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ARCHITECTURE OF THE BELIEVER'S PERSONALITY IN SURAH AL-HUJURĀT: QUR'ANIC TARBIYAH HIERARCHY IN TAHFIZ PESANTREN

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Abstract

This study addresses the paradox between Indonesia's status as the country with the largest Muslim population and the growing moral degradation, digital ethical disruption, and youth character crisis, reflected in hoaxes, bullying, and social polarization. It aims to reconstruct the hierarchy of Qur'anic tarbiyah *in Surah Al-Hujurāt and to evaluate its implementation in student formation at Pondok Pesantren Hamalatul Qur'an, Yogyakarta, a contemporary* tahfiz *(Qur'an memorization) pesantren. Using an integrative qualitative design, the study combines a thematic (*mawḍū'ī*) exegesis of Surah Al-Hujurāt 1–18, based on five authoritative commentaries, with field research involving semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation with 11 key informants. The findings formulate a five-level hierarchy of the believer's personality formation: (1) foundational* adab *toward the authority of revelation and knowledge; (2) cognitive-practical literacy through the principle of* tabayyun*; (3) the social dynamics of* iṣlāḥ *and* ukhuwwah*; (4) universal ethics of equality based on piety; and (5) the peak of authentic faith, marking a transition from structural obedience to autonomous faith. The pesantren ecosystem effectively instills outward obedience through regulation, habituation, and role modeling, but an "implementation limit" remains when students enter social and digital spaces beyond institutional control. Surah Al-Hujurāt thus provides an operational architecture of Qur'anic* tarbiyah *that, integrated with pesantren curricula, can strengthen students' autonomy of faith amid moral and informational disruption.*

Keywords: *Qur'anic Tarbiyah, Surah Al-Hujurāt, Believer's Personality, Tahfiz Pesantren, Value Internalization.*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini berangkat dari paradoks antara status Indonesia sebagai negara dengan populasi Muslim terbesar dan meningkatnya degradasi moral, disrupsi etika digital, serta krisis karakter generasi muda yang tecermin dalam hoaks, perundungan, dan polarisasi sosial. Penelitian ini bertujuan merekonstruksi hierarki tarbiyah *Qur'ani dalam Surah Al-Hujurāt dan mengevaluasi implementasinya dalam pembinaan santri di Pondok Pesantren Hamalatul Qur'an, Yogyakarta, sebuah pesantren* tahfiz *kontemporer. Dengan desain kualitatif integratif, penelitian ini memadukan tafsir tematik (*mawḍū'ī*) atas Surah Al-Hujurāt ayat 1–18 berdasarkan lima kitab tafsir otoritatif dengan penelitian lapangan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi partisipan, dan dokumentasi terhadap 11 informan kunci. Temuan penelitian merumuskan hierarki lima tingkat pembentukan kepribadian mukmin: (1) fondasi* adab *terhadap otoritas wahyu dan ilmu; (2) literasi kognitif-praktis melalui prinsip* tabayyun*; (3) dinamika sosial* iṣlāḥ *dan* ukhuwwah*; (4) etika universal kesetaraan berbasis takwa; dan (5) puncak iman autentik yang menandai peralihan dari ketaatan struktural menuju iman yang otonom. Ekosistem pesantren efektif menanamkan ketaatan lahiriah melalui regulasi, pembiasaan, dan keteladanan, tetapi masih terdapat*

"batas implementasi" ketika santri memasuki ruang sosial dan digital di luar kendali institusi. Dengan demikian, Surah Al-Hujurāt menyediakan arsitektur operasional tarbiyah *Qur'ani yang, jika diintegrasikan dengan kurikulum pesantren, dapat memperkuat otonomi iman santri di tengah disrupsi moral dan informasi.*
Kata Kunci: *Tarbiyah Qur'ani, Surah Al-Hujurāt, Kepribadian Mukmin, Pesantren Tahfiz, Internalisasi Nilai.*

