



Integration of Bengkalis Malay Bara'an Tradition Values for Character Strengthening in Islamic Religious Education Learning

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study: This study aims to explore the Bara'an tradition of the Bengkalis Malay community and analyze its character values to be utilized as a source for strengthening character education in Islamic Religious Education learning at schools.

Methodology: This research employs a qualitative approach with an analytical-descriptive method. The study was conducted in Pangkalan Batang Village, Bengkalis District, Bengkalis Regency, Riau Province. Data were collected through field studies, literature reviews, and interviews, which were then analyzed in accordance with the research objectives.

Main Findings: The findings reveal that the Bara'an tradition is similar to halal bi halal but has unique local adaptations in Bengkalis. The tradition involves handshaking and seeking forgiveness, sharing meals, reciting shalawat (Marhaban), and concluding with a prayer led by an imam or group leader. The core character values reflected in the Bara'an tradition include religiosity, nationalism, independence, mutual cooperation, and integrity, which align with Indonesia's national character education framework.

Novelty/Originality of this Study: This study provides a new perspective on integrating indigenous Malay traditions into character education, specifically in Islamic Religious Education learning. It offers a thematic integration model, demonstrating how traditional cultural values can be systematically incorporated into the Islamic Religious Education curriculum to strengthen students' moral and ethical development.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Silaturahmi, harmony, and good manners are essential concepts in Islamic teachings and daily life. These aspects strengthen interpersonal relationships and foster a respectful and harmonious society. In the context of education, particularly in Islamic Religious Education, these values play a significant role in shaping students' moral character and ethical behavior [1]. Character education is a crucial element in forming a nation's future, as it directly influences social, economic, and cultural development. However, Indonesia has been facing a serious decline in moral values, particularly among school-aged children [2]. Recent reports indicate increasing violence, lack of patience, apathy, and diminished enthusiasm for learning among students. These behavioral shifts reflect a deeper character crisis that needs to be addressed through a structured educational approach [3]. One of the primary concerns in contemporary education is that the learning process is still predominantly focused on cognitive

development while neglecting character formation. Many students struggle to engage meaningfully with the moral lessons embedded in their curriculum, leading to a gap between knowledge acquisition and value internalization [4]. Previous research has explored various approaches to integrating character education into the curriculum, but there remains a gap in studies that specifically incorporate local wisdom into Islamic Religious Education learning. Many existing approaches focus on general character-building strategies without leveraging the rich traditions and values embedded in Indonesia's diverse local cultures [5].

Conflicts between school children often make their interpersonal relationships more fragile, preventing them from communicating effectively. Additionally, apathy, ignorance, and declining enthusiasm for learning are growing concerns, as students struggle to focus and make accurate decisions when facing challenges [6]. While Indonesian students continue to develop intellectually, their awareness of the importance of moral values and manners in social life is diminishing. This character crisis is a matter of national concern, as it threatens the moral integrity of future generations [7]. If left unaddressed, this issue will become even more serious. As educators, we must take responsibility for the various moral and ethical challenges facing Indonesia's younger generation [8]. The deterioration of the nation's character, particularly among school-aged children, is an alarming issue. These students are the future leaders of the country, and without strong moral values, it is difficult to envision a positive future for Indonesia. Therefore, strengthening character education in schools must remain a priority [9]. Ideally, the learning process should not only focus on improving students' cognitive abilities but also on reinforcing their character and skills. Character strengthening efforts must involve the internalization of positive habits, ensuring that students develop behaviors aligned with ethical and religious values [10].

