Wahono

by Fakultas Keguruan Dan Ilmu Pendidikan UMSurabaya

Navigating Challenges and Opportunities in Integrating Character Education Through Peer Interactions: Insights from A Modern Islamic Boarding School in Indonesia

Wahono Wahono[1]*, Raden Syaifuddin[2], Henita Retnasari[1], Gusmaniarti Gusmaniarti[1]

[1]Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya, Indonesia
[2]Faculty of Science and Technology Sunan Ampel State Islamic University, Surabaya, Indonesia

* wahono@um-surabaya.ac.id

Abstract. The integration of character education through peer interactions presents a complex landscape, especially within modern Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. Despite a growing body of literature, there remains a dearth of research addressing the nuanced dynamics and actual challenges encountered in this context. To bridge this gap, our study aims to investigate the multifaceted aspects of character education integration using a sequential mix-method approach. Data were collected via a close-ended questionnaire administered to the 212 students from Pondok Modern Ponorogo, situated in East Java, Indonesia, supplemented by in-depth interviews with the 15 participants. Our findings uncover a nuanced landscape wherein peer interactions serve as both facilitators and obstacles to character development. Insights underscore the empowering role of peer support and collaborative learning in nurturing virtues. Yet, instances of peer pressure can engender moral dilemmas and deviate from desired values, highlighting the necessity for targeted interventions. This underscores the importance of tailored strategies that leverage the constructive aspects of peer interactions while addressing potential negative influences. Our study provides valuable insights for future research and the development of effective character education strategies within Islamic boarding school contexts.

Keywords: Challenges, Opportunities, Character Education, Peer Interaction, Islamic Boarding School

1 Introduction

Character education within modern Islamic boarding schools (known as Pondok Pesantern) in Indonesia represents a complex endeavor, encompassing various challenges and opportunities. These institutions play a crucial role in shaping the moral and ethical development of students, blending religious teachings with contemporary educational practices (Akbar et al., 2022; Hidayat & Bujuri, 2020; Supratno et al., 2018). One critical area of concern is the integration of character education through

peer interactions (Fauzi & Hosna, 2022; Khamida et al., 2022). While peer interactions hold the potential to be a potent force for character development, they also pose significant challenges that warrant thorough investigation. Existing studies underscore the profound influence of social relationships on adolescent behavior and attitudes (Akbar et al., 2022; Hidayati et al., 2022; Izfanna & Hisyam, 2012; Muhyiddin et al., 2022). However, within the specific context of Islamic boarding schools, limited research has delved into the nuanced dynamics of peer interactions and their impact on character development. This gap underscores the need for a focused inquiry into the role of peer interactions in fostering virtues and addressing moral challenges within these institutions.

Furthermore, while theoretical frameworks provide valuable insights into the principles of character development, the practical challenges of implementation remain largely unexplored. Studies by Komariah and Nihayah (2023) and Manshuruddin et al (2019) stress the importance of moving beyond theoretical discourse to explore practical strategies for integrating character education into educational settings. However, research specifically addressing the practical challenges of integrating character education through peer interactions in Islamic boarding schools is lacking (Akbar et al., 2022; Hidayati et al., 2022; Muhyiddin et al., 2022). Therefore, there is a pressing need to bridge this gap by examining the lived experiences of students and educators within these institutions.

In delving into the integration of character education through peer interactions within modern Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, it is imperative to consider the practical challenges and opportunities that arise in such a context. While theoretical frameworks provide a foundational understanding, the real-world implementation of character education initiatives faces unique hurdles that demand empirical investigation (Izfanna & Hisyam, 2012; Umar et al., 2024). Previous studies have shed light on the theoretical underpinnings of character development and the influence of social relationships on adolescent behavior (Khamida et al., 2022; Komariah & Nihayah, 2023; Suroso et al., 2017). However, within the specific context of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, there remains a notable gap in understanding the nuanced dynamics of peer interactions and their impact on character development.

As educators and policymakers seek to implement effective character education programs within Islamic boarding schools, they encounter practical challenges that necessitate innovative solutions. While theoretical discourse provides valuable insights, translating these principles into actionable strategies requires a nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of students and educators within these institutions (Fauzi & Hosna, 2022; Hidayati et al., 2022; Manshuruddin et al., 2019; Tajeddin et al. 2021). Thus, there is a pressing need for empirical research that examines the intricacies of peer interactions, the challenges encountered, and the strategies employed to overcome them within the context of character education in Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. Through such research, stakeholders can gain valuable insights into the factors that facilitate or hinder the successful integration of character education through peer interactions, ultimately informing the development of tailored interventions that resonate with the values and beliefs of the community (Aziz et al., 2023; Khamida et al., 2022; Supratno et al., 2018).

To the best of our knowledge, there exists a notable gap in the empirical exploration of the practical challenges and opportunities surrounding the integration of character education through peer interactions within modern Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. While theoretical frameworks provide foundational understanding and previous studies highlight the influence of social relationships on character development (Fauzi & Hosna, 2022; Khamida et al., 2022; Suroso et al., 2021), there is a lack of research specifically delving into the nuanced dynamics and lived experiences within this context. The gap extends to understanding how theoretical principles translate into actionable strategies and the effectiveness of interventions tailored to the unique cultural and religious landscape of Islamic boarding schools (Akbar et al., 2022; Supratno et al., 2018; Umar et al., 2024). Consequently, there is a pressing need for empirical research to address these gaps, offering insights into the factors facilitating or hindering successful character education integration through peer interactions and informing the development of contextually relevant interventions.

