

Internalizing Akhlaq Lil Banin Values to Shape the Social Character of *Santri*: A Literature Review

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Abstract: *Pesantren* sustain moral education through classical Islamic texts, yet previous studies on *Akhlaq Lil Banin* have mainly mapped moral values or described teaching practices without clearly explaining how textual guidance becomes social conduct. This structured narrative review examines the social values emphasized in *Akhlaq Lil Banin*, their internalization within *pesantren* culture, and their contemporary relevance to *santri* social character. The review uses *Akhlaq Lil Banin* as its primary textual source and synthesizes relevant literature on kitab learning, value internalization, and *pesantren* character education. The analysis identifies six relational values: respect, responsibility, honesty, polite communication, care, and discipline. Internalization is interpreted as a gradual process of textual understanding, contextual meaning, affective acceptance, repeated practice, and social reinforcement. Kitab instruction and dialogue strengthen moral understanding; exemplary conduct gives values visible meaning; and habituation, supervision, and reflection support moral action. The study contributes a conceptual explanation of how moral teachings can move from textual guidance to social conduct within the *pesantren* educational environment. Because it is literature-based, the study does not claim direct behavioral effects but offers a framework for teaching practice and future empirical examinations.

Abstrak: *Pesantren* mempertahankan pendidikan akhlak melalui teks Islam klasik, tetapi penelitian tentang *Akhlaq Lil Banin* masih banyak memetakan nilai moral atau menggambarkan praktik pembelajaran tanpa menjelaskan secara jelas bagaimana pedoman tekstual berkembang menjadi perilaku sosial. Kajian naratif terstruktur ini menganalisis nilai sosial dalam *Akhlaq Lil Banin*, proses internalisasinya dalam budaya *pesantren*, serta relevansinya bagi karakter sosial santri masa kini. Kajian ini menempatkan *Akhlaq Lil Banin* sebagai sumber primer dan mensintesis literatur yang relevan mengenai pembelajaran kitab, internalisasi nilai, dan pendidikan karakter *pesantren*. Hasil analisis mengidentifikasi enam nilai relasional, yaitu hormat, tanggung jawab, kejujuran, kesantunan berkomunikasi, kepedulian, dan disiplin. Internalisasi



dipahami sebagai proses bertahap melalui pemahaman teks, pemaknaan kontekstual, penerimaan afektif, praktik berulang, dan penguatan sosial. Pembelajaran kitab dan dialog memperkuat pemahaman moral; keteladanan memberi makna yang nyata; sedangkan pembiasaan, pengawasan, dan refleksi mendukung tindakan moral. Kontribusi kajian ini adalah penjelasan konseptual tentang bagaimana ajaran moral bergerak dari pedoman tekstual menuju perilaku sosial dalam lingkungan pendidikan pesantren. Karena berbasis literatur, penelitian ini tidak mengklaim dampak perilaku secara langsung, tetapi menawarkan kerangka untuk praktik pembelajaran dan pengujian empiris selanjutnya.

INTRODUCTION

Pesantren are not merely institutions for transmitting religious knowledge. They are educational spaces in which teaching, caregiving, habituation, and communal culture work together to shape the moral personality of *santri*. The Indonesian *Pesantren* Law recognizes *pesantren* as institutions with educational, da'wah, and community empowerment functions, indicating their strategic position in national education (Indonesia, 2019). In daily life, *santri* learn not only how to read religious texts but also how to speak politely, respect teachers, live with peers, obey shared rules, maintain cleanliness, and take responsibility for collective duties.

A distinctive feature of *pesantren* education is the sustained use of classical Islamic texts. A kitab functions not only as instructional material but also as a normative reference through which *santri* learn how knowledge, authority, companionship, and communal obligations should be approached. The *pesantren* tradition itself is sustained by the interaction among kiai, *santri*, the mosque, dormitory life, and kitab learning (Dhofier, 2011). Within this configuration, moral texts occupy a particularly important position because they connect religious knowledge with conduct that can be observed in everyday interaction. Moral learning, therefore, cannot be reduced to reading, translation, or memorization; its educational significance lies in whether textual guidance is interpreted and enacted in lived relationships.

Among the moral texts commonly used in *pesantren* is Akhlaq Lil Banin by Umar bin Ahmad Baraja. The book introduces basic moral advice in a simple style and is frequently taught at the early levels of madrasah diniyah and *pesantren* education. Its lessons include respect for parents and teachers, good manners toward peers, honesty, responsibility, discipline, and proper interaction with others (Baraja, n.d.). For this reason, Akhlaq Lil Banin can be read not only as a text on personal morality, but also as a source for shaping the social character of *santri*.

The issue of social character is especially important because *pesantren* lives are communal. In this article, social character refers to moral dispositions that become visible in relationships with other people and in participation in shared life. This definition distinguishes social character from virtues understood only as private qualities by emphasizing their relational consequences: honesty sustains trust, discipline supports collective order, respectful speech protects dignity, and responsibility affects the welfare of others. Character formation in *pesantren* is shaped by the interaction between learning

methods and values practiced in daily activities rather than by verbal instruction alone (Andrianto et al., 2022). Educator exemplarity is also significant because it gives abstract expectations a visible social form (Kosasih et al., 2023). Recent scholarship further presents *pesantren* character education as a culturally embedded learning ecosystem in which formal instruction, routine practices, and institutional culture continuously interact (Ma'arif & Arif, 2026). This relational perspective provides the conceptual basis for examining Akhlaq Lil Banin as a resource for social, rather than merely personal, moral formation.

A further analytical difficulty arises from the distance between normative prescription and social practice. A moral text can name desirable conduct, but naming a value does not establish that learners understand its relational purpose, accept it as personally meaningful, or apply it when circumstances change. *Pesantren* research increasingly shows that character is shaped through the total educational environment, including hidden curriculum, peer norms, adult conduct, routines, and informal interaction (Homsiyah et al., 2026). This means that the educational question is not simply whether Akhlaq Lil Banin contains respect, honesty, care, or discipline, but how these values acquire meaning across multiple contexts of *santri* life. The distinction is consequential for contemporary *pesantren* because social interaction now extends beyond dormitories and classrooms into digital communication and more socially diverse settings. The relational moral values associated with Akhlaq Lil Banin can remain relevant in such settings when their underlying purposes are interpreted rather than mechanically reproduced (Arianti et al., 2026). Accordingly, the present review treats textual values as normative resources whose educational significance depends on processes of interpretation, enactment, feedback, and transfer.

Previous research confirms the educational importance of Akhlaq Lil Banin, but it leaves a more specific conceptual problem unresolved. Studies in individual *pesantren* have reported positive educational uses of the text while remaining tied to particular institutional settings (Dela et al., 2020). Other work describes the implementation of Akhlaq Lil Banin through *pesantren* learning practices without fully tracing how textual advice becomes an internalized social disposition (Hubbi, 2022). Content-oriented studies have mapped character values in the text and discussed their relevance to *santri* attitudes (Rizkia et al., 2023). Analyses across the first two volumes have likewise catalogued character education values and broadened the textual mapping (Wiratama et al., 2024). More recent research moves closer to the question of internalization by emphasizing repeated guidance and educator exemplarity (Aziz & Makruf, 2025). A separate *pesantren* study links the text with social character in a specific institutional context (Hadi & Susilo, 2025). Developmentally responsive teaching has also been identified as an important consideration in presenting Akhlaq Lil Banin to younger learners (Hidayat & Qodat, 2026). Taking together, these studies establish the educational relevance of the text, but they do not yet fully explain what changes when a moral prescription is understood, interpreted in a concrete situation, affectively accepted, rehearsed in communal life, and sustained with less external control. The present review therefore treats internalization as a conceptual bridge between textual

value and socially observable conduct, while clarifying which values qualify as social character because they regulate relationships and shared life.