Strengthening character education is particularly relevant in the current context, as the moral crisis in Indonesia has been exacerbated by the effects of the pandemic, leading to learning loss. Learning loss not only affects students' academic development in cognitive and skill-based areas but also disrupts the formation of their moral character [11]. Addressing this challenge requires the involvement of families as informal educational institutions, alongside schools, which play a strategic role in mitigating the moral degradation of students [12]. Character is inherent in students and is reflected in their daily behavior, which in turn influences those around them. Teachers must therefore develop strategies to address character-related issues in schools [13]. One of the most effective ways to achieve this is through Islamic Religious Education learning. As a subject in schools, Islamic Religious Education not only contributes to students' cognitive development but also serves as a platform for character strengthening [14]. Furthermore, Islamic Religious Education is highly relevant to societal issues, as it teaches students practical ways to address social problems through contextual learning. Additionally, Islamic Religious Education plays a crucial role in internalizing values derived from local wisdom, reinforcing moral development through the integration of cultural traditions [15].

The integration of values rooted in students' local traditions is essential, as local wisdom-based character education strengthens students' sense of identity and reinforces their moral development. These values, which are embedded in students' everyday lives, should be directly instilled in them at school [16]. Innovation in Islamic Religious Education learning based on local wisdom remains highly necessary. Contextual Islamic Religious Education learning can utilize the surrounding environment as a learning resource while reinforcing students' character [17]. Many community-based learning resources can be utilized by Islamic Religious Education teachers to strengthen character, one of which is the Bengkalis Malay Bara'an tradition. Among the Riau Malays, particularly in Bengkalis, the Bara'an tradition is a cultural practice that has been passed down through generations and is still actively performed during Eid al-Fitr. The term Bara'an means "group," referring to a tradition where people come together to strengthen social bonds and foster communal harmony [18].

In Bengkalis, Riau Province, this tradition holds a significant place in the community, as it serves as an annual gathering that reinforces family ties, solidarity, and social relationships. It involves a structured series of home visits, during which participants engage in handshaking, seeking forgiveness, sharing meals, reciting *shalawat (Marhaban)*, and concluding with prayers led by an imam or group leader. This structured tradition emphasizes silaturahmi, social solidarity, and religious devotion. Given the rich character values embedded in the Bara'an tradition, it presents an opportunity for integration into school-based Islamic Religious Education learning. By incorporating local wisdom into the learning process, Islamic Religious Education can become more meaningful and relatable to students [18].

Teachers should not find it difficult to develop Islamic Religious Education learning that emphasizes character education based on local wisdom. In fact, in today's educational climate, Islamic Religious Education strategies should accommodate various local traditions as learning resources, reconstructing their values to reinforce students' character development [19]. Adela (2019) found that local wisdom-based values are highly relevant to the development of sustainable education for students, including character development. This finding supports the idea that integrating local wisdom into Islamic Religious Education learning can effectively strengthen students' moral character [20]. However, many teachers may not yet know how to design local wisdom-based learning strategies. Additionally, teachers must balance their time between various responsibilities as educators [6]. Recognizing the importance of character education based on local wisdom and the need for innovation in

Islamic Religious Education, this study explores the Bengkalis Malay Bara'an Tradition as a source of values that can be incorporated into Islamic Religious Education learning to strengthen students' character in schools.

The Bara'an tradition of the Bengkalis Malay community serves as a cultural and moral educational resource. Unlike other communal traditions, such as Halal Bihalal, which is widely practiced across Indonesia, Bara'an has unique structural and cultural elements that emphasize collective responsibility, religious devotion, and mutual respect. Despite its potential as an educational resource, the integration of Bara'an values into formal education remains largely unexplored. Islamic Religious Education teachers often struggle to contextualize moral lessons in ways that resonate with students' lived experiences. Previous studies on local wisdom-based education have emphasized the importance of integrating indigenous values into formal education to enhance character development [21]. However, most research has focused on cultural preservation rather than its pedagogical application in religious education. This study fills that gap by developing an approach that incorporates the values of the Bara'an tradition into Islamic Religious Education learning, making character education more relevant and impactful for students.

Given the increasing need for innovative approaches in Islamic Religious Education, this study seeks to explore how the Bara'an tradition can serve as a meaningful source of character education. The novelty of this research lies in its application of a localized, tradition-based character education model, which aligns with students' cultural backgrounds while reinforcing Islamic teachings. The urgency of this study stems from the growing moral crisis among students, necessitating an approach that is both contextual and practical for modern classrooms. Therefore, this study aims to examine the character values embedded in the Bara'an tradition and develop a structured framework for integrating these values into Islamic Religious Education learning.

