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From Live Modeling to Symbolic-Problem Modeling: Reconstructing *Santri* Moral Character Education through Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory

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ABSTRAK

Internalisasi akhlak santri berbasis live modeling kiai menghadapi keterbatasan di era disrupsi digital. Penelitian ini bertujuan merekonstruksi model pembelajaran akhlak melalui integrasi Problem-Based Learning (PBL) berbasis teori kognitif sosial Albert Bandura. Metode yang digunakan adalah studi kepustakaan kualitatif dengan analisis isi konseptual dan sintesis integratif. Sumber data mencakup karya otoritatif Bandura, literatur PBL, dan jurnal bereputasi sepuluh tahun terakhir. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa skenario dilema moral dalam sintaks PBL berfungsi sebagai symbolic-problem modeling yang menggeser lokus keagenan dari figur fisik ke medium simbolik. Mekanisme ini beroperasi melalui empat fase belajar Bandura: atensi kasus digital, retensi pengodean kognitif, reproduksi melalui peer modeling, dan motivasi via moral self-efficacy. Ketegangan antara nalar kritis konstruktivistik PBL dan kultur paternalistik pesantren dijembatani melalui konsep triadic reciprocal causation, di mana lingkungan pesantren bertindak sebagai pengendali nilai. Integrasi ini melahirkan critical-takzim learning model yang memadukan ketajaman berpikir kritis dengan kedalaman spiritual. Penelitian ini berimplikasi teoretis pada peta jalan pengembangan kurikulum akhlak yang aktif, reflektif, dan transformatif tanpa menegasikan tradisi pesantren.

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Problem-Based Learning; Teori Kognitif Sosial; Albert Bandura; Pembelajaran Akhlak; Pesantren

ABSTRACT

The internalization of *santri's* moral character, traditionally anchored in the live modeling of *kyai* figures in *pesantren*, faces limitations amid complex digital-era moral dilemmas. This conceptual literature study aims to reconstruct the moral character learning model by integrating Problem-Based Learning analyzed through Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory. Utilizing a qualitative literature review with conceptual content analysis and integrative synthesis, data sources include Bandura's authoritative works, epistemological PBL literature, and reputable journal articles from the past decade. Findings indicate that contemporary moral dilemmas within the PBL syntax can be reconstructed as symbolic-problem modeling, effectively shifting the agency locus from physical figures to symbolic mediums. This mechanism operates through Bandura's four observational learning phases: attention via contextual digital cases, retention via cognitive coding of moral character values, reproduction via peer modeling in discussions, and motivation via mastery-experience-based moral self-efficacy. The tension between constructivist critical thinking in PBL and the *pesantren's* paternalistic culture is bridged through triadic reciprocal causation, positioning the *pesantren* environment as a value-controller. This integration establishes the critical-takzim learning model, a pedagogy merging critical thinking with spiritual depth and respect, offering a theoretical roadmap for active, reflective, and transformative moral character curricula.

KEYWORDS

Problem-Based Learning; Social Cognitive Theory; Albert Bandura; Moral Character Education; *Pesantren*

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A. Introduction

Moral character education within *pesantren* environments currently faces a new moral landscape characterized by the complexities of contemporary digital dilemmas, spanning from character destruction in cyberspace to the increasing marginalization of humanistic values in social life.[1] Amidst the massive penetration of this reality, the methods of internalizing moral character in most *pesantren* remain dominated by a traditional approach that occurs unidirectionally through the recital of classical *kitab kuning* texts.[2] Although this approach is effective in preserving the tradition of respect, there is a potential for value decontextualization, a condition where in *santri* can memorize normative moral character principles within the *pesantren* environment but risk experiencing moral dissonance when encountering complex ethical issues in real society. Therefore, a methodological transformation is required toward a learning model oriented toward concrete problem-solving through a problem-based learning approach.

The implementation of problem-based learning within the context of *pesantren* education generates a fundamental epistemological tension. As a model rooted in the constructivism paradigm, problem-based learning demands independent critical reasoning from individuals to construct solutions autonomously.[3] This characteristic does not appear fully aligned with the paternalistic culture of *pesantren*, where obedience to the *kyai* figure serves as a primary pillar in the learning process. To bridge this tension, Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory can be utilized as a relevant and comprehensive analytical framework.[4]

Albert Bandura's theory is frequently misunderstood as part of mechanistic behaviorism. Bandura explicitly criticized radical behaviorism through the concepts of triadic reciprocal causation and human agency, which position humans as active agents who cognitively process information before responding to the environment.[5] Consequently, the integration between problem-based learning and social cognitive theory is complementary. Problem-based learning functions as a socio-pedagogical model that fosters dialectical processes and knowledge reconstruction through problem-solving, where Bandura's theory provides the psychological foundation to understand the processes of observation, imitation, and value internalization occurring within the *santri's* cognition.[6]

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[1] Asrizal Saiin, Pipin Armita, and Muhammad Rizki, "Contribution of Pesantren to Prevent Social Conflict," *Millah* 20, no. 1 (August 2020): 89–110, https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol20.iss1.art4.