On that basis, this article addresses three questions: which values in Akhlaq Lil Banin can be conceptually classified as social character values; how does the literature explain the mechanisms through which those values are internalized in *pesantren* culture; and (3) how can the same values be interpreted in relation to contemporary forms of *santri* interaction? The article does not attempt to measure the impact of teaching Akhlaq Lil Banin or to attribute behavioral change to the book without field data. Its novelty lies in synthesizing a conceptual mechanism that traces the movement from textual value to contextual meaning, internalization, and social manifestation, which can later be examined empirically. This focus allows the review to contribute a more precise conceptual framework while remaining consistent with the limits of evidence available in the literature.

METHOD

This study employs library research in the form of a structured narrative literature review supported by qualitative content analysis. The approach was selected because the objective is interpretive synthesis across a heterogeneous body of primary texts, empirical studies, and theoretical literature rather than statistical estimation of an intervention effect. A structured narrative review is appropriate when existing knowledge must be reorganized around a clearly delimited conceptual problem instead of merely summarized source by source (Snyder, 2019). Accordingly, the study does not claim that teaching Akhlaq Lil Banin directly causes changes in *santri* behavior. It examines how the focal text and the available literature make it conceptually possible to explain movement from moral instruction toward social practice.

The focal primary source is Umar bin Ahmad Baraja's Akhlaq Lil Banin, Volume 1. The close reading is deliberately limited to this volume because it contains foundational guidance on conduct toward parents, teachers, peers, and other people. Volume 2 is represented only through secondary studies and is not treated as part of the primary textual corpus. To clarify the position of Akhlaq Lil Banin within the *pesantren* adab tradition, al-Zarnuji's Ta'lim al-Muta'allim and KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim are used only as limited comparative references rather than as equal primary objects. The review began with an initial working set of 25 sources cited in the submitted manuscript. Targeted searches were then conducted through Google Scholar, GARUDA, and Crossref metadata, supplemented by backward citation tracing from relevant studies, to identify additional recent and comparative sources. Search terms included the title variants "Akhlaq Lil Banin," "Akhlak Lil Banin," and "Al-Akhlaq li al-Banin," combined with Indonesian and English terms such as "*santri*," "*pesantren*," "character education," "social character," "moral education," "internalisasi nilai," "value internalization," "role modeling," "habituation," and "digital ethics." Journal literature published from 2020 through July 2026 was prioritized, while older works were retained when they served as the focal primary text, comparative adab sources, legal context, character theory, or review methodology. Sources were included when they directly addressed the focal text,

value internalization, *pesantren* character formation, or mechanisms relevant to the synthesis; sources that mentioned morality only incidentally were excluded. Because the search was iterative rather than a fixed systematic query, a single database hit count was not treated as a reproducible screening denominator. After relevance screening and metadata checks, the final analytic corpus comprised 32 sources: 26 journal articles, three primary moral texts, two foundational books, and one policy document.

Qualitative content analysis was conducted in four stages. First, the focal text and selected studies were read to identify units of meaning related to interpersonal conduct, including respect, trust, responsibility, care, and disciplined participation in shared routines. Second, open codes were grouped into value categories only when the behavior had a clear relational or communal consequence. This criterion distinguished social character from virtues that were primarily individual. Third, the analysis identified the educational mechanisms associated with each value, including textual explanation, contextual dialogue, exemplary conduct, habituation, supervision, reflection, and social reinforcement. The descriptions of these mechanisms were then compared across sources. Fourth, the categories were organized in an analytic matrix that linked textual value, contextual meaning, internalization mechanism, and expected social manifestation. The synthesis was checked against the primary text and compared with findings from empirical studies of *pesantren*. This procedure does not eliminate interpretive judgment, but it makes the basis of categorization transparent and reduces the risk of relying solely on the authors' impressions.

The analysis was conducted from an interpretive epistemological position. Moral values were not treated as self-explanatory variables that possess a single behavioral meaning independent of context. Instead, the review assumed that the social significance of a value emerges through the relationship between textual prescription, pedagogical interpretation, institutional practice, and the situations in which *santri* act. This position is important because the same visible behavior can arise from different forms of regulation. A respectful gesture, for example, may express internalized regard, strategic compliance, or imitation. The analysis therefore focused not only on what behavior is prescribed but also on the meanings and educational conditions through which that behavior is plausibly connected to character.

Analytic credibility was strengthened through source comparison and negative-case attention. Interpretations derived from the primary text were checked against empirical studies of *pesantren* character formation, while claims about internalization were deliberately qualified when the literature supported only instructional practice or short-term behavior. Contradictory possibilities were retained in the synthesis. For instance, habituation was interpreted as potentially formative when accompanied by understanding and reflection, but as potentially limited when conduct remained dependent on surveillance. This procedure was intended to reduce confirmation bias and to prevent the review from converting normative expectations into unobserved empirical effects.

Reflexivity was also necessary because the object of analysis is a normative Islamic text that already carries moral authority within many *pesantren* settings. The review

distinguishes respect for that normative status from the analytic task of explaining educational mechanisms. Consequently, the authors did not treat textual prescription as evidence that a corresponding social character has already formed. Interpretive claims were retained only when they could be linked to textual content and supported, qualified, or problematized by the reviewed literature. This distinction allows the study to affirm the educational significance of Akhlaq Lil Banin while remaining explicit about the evidentiary limits of a literature-based design.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

A close reading of Akhlaq Lil Banin Volume 1 shows that its moral instruction repeatedly addresses relationships rather than isolated personal traits. Adab is presented through concrete situations involving parents, teachers, siblings, friends, neighbors, and other people (Baraja, n.d.). When these units of meaning are screened using the relational criterion described in the method, six recurring value clusters emerge: respect, responsibility, honesty, polite communication, care, and discipline. These categories are not presented as the only virtues in the book; they are the values most directly connected with maintaining trust, dignity, cooperation, and order in communal life. Contemporary analysis of the text likewise positions its moral concepts as a basis for behavioral guidance (Abdurrohman et al., 2025). In the present review, however, the primary-text data are narrowed specifically to values whose consequences are visible in interpersonal and communal relations. This distinction separates moral knowledge in general from social character as its relational manifestation.

Table 1.
Mapping Akhlaq Lil Banin Values and *Santri* Social Character

Main Value	Social Behavior of <i>Santri</i>	Internalization Process
Respect	Polite conduct toward kiai, ustaz, parents, and peers	Advice, exemplarity, habituation of language and attitude
Responsibility	Carrying out dormitory duties and keeping trust	Assignments, rules, supervision, daily evaluation
Honesty	Telling the truth, admitting mistakes, maintaining trust	Moral reinforcement, amanah practice, self-control
Polite communication	Controlling speech and avoiding insult or harsh words	Teacher example, greeting culture, behavioral correction
Care	Helping friends, sharing, and preserving togetherness	Collective activities, cleaning duties, dormitory life
Discipline	Being punctual and orderly in <i>pesantren</i> routines	Schedule, habituation, reward and educational sanction

Source: Authors' synthesis from the close reading of (Baraja, n.d., Vol. 1) and triangulation with the reviewed literature.