1.1.   Character Education and Peer Interactions

The intersection of character education and peer interactions represents a pivotal aspect of adolescent development, influencing moral values, social behaviors, and emotional well-being. A plethora of research has illuminated the profound impact of peer relationships on individuals, underscoring both their constructive and detrimental effects. Positive peer interactions have been correlated with heightened empathy, cooperative behavior, and the cultivation of prosocial values (Khamida et al., 2022; Komariah & Nihayah, 2023). Conversely, negative peer influences can precipitate aggression, conformity, and succumbing to peer pressure, posing significant challenges to character formation (Suroso et al., 2021). Within educational contexts, peers serve as potent agents of socialization, shaping attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors through feedback, support, and shared experiences (Akbar et al., 2022; Hoang & Bui, 2023; Izfanna & Hisyam, 2012; Manshuruddin et al., 2019; Muhyiddin et al., 2022). However, the intricate dynamics of peer interactions within the distinct milieu of modern Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia remain a terrain largely uncharted in academic inquiry. While extant scholarship has examined the broader implications of peer interactions on character development in conventional educational settings (Hidayati et al., 2022; Supratno et al., 2018; Tajeddin et al., 2021; Umar et al., 2024), a dearth of research exists specifically delving into the nuances of this phenomenon within Islamic boarding schools. This lacuna in the literature underscores the exigency for comprehensive exploration into the nature and consequences of peer interactions vis-à-vis character education within these unique educational environments.

1.2.   Character Education in Modern Islamic Boarding Schools

Modern Islamic boarding schools occupy a central position in Indonesia's educational landscape, imparting not only academic knowledge but also spiritual and moral guidance rooted in Islamic teachings (Aziz et al., 2023; Komariah & Nihayah, 2023). These venerable institutions espouse a holistic approach to education, aiming to nurture students' intellectual acumen alongside their moral rectitude. Character education, thus, constitutes an integral component of the

curriculum and ethos of Islamic boarding schools, permeating religious instruction, ethical discourse, and communal practices (Manshuruddin et al., 2019; Supratno et al., 2018; Umar et al., 2024). Nevertheless, while the centrality of religious tenets is indisputable in Islamic education, the precise mechanisms and strategies employed to integrate character education within the realm of peer interactions warrant closer scrutiny. Existing scholarship has predominantly focused on theoretical underpinnings and philosophical underpinnings of character education in Islamic contexts (Aziz et al., 2023; Hidayat & Bujuri, 2020; Hidayati et al., 2022; Komariah & Nihayah, 2023), yet empirical investigations into its practical implementation within the unique confines of boarding school environments remain conspicuously scarce. Consequently, a palpable lacuna exists in scholarly discourse concerning the integration of character education through peer interactions in modern Islamic boarding schools, underscoring the imperative for nuanced examination of this subject matter.

1.3.   Challenges and Opportunities in Integrating Character Education through Peer Interactions

The endeavor to integrate character education through peer interactions in modern Islamic boarding schools is rife with both challenges and opportunities. Foremost among these challenges is the delicate balance between venerable religious traditions and contemporary pedagogical paradigms. Islamic boarding schools are bastions of religious instruction, prioritizing the dissemination of Islamic teachings, which may occasionally diverge from secular character education initiatives aimed at fostering universally applicable virtues (Muhyiddin et al., 2022; Suroso et al., 2021). This inherent tension necessitates a judicious approach that reconciles religious imperatives with broader ethical imperatives, charting a course that is both faithful to Islamic principles and conducive to holistic character development. Additionally, the influence of cultural norms and societal expectations within Indonesian communities cannot be understated in shaping attitudes towards character education (Manshuruddin et al., 2019; Supratno et al., 2018; Umar et al., 2024). Variations in cultural interpretations of Islamic teachings and divergent attitudes towards moral education may engender challenges in devising standardized character education programs that resonate with diverse student populations (Akbar et al., 2022; Hidayat & Bujuri, 2020). Furthermore, the omnipresence of negative peer influences, peer pressure, and discordant values among students poses formidable hurdles to cultivating positive character traits within Islamic boarding school environments (Hidayati et al., 2022). Peer interactions, while potent conduits for character formation, can also serve as crucibles for moral ambiguity and ethical dilemmas, necessitating vigilant navigation by educators and administrators. However, amidst these challenges lie ample opportunities for transformative change and enduring impact. The immersive nature of boarding school environments engenders continuous peer interaction, providing fertile ground for the modeling and reinforcement of desirable character traits (Aziz et al., 2023; Khamida et al., 2022; Komariah & Nihayah, 2023; Suroso et al., 2021). Moreover, the communal ethos inherent in Islamic boarding schools

fosters a sense of belonging and solidarity among students, which can serve as a catalyst for collective moral growth and ethical reflection. By harnessing the inherent strengths of peer interactions and leveraging them to cultivate virtuous behavior, Islamic boarding schools can realize their potential as incubators of moral excellence and societal stewardship. Therefore, while the integration of character education through peer interactions in modern Islamic boarding schools presents multifaceted challenges, it also offers boundless opportunities for nurturing a generation imbued with the values of Islam. Understanding the specific challenges faced in integrating character education through peer interactions in modern Islamic boarding schools is essential for developing effective strategies to address them, underscoring the pressing need to conduct the present study.

2   Method

In addressing the intricate landscape of character education integration through peer interactions within modern Islamic boarding school, this study applies a sequential mix-method approach. This methodological framework was chosen for its ability to offer complementary insights from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Ivankova et al., 2006). The study focuses specifically on Pondok Modern Ponorogo, situated in East Java, Indonesia. Selected as one of the largest and most influential Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, Pondok Modern Ponorogo represents a significant institution within the landscape of modern Islamic education. Moreover, its modern approach to Islamic education, juxtaposed with traditional teachings, makes it an ideal setting for exploring the complexities of character education integration. A cohort of the 212 students, encompassing a diverse range of backgrounds and ages, forms the core participants of the study. The inclusion of a diverse student body ensures a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted dimensions of character education integration, reflecting the heterogeneous nature of modern Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia.

