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## Shaking and Hand-Kissing Culture for Internalizing Respect Toward Teachers in Islamic Boarding Schools

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### Abstract

This study examines the internalization of respect for teachers through the culture of shaking and hand-kissing within an Islamic Religious Education perspective at Darul Muslimin Muhammadiyah Islamic Boarding School. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were gathered from kiai, teachers, and students through interviews, observation, and documentation. The findings reveal that this cultural practice is not merely a tradition, but an effective medium for embedding values of respect, rooted in both religious teachings and educational norms. It significantly contributes to the development of students' character, fostering humility, politeness, discipline, and stronger learning motivation. The internalization process is reinforced through exemplary behavior, habitual practice, and continuous social interaction within the boarding school environment. This study highlights that the culture of shaking and hand-kissing functions as a powerful hidden curriculum, playing a strategic role in strengthening Islamic character education in a holistic and sustainable manner.

**Keywords:** Internalization of Values, Respect for Teachers, Islamic Boarding School Culture, Handshaking and Hand Kissing, Islamic Religious Education

## 1. Introduction

Islamic Religious Education is not only oriented toward cognitive mastery but also emphasizes the cultivation of manners (adab) and moral character as the foundation of students' personalities (Suyadi & Widodo, 2020). In classical Islamic thought, adab even precedes knowledge, as knowledge without proper conduct is considered devoid of blessing and benefit (Al-Ghazali, 2005). However, contemporary educational trends indicate a decline in students' respect toward teachers, leading to weakened pedagogical relationships and reduced learning effectiveness (Kurniawan & Hidayat, 2021). This condition highlights a broader crisis in character formation and underscores the urgency



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of reinforcing value-based education, particularly respect and ethical conduct, within Islamic educational contexts (Rahman et al., 2024).

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) offer a distinctive advantage in addressing this issue through their strong cultural and value-based systems. Unlike formal schooling models that rely heavily on curricular instruction, pesantren integrate moral education into daily life practices, functioning as a living laboratory of character formation (Hasanah, 2022). One prominent example is the tradition of shaking hands and kissing the hands of teachers, which symbolizes respect and serves as a practical medium for internalizing humility and reverence for knowledge (Al-Zarnuji, 2014; Qodir & Fauzi, 2023).

Darul Muslimin Muhammadiyah Islamic Boarding School represents an exemplary model in maintaining and actualizing this tradition within a modern educational framework. The institution demonstrates how cultural practices can coexist with educational modernization while effectively reinforcing core Islamic values. This makes it a relevant case for understanding how pesantren culture can be adapted and replicated in other Islamic educational institutions.

Despite its significance, existing research on adab education remains largely normative and curriculum-centered, with limited empirical attention to institutional culture as a hidden curriculum (Nuryani et al., 2021). Moreover, the handshake and hand-kissing tradition is often misunderstood as a mere formality, detached from its deeper pedagogical meaning (Sari & Ma'arif, 2022). This gap indicates the need for studies that reposition such practices as strategic instruments for character education, particularly in addressing the broader decline of respect and moral awareness among students.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the handshake and hand-kissing culture as a medium for internalizing respect toward teachers, integrating perspectives from Islamic educational theory and classical scholarship. By focusing on Darul Muslimin Muhammadiyah Islamic Boarding School as a model, this research seeks not only to fill existing academic gaps but also to offer a practical and transferable framework for strengthening character education across Islamic educational institutions.

## **2. Literature Review**

From an Islamic educational perspective, respect for teachers constitutes a fundamental aspect of adab in the pursuit of knowledge. Teachers are not merely transmitters of knowledge but are regarded as moral and spiritual guides who mediate the transmission of knowledge originating from Allah SWT. Consequently, students are required to demonstrate humility, respect, and proper conduct in their interactions.

Classical scholars provide a strong ethical foundation for this view. Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali emphasizes that success in learning is inseparable from students' etiquette toward their teachers, arguing that intellectual ability alone is insufficient without moral discipline (Al-Ghazali, 2011). This perspective is reinforced by Az-Zarnuji, who links the



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blessing (barakah) of knowledge directly to respect for teachers and sincerity in learning (Az-Zarnuji, 2016). Similarly, An-Nawawi highlights practical dimensions of respect, such as attentive listening and avoiding arrogance, thereby framing adab as observable behavior in the learning process (An-Nawawi, 2018). Together, these scholars underline that respect is not only a moral obligation but also an epistemological requirement in Islamic education.

Building on this normative foundation, contemporary educational theories help explain how such values are internalized. Muhaimin (2017) conceptualizes internalization as a staged process value transformation, transaction, and transinternalization, indicating that values must move from cognition to lived awareness. This aligns with Lickona's (2018) framework of moral knowing, feeling, and action, which stresses that character education must integrate understanding with emotional engagement and behavior. Furthermore, Bandura's (1986) social learning theory highlights the centrality of role models and environmental influence, suggesting that students internalize values through observation and imitation. These perspectives collectively emphasize that value formation is most effective when embedded in lived experience rather than abstract instruction.