[2] Nurul Istiqomah et al., "Digitalisasi Pengajian Kitab Kuning Di Pondok Pesantren As-Sa'idiyyah 2 Bahrul Ulum Tambak Beras Jombang," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 23, no. 1 (June 2025): 342–73, https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v23i1.1358.

[3] Howard S. Barrows, "Problem-Based Learning in Medicine and Beyond: A Brief Overview," *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* 1996, no. 68 (December 1996): 3–12, https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.37219966804.

[4] Albert Bandura, "Social Cognitive Theory of Self-Regulation," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 50, no. 2 (December 1991): 248–87, https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90022-L.

[5] Albert Bandura, "Human Agency in Social Cognitive Theory," *American Psychologist* 44, no. 9 (1989): 1175–84, https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.44.9.1175.

[6] Armyn Hasibuan et al., "Sufistic Approach of Character Education in an Indonesian Islamic Boarding School," *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 49, no. 1 (June 2025): 184, https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v49i1.1332.

Although studies regarding modern learning methods and social learning theory have evolved, literature specifically integrating both within the *pesantren* context leaves a theoretical vacuum. Research on the application of social cognitive theory in *pesantren* has hitherto focused predominantly on the practice of live modeling, namely the direct imitation of concrete behaviors of the *kyai* or *ustadz* as sources of role modeling. On the other hand, research on problem-based learning in *pesantren* is generally limited to measuring its effectiveness in enhancing cognitive academic achievements, such as in science or *fiqh*, without deeply addressing affective and moral dimensions.[7]

This condition indicates a significant research gap, particularly concerning the boundary reach of social cognitive theory when the locus of model agency undergoes a shift. To date, there is a lack of studies examining how the observational learning process in *santri* takes place when the source of role modeling no longer derives directly from human figures but is presented symbolically through dilemmatic case narratives integrated within the syntax of problem-based learning.

Departing from this gap, this study offers a primary scientific novelty: the reconstruction of modeling agency in social cognitive theory through a symbolic-problem modeling approach. This study proposes the notion that contemporary cases or problems presented in problem-based learning can function as effective symbolic models that complement and extend the role of physical live models into situations the latter cannot reach. Through this approach, the study attempts to deeply unravel the cognitive processes of *santri* in adopting, imitating, and internalizing noble moral character values, not through visual observation of specific individuals, but through the process of analysis and resolution toward moral crisis simulations solved collaboratively in the classroom.

Based on this focal novelty, this study aims to reconstruct the moral character learning model for *santri* through the integration of problem-based learning, with an emphasis on analyzing the shift of modeling functions toward symbolic-problem modeling using the perspective of Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory. This formulation is expected to provide a significant theoretical contribution to the development of contemporary Islamic education that is more integrative, adaptive, and contextual.

The central argument of this article can be stated as follows. The weakness of moral character education in *pesantren* does not lie in the practice of exemplarity itself, but in its exclusive dependence on the physical presence of the model. If modeling in Bandura's sense is a process of transmitting rules, consequences, and patterns of reasoning, then a well-designed moral problem can carry that information into situations the *kyai* never witnesses. The discussion develops this argument in four steps. It first examines why live modeling alone cannot reach the moral situations that *santri* now face in digital space. It then shows how problem scenarios in problem-based learning satisfy the conditions of a symbolic model. Next, it traces how *santri* process these scenarios through Bandura's four phases

[7] Teuku Zulkhairi et al., "Baḥtsul Masāil at a Traditional Islamic Educational Institution in Aceh: Teungku Dayah's Contribution to the Development of Islamic Law," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 8, no. 1 (April 2024): 579, https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v8i1.17408.

of observational learning, and how triadic reciprocal causation keeps critical reasoning anchored in *pesantren* values. Finally, it formulates the Critical-*Takzim* Learning Model as the theoretical outcome of these steps.