The pedagogical position of Akhlaq Lil Banin becomes clearer when it is read alongside other adab texts used in Islamic learning traditions. The ethics and discipline of seeking knowledge receive sustained attention in Ta'lim al-Muta'allim (Al-Zarnuji, 1995). Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim elaborates responsibilities and manners within teacher-student relationships (Asy'ari, n.d.). Akhlaq Lil Banin shares this concern for adab but is distinctive in the simplicity and everyday range of its guidance for younger learners. Its moral lessons are presented through family, learning, friendship, and neighborhood situations. This comparison does not establish absolute uniqueness; rather, it clarifies the text's pedagogical accessibility and its suitability for translating moral principles into routine social behavior. *Pesantren* implementation of the text is strengthened through repetition and teacher modeling (Hubbi, 2022). Learning practices can also connect its moral lessons with *santri* formation in daily life (Jamaluddin & Farisi, 2024). Repeated guidance and educator exemplarity further reinforce the internalization process (Aziz & Makruf, 2025). Taken together, these findings support the view that the text acquires educational force through the social environment in which it is interpreted and practiced.

The first value is respect. In the focal text, respect is expressed through appropriate conduct toward parents, teachers, elders, and peers. Within *pesantren* life, its social meaning appears in listening attentively, asking permission, accepting correction without humiliating others, and using forms of speech that recognize the dignity of the person addressed. Respect is therefore treated here not as blind obedience but as a relational discipline that regulates how authority and companionship are negotiated in learning situations.

The second value is responsibility. Akhlaq Lil Banin connects proper conduct with fulfilling obligations and preserving trust. In a communal setting, responsibility becomes social character because an individual's choices affect other people: neglected cleaning duties burden roommates, lateness disrupts collective activities, and failure to keep an amanah weakens trust. The relevant outcome is thus not simply personal compliance but dependable participation in shared life.

The third value is honesty. Honesty has a direct relational function because it protects social trust. It is visible in telling the truth, admitting mistakes, respecting the rights of others, and maintaining an amanah. Honesty has also been identified as one of the Akhlaq Lil Banin values associated with *santri* social character in a *pesantren* setting (Hadi & Susilo, 2025). For the present synthesis, the important point is not simply that honesty is named as a virtue. It becomes social character when *santri* are expected to account for their actions and preserve the trust of other people.

The fourth value is polite communication. The text's concern with guarding speech becomes socially significant because language can either preserve or damage another person's dignity. In *pesantren*, this value includes avoiding insulting labels, humiliating jokes, harsh responses, and speech that exposes another person's faults. Its

contemporary importance is especially clear in peer interaction, where repeated verbal aggression can develop into conflict, exclusion, or bullying. Polite communication is therefore treated as an ethical practice of self-restraint in relation to others, not simply as formal courtesy.

The fifth value is care. Care is manifested when *santri* notice and respond to the needs of others, for example by assisting a sick friend, sharing resources, helping a peer who is struggling with study, or maintaining shared facilities. This relational orientation is strengthened by the residential character of *pesantren*, where repeated contact creates frequent opportunities to practice cooperation. Organized character-management routines can provide a practical structure for such shared responsibility (Nizarani et al., 2020). Residential education also offers continuing opportunities to rehearse social values in everyday life (Rochmania, 2022). In this review, those repeated encounters matter because they allow care to develop through concrete responses to other people's needs rather than remain an abstract moral ideal.

The sixth value is discipline. Although discipline can be understood as an individual capacity for self-control, it becomes a social character value when it protects collective order. *Pesantren* schedules coordinate prayer, study, cleaning, rest, and other shared activities; persistent lateness or disorder therefore affects more than the individual. The social dimension of discipline lies in the willingness to regulate personal impulses so that communal activities can proceed predictably and fairly. This interpretation explains why discipline is retained in the social character category even though it also has a personal moral dimension.

Discussion

Social Character Values in Akhlaq Lil Banin

The findings suggest that the contribution of Akhlaq Lil Banin should not be reduced to a list of familiar virtues. Respect, honesty, responsibility, care, disciplined conduct, and appropriate speech are found in many character education traditions; what matters here is the way the text gives these values a relational form that can be recognized in everyday conduct. The category of social character is therefore defined by consequence rather than by label. Honesty is included because it preserves trust, discipline because it sustains collective order, and self-restraint in speech because it protects another person's dignity. This criterion also addresses the potential overlap between personal morality and social character: a value may have a personal dimension, but it enters the present framework only when literature and the text show a clear interpersonal or communal expression.

Internalization Mechanisms within *Pesantren* Culture

Internalization is more than repetition, imitation, or compliance. Conceptually, it occurs when external moral instruction is understood, interpreted in relation to lived situations, accepted as a reason for action, and gradually used to regulate behavior even when direct instruction is absent. The five patterns identified in the literature, namely kitab learning, contextual dialogue, exemplary conduct, habituation, and supervision, are

best understood as mutually reinforcing mechanisms rather than rigid stages. They can be interpreted through the distinction among moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Lickona, 1991). Kitab learning and contextual explanation predominantly strengthen moral knowing. Exemplary conduct and reflective dialogue can support moral feeling by making the human consequences of a value visible. Habituation, supervision, and opportunities for responsible choice provide conditions for moral action. The relationship is recursive because action may generate reflection, while reflection can deepen subsequent understanding.

At the cognitive level, value transformation occurs when an *ustaz* explains the meaning of a passage, its moral purpose, and the limits of its application. *Bandongan*, *sorogan*, *halaqah*, and related kitab-learning practices provide access to the text, but access alone does not constitute internalization. These methods remain important for preserving *pesantren* scholarship and transmitting classical texts (Amir, 2020). Value transaction begins when the teacher connects a norm with situations *santri* face, such as borrowing a friend's belongings, responding to correction, joking without humiliating others, sharing duties, or deciding what to do after making a mistake. This contextual step converts a general instruction into a moral reason that can be understood within a concrete relationship. Akhlaq Lil Banin learning is more educationally complete when it reaches understanding, attitude, and behavior (A'yunin & Muhid, 2022). The transition from explanation to contextual judgment is therefore treated here as the point at which textual knowledge begins to acquire personal and social meaning.

Habituation and supervision provide the social conditions in which valued conduct is rehearsed, corrected, and potentially stabilized. Schedules, cleaning duties, queues, congregational activities, shared study, and dormitory etiquette repeatedly place *santri* in situations that require responsibility, patience, care, and self-restraint. *Pesantren* culture can support character formation because values are repeatedly experienced in daily activities (Rohdiana, 2023). Collective traditions can also strengthen discipline, brotherhood, and shared responsibility (Romdoni & Malihah, 2020). Appreciation of character values is strengthened when kitab learning is connected with *santri* habits (Putri, 2022). More broadly, *pesantren* can reinforce character when moral values are managed consistently across institutional practices (Saparwadi, 2024). Supervision adds feedback by identifying the social consequences of conduct and reinforcing responsible choices. Yet routine and supervision remain educationally incomplete if they produce behavior that disappears when external control is removed. The conceptual sequence proposed here therefore moves beyond repetition toward increasingly independent regulation of conduct.