In this regard, the concept of the hidden curriculum becomes particularly relevant. It refers to values transmitted implicitly through institutional culture, daily practices, and social interactions. Islamic boarding schools exemplify this model, where traditions function as continuous moral education. Zarkasyi (2017) and Baharun and Mahmudah (2018) argue that pesantren culture shapes students' character through sustained habituation, while Yusuf and Rahman (2023) highlight its role in fostering discipline and moral awareness. One key practice is the tradition of shaking hands and kissing teachers' hands, which serves as a symbolic and experiential medium for expressing and internalizing respect.

However, a critical gap remains in existing studies. Much of the literature tends to emphasize the normative importance of adab or broadly discuss pesantren culture without empirically examining specific practices as pedagogical instruments. Moreover, some contemporary perspectives view traditions such as hand-kissing as merely symbolic or even outdated, potentially overlooking their deeper educational significance in shaping character (Sari & Ma'arif, 2022). This critique suggests that traditional practices risk being reduced to ritual formality if not contextualized within modern educational frameworks.

Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by analyzing the handshake and hand-kissing tradition not merely as a cultural artifact, but as an active mechanism of value internalization. By integrating classical Islamic thought with contemporary theories of character education and focusing on lived practice within the pesantren environment, this research offers a more comprehensive and contextual understanding. It positions the tradition as a form of hidden curriculum that remains relevant in addressing current challenges in respect, character formation, and moral education.



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### 3. Research Method

This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design, aiming to deeply understand the process of internalizing the value of respect for teachers through the handshake-kiss culture in the context of Islamic boarding school education. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allowed researchers to explore the meanings, practices, and socio-cultural dynamics that exist naturally within the Islamic boarding school environment (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

The research was conducted at the Darul Muslimin Muhammadiyah Islamic Boarding School, one of the Islamic boarding schools that consistently practices the handshake-kiss culture in the daily lives of its students. The research location was selected based on the consideration that this Islamic boarding school represents an Islamic educational institution that combines Islamic boarding school traditions with Muhammadiyah educational values, making it relevant for study from an Islamic Religious Education perspective.

The research subjects included kiai (Islamic religious leaders), teachers, and students at the Darul Muslimin Muhammadiyah Islamic Boarding School. Informants were selected purposively, with criteria for direct involvement in the handshake-kiss cultural practice and a strategic role in the Islamic boarding school educational process. Kiai (Islamic scholars) and teachers were chosen because they serve as primary educators and role models, while students (*santri*) were chosen to illustrate their direct experiences in the process of internalizing values (Sugiyono, 2021; Nurjannah et al., 2025).

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were used to explore informants' understanding, perspectives, and experiences regarding the meaning and purpose of the handshake and kissing culture. Participatory observation was conducted to directly observe the implementation of this culture in the students' daily activities, both in the context of learning and social interactions at the Islamic boarding school. Documentation was used to supplement the data, including pesantren archives, regulations, activity photographs, and other supporting documents (Hasanah, 2022; Budiman et al., 2024).

Data analysis was conducted in three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The analysis process occurred simultaneously from data collection to the final stage of the study, allowing researchers to continuously reflect on and deepen their findings. To maintain data validity, this study applies triangulation of sources and techniques, by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, so that the research findings have a high level of credibility and validity (Miles et al., 2020; Rohemah, 2021).



## 4. Result

This chapter presents research findings based on field data obtained through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation at the Darul Muslimin Muhammadiyah Islamic Boarding School. The discussion focuses on the informants' This chapter presents research findings based on field data obtained through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation at Darul Muslimin Muhammadiyah Islamic Boarding School. The discussion focuses on informants' interpretations, the process of value internalization, and the impact of the handshake–hand-kissing culture on students' character development, with reference to theories of value internalization, character education, and the hidden curriculum.

### 4.1 Meaning of Respect for Teachers

Interviews reveal that kiai and teachers interpret respect for teachers as an integral part of worship and the ethics of seeking knowledge. One kiai stated, *“Respecting teachers is not just tradition, but part of ibadah. Without adab, knowledge loses its blessing.”* Teachers are viewed not only as knowledge transmitters but also as moral and spiritual guides.

Another teacher explained, *“Students who show respect are usually more open to guidance and easier to direct.”* This reflects a relational model where respect strengthens both pedagogical effectiveness and spiritual connection. These findings indicate that respect is a foundational value that animates the entire educational process.

### 4.2 Implementation of the Handshake and Hand-Kissing Culture

Observations show that the handshake–hand-kissing practice is embedded in students' daily routines before and after lessons, when meeting teachers, and during various activities. A student noted, *“We shake and kiss the teacher's hand every time we meet them. It has become a habit, not something forced.”*

*Teachers emphasized that this practice is not imposed formally but grows through habituation and example. As one teacher explained, “New students learn by observing seniors. Over time, it becomes part of their character.”* This demonstrates that value internalization occurs naturally through lived experience rather than instruction alone.