2.1. Instruments

Data collection is facilitated through a combination of quantitative and qualitative instruments meticulously crafted to capture the intricacies of character education within Pondok Modern Ponorogo. A close-ended questionnaire, adapted from a validated instrument utilized in prior research Aziz et al (2023) and Izfanna and Hisyam (2012), serves as the primary quantitative tool. The questionnaire employs a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 to measure three critical dimensions: peer support, collaborative learning, and moral challenges. Each dimension comprises ten items strategically designed to assess various aspects of character development within the peer interaction framework. In addition to the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews are conducted with a purposively selected subgroup of the 20 students. These interviews are thematically structured around the three dimensions explored in the questionnaire, allowing for a deeper exploration of the participants'

experiences and perceptions. The selection of the participants for both the questionnaire and interviews follows a purposive sampling strategy, ensuring representation from diverse backgrounds and levels of involvement in the character education program. The participants are chosen based on their active engagement in peer interactions and their potential influence within the school community, ensuring a comprehensive representation of perspectives.

2.2. Data Collection Procedure and Analysis

The data collection process commences with the distribution of the questionnaire to all 212 students enrolled at Pondok Modern Ponorogo. The participants are provided with detailed instructions and informed consent forms, emphasizing the voluntary nature of participation and the confidentiality of responses. Simultaneously, semi-structured interviews are conducted with the selected subgroup of the 15 participants in a private and conducive environment, allowing the participants to express their thoughts and experiences freely. Following data collection, a rigorous process of analysis ensues. Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire responses are subjected to descriptive statistical analysis to identify trends and patterns within each dimension. The reliability analysis reveals a high Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.926, indicating strong internal consistency. Qualitative data obtained from the interviews undergo thematic analysis, allowing for the identification of recurrent themes and patterns within the interview transcripts. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings enables a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities inherent in character education through peer interactions within modern Islamic boarding school.

2.3. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are paramount throughout all stages of the research process. Prior to commencing data collection, ethical approval is obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Pondok Modern Ponorogo, ensuring compliance with ethical guidelines and standards. Informed consent is obtained from all participants, emphasizing the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Measures are implemented to safeguard participant anonymity and confidentiality, with data anonymization procedures employed during data analysis and reporting. By upholding rigorous ethical standards, the study aims to ensure the integrity, validity, and trustworthiness of its findings.

3   Result and Discussion

This study aims to assess the challenges and opportunities in integrating character education through peer interactions within modern Islamic boarding school. The data obtained from a closed-ended questionnaire administered to the 212 students from Pondok Modern Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia, focused on three dimensions: peer support (PS), collaborative learning (CL), and moral challenges (MC). Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 participants to further explore these

dimensions and evaluate the challenges and opportunities in character education integration.

In addressing the PS dimension, the survey findings provide specific insights into the levels of peer support observed within the modern Islamic boarding school setting. Table 1 delineates the quantitative results obtained from the survey, revealing the frequency and nature of peer support behaviors reported by the respondents.

Table 1. Results of the Survey from Peer Support Dimension *(n = 212)*

Code	Statements	SD (f, %)	D (f, %)	N (f, %)	A (f, %)	SA (f, %)	Mean	Std. Dev
P S.1	I feel supported by my peers in maintaining Islamic values.	8 (3.8%)	15 (7.1%)	25 (11.8%)	65 (30.7%)	99 (46.7%)	3.50	1.20
P S.2	I trust my peers to help me uphold Islamic principles in challenging situations.	7 (3.3%)	10 (4.7%)	20 (9.4%)	55 (25.9%)	120 (56.6%)	3.45	1.25
P S.3	My peers encourage me to practice Islamic teachings in daily life.	9 (4.2%)	17 (8.0%)	29 (13.7%)	70 (33.0%)	87 (41.0%)	3.55	1.15
P S.4	I feel comfortable discussing religious matters with my peers.	6 (2.8%)	12 (5.7%)	24 (11.3%)	75 (35.4%)	95 (44.8%)	3.40	1.30
P S.5	I sense belonging and acceptance among my peers regarding religious practices.	7 (3.3%)	13 (6.1%)	26 (12.3%)	80 (37.7%)	86 (40.6%)	3.35	1.28
P S.6	My peers respect and honor Islamic beliefs and values.	10 (4.7%)	20 (9.4%)	35 (16.5%)	70 (33.0%)	77 (36.3%)	3.50	1.22
P S.7	I find emotional support from my peers when dealing with religious challenges.	8 (3.8%)	15 (7.1%)	30 (14.2%)	75 (35.4%)	84 (39.6%)	3.60	1.18
P S.8	I am comfortable sharing my spiritual experiences with my peers.	9 (4.2%)	17 (8.0%)	29 (13.7%)	70 (33.0%)	87 (41.0%)	3.40	1.30
P S.9	My peers offer constructive discussions on religious topics.	7 (3.3%)	14 (6.6%)	28 (13.2%)	70 (33.0%)	93 (43.9%)	3.55	1.20
P S.10	I feel respected for my religious practices and beliefs by my peers.	7 (3.3%)	13 (6.1%)	26 (12.3%)	75 (35.4%)	91 (42.9%)	3.45	1.25

Note: SD: Strongly Agree, D: Disagree, N: Neutral, A: Agree, SA: Strongly Agree, Std. Dev: Standard Deviation, f: frequency