Transinternalization and the difference from imitation. A critical distinction is required between seeing a moral example and making that value part of one's own character. In this article, trans internalization refers to the point at which a value communicated through instruction and interpersonal interaction becomes a personally endorsed standard that helps regulate conduct. Social cognitive theory explains how modeled conduct can attract attention, be cognitively represented, and support self-regulated action (Bandura, 2001). However, modeled behavior does not by itself

demonstrate internalization. The distinction among compliance, identification, and internalization clarifies why the same visible conduct may arise from different sources of regulation (Kelman, 1958). A *santri* may obey because sanctions are expected, copy a respected teacher because of attachment or admiration, or enact a value because its moral meaning has become congruent with a personally accepted standard. These processes may look similar in a supervised setting, but they are educationally different.

Exemplarity can therefore transform a textual value into social character only when several mediating conditions are present. First, the model must make the moral meaning of the text visible in a concrete relationship. When an *ustaz* corrects an error without humiliating the learner, keeps a promise, apologizes after a mistake, or treats a weaker student fairly, the *santri* can observe not only what to do but also what the value protects, such as dignity, trust, and justice. Second, there must be interpretive linkage between the observed conduct and the moral principle previously discussed in kitab learning. Without this linkage, the learner may copy a mannerism while failing to understand the value that organizes it. Third, the model must possess moral credibility. Consistency between what teachers teach and how they act gives the value affective plausibility; contradiction between verbal instruction and adult conduct can weaken that plausibility. Fourth, learners need opportunities to enact the same value through their own choices and to receive feedback about its consequences. Exemplarity becomes educationally significant when observation, meaning, practice, and reflection converge.

The value of respecting teachers illustrates this difference. At the level of imitation, a *santri* may reproduce visible conventions such as a lowered voice, a particular greeting, or a deferential posture because those forms are socially expected. Such behavior can be pedagogically useful, yet it is not sufficient evidence that respect has become character. Internalization requires moral knowing about why the teacher deserves appropriate regard and what limits respectful conduct should have; moral feeling in the form of gratitude, humility, and concern for the dignity of the relationship; and moral action that remains respectful even when the learner disagrees, receives criticism, or is outside immediate supervision. The more demanding test is therefore whether the underlying principle transfers to new situations. A *santri* who can disagree without ridicule, ask critical questions without contempt, and avoid humiliating a teacher or peer when authority is absent demonstrates a broader relational understanding than a learner who merely reproduces ceremonial signs in front of a *kiai*.

Guarding one's speech provides a second example. Knowledge consists not merely in memorizing a prohibition against harsh or harmful words but in recognizing that speech can injure dignity, break trust, and intensify conflict. Moral feeling develops when that recognition becomes affectively salient: the learner can anticipate another person's embarrassment, experience concern about the harm of ridicule, or feel responsibility after causing verbal injury. Moral action appears when the *santri* restrains a humiliating joke, corrects misinformation, apologizes after harmful speech, or refuses to amplify another person's embarrassment. Habituation may create repeated opportunities for this conduct, but true internalization is indicated conceptually when restraint is guided by an accepted moral reason rather than only by the presence of a supervisor. Thus, the

difference between habituation and internalization is not that one involves repetition and the other does not; repetition is often necessary, but internalization adds understanding, affective endorsement, and increasingly autonomous self-regulation.

This analysis also identifies failure conditions. Modeling without explanation can remain imitated; habituation without reflection can remain routine; supervision dominated by fear can remain compliance; and identification with a charismatic teacher can remain person-dependent if the learner cannot transfer the value beyond that relationship. Conversely, verbal explanation without opportunities for action can produce moral vocabulary without behavioral competence. The *pesantren* environment becomes analytically important because it can combine, reinforce, or contradict these partial mechanisms. Hidden curriculum operates through routines and institutional practices that continually communicate expectations about conduct (Homsiyah et al., 2026). *Pesantren* character education can therefore be understood as a culturally embedded learning ecosystem rather than as the outcome of a single lesson or text (Ma'arif & Arif, 2026). Internalization becomes more plausible when the same moral principle is encountered in the text, embodied by adults, supported by peer norms, rehearsed in daily routines, and revisited through reflection. This cross-context congruence explains why exemplary conduct can participate in trans internalization without being equated with it.

Integration with moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. The three dimensions of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action become analytically useful when they are connected to specific values and to the five internalization patterns identified in this review (Lickona, 1991). Moral knowing concerns the learner's ability to identify the value, understand its moral rationale, recognize relevant situations, and judge the likely consequences of alternative actions. Moral feeling concerns affective attachment to value, including empathy, conscience, respect for self and others, and willingness to accept moral responsibility. Moral action concerns the competence, intention, and repeated enactment required to put the value into practice. The five *pesantren* patterns do not correspond to these dimensions in a one-to-one manner. Kitab learning and contextual dialogue have a predominantly cognitive function but can also evoke feeling; exemplarity carries cognitive and affective meaning; habituation provides behavioral rehearsal; and supervision can support all three when it includes explanation, feedback, and reflection rather than punishment alone.

Table 2.
Integration of Akhlaq Lil Banin Values, Lickona's Dimensions, and Internalization Patterns

Value Example	Moral Knowing	Moral Feeling	Moral Action	Dominant Internalization Patterns
Respect for teachers	Understanding dignity, educational authority, and limits of respectful disagreement	Gratitude, humility, and concern for relational dignity	Listening, asking permission, disagreeing without ridicule, accepting correction responsibly Avoiding insults and humiliating jokes, correcting harmful speech, apologizing, responsible digital communication	Kitab learning + contextual dialogue; exemplarity; habituation; formative supervision
Guarding speech	Recognizing how words can harm dignity, trust, and communal harmony	Empathy, conscience, remorse after harm, and willingness to exercise restraint	Completing shared duties, protecting entrusted property or information, acting without repeated prompting	Contextual dialogue; educator modeling; peer feedback; habituation and reflection
Responsibilit/ amanah	Understanding obligations and the consequences of neglect for others	Sense of accountability and concern for those affected	Telling the truth, acknowledging mistakes, returning what is entrusted, resisting deceptive advantage	Kitab learning; assigned responsibilities; habituation; supervision followed by autonomy
Honesty	Knowing why truthfulness sustains trust and why concealment can injure others	Commitment to trustworthiness and willingness to admit fault		Dialogue around moral dilemmas; exemplarity; feedback; repeated responsible choice

Value Example	Moral Knowing	Moral Feeling	Moral Action	Dominant Internalization Patterns
Care	Recognizing others' needs and the communal significance of assistance	Empathy, compassion, and sensitivity to vulnerability	Helping sick or struggling peers, sharing resources, maintaining shared facilities	Exemplarity; dormitory interaction; collective activities; reflection on consequences
Discipline	Understanding the purpose of schedules and rules for collective order	Acceptance of fair limits and responsibility for group welfare	Punctual participation, orderly routines, self-control even when monitoring decreases	Habituation; consistent rules; supervision; gradual transfer to self-regulation

Source: Authors' conceptual synthesis based on (Baraja, n.d.). The analytical dimensions draw on (Lickona, 1991) and are interpreted through the reviewed *pesantren* literature.