The purpose of this research is to explain the character values contained in the Bara'an tradition that are relevant to character strengthening efforts in Islamic Religious Education learning. These values are examined within the framework of local wisdom integration in education, emphasizing how cultural traditions can be a valuable resource for contextualized moral education in schools. The research findings aim to provide practical recommendations for teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers to incorporate local traditions into character education initiatives.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Research Type

This study employs a qualitative research method with a case study approach to explore the values embedded in the Bara'an tradition and their relevance to character strengthening in Islamic Religious Education learning. A case study approach is appropriate for this study as it allows for an in-depth examination of the Bara'an tradition within its natural setting and provides a comprehensive understanding of how its values can be integrated into formal education. By focusing on a specific community and its educational implications, this approach ensures a contextual and detailed exploration of the tradition's role in character education.

2.2. Research Subjects

The research was conducted in Pambang Baru Village, Bantan Sub-district, Bengkalis District, where the Bara'an tradition is still actively practiced. The research subjects include traditional community leaders, who have extensive knowledge of the Bara'an tradition, Islamic Religious Education teachers, who provide insights into character education in schools, and students, who experience the impact of character learning. The purposive sampling method was used to ensure relevant and in-depth data collection. Traditional community leaders were selected for their extensive knowledge and role in preserving the Bara'an tradition. Islamic Religious Education teachers were chosen based on their experience in character education and their ability to integrate local wisdom into the curriculum. Students were selected for their active participation in learning and exposure to character education, providing insights into the practical application of Bara'an values in schools. This selection ensured that the study gathered comprehensive perspectives from key stakeholders involved in the practice, teaching, and learning of character-based education [22].

2.3. Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved identifying patterns and recurring themes related to character values in the Bara'an tradition. Thematic coding was applied to classify the findings into key value categories, such as religious devotion, mutual cooperation, and integrity. Additionally, data triangulation was conducted by comparing observational findings with interview responses and literature sources to enhance the validity and reliability of the study. This method ensured that the conclusions drawn were consistent, credible, and supported by multiple data sources.

2.4. Research Procedures

The research followed a systematic data collection and analysis process to ensure validity and reliability. The procedure began with preliminary research, where literature on character education, local wisdom, and the Bara'an tradition was reviewed. This was followed by field research, where data were collected through observations, interviews, and document analysis. Observations were conducted to understand how the Bara'an tradition is practiced in the community, while interviews with traditional leaders, teachers, and students provided insights into the values embedded in the tradition and their relevance to character education. Document analysis involved reviewing educational policies, curriculum guidelines, and previous studies related to Islamic Religious Education and local wisdom integration.

After data collection, the next phase involved data organization and analysis. The data were categorized into thematic patterns, focusing on the core character values in the Bara'an tradition, such as religiosity, mutual cooperation, integrity, and social responsibility. A descriptive-analytical approach was used to interpret the findings in relation to the integration of local traditions into Islamic Religious Education learning. The final stage involved concluding the research by synthesizing the findings and formulating practical recommendations for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers to incorporate Bara'an values into character education.

Below is the research flowchart, illustrating the step-by-step process:

1. Preliminary Research
 - Literature review on character education, local wisdom, and the Bara'an tradition
 - Identification of research gaps and formulation of research questions
2. Field Research (Data Collection)
 - Conducting observations on the Bara'an tradition in the community
 - Interviewing traditional leaders, teachers, and students
 - Analyzing relevant documents and curriculum materials
3. Data Organization and Thematic Analysis
 - Categorizing character values from the Bara'an tradition
 - Applying thematic coding to classify findings into religious devotion, mutual cooperation, and integrity
 - Conducting data triangulation by comparing observations, interviews, and literature sources
4. Conclusion and Recommendations
 - Summarizing key findings
 - Formulating recommendations for integrating Bara'an values into Islamic Religious Education learning