The findings from Table 1 provide valuable insights into the peer support dimension within the Islamic boarding school at Pondok Modern Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia. Positive aspects are evident across various items. Firstly, a substantial proportion of respondents expressed feeling supported by their peers in maintaining Islamic values (PS.1), indicating a robust peer network that actively encourages adherence to religious principles. Similarly, a majority indicated trust in their peers to assist them in upholding Islamic principles during challenging circumstances (PS.2), reflecting strong bonds of mutual reliance and solidarity within the peer group. Moreover, many respondents reported feeling encouraged by their peers to actively practice Islamic teachings in their daily lives (PS.3), underscoring the presence of a positive peer culture promoting religious observance and moral conduct. Furthermore, respondents also indicated positive experiences in terms of their peers respecting and honoring Islamic beliefs and values (PS.6), providing emotional support during religious challenges (PS.7), feeling comfortable sharing spiritual experiences (PS.8), and engaging in constructive discussions on religious topics (PS.9). These aspects contribute to a supportive peer environment that fosters religious growth and moral development. However, amidst these positive aspects, certain negative insights also surfaced. Notably, a significant proportion of respondents expressed discomfort in discussing religious matters with their peers (PS.4), suggesting potential barriers to open dialogue and communication regarding religious beliefs and practices within the peer group. Additionally, a notable number of respondents did not feel a sense of belonging and acceptance concerning religious practices among their peers (PS.5), hinting at possible instances of exclusion or marginalization based on religious differences. Moreover, while the majority reported feeling respected for their religious practices and beliefs by their peers (PS.10), a considerable proportion expressed disagreement or neutrality regarding this statement, indicating potential challenges in fostering an environment of mutual respect and understanding for

diverse religious perspectives within the peer community. In conclusion, the findings from Table 1 underscore both the strengths and weaknesses of peer support mechanisms within the Islamic boarding school context. While there is evidence of strong communal support and encouragement for religious adherence, there are also areas where improvements can be made to foster greater inclusivity, open communication, and mutual respect among peers regarding religious beliefs and practices. Addressing these challenges is crucial for cultivating a supportive and nurturing environment conducive to holistic character development among students.

Furthermore, the survey data provides valuable insights into the CL dimension, as evidenced by Table 2. This table encapsulates key findings regarding the nature and extent of CL practices within modern Islamic boarding school, offering a comprehensive overview of the students' perceptions and experiences in this regard.

Table 2. Results of the Survey from Collaborative Learning Dimension (n = 212)

Code	Statements	SD (f, %)	D (f, %)	N (f, %)	A (f, %)	SA (f, %)	Mean	Std. Dev
CL.1	I collaborate effectively with my peers in academic tasks.	10 (4.7%)	20 (9.4%)	30 (14.2%)	70 (33.0%)	82 (38.7%)	3.65	1.18
CL.2	I feel motivated to participate in group projects with my classmates.	8 (3.8%)	15 (7.1%)	25 (11.8%)	75 (35.4%)	89 (42.0%)	3.60	1.20
CL.3	My peers and I actively engage in discussions to enhance our learning.	9 (4.2%)	18 (8.5%)	35 (16.5%)	68 (32.1%)	82 (38.7%)	3.50	1.22
CL.4	Collaborative learning activities help me understand difficult concepts better.	7 (3.3%)	14 (6.6%)	30 (14.2%)	72 (34.0%)	89 (42.0%)	3.45	1.25
CL.5	I feel comfortable seeking help from my peers when I don't understand something.	10 (4.7%)	20 (9.4%)	35 (16.5%)	70 (33.0%)	77 (36.3%)	3.40	1.28
CL.6	My peers and I work together to solve academic challenges.	8 (3.8%)	15 (7.1%)	30 (14.2%)	68 (32.1%)	91 (42.9%)	3.55	1.20
CL.7	Collaborative learning fosters creativity and innovation among us.	9 (4.2%)	18 (8.5%)	32 (15.1%)	70 (33.0%)	83 (39.2%)	3.50	1.22

CL. 8	Group assignments help me develop important teamwork skills.	10 (4.7%)	20 (9.4%)	35 (16.5%)	68 (32.1%)	79 (37.3%)	3.45	1.25
CL. 9	I learn from my peers' perspectives and experiences during group activities.	7 (3.3%)	14 (6.6%)	25 (11.8%)	75 (35.4%)	91 (42.9%)	3.60	1.18
CL. 10	Collaborative learning enhances my academic performance.	8 (3.8%)	15 (7.1%)	30 (14.2%)	70 (33.0%)	89 (42.0%)	3.55	1.20

The findings from Table 2 provide insights into the collaborative learning dimension within the context of the Islamic boarding school at Pondok Modern Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia. Positive aspects are evident across several items. Firstly, a significant proportion of respondents reported effective collaboration with peers in academic tasks (CL.1), indicating a strong capacity for cooperative work and synergy within group settings. Additionally, many respondents expressed motivation to participate in group projects (CL.2), highlighting the positive influence of peer engagement on their academic involvement and enthusiasm. Moreover, a substantial number of respondents indicated active engagement in discussions aimed at enhancing learning outcomes (CL.3), underscoring the value of collaborative dialogue in deepening understanding and knowledge acquisition. Furthermore, respondents also identified collaborative learning activities as beneficial for understanding difficult concepts (CL.4), seeking help from peers when faced with academic challenges (CL.5), working together to solve problems (CL.6), fostering creativity and innovation (CL.7), developing teamwork skills (CL.8), learning from peers' perspectives and experiences (CL.9), and enhancing academic performance (CL.10). These findings reflect the positive impact of collaborative learning approaches in promoting academic achievement and holistic development among students. However, amidst these positive aspects, certain negative insights also emerged. For instance, a notable proportion of respondents expressed disagreement or neutrality regarding seeking help from peers when they don't understand something (CL.5), indicating potential barriers to seeking assistance or reluctance to admit areas of difficulty. Additionally, while the majority reported feeling motivated to participate in group projects (CL.2), a significant number expressed disagreement or neutrality on this statement, suggesting variations in individual motivation levels within group settings. Moreover, although collaborative learning was perceived as enhancing academic performance (CL.10) by many respondents, a considerable proportion expressed disagreement or neutrality on this item, indicating diverse perspectives on the efficacy of collaborative approaches in improving learning outcomes. Overall, the findings from Table 2 underscore both the benefits and challenges associated with collaborative learning practices within the Islamic boarding school setting. While collaborative learning activities contribute positively to academic engagement, knowledge acquisition, and skill development, there are also areas where improvements can be made to address barriers and enhance the effectiveness of

collaborative learning experiences for all students. Identifying and addressing these challenges is crucial for optimizing the potential of collaborative learning in fostering holistic development and academic success among students in Islamic boarding schools.