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INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an was revealed as *manhaj al-ḥayāh*, a comprehensive road map for life that not only regulates belief and law but also builds an architecture of *tarbiyah* (education and nurturing) for forming the whole human personality.[1] Recent developments, however, show a widening gap between the Qur'an's normative ideals and the moral reality of contemporary Muslim societies, including Indonesia, the country with the largest Muslim population in the world.[2] Studies point to weak internalization of character values at the grassroots, reflected in bullying, deviant adolescent behavior, and value disorientation.[3]

This crisis is compounded by digital disruption. Hoaxes, hate speech, and provocative narratives on social media accelerate social polarization and damage community cohesion, especially when the principle of caution in receiving information (*tabayyun*) is ignored.[4] In this context, Islamic education can no longer stop at the transmission of knowledge; it must produce subjects who can endure morally amid an uncontrolled flow of information.

Surah Al-Hujurāt occupies a strategic position as one of the foundations of Qur'anic social ethics. Classical exegetes call it *Sūrat al-Ādāb* because it contains comprehensive guidance on manners, from *adab* toward God and His Messenger and etiquette in communicating with the

[1] Epik Teyebu et al., "Ulumul Qur'an dalam Konteks Pendidikan," *Jurnal Budi Pekerti Agama Islam* 2, no. 4 (2024), https://doi.org/10.61132/jbpai.v2i4.474.

[2] Eko Ngabdul Shodikin, Shafira Azzahra, and Luriana Rihadini, "Global Trends in Islamic Character Education: A Decade of Bibliometric Analysis," *Proceeding of International Conference of Islamic Education* 3 (2025).

[3] Achmad Djuaini, "Internalization of Islamic Religious Education Values in Moral Development of Students in Madrasah," *Afkaruna: International Journal of Islamic Studies* 3, no. 1 (2025), https://doi.org/10.38073/aijis.v3i1.3330; Sri Wahyuni and Ikrar, "Implementasi Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Karakter QS Al-Hujurat Ayat 11–13 di Era Digital pada Peserta Didik Kelas III SDIT Ihyaussunnah Bontang Tahun Pelajaran 2023/2024," *Nabawi: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 1 (2025).

[4] Emrida Harahap et al., "Prinsip Tabayyun dalam Surah Al-Hujurat Ayat 6: Analisis Multidisipliner Perspektif Tafsir, Komunikasi dan Literasi Digital," *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar* 11, no. 2 (2026), https://doi.org/10.23969/jp.v11i02.51164.

authority of knowledge to the ethics of social relations in a plural society.[5] Contemporary studies affirm that the surah places *adab* and piety as primary foundations of character that must precede intellectual ability,[6] while thematic studies show that its principle of *tabayyun* can serve as a framework for information literacy amid digital ethical crisis, and that its prohibitions of mockery, contempt, and suspicion function as normative barriers against bullying and symbolic violence in education.[7]

Recent literature on Surah Al-Hujurāt has developed in several directions: some studies highlight character education and social ethics, while others link the surah to digital literacy and religious moderation.[8] More broadly, a bibliometric analysis of global trends in Islamic character education over the past decade shows a significant increase in publications on the integration of Islamic values into formal and non-formal education, with Indonesia as a leading contributor, but it also reveals that most approaches remain normative and have not formulated operational *tarbiyah* models tested in educational institutions.[9] In the pesantren context, studies of the body of knowledge of pesantren education show that the pesantren tradition has its own epistemological richness spanning theological, historical, and curricular dimensions;[10] research on the internalization of Islamic values stresses the need to prevent faith from being reduced to formal compliance that is fragile in the face of external temptation;[11] and studies of character education based on Qur'an memorization show that intensive engagement with the Qur'an can effectively form students' moral habitus when accompanied by a conscious and reflective design of *tarbiyah*.[12]

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[5] Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Cairo: Dār Hajr, 2001); Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, ed. Sāmī ibn Muḥammad Salāmah (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayyibah, 1999).