This structured approach ensures that the study remains systematic, comprehensive, and applicable to educational contexts, particularly in strengthening character education through local wisdom integration.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Islamic Religious Education is one of the compulsory subjects in schools, from elementary to secondary levels, as mandated by the 2003 National Education System Law. As an essential part of the curriculum, PAI not only teaches religious doctrines but also serves as a foundation for moral and character education, ensuring that students develop a strong ethical compass. According to Sapriya, as cited in Widodo [24], Islamic Religious Education integrates various disciplines, including social sciences, natural sciences, and humanities, using scientific methods and pedagogical approaches tailored to school learning objectives. However, to ensure PAI remains relevant and meaningful, it is essential to integrate local wisdom into its teaching strategies, enabling students to connect religious teachings with their cultural and social environments.

The purpose of Islamic Religious Education in schools is to prepare students to become good citizens with a mastery of knowledge, attitudes, and values that benefit their daily lives [25]. Through PAI learning, students develop social sensitivity, active participation, and a strong sense of community involvement. These aspects are crucial, given the increasing complexity of social challenges and moral dilemmas in modern society. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education learning must be contextualized within students' lived experiences, incorporating local traditions and wisdom as learning resources to reinforce religious and moral values [26].

One of the innovations needed in Islamic Religious Education learning is the integration of local wisdom-based education. This approach enhances student competencies by connecting learning materials with their everyday realities, making religious education more engaging and applicable to their lives. Local wisdom-based education also fosters a sense of cultural identity and national character, which is essential in preparing students to be well-rounded individuals who uphold moral values while embracing their cultural heritage [27].

This research highlights the importance of integrating Islamic Religious Education learning with local wisdom values, emphasizing how local traditions contribute to the development of culture, scientific knowledge, and character-building in students [28]. If Islamic Religious Education education continues to develop based on

the noble values of the nation's culture, it will foster good Indonesian citizens who uphold ethical values in line with Islamic teachings and local traditions. Local wisdom, as knowledge derived from the culture of local communities, can be adopted into Islamic Religious Education learning materials and themes, ensuring that students gain a comprehensive understanding of morality that is rooted in both religion and their sociocultural context [29].

According to the official website of the Ministry of Education and Culture, five main character values are prioritized for the development of the Strengthening Character Education movement, namely religion, nationalism, integrity, independence, and mutual cooperation [30]. These character values are holistically interrelated and complementary, forming the basis for comprehensive character-building efforts in Islamic Religious Education learning. By integrating local wisdom with these core values, Islamic Religious Education learning becomes a powerful tool for reinforcing religious devotion, national identity, and ethical behavior, ultimately shaping students into individuals who uphold Islamic values while preserving their cultural heritage [18].

The five character values emphasize the need for educational institutions to prepare students not only scientifically but also personally, shaping individuals who are strong in moral, spiritual, and scientific values. Character education is a crucial aspect of national development, aiming to create a generation with integrity, ethical awareness, and adaptability to future changes.

The primary objectives of Character Education include preparing students as part of Indonesia's golden generation for 2045, equipping them with the skills and moral strength needed to face future challenges. Additionally, character education seeks to develop a national education platform that places moral values at its core, ensuring that education does not merely focus on academics but also integrates ethical and cultural diversity into learning. By incorporating Indonesia's rich cultural heritage, character education fosters a strong sense of identity and moral responsibility among students [31].

Furthermore, the revitalization and enhancement of the education ecosystem play a key role in ensuring that character education is effectively implemented. Schools must strengthen their potential and competence by integrating character-building into the learning process, supported by collaboration between schools, families, and communities. Education should harmonize the heart, emotions, mind, and actions, ensuring a balanced approach to character formation. This approach aligns with the philosophy of Pancasila, which serves as the foundation for national values [32].

