “Modern Pondok Pesantren: Maintaining Tradition in Modern System,” *Tsaqafah* 11, no. 2 (2015): 223–48.

<sup>24</sup> Muhammad Fahrurrozi, “Pendidikan Karakter Di Pondok Pesantren,” *Tarlim: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 5, no. 1 (2022): 29–42, <https://doi.org/10.32528/tarlim.v5i1.7061>.

Character education in modern Islamic boarding schools is not only theoretical but also relies on habituation and exemplary behavior. The closed and controlled environment of Islamic boarding schools is a strategic medium for forming noble values that are consistently embedded in the daily lives of students. Character learning in Islamic boarding schools is effective because the social environment supports the process of continuous internalization of values through Islamic boarding school culture, such as ta'lim, muhadharah, cleaning duties, and collective worship, which are daily routines<sup>25</sup>.

Furthermore, Nofiaturrehman<sup>26</sup> (2024) stated that the character education model in Islamic boarding schools involves three important elements: habituation of values, intensive supervision, and spiritualization of learning activities. Islamic boarding schools not only teach morals as subject matter but also make morals a system of life. This is in line with the holistic approach in the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes the dimensions of faith and noble morals as part of the Pancasila Student Profile.

Research by Azra (2020) also shows that the success of Islamic boarding schools in shaping the character of students is highly dependent on the role of the kyai as a moral educator who integrates Islamic and nationalist values harmoniously. Thus, the Islamic boarding school model is relevant to be used as a national reference in the implementation of contextual and sustainable character education<sup>27</sup>.

### 3. Character Education in Boarding School Pesantren

Character education in Islamic boarding schools emphasizes a structured and professional education management system. This concept places students in a disciplined environment but still provides space for the development of individual potential. According to Nasution<sup>28</sup>, the Islamic boarding school approach emphasizes the planning of training programs whose characteristics are measurable, such as leadership training, student organization training, and mentoring programs that take place periodically.

This model is in accordance with the character education management approach that integrates character values into all aspects of school life. As stated by Lickona<sup>29</sup>, effective character education must include moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral actions, all of which can be implemented in the Islamic boarding school system through evaluation of daily behavior and student community activities that form social and moral responsibility. Furthermore, Islamic boarding schools also adopt a project-based approach (*project-based character development*), where students are involved in social activities,

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<sup>25</sup> Asmuki Asmuki and Wilda Al Aluf, "Pendidikan Karakter Di Pesantren," *Edupedia* 2, no. 2 (2018): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.35316/edupedia.v2i2.325>.

<sup>26</sup> Fifi Nofiaturrehman, "Metode Pendidikan Karakter Di Pesantren," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 11, no. 2 (2014): 201–16.

<sup>27</sup> Khusnul Khatimah Fany, "Peran Kiaidalam Penguatan Budaya Pesantren Pada Pondok Pesantren Miftahul 'Ulumdi Desatanjunganom Kabupaten Lampung Tengah" (UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI RADEN INTAN LAMPUNG, 2022).

<sup>28</sup> Faisal Hakim Nasution, "Manajemen Mutu Berbasis Pesantren Dalam Upaya Mengembangkan Pendidikan Berkarakter, Studi Di Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Wal Lughoh Ruhul Qur'an Kota Batam" (Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, 2022).

<sup>29</sup> Lickona, *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility*.

community service, and teamwork that encourage the growth of values such as empathy, hard work, and leadership. This makes Islamic boarding schools an environment that supports character formation systematically and contextually in accordance with the challenges of the modern era.

On the other hand, boarding schools that adopt a modern managerial approach in implementing education emphasize the importance of structure, planned programs, and monitoring systems. Character education in boarding schools is often implemented through various extracurricular programs, leadership training, mentoring, and community activities designed to foster students' responsibility, work ethic, and interpersonal skills. This system provides ample space for self-development and creativity, as "the character education management approach in boarding schools allows for more systematic supervision of the character-building process through performance assessments and consistent routine activities"<sup>30</sup>.