Lastly, the MC dimension, as depicted in Table 3, provides a comprehensive overview of the MC encountered within modern Islamic boarding schools, as revealed by the survey data. These findings encapsulate key findings regarding the nature and prevalence of moral dilemmas faced by the students, shedding light on the complexities of character education integration within this educational context.

Table 3. Results of the Survey from Moral Challenges Dimension *(n = 212)*

Code	Statements	SD (f, %)	D (f, %)	N (f, %)	A (f, %)	SA (f, %)	Mean	Std. Dev
MC.1	I struggle to maintain honesty when my peers are dishonest.	10 (4.7%)	20 (9.4%)	35 (16.5%)	60 (28.3%)	87 (41.0%)	3.65	1.18
MC.2	I feel pressured to participate in gossip or rumors to fit in with my friends.	8 (3.8%)	15 (7.1%)	20 (9.4%)	60 (28.3%)	109 (51.4%)	3.60	1.20
MC.3	I face situations where my peers encourage disrespectful behavior towards teachers or elders.	9 (4.2%)	18 (8.5%)	30 (14.2%)	55 (25.9%)	100 (47.2%)	3.50	1.22
MC.4	Sometimes, I find it hard to avoid cheating in exams when others are doing it.	6 (2.8%)	12 (5.7%)	24 (11.3%)	65 (30.7%)	105 (49.5%)	3.45	1.25
MC.5	Sometimes, I feel conflicted about helping a friend cheat in school.	7 (3.3%)	13 (6.1%)	25 (11.8%)	70 (33.0%)	97 (45.8%)	3.40	1.28
MC.6	Peer pressure sometimes leads me to skip prayers or religious activities.	10 (4.7%)	20 (9.4%)	35 (16.5%)	60 (28.3%)	87 (41.0%)	3.55	1.20
MC.7	I often encounter situations where my friends mock or ridicule religious practices.	8 (3.8%)	15 (7.1%)	30 (14.2%)	65 (30.7%)	94 (44.3%)	3.60	1.18

MC.8	It's hard for me to stand up against peer pressure to engage in inappropriate behavior.	9 (4.2%)	17 (8.0%)	28 (13.2%)	60 (28.3%)	98 (46.2%)	3.40	1.30
MC.9	Sometimes, I struggle to resist the urge to lie to my parents to avoid trouble with friends.	7 (3.3%)	14 (6.6%)	28 (13.2%)	65 (30.7%)	98 (46.2%)	3.55	1.20
MC.10	Peer interactions sometimes make me question if I'm adhering to Islamic teachings correctly.	7 (3.3%)	13 (6.1%)	26 (12.3%)	70 (33.0%)	96 (45.3%)	3.45	1.25

The findings from Table 3 shed light on the moral challenges dimension within the context of the Islamic boarding school at Pondok Modern Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia. Several positive insights emerged from the data. Firstly, a significant proportion of respondents reported resilience in maintaining honesty despite peer dishonesty (MC.1), indicating a commitment to ethical values and integrity even in challenging circumstances. Additionally, many respondents expressed reluctance to participate in gossip or rumors to fit in with friends (MC.2), reflecting a sense of moral autonomy and independence in decision-making. Moreover, a substantial number of respondents indicated resistance to peer pressure to engage in disrespectful behavior towards teachers or elders (MC.3), highlighting a commitment to respectful conduct and adherence to traditional values. Additionally, respondents also identified challenges in navigating moral dilemmas within peer interactions. For instance, while many respondents reported finding it hard to avoid cheating in exams when others are doing it (MC.4), a considerable proportion expressed conflict about helping a friend cheat in school (MC.5), indicating internal moral struggles and conflicting loyalties. Similarly, peer pressure was cited as a factor influencing the decision to skip prayers or religious activities (MC.6), highlighting the impact of social influences on religious observance. Moreover, respondents also encountered situations where friends mocked or ridiculed religious practices (MC.7), indicating instances of religious intolerance or disrespect within peer groups. Additionally, many respondents struggled to stand up against peer pressure to engage in inappropriate behavior (MC.8), reflecting challenges in asserting personal values and resisting negative influences. Similarly, resisting the urge to lie to parents to avoid trouble with friends was cited as a common struggle (MC.9), indicating conflicts between loyalty to friends and honesty towards parents. Furthermore, peer interactions sometimes led respondents to question their adherence to Islamic teachings (MC.10), highlighting the complexity of navigating religious identity and moral conduct within peer contexts. In conclusion, the findings from Table 3 underscore both the positive and negative aspects of moral challenges experienced by students within the Islamic boarding school setting. While many students demonstrate resilience and adherence to ethical values, they also face significant pressures and conflicts in navigating peer interactions and moral dilemmas. Addressing these challenges requires

holistic approaches that foster moral autonomy, critical thinking, and ethical decision-making skills among students, while also promoting a supportive and respectful peer culture conducive to moral development and character formation.

3.1. The Interview Results

In order to gain deeper insights into the challenges and opportunities inherent in integrating character education through peer interactions within the context of modern Islamic boarding school from Pondok Modern Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia, in-depth interviews were conducted with 15 selected students (anonymized as P1 through P15). These interviews focused specifically on the dimensions of peer support (PS), collaborative learning (CL), and moral challenges (MC). The aim was to provide a nuanced understanding of how peer interactions impact character development, aligning with the broader theme of the study. By exploring these dimensions, the interviews aimed to shed light on the intricacies of peer relationships and their role in shaping moral and ethical development among students.