[6] Muhammad Habib Zainul Huda and Fitri Wulandari, "Relevansi Nilai Pendidikan Karakter dalam QS. Al-Hujurat Perspektif Kitab Tafsir Tarbawi lil Qur'anil Karim Karya Anwar al-Baaz," *El-Waroqoh: Jurnal Ushuluddin dan Filsafat* 7, no. 1 (2023).

[7] Harahap et al., "Prinsip Tabayyun"; Wahyuni and Ikrar, "Implementasi Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Karakter."

[8] Huda and Wulandari, "Relevansi Nilai Pendidikan Karakter"; Imam Shofwan and Achmad Munib, "Pendidikan Karakter Sosial Qur'ani: Studi Tafsir Surat Al-Hujurat Ayat 11–13," *Intelektual: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Studi Keislaman* 13, no. 1 (2023), https://doi.org/10.33367/ji.v13i1.3500.

[9] Shodikin, Azzahra, and Rihadini, "Global Trends in Islamic Character Education."

[10] Agus Budiman et al., "Constructing the Body of Knowledge of Pesantren Education: A Philosophical, Historical, and Curricular Inquiry," *At-Ta'dib: Journal of Pesantren Education* 20, no. 1 (2025), https://doi.org/10.21111/attadib.v20i1.14723.

[11] Djuaini, "Internalization of Islamic Religious Education Values."

[12] Ahmad Farohi, Noor Fatmawati, and Nurkholifatul Maula, "Implementation of Character Education Based on Tahfidzul Qur'an at the Yanbu'ul Qur'an Tahfidz Islamic Boarding School in Menawan Village," *Al Hikmah: Journal of Education* 5, no. 1 (2024), https://doi.org/10.54168/ahje.v5i1.266; Faisal Rahman, Abdul Mun'im Amaly, and Cucu Abdul Qosim, "Development of a Character Education Model at Pondok Pesantren Riyadhul Muhibbin, Balangan Regency during the Covid-19 Pandemic," *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan* 14, no. 4 (2022), https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v14i4.2434.

There is nevertheless a clear research gap. First, most studies of Surah Al-Hujurāt stop at a normative exposition of its verses on manners without systematically elaborating the hierarchical structure of the *tarbiyah* process it contains.[13] Second, studies of pesantren and character education often portray formation practices in general, without linking them directly to the architecture of Qur'anic *tarbiyah* in a particular surah.[14] Third, few studies explicitly bridge the interpretations of authoritative commentaries with the dynamics of value implementation in contemporary *tahfiz* pesantren, including the tension between the structural obedience produced by a 24-hour boarding system and the need for autonomous faith when students leave institutional supervision.

This article therefore aims to reconstruct the hierarchy of Qur'anic *tarbiyah* in Surah Al-Hujurāt and to evaluate its implementation in student formation at Pondok Pesantren Hamalatul Qur'an (PPHQ), Yogyakarta, as a model of a *tahfiz* pesantren. Specifically, it seeks to (1) formulate a hierarchical architecture of the believer's personality formation based on a synthesis of five authoritative commentaries; (2) map how this hierarchy is operationalized in the regulations, culture, and *tarbiyah* practices of the pesantren; and (3) identify the "implementation limit" when the values of Surah Al-Hujurāt confront moral and informational disruption outside the pesantren. The study is expected to contribute a pedagogical framework that is theologically sound and applicable to the design of character education in contemporary Islamic institutions.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used an integrative qualitative design that combines textual (library) research with field research in order to bridge the normative ideals of revelation and the empirical reality of contemporary Islamic education.[15] This approach was chosen so that the *tarbiyah* hierarchy of Surah Al-Hujurāt would not remain at the conceptual level but would be examined in the practice of student formation in a *tahfiz* pesantren, in line with recent trends in Islamic education research that emphasize bridging religious theory, curriculum, and institutional practice.[16]

At the textual level, the study applied the thematic (*mawḍū'ī*) method of exegesis to Surah Al-Hujurāt verses 1–18 as a unified *tarbiyah* theme. The analysis followed the steps formulated by al-Farmāwī: determining the theme, collecting the relevant verses, tracing the occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), classifying sub-themes, and synthesizing their meaning

[13] Huda and Wulandari, "Relevansi Nilai Pendidikan Karakter"; Shofwan and Munib, "Pendidikan Karakter Sosial Qur'ani."