The table clarifies that the same value can move through knowing, feeling, and action while being supported by different educational mechanisms. Respect for a teacher, for example, begins cognitively when *santri* understands why *adab* protects a relationship of learning rather than merely demanding ceremonial submission. It becomes affectively grounded when gratitude and concern for dignity make the norm personally meaningful. It becomes action when respectful conduct persists during correction, disagreement, or absence of direct monitoring. Guarding speech follows the same logic: learners first understand the social consequences of words, then develop empathy and conscience regarding those consequences, and finally regulate speech in face-to-face and digital situations. The five internalization patterns therefore describe the educational conditions under which Lickona's dimensions can develop, whereas knowing, feeling, and action describe dimensions of the learner's moral functioning. Conflating these two levels would obscure the mechanism.

The relationship is also recursive rather than strictly linear. A *santri* may perform a responsible action because of a routine before fully articulating its moral rationale; subsequent reflection on the effects of that action can deepen knowing and feeling. Conversely, a learner may understand a value intellectually but fail to enact it when peer pressure, anger, or personal interest become strong. This gap explains why moral knowing is necessary but insufficient, and why repeated opportunities for practice remain important. The crucial transition is not simply from one stage to the next but from externally organized experiences toward an increasingly integrated pattern in which judgment, affect, and action support one another. In this sense, habituation is most educational when it becomes a laboratory for moral choice rather than a mechanism for producing automatic conformity.

The *pesantren* context can strengthen or interrupt this integration. Formal kitab instruction may communicate respect and care, but dormitory routines, peer culture, disciplinary practices, and the conduct of adults can either reinforce or contradict the same values. A lesson on respectful speech gains credibility when teachers also correct students without humiliation, senior *santri* avoids abusive use of authority, and institutional rules protect the dignity of all residents. When the formal curriculum condemns ridicule, peer status is gained through humiliating jokes, learners receive competing moral signals. The mechanism proposed here therefore includes institutional congruence as an enabling condition: internalization becomes more plausible when text, model, routine, feedback, and peer norms point toward the same relational purpose.

Conceptual mechanism linking text, *pesantren* context, and social character.

The synthesis can now be stated as a clearer conceptual mechanism. The first component is normative input: Akhlaq Lil Banin supplies moral language, examples, and relational expectations. The second is semantic and contextual interpretation: kitab learning and dialogue clarify what a value means, why it matters, and which concrete situations activate it. The third is effective and normative validation: credible exemplarity, discussion of consequences, and emotionally meaningful relationships make the value worthy of endorsement rather than merely memorized. The fourth is guided enactment: routines, responsibilities, peer interaction, and supervised practice create repeated opportunities to perform the value. The fifth is feedback and reflection: learners encounter the consequences of their choices, receive corrections, and reconsider the relation between the textual principle and lived experience. The sixth is transfer and self-regulation: the learner increasingly applies the principle across situations, including those not directly scripted by the teacher and those in which supervision is reduced. Social character, in this framework, is the relatively stable relational pattern that emerges when these components become integrated.

This mechanism is causal only in a conceptual and conditional sense, not as an empirically demonstrated effect of the present review. Research on *pesantren* character formation supports a link between teaching methods and values practiced in daily activities (Andrianto et al., 2022). Repeated guidance and educator exemplarity have been associated more specifically with value internalization (Aziz & Makruf, 2025). Educator example also makes expected conduct visible within traditional *pesantren* interaction (Kosasih et al., 2023). Recent scholarship further conceptualizes *pesantren* character education as a culturally embedded learning ecosystem (Ma'arif & Arif, 2026). These studies make the proposed mechanism conceptually plausible, but the present review has not observed individual *santri* longitudinally or isolated the effect of Akhlaq Lil Banin from other influences. Each component should therefore be treated as an enabling or mediating condition rather than as a sufficient cause. Textual knowledge without credible models may remain abstract; a respected model without contextual explanation may produce person-dependent identification; routine without reflective feedback may produce compliance; and supportive instruction may be weakened by peer norms that reward contradictory behavior. The mechanism is strongest when these conditions align, but its actual behavioral effect remains a question for empirical testing.

The proposition that character formation should be evaluated through behavioral consistency requires a distinction between an empirical result and a conceptual indicator. This literature review does not establish that *santri* behavior is consistent, nor does it measure improvement. Instead, it proposes consistency as one criterion that future research may use to distinguish internalized character from situational compliance. Consistency has at least four dimensions. Temporal consistency concerns whether conduct is sustained across repeated occasions rather than appearing once. Cross-situational consistency concerns whether the value transfers from a formal lesson to dormitory, peer, family, or digital contexts. Regulatory autonomy concerns whether the conduct persists as direct supervision decreases. Value-conduct congruence concerns whether learners can explain the moral reason for their action in a way that corresponds with what they do. None of these dimensions is absolute; character does not imply flawless behavior. Rather, together they provide stronger evidence of internalization than a single compliant act observed under authority.

This criterion also changes how educational evaluation should be interpreted. A written test can show whether a *santri* recognizes the definition of respect or honesty, but it cannot by itself establish social character. Likewise, punctual attendance under strict surveillance can indicate behavioral compliance without revealing whether discipline has become self-regulation. Future empirical work should therefore combine sources of evidence: learners' explanations of moral dilemmas, observations across different situations, reports from teachers and dormitory supervisors, peer interaction, and longitudinal patterns of behavior. Such evidence could test whether the proposed sequence from knowing and contextual interpretation to affective endorsement, guided practice, reflection, and self-regulation occurs. The present review contributes the conceptual variables and expected relationships; it does not substitute conceptual plausibility for observed behavioral change.

Contemporary Transformation, Practical Implications, and Limitations

The contemporary relevance of Akhlaq Lil Banin lies in transforming the relational logic of its values for new contexts, not merely replacing an old example with a modern equivalent. A transformation keeps the moral purpose of a value stable while reconsidering the object, medium, scale, and consequences of action. Guarding speech, for instance, is not relevant to digital communication simply because a written message is another form of speech. The deeper continuity lies in the protection of dignity and trust. Digital media alter the conditions under which that purpose must be pursued because messages can be copied, forwarded, stored, detached from their original context, and exposed to audiences far beyond the initial interaction. The classical norm therefore requires contextual moral reasoning: the learner asks what it means to protect another person's dignity when communication is persistent, replicable, and potentially public. This is a transformation of the value's application rather than a claim that the classical text directly anticipated contemporary technology.

The prohibition against mocking peers illustrates the same point. In face-to-face interaction, ridicule may embarrass one person before a limited audience; in a digital

group, the same act can be preserved as text, image, or video and repeatedly recirculated. The moral object remains the dignity of the person, but the possible duration and reach of harm change. Accordingly, polite communication as social character involves more than avoiding offensive vocabulary. It includes refusing to forward humiliating content, resisting group pressure to amplify ridicule, correcting a harmful post, and considering whether humor depends on another person's loss of dignity. The values of Akhlaq Lil Banin retain educational relevance when they are connected with modern contexts rather than treated as historically closed prescriptions (Yugo & Muhardi, 2024). The present review extends this point through functional translation: educators identify the relational good protected by the original norm and then examine how new social conditions create different risks to that good.

Amanah undergoes a similar transformation. In a traditional example, trust may concern borrowed objects, assign duties, or promise. In contemporary interaction, entrusted information can be as morally significant as entrusted property. A private message, a personal story, a photograph, or information shared by parents, teachers, or peers can create an obligation not to expose, manipulate, or distribute it irresponsibly. The conceptual continuity is trustworthiness; the transformation lies in recognizing informational vulnerability as one of its modern objects. Honesty likewise extends from truthful speech to responsible verification before transmitting information. These applications are not independent additions to Akhlaq Lil Banin but contextual deductions from the relational functions identified in the text: preserving trust, protecting dignity, and accepting responsibility for the consequences of one's conduct.