#### 4. Critical Review and Comparison

The fundamental difference between Islamic boarding schools and boarding schools lies in their philosophical foundations: Islamic boarding schools are rooted in Islamic spiritual values and traditions, while boarding schools emphasize system efficiency and measurable academic achievement<sup>31</sup>. Nevertheless, both contribute greatly to the goals of national character education. Data from the National Character Survey released by the Education Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Agency<sup>32</sup> shows that students who take boarding-based education, both in Islamic boarding schools and boarding schools, have higher levels of discipline, responsibility, and empathy than regular school students.

The Independent Curriculum provides flexibility for educational units to design appropriate approaches, including in character strengthening. However, there is still a gap between the ideal concept of the Independent Curriculum and its implementation. Many schools still position character education as an additional activity or ceremony, not the core of the learning process<sup>33</sup>. This shows the importance of comparative studies, so that the successful models of Islamic boarding schools and boarding schools can be replicated in other institutions.

Pesantren excels in habituating values and instilling spirituality, while boarding schools excel in managing structured and professional programs. Therefore, the synthesis of the two approaches can produce a more comprehensive and contextual character education model. As emphasized by Lickona<sup>34</sup>, "successful character education requires the integration of role models, habituation, and consistent support systems in a sustainable learning environment."

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<sup>30</sup> Agus Triyono, "Pendidikan Karakter Pada Sistem Boarding School," *Jurnal Kependidikan* 7, no. 2 (2019): 251–63, <https://doi.org/10.24090/jk.v7i2.3085>.

<sup>31</sup> Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, "Imam Zarkasyi'S Modernization of Pesantren in Indonesia," *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies (QIJIS)* 8, no. 1 (2020): 161–200.

<sup>32</sup> "Badan Standar, Kurikulum, Dan Asesmen Pendidikan (BSKAP)," 2022.

<sup>33</sup> Nuryanti Siregar et al., "Dampak Pelaksanaan Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Terhadap Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam," *Dharmas Education Journal (DE\_Journal)* 5, no. 2 (2024): 680–90, <https://doi.org/10.56667/dejournal.v5i2.1345>.

<sup>34</sup> Lickona, *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility*.

Furthermore, the integration of religious values and educational professionalism is in line with the holistic approach promoted by the Merdeka Curriculum. Education not only functions as a means of transferring knowledge, but also as a vehicle for forming whole people with strong character and able to live harmoniously in a global society<sup>35</sup>. Therefore, the involvement of all parties—teachers, parents, the community, and institutional managers—is crucial in the successful implementation of character education.

In practice, several boarding schools have adopted the pesantren approach through spiritual camp activities, religious studies, and strengthening faith values to balance the moral aspects of education. On the other hand, modern Islamic boarding schools are now also starting to implement modern managerial systems, such as financial management, technology-based academic reporting, and student leadership certification. This phenomenon shows a positive tendency towards an integrative approach to character education in Indonesia.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Strengthening Character Education (PPK) is a mandate from the eighth point of Nawa Cita, which emphasizes the importance of mental revolution in shaping the morality of the nation's generation. The President of the Republic of Indonesia emphasized that the current generation is the future leaders, in line with Ki Hajar Dewantara's view that "education must be in line with the natural growth of children". In the context of the Independent Curriculum, character education requires a flexible model but is firmly rooted in moral and spiritual values. Modern Islamic boarding schools and boarding schools represent two educational models that complement each other in shaping the character of students. Islamic boarding schools excel in instilling religious values and habits through intensive, exemplary-based boarding life. Meanwhile, boarding schools offer advantages in systematic education management, leadership programs, and structured self-development. The combination of the advantages of these two models allows for the formation of a more complete, contextual, and sustainable character education approach. By adopting the best practices of these two institutions, educational units in Indonesia can strengthen the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in a more meaningful way. This effort is also in line with the grand vision of establishing the Pancasila Student Profile, namely, to create a generation that is faithful, pious, independent, critical, creative, cooperative, and globally diverse.

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<sup>35</sup> UNESCO, "Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4," 2015.

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