One of the core principles in character education is the promotion of harmony within society. Harmony refers to a state in which individuals or groups coexist in an atmosphere of mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation. This concept is particularly important in a pluralistic society like Indonesia, where social and religious diversity requires continuous efforts to foster unity and peaceful coexistence [17]. Through effective character education, students not only develop intellectual competence but also internalize moral and ethical values that contribute to the formation of a socially responsible and harmonious generation.

Islam teaches the importance of harmony through the principles of mutual respect and help. In Surah Al-Hujurat verse 10, Allah says, "Verily, the believers are brothers, so reconcile between your brothers." Efforts to strengthen local wisdom-based character through the learning process are considered an appropriate step.

Bengkalis Malay Bara'an Tradition and Its Integration into Islamic Religious Education Learning

The Bara'an tradition in Bengkalis is a unique form of communal gathering that differs from other local traditions. Unlike the general halal bi halal practice in Indonesia, Bara'an involves a structured procession of visits, beginning with the most respected elders and continuing to each household in the community. This hierarchical order ensures that social structure, respect, and community values are maintained, distinguishing it from other Eid traditions. The tradition is performed annually during Eid al-Fitr and holds great significance for the Bengkalis Malay community, as it strengthens family bonds, social solidarity, and mutual respect. Participants engage in handshaking, seeking forgiveness, reciting *shalawat* (Marhaban), and concluding with communal prayers, which reinforce moral and ethical values among community members [33].

Beyond villagers, Bara'an has been adopted by various institutions, including government offices, private organizations, and schools, as a way to maintain interpersonal connections. Based on field interviews with Mr. AW, it was explained that the Bara'an tradition originated from the Johor Sultanate, particularly from Muar, Malacca, and Batu Pahat, before being passed down through generations in Bengkalis. This practice has become an integral part of the local identity, making Eid celebrations in Bengkalis unique and difficult to find in other parts of Indonesia.

At its core, Bara'an reflects the principle of gotong royong (mutual cooperation), where all members of the community—regardless of age, gender, or social status—actively participate. It serves as a model for inclusivity, collective responsibility, and empathy, extending beyond family circles to strengthen the broader community. The tradition also includes a social welfare component, as visits allow community members to check on the well-being of their neighbors, offering material or emotional support to those in need. This spirit of solidarity and communal care further highlights the Bara'an tradition as an example of Islamic social ethics.

The implementation of Bara'an varies depending on the size of the community. In some areas, it lasts only a few hours, while in others, it can extend for up to a week. The number of homes visited determines the duration of the event, with each stop typically lasting between 5 to 15 minutes. For Bengkalis migrants, the tradition serves as a powerful cultural pull, drawing them back to their hometown every Eid. Alongside Bara'an, another key attraction is the colok lamp festival, which further reinforces community ties. Despite its deep-rooted Islamic values, Bara'an remains inclusive, welcoming participation from non-Muslims who wish to engage in the tradition, demonstrating religious tolerance and social harmony.

Islamic Values and Character Education in the Bara'an Tradition

Although there are no direct references to Bara'an in the Qur'an and Hadith, the tradition embodies Islamic principles such as silaturahmi (strengthening brotherhood), social cohesion, and collective responsibility. Through Bara'an, individuals practice mutual forgiveness, unity, and solidarity, reinforcing the concept of *ukhuwah islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood). These values align with the Strengthening Character Education movement, which emphasizes religiosity, nationalism, independence, mutual cooperation, and integrity [18].

The religious essence of Bara'an is evident in its rituals of prayer and *shalawat* (Marhaban). Participants collectively recite prayers for the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and offer blessings for the hosts, led by an imam or community leader. Another religious aspect is the post-Eid tahlil (remembrance of Allah) and grave visits, where participants reflect on mortality and honor deceased relatives [34], [35].

The nationalist character in Bara'an is demonstrated through the preservation of cultural heritage. Despite globalization, the Bengkalis community actively maintains the tradition, with even migrants returning home annually to participate. Local governments also support Bara'an as a cultural asset, further embedding it in the region's identity. The independent spirit in Bara'an is reflected in community self-reliance. Households voluntarily prepare meals, decorations, and hospitality to welcome visitors, often investing significant effort to uphold the tradition. This teaches self-discipline and social responsibility, reinforcing values of autonomy and preparedness.