### 4.3 Role of Teachers as Exemplars

Field data highlight that teacher role modeling is central to value internalization. Teachers consistently demonstrate respectful behavior in daily interactions. One student shared, *“We respect our teachers because they also show respect to us and to others.”*

Such examples reinforce Bandura's social learning theory, where students internalize values through observation and imitation. Respect is not merely taught but embodied, making it more meaningful and sustainable. This aligns with the concept of the hidden curriculum, where values are transmitted through everyday interactions.



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#### **4.4 Impact on Student Character**

Students reported that the handshake–hand-kissing habit significantly shapes their character. One student stated, *“I have become more careful in speaking and more respectful, not only to teachers but also to my parents.”* Another added, *“This habit makes me feel closer to my teachers and more motivated to learn.”*

These findings indicate that the practice fosters humility, politeness, discipline, and emotional connection. Importantly, its impact extends beyond the boarding school environment into students’ broader social lives. Thus, the handshake–hand-kissing culture functions as an effective medium for character formation through continuous and meaningful habituation.

### **5. Discussion**

#### **5.1 Handshake and Hand-Kissing Tradition as a Medium for Value Internalization**

Research findings show that the handshake and hand-kissing tradition at Darul Muslimin Muhammadiyah Islamic Boarding School is not merely a social practice, but an effective medium for internalizing respect for teachers. Through continuous habituation, this practice becomes embedded in students’ awareness and character, transforming from symbolic action into lived values.

This aligns with Muhaimin’s (2017) concept of value internalization as a gradual process, as well as Lickona’s (2018) emphasis on the integration of moral knowing, feeling, and action. The tradition serves as a concrete manifestation of moral values in daily life, making character education experiential rather than purely theoretical.

Normatively, this practice is rooted in Islamic teachings that elevate the status of knowledge and those who possess it, as reflected in Surah Al-Mujadilah verse 11 and the Prophet’s hadith on honoring scholars. Classical scholars such as An-Nawawi further reinforce this perspective by emphasizing respect and humility as essential components of learning. Thus, the tradition represents an integrative model combining cultural, pedagogical, and religious dimensions.

Importantly, while rooted in Islamic boarding school culture, this model has broader relevance. Other educational institutions both religious and general can adapt similar practices by emphasizing respectful gestures, ethical interaction norms, and value-based routines that foster student-teacher respect in culturally appropriate ways.

#### **5.2 The Role of Role Models and the Educational Environment**

The findings highlight that successful value internalization is closely tied to teacher exemplarity and a supportive institutional environment. Teachers function as living models of ethical behavior, confirming Bandura’s (1986) social learning theory that individuals learn through observation and imitation.

A consistent environment further strengthens this process by creating shared norms and positive social reinforcement. Berkowitz and Bier (2017) emphasize that such environments significantly influence moral development because values are not only taught but continuously practiced.



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In broader educational contexts, this suggests that administrators should prioritize building school cultures that model respect, rather than relying solely on formal instruction. Teacher training programs, institutional policies, and daily routines should reflect and reinforce these values.

### **5.3 Islamic Boarding School Traditions as a Hidden Curriculum**

The handshake and hand-kissing tradition can be understood as part of the hidden curriculum, where values are transmitted implicitly through daily practices and social interactions. This demonstrates that character education is most effective when embedded in lived experience rather than confined to formal curricula.

For wider application, educational administrators can integrate similar principles into modern school systems by designing structured yet flexible character-building routines. For example, schools can institutionalize respectful greeting practices, mentorship interactions, or reflective activities that emphasize appreciation and respect for teachers. Importantly, these practices need not replicate the exact form of hand-kissing, but should capture its underlying values respect, humility, and relational closeness.

In digital and modern educational environments, this can also be extended through ethical communication norms, such as respectful language in online classrooms and mindful interaction with educators. By translating traditional values into contemporary forms, schools can maintain relevance while preserving moral substance.

Thus, this study demonstrates that culturally grounded practices, when properly understood and adapted, can serve as effective and transferable models for strengthening character education across diverse educational settings.

## **6. Conclusion**

The findings of this study demonstrate that the tradition of shaking hands and kissing hands in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) functions as an effective and contextually grounded model for internalizing respect for teachers. This practice extends beyond a routine gesture, operating as a structured yet natural process of character formation through imitation, habituation, and the development of personal awareness. The presence of exemplary teachers and a supportive institutional environment significantly strengthens this process, ensuring that values of respect are not only understood but consistently practiced in students' daily lives. Moreover, this tradition contributes to building emotional closeness between students and teachers, thereby fostering a more conducive and meaningful learning environment. Positioned as a form of hidden curriculum, it plays a strategic role in cultivating key character values such as humility, politeness, and respect for knowledge.

This study advances the discourse on character education and Islamic Religious Education by providing empirical evidence that culturally embedded practices can serve as effective pedagogical instruments. It offers a conceptual and practical framework for integrating value-based traditions into modern educational settings. Consequently, this research not



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only enriches theoretical perspectives on value internalization but also provides actionable insights for educators and policymakers seeking to develop holistic, human-centered character education models across diverse educational contexts.

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