[14] Rahman, Amaly, and Qosim, "Development of a Character Education Model."

[15] John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2018).

[16] Budiman et al., "Constructing the Body of Knowledge."

comprehensively.[17] To ensure interpretive authority, the study drew on five authoritative commentaries: al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, al-Baghawī's *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, al-Qurṭubī's *Al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, Ibn Kathīr's *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, and *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*.[18] This analysis was enriched with Islamic education literature and contemporary studies of Surah Al-Hujurāt that highlight character, social ethics, and digital literacy.

The field study was conducted at PPHQ Yogyakarta, a *tahfiz* pesantren that emphasizes the integration of Qur'an memorization and the formation of students' manners. The site was selected purposively on the basis of (1) its institutional focus on memorization and character formation, (2) its explicit regulations on *adab*, and (3) its willingness to grant access for observation and in-depth interviews. The 11 key informants comprised the head of the foundation, the director of the pesantren, the head of student care, the coordinator of memorization, several supervising teachers (*ustadz*), and student representatives from various levels. This composition was intended to achieve thematic saturation by representing policy makers, implementers, and students, and allowed the researchers to capture structural (policy), cultural (pesantren habitus), and experiential perspectives on the internalization of the values of Surah Al-Hujurāt.

Data were collected through (1) library research to extract the *tarbiyah* values of Surah Al-Hujurāt and map previous findings on pesantren and character education; (2) semi-structured interviews with key informants on their understanding, strategies, and experiences in implementing *adab*, *tabayyun*, *iṣlāḥ*, and equality; (3) limited participant observation of students' daily activities in the dormitory, mosque, and classrooms; and (4) documentation of the *adab* curriculum, pesantren regulations, student handbooks, and other records. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, comprising data condensation, thematic data display, and iterative conclusion drawing,[19] by relating the field findings to the *tarbiyah* hierarchy so that each level could be examined in practice. Trustworthiness was ensured through source and method triangulation, comparing interviews, observations, and institutional documents, including comparing the leaders' normative accounts with students' actual experiences; member checking with several key informants; and an audit trail documenting the research process from design to conclusion.[20]

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[17] 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Farmāwī, *Al-Bidāyah fī al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī* (Cairo: al-Ḥaḍārah al-'Arabiyyah, 1977).

[18] al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*; al-Ḥusayn ibn Mas'ūd al-Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayyibah, 1997); Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, ed. Aḥmad al-Bardūnī and Ibrāhīm Aṭfayyish (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1964); Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*; Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, n.d.).

[19] Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2020).

[20] Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*; Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Architecture of the Tarbiyah Hierarchy in Surah Al-Hujurāt

The hierarchy was constructed through an integrative synthesis of the five commentaries, drawing on the distinctive contribution of each: al-Ṭabarī and al-Qurṭubī provide a strong basis for the normative status of *adab* at the first level; Ibn Kathīr and al-Baghawī provide the framework of cognitive filtering for *tabayyun* at the second level; and *al-Jalālayn* offers a precise distinction between *islām* (outward submission) and *īmān* (inner conviction) that underlies the fifth level.[21] Thematic analysis of verses 1–18 shows that the surah contains a hierarchy of Qur'anic *tarbiyah* that moves gradually from the ordering of manners to the formation of authentic faith, with at least five mutually supporting levels of the believer's personality formation (Table 1).