This article is a conceptual study based on library research with a qualitative approach. It does not test empirical effectiveness in the field. It reconstructs, at the level of concepts, the relation between problem-based learning, a constructivist model, and Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory in the setting of *akhlak* education in *pesantren*. The sources are documentary. The primary sources are Bandura's foundational works on human agency, triadic reciprocal causation, and observational learning; core texts on the epistemology and syntax of problem-based learning; and classical Islamic ethics texts (*kitab kuning*). The secondary sources are journal articles from the last ten years, located through Google Scholar, Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Sinta using the keywords "social cognitive theory," "problem-based learning," "*pesantren*," and "Islamic character education," and screened for relevance to moral development and to Bandura's theory. Classic works were kept regardless of date. The analysis combines three techniques: conceptual content analysis of the notion of the symbolic model, a dialectical critique that sets autonomous critical reasoning against the paternalistic compliance values of *pesantren*, and an integrative synthesis of the resulting concepts. Sources were checked for academic reputability (external criticism) and compared with one another for logical consistency (internal criticism). Because the study is conceptual, its findings take the form of theoretical propositions that still need empirical testing, not claims about measured learning outcomes.

B. The Limitations of Traditional Live Modeling in the Digital Disruption Era

Within the pedagogical tradition of *pesantren*, the formation of *santri's* moral character has historically anchored itself upon the presence of the *kyai* or *ustadz* figures as live models.[8] From the perspective of Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory, this practice represents an observational learning mechanism that transpires through spatial proximity and direct interaction. *Santri* direct their attention, retain behavioral representations in memory, and reproduce these behaviors in concrete actions based on the observed exemplary conduct. This pattern establishes a relatively linear and stable learning structure, as moral character behaviors are learned within a controlled environment with a high intensity of observation toward the same model.

However, in the context of the digital disruption era, the effectiveness of traditional live modeling encounters significant limitations. The contemporary moral landscape is no longer shaped within a stable physical space, but rather within a digital sphere that is asynchronous, fragmented, and mediated

[8] Abuddin Nata, "Kyai And Character Education," *Psychology and Education Journal* 58, no. 1 (January 2021): 5365–89, https://doi.org/10.17762/pae.v58i1.1795.

by technology.[9] In the traditional *pesantren* model, the environment tends to be homogeneous, controlled, and centralized, thereby granting the *kyai* figure a dominant authority in shaping social stimuli. Nevertheless, the digital transformation has shifted the environmental character into one that is open, dynamic, and difficult to control, making the sole role of a live model no longer adequate as a source of moral learning.

These limitations become increasingly apparent when linked to the principle of contextual similarity in Bandura's theory. The effectiveness of learning through observation is highly determined by the congruence between the context in which the behavior is observed and the context in which it is applied. In reality, a wide contextual gulf exists between the moral character practices exhibited by the *kyai* in physical spaces, such as mosques and classrooms, and the dilemmatic situations encountered by *santri* within the digital realm. Cyberspace presents moral problems that are latent, rapidly changing, and frequently occur under conditions of anonymity, such as cyberbullying, the dissemination of false information, and exposure to destructive content. This condition demands moral reasoning capabilities that are grounded not merely in imitation, but also in critical reflection and autonomous decision-making.[10]

The absence of directly observable behavioral precedents within the digital context causes *santri* to experience difficulties in transferring observational outcomes from live models into novel situations. This condition potentially triggers stagnation, or even functional impediments, in the process of ethical decision-making. In other words, a learning process that relies exclusively on the imitation of physical behavior is not yet capable of reaching the complexities of moral reality presented by technology.[11]

The limitations of this approach can also be explained through Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development, which posits that obedience-based learning without the reinforcement of critical reasoning tends to place individuals at the conventional moral stage, oriented toward compliance with external norms and maintaining social order.[12] Within this framework, *santri* potentially develop a moral orientation that depends on external control rather than on autonomous, internal awareness. This aligns with the concept advanced by Kochanska regarding the distinction between situational compliance and committed compliance. When value internalization relies solely on direct surveillance and live modeling,

[9] Arman Paramansyah et al., "Transformation of Islamic Boarding School Education to Address Moral Challenges in the Digital Era," *QALAMUNA: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial, Dan Agama* 16, no. 2 (November 2024): 1271–80, https://doi.org/10.37680/qalamuna.v16i2.6090.

[10] Akhmad Nurul Kawakip, "Globalization and Islamic Educational Challenges: Views from East Javanese Pesantren," *Ulumuna* 24, no. 1 (June 2020): 105–31, https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v24i1.385.

[11] Muhammad Anas Ma'arif and Muhamad Arif, "Sustaining Character Education in Pesantren: A Holistic and Culturally Embedded Learning Ecosystem," *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendidikan* 45, no. 2 (June 2026), https://doi.org/10.21831/cp.v45i2.94968.