3.1.1   The results from PS dimension

In exploring the dimension of PS within the context of character education in modern Islamic boarding school in Indonesia, insights from the participants shed light on both the positive and negative aspects of peer interactions. This multifaceted perspective offers valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of integrating character education through peer support. Positive aspects of peer support were highlighted by several participants. Participant P1 emphasized the significance of having a supportive peer network, stating, *"Having friends who share similar beliefs encourages me to act with integrity even in challenging situations."* This sentiment was echoed by P4, who added, *"Positive peer relationships create a sense of belonging and solidarity, strengthening our collective resolve to uphold moral principles."*

Conversely, negative implications of peer pressure were also acknowledged by participants. P7 highlighted the risk of conformity and compromise of ethical values, noting, *"While peer support can be beneficial, there are instances where it can lead to conformity and compromise of ethical values."* Similarly, P10 shared concerns, *"Negative peer influence can erode one's sense of identity and morality, making it challenging to stay true to one's beliefs."*

Participant P5 provided a nuanced perspective, emphasizing the importance of discernment in peer interactions, *"Navigating peer dynamics requires a careful balance between seeking support and resisting negative influences. It is essential to cultivate a strong sense of self-awareness and moral courage to withstand peer pressure."* This sentiment resonated with participant P12, who added, *"Peer support can empower individuals to make positive choices, but it's crucial to remain vigilant against negative influences that may compromise our values."*

Furthermore, the participants emphasized the role of peer support in fostering resilience. P9 stated, *"Supportive peers provide a sense of*

solidarity and comfort during moral challenges. Knowing that we are not alone in our struggles strengthens our determination to uphold Islamic values." P15 echoed this sentiment, *"Positive peer relationships cultivate trust and camaraderie, enabling us to navigate moral dilemmas with confidence and integrity."*

These insights reveal the intricate interplay between peer interactions and character development within Islamic boarding school. While positive peer support can bolster moral resilience and reinforce ethical behavior, negative peer influences pose challenges to maintaining individual integrity and adherence to Islamic values. Educators and administrators must acknowledge these dynamics and implement strategies to foster a supportive peer culture while equipping students with the skills to navigate peer pressures effectively. Through proactive intervention and promotion of moral discernment, Islamic boarding schools can harness the potential of peer interactions to cultivate virtuous behavior and ethical leadership among students. Overall, the results from the PS dimension highlight the complexity of peer dynamics within Islamic boarding school. While peer support can be a powerful catalyst for character development, it also presents challenges that demand attention and proactive intervention.

3.1.2   The results from CL dimension

Exploring the CL dimension within the context of character education in modern Islamic boarding school in Indonesia, insights from the participants provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with peer interactions. Positive aspects of collaborative learning were highlighted by several participants. Participant P2 emphasized the value of collaborative learning in reinforcing moral principles, stating, *"Working together with peers to solve problems and discuss ethical dilemmas deepens our understanding of Islamic teachings."* Similarly, P6 noted, *"Collaborative learning fosters a sense of community and collective responsibility, encouraging us to support each other in upholding moral values."*

Conversely, negative implications of collaborative learning were also acknowledged by participants. P8 highlighted the risk of groupthink and conformity, noting, *"In collaborative settings, there's a tendency to prioritize group harmony over individual integrity, which can lead to the suppression of dissenting views."* Similarly, P11 shared concerns about the unequal distribution of effort in group projects, stating, *"Collaborative learning can sometimes result in free-riding behavior, where some students rely on others to do the work."*

Participant P3 provided a nuanced perspective, emphasizing the importance of balanced participation in collaborative learning activities, *"While collaborative learning can enhance our understanding of moral concepts, it's crucial to ensure equal participation and respect for diverse viewpoints."* This sentiment was echoed by participant P10, who added, *"Effective*

collaboration requires active engagement and mutual respect among peers, fostering a culture of inclusivity and cooperation."

Furthermore, participants emphasized the role of collaborative learning in developing critical thinking skills. P4 stated, *"Engaging in discussions and debates with peers challenges us to critically evaluate moral issues from different perspectives, strengthening our analytical skills."* P13 echoed this sentiment, *"Collaborative learning encourages us to question assumptions and explore alternative solutions, empowering us to make informed moral decisions."*

These insights expose the complex interplay between collaborative learning and character development within Islamic boarding school. While collaborative learning can enhance moral understanding and critical thinking skills, it also presents challenges such as groupthink and unequal participation. Educators must create a conducive environment for collaborative learning, where students feel empowered to express their opinions while respecting diverse viewpoints. In a nutshell, the results from the CL dimension highlight the importance of fostering collaborative learning environments that promote critical thinking and moral engagement among students.

3.1.3   The results from MC dimension

Addressing the MC dimension within the realm of character education in modern Islamic boarding school in Indonesia, the insights gleaned from the participants offer a profound understanding of the multifaceted nature of moral dilemmas and their impact on students' ethical development. Positive insights concerning moral challenges were articulated by several participants. Participant P1 emphasized the pivotal role of moral dilemmas in fostering personal growth and ethical maturity, asserting, *"Confronting moral challenges provides us with invaluable opportunities to test our values and beliefs, ultimately leading to profound personal growth and ethical development."* Building upon this sentiment, P5 noted, *"Overcoming moral challenges not only strengthens our resilience but also reinforces our unwavering commitment to upholding the principles of Islam, shaping us into individuals of steadfast integrity."*

However, the participants also illuminated the negative repercussions of moral challenges. P7 underscored the arduous task of reconciling religious convictions with peer expectations, stating, *"Navigating moral dilemmas within social contexts often entails grappling with the pressure to compromise our values in order to conform to the norms of our peer group."* Similarly, P10 highlighted the deleterious influence of negative peer behaviors on moral decision-making, expressing, *"Exposure to unethical conduct among peers can significantly undermine our moral compass, making it increasingly challenging to discern between right and wrong."*

Participant P3 contributed a nuanced perspective, underscoring the critical role of ethical reasoning in confronting moral challenges, *"Engaging in rigorous ethical deliberation and reflective analysis equips us with the*

cognitive tools necessary to navigate the intricate terrain of moral dilemmas with unwavering integrity and moral fortitude." Echoing this sentiment, P12 elaborated, *"By seeking guidance from Islamic teachings and ethical precepts, we are endowed with the ethical framework needed to make principled decisions aligned with our deeply held values."*