Table 1**.** Hierarchy of the Believer's Personality Formation in Surah Al-Hujurāt

Level	Verses	Core Value	Operationalization at PPHQ
1. Foundation	1–5	*Adab* toward the authority of revelation and knowledge	Worship discipline and etiquette toward teachers
2. Cognitive-instrumental	6	Literacy of *tabayyun* and information filtering	Staged verification of news in the dormitory
3. Social dynamics	9–10	*Iṣlāḥ* and *ukhuwwah*	Conflict mediation by teachers
4. Universal ethics	11–13	Equality based on piety (*taqwā*)	Equal facilities, menus, rules, and forms of address
5. Peak	14–18	Authentic faith (*īmān*)	Limited; reflection programs still needed

Source: Authors' synthesis of the exegetical and field data.

Level 1, Foundation: Adab toward Authority (Verses 1–5)

The opening verses order the believer's inner position before God, the Messenger, and the authority of knowledge. The prohibitions against putting oneself before God and His Messenger, raising one's voice, and acting carelessly before the Prophet are read by the exegetes as affirming that *adab* is the gateway of personality, a determinant of the acceptance of deeds, and a basic condition for the blessing of knowledge.[22] Without *adab*, *tarbiyah* loses its spirit, because knowledge touches only the cognitive surface rather than the inner structure.

Level 2, Cognitive-Instrumental: Literacy of Tabayyun (Verse 6)

The verse on *tabayyun* places information literacy at the heart of *tarbiyah*. The command to verify news brought by an unreliable source is read as training in cognitive filtering to prevent

[21] al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*; al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*; al-Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*; al-Maḥallī and al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*.

[22] al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*; al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*.

hasty action out of ignorance (*jahālah*) that may harm others and damage the social order.[23] In the context of digital disruption, this principle becomes a conceptual basis for media literacy education and countering hoaxes.[24]

Level 3, Social Dynamics: Iṣlāḥ and Ukhuwwah (Verses 9–10)

The verses on reconciliation between groups of believers teach that social conflict is a test of faith and a field of *tarbiyah*. Reconciliation (*iṣlāḥ*) that is just, sides with the truth, and aims to restore brotherhood (*ukhuwwah*) requires individuals to subdue their egos for the sake of collective unity; at this level, the quality of faith is seen in the willingness to put the community above the interests of oneself or one's group.

Level 4, Universal Ethics: Equality Based on Piety (Verses 11–13)

The prohibitions of mutual contempt, offensive nicknames, suspicion, and backbiting cut off the roots of identity-based arrogance and symbolic violence. Verse 13 then affirms that the only measure of nobility is piety (*taqwā*), so that all forms of superiority based on tribe, race, and economic status must collapse. Contemporary commentators regard this section as a foundation of inclusive social ethics relevant to character education in plural societies.[25]

Level 5, Peak: Authentic Faith (Verses 14–18)

At the highest level, the architecture of Al-Hujurāt deconstructs mechanical obedience. Based on the Qur'anic critique in verse 14, which distinguishes those who have only submitted (*aslamnā*) from those in whose hearts faith has entered,[26] this study formulates "authentic faith" as a condition in which the center of obedience has shifted from external control to autonomous inner awareness. Drawing on the *Husn-i-Akhlaaq* framework, which views personality as an integration of *nafs*, *qalb*, and *rūḥ*, this level marks students' transition from merely controlling the *nafs* (outward behavior for the sake of rules) to the maturity of the *qalb* and *rūḥ* (conviction that permeates the heart).[27] Operationally, authentic faith is measured not by physical presence in the mosque but by *murāqabah*, the awareness of being constantly watched by God even beyond the supervision of teachers or the pesantren system, the point at which faith becomes a favor that is felt (*minnah*) rather than a social status or a regulatory burden.

This hierarchy shows that Surah Al-Hujurāt presents not fragments of moral rules but a complete architecture of *tarbiyah*: from manners, ways of thinking, and social relations to

[23] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*; al-Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*.

[24] Harahap et al., "Prinsip Tabayyun."