The same interpretive method applies to social diversity. Respect should not be reduced to deference within a narrow hierarchy because *santri* also encounter people with different regional backgrounds, languages, educational experiences, and social positions. Care and polite communication can be interpreted as capacities for living constructively with difference, while honesty and responsibility provide conditions for trust across group boundaries. The social moral values of Akhlaq Lil Banin have been related to multicultural Islamic learning (Arianti et al., 2026). Read through the present framework, contemporary relevance therefore depends on extending the text's relational ethics to new situations without severing them from their Islamic moral foundation. The question for educators is not whether a modern problem is literally named in the book, but whether the moral purpose of a value can guide judgment in a new relational environment.

Practical implications. For teaching practice, the synthesis suggests an instructional cycle that makes the internalization mechanism explicit. First, the teacher identifies the moral principle contained in a selected passage and explains its textual meaning. Second, the class discusses a concrete social case in which the value is challenged, such as borrowing property, responding to criticism, managing a shared duty, handling a private message, or communicating in a digital group. Third, *santri* identify the possible consequences of different choices for trust, dignity, fairness, and communal order. Fourth, the same value is practiced through routine responsibilities or supervised interaction. Fifth, brief reflection asks learners to connect what happened with the moral

principle and to consider how they would respond when supervision is absent. This cycle is consistent with the view that moral learning should connect understanding, attitude, and behavior (A'yunin & Muhid, 2022). The same cycle should remain sensitive to learners' developmental characteristics (Hidayat & Qodat, 2026).

At the institutional level, coordination among kitab teachers, dormitory supervisors, senior *santri*, and *pesantren* leaders becomes important because learners interpret values through the total environment. Simple behavioral indicators may be used formatively, such as responsible completion of shared duties, respectful disagreement, acknowledgment of mistakes, care for common spaces, and protection of entrusted information. These indicators should not be converted into simplistic moral scores or treated as proof of stable character after a short observation. Their function is diagnostic: they can help identify whether explanation, modeling, practice, peer norms, or reflective feedback require strengthening. Organized institutional processes are central to *pesantren* character education (Nizarani et al., 2020). Consistent management of moral values can also reinforce the educational environment (Saparwadi, 2024). The present synthesis adds that organizational consistency matters because it reduces contradictions between what the text teaches and what the institution rewards in daily life.

Moral Agency, Authority, and Relational Respect

Reading respect as social character requires attention to the quality of the relationship in which respect is enacted. In *pesantren*, respect for kiai, ustaz, senior *santri*, parents, and peers is often expressed through recognizable conventions of speech and conduct. These conventions can support moral learning because they make relational boundaries visible, yet their educational meaning cannot be reduced to outward deference. The more significant question is whether *santri* understand what respectful conduct protects, including dignity, trust, the integrity of learning, and the possibility of correction without humiliation. Empirical work connecting Akhlaq Lil Banin with *santri* social character supports the importance of respect as a relational value (Hadi & Susilo, 2025). Research on *pesantren* character formation likewise shows that values become educationally meaningful through the interaction between learning methods and everyday practice (Andrianto et al., 2022). From this perspective, authority is not morally self-validating. Its pedagogical legitimacy is strengthened when authority is exercised consistently with the values it seeks to cultivate. Respect therefore becomes a reciprocal ethical structure: learners are expected to recognize legitimate guidance, while educators are expected to embody fairness, restraint, and concern for the learner's dignity. This interpretation prevents the concept from collapsing into simple obedience and keeps the focus on relational responsibility.

This distinction is particularly important because externally compliant behavior can resemble internalized character in highly structured environments. A *santri* may speak softly, arrive on time, or complete a duty because the behavior is expected and monitored. Such conduct can be pedagogically useful, but its presence does not reveal the source of regulation. Repeated guidance and educator exemplarity are important

components of value internalization (Aziz & Makruf, 2025), yet the present synthesis suggests that their effect depends on how learners interpret those experiences. If a rule is followed only to avoid correction, the behavior remains contingent on surveillance. If the same rule is understood as protecting another person's rights or sustaining a shared good, it acquires a different moral status. This is why the *pesantren* should be understood as a learning ecosystem rather than as a collection of isolated lessons (Ma'arif & Arif, 2026). The ethical force of a rule is produced through the convergence of explanation, example, peer response, routine, and reflection. A critical implication following strong discipline should not be inferred from visible order alone. Educational success is more plausibly indicated when learners can articulate moral reasons for their conduct and continue to act responsibly when the immediate pressure of authority is reduced.

Moral agencies also become visible when learners face disagreement, ambiguity, or competing obligations. Respectful social character is not tested only when the correct response is obvious and institutionally prescribed. It is tested when a *santri* must ask a difficult question, disagree with a senior, acknowledge an unfair situation, or balance loyalty to a peer with responsibility to tell the truth. In such moments, character involves judgment rather than mechanical conformity. The pedagogical task is therefore to create conditions in which *santri* can practice principled disagreement without contempt and receive correction without being stripped of agency. This does not weaken *adab*. Instead, it clarifies that *adab* concerns the moral form of interaction as well as the social position of the people involved. A learning environment that permits reasoned questions, proportionate correction, and reflective discussion can help learners distinguish respect from fear and responsibility from submission. For future empirical research, this distinction is analytically important because observations of silence, compliance, or punctuality should not automatically be coded as evidence of internalized respect or discipline. Researchers need to examine how learners interpret the situation, what moral reasons they provide, and whether the same relational principles remain visible when the authority structure changes.

Peer Culture, Hidden Curriculum, and Institutional Congruence

Peer culture is a second arena in which textual values acquire, lose, or change their practical meaning. *Santri* does not encounter Akhlaq Lil Banin only through formal explanation by teachers. They also interpret respect, honesty, care, and discipline through jokes, friendship groups, dormitory routines, informal sanctions, senior-junior relations, and everyday judgments about what conduct earns approval. Research on hidden curriculum in Islamic boarding schools highlights the formative role of routines and institutional practices that operate alongside formal instruction (Homsiyah et al., 2026). The ecosystem perspective similarly suggests that *pesantren* character education is sustained through interconnected cultural and pedagogical processes (Ma'arif & Arif, 2026). These insights shift the analytical focus from the question of whether a value is taught to the question of how that value circulates socially. A formal lesson may define ridicule as morally harmful, for example, while a peer group may reward humiliating humor as a sign of status. In that situation, the learner receives competing moral

messages. The hidden curriculum is therefore not automatically positive. It is an interpretive field in which institutional ideals can be reinforced, negotiated, or contradicted by everyday social practice.