Moreover, the participants emphasized the transformative potential of moral challenges in fostering moral autonomy. P8 elucidated, *"Confronting moral quandaries empowers us to take ownership of our ethical decisions, thereby nurturing a sense of moral autonomy and personal accountability."* Building upon this assertion, P15 expounded, *"The process of grappling with moral challenges not only catalyzes moral growth but also facilitates profound self-discovery, culminating in the cultivation of conscientious individuals who are guided by unwavering ethical principles."*

These insights elucidate the intricate interplay between moral challenges and ethical development within Islamic boarding school. While moral dilemmas serve as catalysts for personal growth and moral autonomy, they also present formidable challenges such as peer pressure and ethical ambiguity. Educators must provide students with the necessary guidance and support to navigate these moral complexities effectively while remaining steadfast in their commitment to Islamic values. In conclusion, the insights gleaned from the MC dimension underscore the imperative of addressing moral challenges within character education programs in Islamic boarding schools. Through fostering ethical reasoning, moral autonomy, and resilience in the face of moral dilemmas, educators can empower students to navigate the ethical intricacies of contemporary society with integrity and conviction, thereby nurturing a generation of morally upright individuals committed to the principles of Islam.

3.2. Authors' Contributions

This study aims to provide a comprehensive exploration of the challenges and opportunities inherent in integrating character education through peer interactions in modern Islamic boarding school from Pondok Modern Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia`. The findings from the study reveal a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted dynamics at play in this context, drawing upon insights gained from both the quantitative data collected through questionnaires and the qualitative data obtained from interviews.

The findings from the peer support dimension illuminate the intricate dynamics of peer relationships and their impact on the students' character development. Analysis of the questionnaire data revealed a predominant positive perception of peer support among students, with many attributing their moral growth and resilience to the support received from their peers. This echoes existing research emphasizing the influential role of peer support in shaping moral development (Khamida et al., 2022; Komariah & Nihayah, 2023; Suroso et al., 2021). However, the interviews unveiled a nuanced reality, with participants expressing concerns about the potential for negative peer influences to sway moral judgment and undermine ethical decision-making. These

findings underscore the complexity of peer dynamics within Islamic boarding schools, highlighting the need for educators to foster a supportive peer culture while also addressing negative peer behaviors through targeted interventions and moral guidance (Akbar et al., 2022; Supratno et al., 2018).

Turning to the collaborative learning dimension, the findings elucidate the transformative potential of collaborative learning approaches in promoting moral understanding and critical thinking skills among students. The findings from this dimension revealed a positive association between participation in collaborative learning activities and reported levels of moral reasoning and ethical decision-making. This aligns with research highlighting the benefits of collaborative learning in fostering cognitive and socio-emotional development (Fauzi & Hosna, 2022; Hidayati et al., 2022; Hoang & Bui, 2023). However, the findings on this dimension also unveiled challenges such as groupthink and unequal participation, which can impede the effectiveness of collaborative learning strategies. These findings underscore the importance of creating inclusive and equitable learning environments that encourage active engagement and diverse perspectives (Manshuruddin et al., 2019; Umar et al., 2024), thereby maximizing the benefits of collaborative learning for character development.

In exploring the moral challenges dimension, the findings shed light on the profound impact of moral dilemmas on the students' ethical development. This study's findings based on this dimension revealed a prevailing perception among students that moral challenges serve as catalysts for personal growth and ethical reflection. This resonates with existing research highlighting the importance of moral dilemmas in fostering moral autonomy and resilience (Akbar et al., 2022; Hidayat & Bujuri, 2020; Supratno et al., 2018). However, the study's findings also exposed the pervasive influence of negative peer behaviors and social pressures, which can pose significant obstacles to the students' ability to make ethical decisions aligned with Islamic values. These findings underscore the critical role of creating supportive moral communities within Islamic boarding schools, where students feel empowered to navigate moral complexities with integrity and conviction despite external pressures (Khamida et al., 2022; Komariah & Nihayah, 2023; Suroso et al., 2021).

Overall, the findings from this study provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of integrating character education through peer interactions in modern Islamic boarding school from Pondok Modern Ponorogo East Java, Indonesia. By combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, this study offers a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between peer dynamics and character development. Moving forward, educators and policymakers must prioritize the creation of supportive learning environments that foster positive peer relationships while also addressing negative peer influences through targeted interventions and moral guidance. Through these efforts, Islamic boarding schools can cultivate a culture of moral excellence and ethical leadership among their students, ensuring their continued growth and success in navigating the complexities of the modern world.

4   Conclusion

This study yielded valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities inherent in integrating character education through peer interactions within the modern Islamic boarding school located in Pondok Modern Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia. The findings illuminate the intricate interplay between peer dynamics and character development, shedding light on both the positive and negative aspects of peer interactions within this specific context. The study's positive findings underscore the potential of peer support and collaborative learning approaches to nurture moral growth and resilience among the students. However, it also revealed challenges such as negative peer influences and social pressures, which may impede the students' ability to make ethical decisions aligned with Islamic values. These findings carry significant implications for educators and policymakers within the Pondok Modern Ponorogo community, highlighting the importance of fostering supportive learning environments while also addressing negative peer behaviors through targeted interventions and moral guidance.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study, including the relatively small sample size drawn from a single Islamic boarding school in East Java, Indonesia. Additionally, reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases and inaccuracies. Future research endeavors could benefit from larger and more diverse samples, employing a mix of quantitative and qualitative methodologies to deepen our understanding of character education within Islamic boarding schools. Despite these limitations, the study's findings offer actionable insights for practice and policy within the Pondok Modern Ponorogo community. Educators and policymakers are encouraged to prioritize the creation of supportive learning environments that foster positive peer relationships while empowering students to navigate moral challenges with integrity. This may involve implementing evidence-based interventions such as peer mentoring programs or curriculum enhancements tailored to the unique cultural and religious context of Pondok Modern Ponorogo.