[25] Shofwan and Munib, "Pendidikan Karakter Sosial Qur'ani"; Wahyuni and Ikrar, "Implementasi Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Karakter."

[26] al-Maḥallī and al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*.

[27] A. Khan et al., "The Process of Human Personality Development Based on Husn-i-Akhlaaq," *Journal of Religion and Health* (2025), https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12380808/.

universal ethics and depth of faith. It complements previous studies that tended to treat *adab*, social character, and information ethics separately without seeing their interconnected, tiered structure.[28]

The Implementation of the Tarbiyah Hierarchy at PPHQ

The implementation of the *tarbiyah* hierarchy at PPHQ can be seen in its regulations, daily habituation, and institutional culture. Interviews and observation show that the pesantren operationalizes the hierarchy through four practical pillars.

Internalization of Adab and Authority

PPHQ places *adab* toward God, the Messenger, and teachers as the entry point of all educational programs. Rules on worship discipline, such as arriving at the mosque several minutes before the call to prayer, and etiquette in interacting with teachers, such as lowering one's voice, lowering one's gaze, and showing outward and inward respect (*taʿẓīm*), are designed to train students to subdue intellectual and emotional ego. This practice is consistent with other pesantren studies that place *adab* as the foundation of the hidden curriculum and the spirit of learning.[29]

Operationalizing Tabayyun in Dormitory Life

In the dense interactions of dormitory life, PPHQ explicitly teaches students not to believe circulating news before clarifying it. *Tabayyun* is practiced through a staged reporting procedure: ascertaining the source of information, confirming it with senior students on service duty or supervising teachers, and refraining from spreading unverified issues. Verse 6 thus becomes not merely a memorized text but a living practice of information literacy at the grassroots, consistent with recommendations in the literature on Qur'anic digital ethics.[30]

Conflict Management and Strengthening Brotherhood

When conflicts arise between students, the pesantren does not simply impose administrative sanctions but uses an *iṣlāḥ* approach emphasizing fairness, balanced hearing, and the restoration of relationships. Teachers act as mediators who help the disputing parties find common ground and see the conflict as an exercise in self-control, so that verses 9–10 are internalized as a *tarbiyah*-based method of conflict management rather than merely a normative instruction.

[28] Huda and Wulandari, "Relevansi Nilai Pendidikan Karakter"; Shofwan and Munib, "Pendidikan Karakter Sosial Qur'ani."

[29] Rahman, Amaly, and Qosim, "Development of a Character Education Model"; Farohi, Fatmawati, and Maula, "Implementation of Character Education."

[30] Harahap et al., "Prinsip Tabayyun."

A Culture of Equality and Rejection of Identity-Based Superiority

PPHQ builds an egalitarian culture by standardizing facilities, menus, and rules for all students regardless of socioeconomic or ethnic background. Equal forms of address and the avoidance of demeaning nicknames are practical ways of preserving mutual dignity, consistent with studies of pesantren character education that stress dismantling artificial social hierarchies so that equality based on piety can take root.[31] Overall, the field data indicate that PPHQ has operationalized the first four levels of the hierarchy, namely *adab*, *tabayyun*, *iṣlāḥ*/*ukhuwwah*, and equality, in its institutional design and students' daily culture.

The Implementation Limit and the Challenge of Authentic Faith

Although the *tarbiyah* structure at PPHQ is fairly systematic, this study identified an "implementation limit": the point at which students' structural obedience does not automatically transform into autonomous faith. Inside the pesantren, 24-hour supervision, strict schedules, and collective culture produce strong behavioral order, but several informants expressed concern that some students are merely "obedient under supervision" and have not been tested outside the pesantren system. The findings also reveal a sharp discrepancy of perception between administrators and students regarding the success of *tarbiyah*. Supervisors tend to regard students' compliance with *adab* regulations and *tabayyun* protocols as evidence of the internalization of Al-Hujurāt's values, viewing 24-hour discipline as a form of "forced habituation" that will eventually become character. Interviews with student representatives, by contrast, revealed "situational obedience": some students acknowledged that their compliance with *adab*, such as lowering their voices before teachers or mosque discipline, was often driven by systemic pressure and sanctions rather than autonomous spiritual awareness.