The Bara'an tradition exemplifies gotong royong, as seen in pre-event village clean-ups, collective planning meetings, and resource-sharing among neighbors. Decision-making is conducted through deliberations (musyawarah), where mosque leaders, community heads, and local officials collaborate to organize the tradition effectively. The spirit of teamwork and shared responsibility is a defining feature of the event. The value of integrity is also prominent, as Bara'an fosters social involvement and encourages participation across age, gender, and economic status. The act of visiting each other's homes, offering respect, and maintaining honesty in social interactions strengthens trust and communal integrity, making Bara'an a unifying force in the community.

Bara'an as a Model for Character Strengthening in Islamic Religious Education Learning

The Bara'an tradition can be a valuable model for Islamic Religious Education learning, serving as a contextualized approach to teaching Islamic values. Given the risk of cultural erosion, students must be encouraged to appreciate and uphold their heritage. Schools can achieve this by integrating Bara'an into character education through discussion-based learning, project-based activities, and cultural immersion experiences. For instance, students could participate in Bara'an celebrations and reflect on the moral values embedded in the tradition. This could be further explored through case studies, role-playing, and collaborative projects, ensuring that Islamic teachings remain relevant and applicable to their lived experiences [37], [38].

In Islamic Religious Education learning, students should not only understand Islamic principles theoretically but also apply them in real-world contexts. The contextual learning model emphasizes direct engagement with cultural practices, allowing students to experience Islamic values in action. This approach ensures that students internalize moral principles, fostering a mindset that aligns religious teachings with ethical conduct in everyday life.

This research contributes to educational policy, local cultural preservation, and character education. By integrating the Bara'an tradition into Islamic Religious Education, this study provides a model for embedding local wisdom into formal learning, ensuring that students develop a strong moral foundation alongside cultural awareness. Additionally, this research supports the Strengthening Character Education (PPK) movement, demonstrating how contextualized learning approaches can enhance moral development.

However, several limitations must be acknowledged. The small sample size may limit the generalizability of findings, and variations in community practices may affect how Bara'an is applied in different regions. Furthermore, standardized learning materials for integrating local traditions into PAI curricula are lacking, posing a challenge for broader implementation. Finally, technological limitations in rural schools may hinder the use of digital-based learning approaches for cultural education.

To address these limitations, future research should focus on developing standardized curriculum models, conducting longitudinal studies to assess long-term impact, and exploring scalable learning frameworks to expand the application of Bara'an-based character education in different school settings. By addressing these challenges, the integration of local traditions into Islamic education can become a sustainable and impactful approach to character development, ensuring that students uphold Islamic values while preserving their cultural heritage.

4. CONCLUSION

The character crisis among Indonesian students today is increasingly concerning, necessitating effective character education strategies that can be implemented through Islamic Religious Education learning. This study demonstrates that integrating the Bengkalis Malay Bara'an tradition into Islamic Religious Education learning is a potential solution to strengthen students' moral values. By incorporating the core values of the Bara'an tradition—religious values, nationalism, independence, mutual cooperation, and integrity— Islamic Religious Education learning can serve as a medium for character-building, helping students internalize these values in their daily lives. The findings highlight that Bara'an-based character education provides a contextual and culturally relevant approach that can foster a stronger national identity and social harmony among students.

To maximize the effectiveness of this approach, further research is needed to develop standardized curriculum models that can effectively integrate local traditions into Islamic Religious Education learning across different schools and regions. Future studies should explore the scalability of this model by conducting wider trials in various educational settings, including urban and rural schools with different sociocultural backgrounds. Additionally, it is recommended to develop interactive learning media, such as digital modules or audiovisual content, to enhance the accessibility and engagement of students with local wisdom-based character education. Long-term studies should also be conducted to assess the sustained impact of integrating local traditions on students' moral development and national identity formation.

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