This point is especially relevant to routines that are often treated as self-evident character-building. Shared cleaning, queues, congregational activities, study schedules, and dormitory responsibilities can create repeated opportunities for cooperation and self-regulation. *Pesantren* culture has been associated with the repeated experience of character values in daily activities (Rohdiana, 2023). Institutional coordination can turn recurring duties into practical opportunities for learners to assume responsibility toward others (Nizarani et al., 2020). Nevertheless, repetition does not determine the moral meaning of a routine. The same cleaning duty can be experienced as shared responsibility, as arbitrary punishment, or as an unequal burden shifted onto less powerful students. The difference lies in the social relations through which the routine is organized and interpreted. This requires educators to examine not only whether practice exists but also whether its implementation is congruent with the value it is supposed to teach. A routine intended to cultivate care, for instance, loses coherence if it permits humiliation of those who perform poorly. Similarly, discipline becomes ethically unstable when sanctions are unpredictable or disproportionately attached to status. Institutional consistency in character education therefore concerns the moral quality of implementation, not merely the regularity of enforcement.

Institutional congruence should also be distinguished from institutional uniformity. A healthy moral environment does not require every actor to use identical methods or every situation to produce the same response. It requires that diverse practices remain intelligible in relation to shared relational purposes such as dignity, trust, fairness, responsibility, and communal welfare. The philosophical and managerial importance of *pesantren* as an environment for character strengthening has been emphasized in recent work (Saparwadi, 2024). Building on that position, the present review interprets congruence as the absence of persistent contradictions between stated values and socially rewarded conduct. This definition creates room for reflexive institutional evaluation. Teachers, dormitory supervisors, senior *santri*, and leaders can ask whether disciplinary procedures model the same respectful communication expected from students, whether entrusted information is protected by adults as well as learners, and whether peer leadership reproduces care or merely reproduces hierarchy. Such questions are educationally significant because learners infer moral credibility from patterns of conduct. A value repeatedly contradicted by influential adults or peers may remain verbally recognizable while becoming socially implausible. The institutional task is therefore not to eliminate complexity, but to reduce avoidable contradictions that teach learners that moral language and actual practice belong to separate worlds.

Reflective Practice, Contextual Transfer, and Formative Assessment

Reflection is the mechanism that can connect repeated practice with increasingly autonomous judgment. Without reflection, habituation may stabilize useful conduct, but learners may have limited capacity to explain why conduct matters or to adapt it when

circumstances change. Studies of Akhlaq Lil Banin indicate that learning is pedagogically incomplete when textual understanding is not carried into attitude and conduct (A'yunin & Muhid, 2022). More recent work also stresses the importance of adapting character education to the developmental characteristics of learners (Hidayat & Qodat, 2026). These perspectives support a form of reflection that is concrete rather than abstract. After a conflict, shared duty, disciplinary incident, or act of assistance, educators can invite *santri* to reconstruct what happened, identify who was affected, connect the event with a textual value, and consider alternative responses. The purpose is not to demand a predetermined confession. It is to make the moral structure of experience available for interpretation. Such reflection can reveal gaps between what learners know and what they are able to enact. It can also expose tensions within the institution itself, including situations in which a rule was formally correct but implemented in a way that undermined dignity or trust. Reflection therefore operates in two directions: it supports learner self-regulation and provides feedback on the moral coherence of the educational environment.

Contextual transfer is particularly important in digital interaction because the medium changes the scale, persistence, and visibility of social consequences. The relevance of Akhlaq Lil Banin to modern educational contexts has been discussed in recent scholarship (Yugo & Muhardi, 2024). Recent analysis also frames these social moral values as ethical resources for learning across social and cultural difference (Arianti et al., 2026). The conceptual implication is not that classical examples should be mechanically rebelled as digital rules. Rather, learners need to identify the relational good protected by a value and reason about how that good is threatened in a different environment. Amanah can concern a private photograph or message as well as a borrowed object. Guarding speech can involve refusing to forward humiliating content, verifying information before transmission, and recognizing that an impulsive comment can reach audiences beyond the original conversation. Respect can require disagreement without public shaming, while care can involve noticing exclusion within online groups. These examples test whether learners can preserve moral purpose when the surface form of the situation changes. Contextual transfer is therefore a demanding indicator of internalization because it requires interpretation, not mere reproduction of a familiar script.

The same logic has implications for assessment. Character cannot be validly represented by a single score detached from context, because the meaning of conduct depends on situation, motive, relationship, and degree of external control. A formative approach should combine several kinds of evidence, including observation of routine participation, learner explanations of moral dilemmas, reflective conversations after significant events, peer interaction, and reports from educators who encounter *santri* in different settings. The purpose of triangulation is not to produce a definitive moral label for an individual. It is to identify patterns, contradictions, and developmental movements. A learner may, for example, demonstrate reliable responsibility in assigned duties but struggle to protect entrusted information in peer communication. Such variation is analytically useful because it shows where transfer has not yet occurred. The structured

narrative review approach used in this study is appropriate for generating these conceptual relationships, but it cannot determine their frequency or causal strength (Snyder, 2019). Future field studies should therefore treat the framework as a sensitizing structure rather than a ready-made measurement instrument. Multi-site and longitudinal designs could examine how moral reasoning, peer norms, institutional practices, and self-regulation interact over time, while qualitative inquiry can preserve the meanings that *santri* and educators attach to those processes.

Pedagogical mediation also requires attention to the moral messages carried by institutional practices that are rarely discussed explicitly in class. *Santri* learns what an institution values by observing which behaviors receive recognition, which forms of speech are tolerated, how mistakes are corrected, and whether rules are applied consistently across differences in status. These experiences matter because a formal lesson on dignity can be weakened when everyday interaction normalizes ridicule or public embarrassment. Research on the hidden curriculum in Islamic boarding schools shows that routines and institutional practices can participate directly in character formation (Homsiyah et al., 2026). This means that the educational task is not limited to explaining moral concepts accurately. It also involves examining whether the surrounding environment gives those concepts practical credibility. A culturally embedded ecosystem perspective likewise emphasizes that character education is sustained through interconnected practices rather than isolated teaching episodes (Ma'arif & Arif, 2026). From this perspective, ethical coherence becomes a pedagogical resource. When teachers, dormitory supervisors, peer leaders, and institutional rules communicate compatible expectations, *santri* encounter fewer contradictions between normative language and lived experience. Such coherence does not require uniform behavior in every situation. What matters is whether varied institutional responses can still be justified by the same ethical commitments to dignity, trust, fairness, and shared responsibility. This distinction is important because learners may reproduce institutional routines without necessarily endorsing the values those routines are intended to cultivate. Moral education therefore benefits when institutions periodically interpret their own practices, asking not only whether rules are followed but also what kinds of relationships those rules are producing.

Teacher mediation is equally important when a classical moral formulation must relate to situations that are unfamiliar to learners or morally ambiguous. A teacher who only supplies the correct answer can produce short-term compliance, whereas a teacher who asks learners to identify affected persons, competing responsibilities, and possible consequences creates space for moral judgment. Research on Akhlaq Lil Banin suggests that the educational value of textual study depends on how understanding is translated into dispositions and observable conduct (A'yunin & Muhid, 2022). The practical implication is that contextual discussion should not be treated as an optional addition to kitab instruction. It is one of the places where learners learn how to interpret a value when the surface features of a situation change. Recent work also emphasizes the need to adapt character education based on Akhlaq Lil Banin to learners' developmental characteristics (Hidayat & Qodat, 2026). Developmental responsiveness does not mean

diluting the normative content of the text. It means selecting examples, questions, and forms of reflection that learners can meaningfully evaluate at their level of social experience. For younger *santri*, this may involve concrete issues such as borrowing belongings, teasing, keeping promises, or completing shared duties. For older learners, discussion can move toward digital privacy, unequal peer power, public disagreement, misinformation, and responsibility for content circulated in group communication. Across these contexts, the criterion of successful mediation is not whether learners repeat a predetermined phrase, but whether they can explain the relational good protected by the value and use that understanding to justify a proportionate response.