This confirms the Qur'anic critique in verse 14 of those who have reached only the level of *islām* (formal compliance) while faith has not yet entered their hearts.[32] The phenomenon of "obedience under supervision" shows that the "total space" of the pesantren is highly effective in restraining the *nafs* but has limitations in touching the maturity of the *qalb* if students are not given room for reflection free from coercion.[33] Without a transition from external control to *murāqabah*, students risk a "moral shock" when they leave the institution's orbit of supervision. The literature on the internalization of Islamic values likewise shows that the transformation of faith requires inner reflection, spiritual dialogue, and authentic religious experience, not only physical habituation and sanctions.[34] The success of *tarbiyah* should therefore not stop at administrative indicators such as attendance but should begin to measure students' moral

[31] Shofwan and Munib, "Pendidikan Karakter Sosial Qur'ani."
[32] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*; al-Maḥallī and al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*.
[33] Khan et al., "Process of Human Personality Development."
[34] Djuaini, "Internalization of Islamic Religious Education Values."

independence in situations with minimal supervision, for example through guided self-examination (*muḥāsabah*), spiritual mentoring, and service projects that place students outside the comfort zone of direct supervision.

Discussion: Tarbiyah Hierarchy, Pesantren, and Autonomy of Faith

Positioning the Tarbiyah Hierarchy in the Research Landscape

The *tarbiyah* hierarchy of Surah Al-Hujurāt takes this article beyond the predominantly fragmentary and normative pattern of previous studies, which tended to isolate *adab*, social character, or digital literacy without formulating the hierarchical relationships among the verses. Huda and Wulandari, for example, emphasize Surah Al-Hujurāt as a foundation of character education that upholds *adab* and piety but do not articulate a sequence of formation from *adab* to authentic faith.[35] Shofwan and Munib's study of social character in verses 11–13 provides a strong mapping of Qur'anic social ethics but treats this section as a self-contained entity rather than one stage in a *tarbiyah* sequence culminating in the transformation of faith.[36] The bibliometric analysis of global trends likewise shows that many publications use the term "Qur'anic values" generically without translating it into a tiered design that can be tested empirically in educational institutions.[37] The five-level hierarchy proposed here offers an explicit sequence of formation that can serve as an evaluation matrix for how far Islamic educational institutions manage *tarbiyah* gradually rather than sporadically, filling a gap between thematic exegesis, character studies, and institutional research on pesantren.

The Pesantren between Structural Obedience and Spiritual Maturity

Studies of pesantren often highlight the advantages of the 24-hour environment as a "total space" that enables intensive habituation and supervision, and the findings at PPHQ confirm the effectiveness of this pattern in building outward obedience and social order.[38] When Surah Al-Hujurāt is applied as an evaluative lens, however, the pesantren's success is strongest at the first four levels of the hierarchy and is tested most severely at the level of authentic faith. Structural control may indirectly sustain students' dependence on external control, so that the move to inner control does not occur automatically. The *Husn-i-Akhlaaq* framework reinforces this reading: pesantren discipline that restrains the *nafs* through rules, schedules, and sanctions is a necessary foundation, but without processes that lead students into reflection of the *qalb* and illumination of the *rūḥ*, obedience may remain a fragile behavioral pattern once external supervision is lifted.[39] PPHQ and similar pesantren thus face a paradox: the stronger the system of supervision, the

[35] Huda and Wulandari, "Relevansi Nilai Pendidikan Karakter."
[36] Shofwan and Munib, "Pendidikan Karakter Sosial Qur'ani."
[37] Shodikin, Azzahra, and Rihadini, "Global Trends in Islamic Character Education."
[38] Rahman, Amaly, and Qosim, "Development of a Character Education Model."
[39] Khan et al., "Process of Human Personality Development."

greater the risk of dependence that hinders autonomous faith if it is not balanced by deliberate internalization programs.