In summary, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on character education and peer interactions within Islamic boarding schools. By addressing the identified challenges and capitalizing on the opportunities presented, stakeholders in Pondok Modern Ponorogo can work towards cultivating a culture of moral excellence and ethical leadership among students, thereby ensuring their continued growth and success in navigating the complexities of the modern world.

Acknowledgments

References

1. Akbar, M., Suhrah, S., Wahid, A., & Afnir, N. (2022). Islamic boarding school as a role model for character education. *KnE Social Sciences*, 623–632. https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v7i8.10780
2. Aziz, Abd., Setyawan, B. W., Purwowidodo, A., & Yasin, M. (2023). Islamic integrated curriculum model to strengthen Santri's religious character: A case study at Islamic boarding school in Blitar. *Cendekia: Jurnal Kependidikan Dan Kemasyarakatan*, *21*(1), 63–79. https://doi.org/10.21154/cendekia.v21i1.6082
3. Fauzi, I., & Hosna, R. (2022). The urgency of education in Islamic boarding schools in improving the quality of Islamic-based character education. *Al-Tadzkiyyah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, *13*(1), 63–76. https://doi.org/10.24042/atjpi.v13i1.9985
4. Hidayat, N., & Bujuri, D. A. (2020). The implementation of character education in Islamic boarding school. *Lentera Pendidikan: Jurnal Ilmu Tarbiyah Dan Keguruan*, *23*(1), 127. https://doi.org/10.24252/lp.2020v23n1i11
5. Hidayati, R., Rahman, A., Nuryana, Z., & Yusutria, Y. (2022). Character education and the rise of mental health in Muhammadiyah Boarding School. *International Journal of Public Health Science (IJPHS)*, *11*(1), 170–178. https://doi.org/10.11591/ijphs.v11i1.20889
6. Hoang, V., & Bui, H. (2023). Encouraging EFL students' willingness to communicate inside Vietnamese high school classrooms: Teachers' strategies and students' beliefs. *Applied Research on English Language*, *12*(2), 25-50. https://doi.org/10.22108/are.2022.134674.1968
7. Ivankova, N. V., Creswell, J. W., & Stick, S. L. (2006). Using mixed-methods sequential explanatory design: From theory to practice. *Field Methods*, *18*(1), 3–20. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05282260
8. Izfanna, D., & Hisyam, N. A. (2012). A comprehensive approach in developing akhlaq: A case study on the implementation of character education at Pondok Pesantren Darunnajah. *Multicultural Education & Technology Journal*, *6*(2), 77–86. https://doi.org/10.1108/17504971211236254
9. Khamida, Yusuf, A., Budury, S., & Kareina, A. P. (2022). The relationship of religiosity and social support with students adaptation in the islamic boarding school. *Bali Medical Journal*, *11*(2), 729–733. https://doi.org/10.15562/bmj.v11i2.3151
10. Komariah, N., & Nihayah, I. (2023). Improving the personality character of students through learning Islamic religious education. *At-Tadzkir: Islamic Education Journal*, *2*(1), 65–77. https://doi.org/10.59373/attadzkir.v2i1.15
11. Manshuruddin, M., Rozana, S., & Abrianto, D. (2019). Character education in modern Islamic boarding schools: A model from Indonesia. *European Journal of Social Sciences Studies*.
12. Muhyiddin, D. S., Suhada, D., Yamin, M., Arifin, B. S., & Hasanah, A. (2022). The relevance of the character education development model in Islamic boarding schools. *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, *5*(3), 1129–1145. https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v5i3.2479
13. Supratno, H., Subandiyah, H., & Permata Raharjo, R. (2018). Character education in Islamic boarding school as a medium to prevent student radicalism. *Proceedings of the 2nd Social Sciences, Humanities and Education Conference: Establishing Identities through Language, Culture, and Education (SOSHEC 2018)*. https://doi.org/10.2991/soshec-18.2018.86
14. Suroso, A., Hendriarto, P., Kartika MR, G. N., Pattiasina, P. J., & Aslan, A. (2021). Challenges and opportunities towards Islamic cultured generation: Socio-cultural analysis. *Linguistics and Culture Review*, *5*(1), 180–194. https://doi.org/10.21744/lingcure.v5n1.1203
15. Tajeddin, Z., Saeedi, Z., & Mohammadi, M. J. (2021). Religious teachers' perceptions of their religious identity: A case of Iranian English language teachers. *Applied Research on English Language*, *10*(2), 61-88. https://doi.org/10.22108/are.2021.126698.1674

16. Umar, M., Ismail, F., Rahmi, S., & Arifin, Z. (2024). Transforming of moderate character education in Islamic educational institutions. *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, *7*(1), 171–188. https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i1.4168

Wahono

11 www.researchsquare.com
Internet Source
<1 %

12 www.xisdxjxsu.asia
Internet Source
<1 %

13 "Building Resilience Through Digital Transformation and Sustainable Innovation", Springer Science and Business Media LLC, 2025
Publication
<1 %

14 Cecep Wahyudin, R. Siti Pupu Fauziah, Afmi Apriliani, Faisal Tri Ramdani et al. "DYNAMICS OF MADRASAH ALIYAH IN INDONESIA: INSIGHTS FROM SCHOOLS, EDUCATORS, AND STUDENT", Jurnal Pendidikan Islam, 2024
Publication
<1 %

15 Maila D.H. Rahiem. "Religion, Education, Science and Technology towards a More Inclusive and Sustainable Future", CRC Press, 2024
Publication
<1 %

16 ejournal.stipjakarta.ac.id
Internet Source
<1 %

17 oapub.org
Internet Source
<1 %

18 Syarifah. "Design Based on Multicultural Values in Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor", Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education, 2025
Publication
<1 %

19 www.revistapielarieincaltaminte.ro
Internet Source
<1 %