This emphasis on ethical deliberation also strengthens the contemporary relevance of Akhlaq Lil Banin without requiring anachronistic claims about the text. Its values can remain educationally productive when educators distinguish between the enduring moral purpose of a norm and the changing social conditions in which that purpose must be enacted. Recent scholarship has examined how the moral logic of Akhlaq Lil Banin can be interpreted within present-day educational settings (Yugo & Muhandi, 2024). Such relevance becomes more convincing when it is demonstrated through reasoning rather than asserted through simple equivalence. For example, amanah can be interpreted in relation to entrusted digital information because the underlying issue remains trustworthiness, even though the object of trust has changed. Research linking the text's social moral values with multicultural Islamic learning also points to their potential significance in socially diverse settings (Arianti et al., 2026). These applications suggest that contextualization should preserve moral continuity while allowing situational judgment. Respect in a diverse environment cannot be reduced to ceremonial deference, just as care in digital interaction cannot be reduced to polite vocabulary. Learners need to consider audience, power, permanence, and the possible reach of harm. When a value can guide judgment across these changing conditions, its educational significance becomes more than textual familiarity. It becomes evidence, still requiring empirical investigation, that the learner is beginning to use a moral principle as a portable framework for social action. This is precisely the kind of transfer that future qualitative and longitudinal studies should examine through observation, reflective interviewing, and comparison across settings.

Analytical Propositions for Future Empirical Examination

The conceptual mechanism developed in this review can be translated into a set of propositions for future empirical work. The first proposition is that textual exposure alone will be a weak indicator of internalization unless *santri* can explain the relational purpose of a value and apply it to situations that differ from examples explicitly discussed in class. This proposition follows from the distinction between moral knowledge and socially transferable conduct. Studies that evaluate learning only through recall of definitions or rules risk measuring textual familiarity rather than character. A stronger design would compare what learners can explain, how they reason through unfamiliar social dilemmas, and how their conduct changes across settings.

The second proposition is that educator exemplarity will have greater formative significance when it is accompanied by interpretive linkage and opportunities for learner enactment. Observation can make a value visible, but internalization requires learners to understand what the modeled action protects and why it is morally relevant. Empirical research could therefore examine whether *santri* who receive explicit discussion of the meaning behind exemplary conduct shows greater transfer than those who encounter modeling without reflective dialogue. Evidence indicates that educator example and repeated guidance participate in value internalization (Aziz & Makruf, 2025). Evidence from *pesantren* research further indicates that character formation is shaped by the interaction between instructional arrangements and everyday enactment (Andrianto et al., 2022). The proposition therefore treats exemplarity as one enabling mechanism within a wider educational ecology rather than as an independent cause of character change.

The third proposition concerns institutional congruence. Internalization should be more plausible when formal teaching, adult conduct, peer norms, disciplinary practices, and routine activities communicate compatible moral expectations. Conversely, contradictory institutional signals may weaken transfer even when classroom instruction is clear. This proposition can be investigated through multi-site comparative designs that map the same value across kitab lessons, dormitory rules, peer interaction, and educator behavior. Recent descriptions of *pesantren* as a culturally embedded educational ecosystem support the importance of examining these interacting contexts rather than isolating one instructional technique (Ma'arif & Arif, 2026).

The fourth proposition concerns regulatory autonomy. A value is more plausibly internalized when corresponding conduct persists as direct monitoring decreases and when learners can justify their choices in terms of moral reasons rather than fear of sanction. Longitudinal observation would be especially useful here because a short, supervised episode cannot distinguish stable self-regulation from situational compliance. Researchers could combine observations, reflective interviews, peer reports, and teacher assessments to examine whether respectful communication, responsibility, honesty, care, and discipline remain visible across time and contexts. Such triangulation would not eliminate interpretation, but it would provide a stronger evidentiary basis than a single behavioral measure.

The fifth proposition concerns contemporary transfer. If the relational function of a value has been internalized, *santri* should be able to recognize its relevance in situations not literally described in the classical text, including digital communication and interaction across social differences. Protecting dignity, maintaining *amanah*, verifying information, and accepting responsibility for the consequences of communication are examples of how moral reasoning may extend into new environments. Recent scholarship supports the relevance of Akhlaq Lil Banin to contemporary educational contexts (Yugo & Muhardi, 2024). Multicultural scholarship further suggests that these values can orient conduct across socially diverse settings (Arianti et al., 2026). Together, these strands make contextual translation educationally plausible without implying that the classical text explicitly addresses every contemporary situation. Future studies

should therefore evaluate not only fidelity to traditional behavioral forms but also the learner's capacity to preserve the moral purpose of a value when the medium, audience, and social risk change.

Limitations. This review has several limitations. It is a structured narrative review rather than a systematic review, so the corpus is selective and does not support claims about the prevalence of findings across all *pesantren* research. The primary textual analysis is limited to Akhlaq Lil Banin Volume 1, while comparisons with al-Zarnuji and KH. Hasyim Asy'ari is intentionally brief. Social cognitive theory helps explain how observation and self-regulation can participate in learning (Bandura, 2001). Kelman's framework differentiates conduct driven by external pressure, attachment to a model, and personally endorsed standards (Kelman, 1958). The framework of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action provides a complementary lens for character development (Lickona, 1991). These conceptual lenses strengthen the explanation of possible mechanisms, but they do not constitute empirical verification in a specific *pesantren*. Most importantly, the proposed pathway linking textual values, interpretation, exemplarity, practice, reflection, and self-regulation have not been tested through direct observation, interviews, experimental comparison, or longitudinal behavioral data. The study can therefore explain conceptual plausibility and formulate testable relationships, but it cannot determine the magnitude, direction, or certainty of behavioral change.

CONCLUSION

This review identifies six Akhlaq Lil Banin values that can be meaningfully classified as social character values because they regulate relationships and communal life: respect, responsibility, honesty, polite communication, care, and discipline. Their significance does not rest on novelty as isolated virtues, but on the way the text presents moral conduct through concrete relations with parents, teachers, peers, and the surrounding community.

The main conceptual contribution is a mechanism that explains how textual values may move toward social character without equating teaching, imitation, habituation, and internalization. Moral instruction first provides normative meaning; contextual dialogue connects that meaning with concrete relationships; credible exemplarity gives the value affective and normative plausibility; habituation and supervised practice provide opportunities for enactment; and reflection plus social feedback support transfer toward increasingly autonomous self-regulation. Integrated with Lickona's moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, this mechanism clarifies that trans internalization occurs only when observed and repeated conduct becomes personally endorsed and transferable beyond immediate supervision, rather than remaining compliance or imitation.

Because the study is literature-based and focuses primarily on Volume 1, these relationships are proposed as a conceptual model rather than evidence of direct behavioral effects. Behavioral consistency is therefore treated as a future empirical indicator that includes temporal stability, cross-situational transfer, reduced dependence on supervision, and congruence between moral reasons and conduct. It is not treated as

an outcome measured in this study. For *pesantren* educators, the practical implication is to align kitab explanation, educator example, peer norms, daily routines, and reflective feedback. For researchers, the five propositions provide a basis for multi-site longitudinal tests of value transfer, including in digital interaction.

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