Internalization of Values and Space for Reflection

Faith cannot be reduced to the result of repeated rituals and administrative compliance; it arises from a reflective inner encounter with the meaning of worship and divine values.[40] This corresponds to the structure of Surah Al-Hujurāt, which places the verses on faith at the end, suggesting that true faith is the final fruit of a long *tarbiyah* process rather than a given starting point. At PPHQ, spaces for reflection, such as personal *muḥāsabah*, egalitarian spiritual dialogue, and independent moral decision making outside formal procedures, remain relatively limited compared with the intensity of structural control, even though studies of character internalization in pesantren and *tahfiz* institutions highlight the importance of giving students opportunities to test their faith in less controlled situations while still receiving meaningful guidance.[41] The implementation limit is thus not merely a technical problem of institutional management but a theological-pedagogical question of how to shift the paradigm from "producing obedient students" to "helping students discover their own faith" within Qur'anic *tarbiyah*.

Conceptual Implications for the Design of Qur'anic Tarbiyah

Conceptually, these results suggest that the design of Qur'anic *tarbiyah* in pesantren needs to be reconstructed in three ways. First, the hierarchy of Surah Al-Hujurāt can be adopted as a road map, so that programs, curricula, and character evaluation follow the sequence of *adab*, *tabayyun*, *iṣlāḥ*/*ukhuwwah*, equality, and authentic faith rather than being a collection of separate activities. Second, spaces for reflection on faith should be formalized in the curriculum, for example through structured *muḥāsabah*, students' reflective journals on the verses of Al-Hujurāt, or spiritual mentoring that treats students as seekers of meaning rather than objects of supervision. Third, Qur'an-based indicators of autonomous faith should complement indicators of outward discipline, assessing the consistency of students' *adab* beyond direct supervision, their maturity in handling conflict, and their ability to apply *tabayyun* in digital spaces, in line with the shift in Islamic character education toward more subtle and context-based character outcomes.[42]

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Surah Al-Hujurāt is not merely a collection of moral instructions but a systematic and tiered architecture of Qur'anic *tarbiyah*. A synthesis of five authoritative commentaries yields a five-level hierarchy of the believer's personality formation:

[40] Djuaini, "Internalization of Islamic Religious Education Values."
[41] Farohi, Fatmawati, and Maula, "Implementation of Character Education."
[42] Shodikin, Azzahra, and Rihadini, "Global Trends in Islamic Character Education."

adab toward the authority of revelation and knowledge (verses 1–5); literacy of *tabayyun* and information filtering (verse 6); conflict management through *iṣlāḥ* and *ukhuwwah* (verses 9–10); equality and the elimination of superiority based on piety (verses 11–13); and transformation toward authentic faith (verses 14–18). At Pondok Pesantren Hamalatul Qur'an, Yogyakarta, this model effectively shapes students' structural obedience through institutional regulation, daily habituation, and an egalitarian culture, but a critical implementation limit remains: the transition from external control to autonomous faith is still the main challenge, and much of students' obedience remains at the stage of outward *islām* while moving toward inner *īmān*. Theoretically, the study offers a hierarchical *tarbiyah* framework that can serve as an evaluation matrix for Qur'an-based character education, confirms Surah Al-Hujurāt as an operational blueprint linking classical texts with contemporary challenges, and distinguishes conceptually between structural compliance and autonomy of faith. Practically, pesantren are advised to design tiered *tarbiyah* curricula with clear indicators for each level, develop reflective programs of faith alongside physical discipline, design field tests of autonomous faith such as independent service projects and digital moral dilemma simulations, and integrate memorization with reflective *tarbiyah*. Future research should use mixed methods to examine the relationship between exposure to the hierarchy and students' autonomy of faith, follow alumni longitudinally for three to five years, and compare pesantren to test the generalizability of the model beyond the *tahfiz* context.

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