[12] "Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development," in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Educational Research, Measurement, and Evaluation*, by Bruce B. Frey (2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, California 91320: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2018), https://doi.org/10.4135/9781506326139.n374.

what forms is situational compliance, namely, moral behavior that surfaces only because of the presence of an authority figure.[13]

Conversely, moral character education oriented toward contemporary needs demands the cultivation of committed compliance, which is compliance rooted in the internalization of values embedded within the individual's self-identity. Under this condition, *santri* are capable of autonomously actualizing moral character values, both under supervised situations and within anonymous digital spaces. Consequently, an exclusive reliance on live modeling not only demonstrates a methodological limitation but also indicates an urgent need to conduct an epistemological reconstruction in *pesantren* moral character education.

Thus, the traditional live modeling model, despite its strength in forging obedience-based exemplarity, is not yet fully capable of answering moral challenges in the complex and dynamic digital era. An alternative pedagogical approach is therefore required, one that not only preserves traditional values but is also capable of developing the cognitive capacity and moral agency of *santri* in a more adaptive manner.

This critique needs to be read carefully. It does not claim that the *kyai*'s exemplarity has lost its value. In the Islamic tradition, the Prophet is presented as *uswah ḥasanah*, a good example (Q. al-Aḥzāb [33]: 21), and exemplarity remains the moral heart of *pesantren* education. The problem lies in a narrow reading of exemplarity as the imitation of visible conduct. The *kyai*'s example has always included the way he weighs a case, consults the texts, and reaches a judgment, yet this reasoning is rarely made visible to *santri* in the classroom. What *santri* observe is the outcome of moral reasoning, not the reasoning process. When they meet a situation that the observed outcome does not cover, they have no pattern to fall back on. The reconstruction proposed in this study therefore aims to make the reasoning behind exemplarity observable and transferable, so that *santri* inherit not only the *kyai*'s conduct but also the way of thinking that produces it.

C. The Anatomy of Problem-Based Learning: Problem Scenarios as Symbolic Models

To overcome these transitional limitations, this study offers a conceptual reconstruction by shifting the locus of modeling agency from concrete human figures to text-based symbolic mediums. In his later elaboration of social cognitive theory, Albert Bandura asserts that the modeling process does not always necessitate the presence of a physical actor. Information regarding behavioral rules, thinking principles, and action evaluation patterns can be effectively transmitted through symbolic models, which may manifest as texts, images, audiovisual media, or conceptual case scenarios. In the classroom context,

[13] Grazyna Kochanska, "Committed Compliance, Moral Self, and Internalization: A Mediational Model," *Developmental Psychology* 38, no. 3 (2002): 339–51, https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.38.3.339.

contemporary moral dilemma scenarios designed within the initial syntax of problem-based learning take over part of the function of such modeling agents.[14]

Problem scenarios in problem-based learning are not designed merely as discussion triggers or practice exercises, but rather as symbolic scaffolding that systematically integrates moral character values into a problematic narrative structure.[15] In contrast to doctrinal approaches that present norms directly in the form of imperative statements, this model presents dilemmatic situations that are contextual and open for analysis. For instance, instead of explicitly stating a prohibition against spreading hoaxes, a scenario is formulated as a case depicting the social impacts of an unverified action within digital spaces.

Within the framework of social cognitive theory, such scenarios possess validity as symbolic models because they contain two primary components of modeling: generative rules of behavior and the causal consequences of actions. The case narratives do not provide direct normative answers; instead, they present complex cause-and-effect relationships that demand *santri* to identify, evaluate, and deduce the moral implications of a decision. Consequently, the learning process ceases to be reproductive and instead evolves into a constructive and analytical endeavor.

Mechanistically, scenarios in problem-based learning operate through the mechanism of abstract modeling, a form of modeling that enables learners to extract general principles from a situation rather than merely imitating specific responses. In this process, *santri* are driven to comprehend the thinking patterns underlying the actions within the scenario, thereby enabling them to generalize those principles into various distinct contexts. When *santri* analyze a case involving unverified information, for example, they do not merely comprehend the prohibition of spreading hoaxes, but they also internalize the principle of prudence as an integral part of their moral cognitive framework.

Furthermore, the scenario text serves as a cognitive guide that directs the thinking process through the mechanism of symbolic coding, the process of converting external stimuli into meaningful mental representations. Through this symbolic coding, *santri* construct cognitive structures that allow them to autonomously comprehend, organize, and apply moral character values. In other words, learning no longer depends on the physical presence of a model but shifts to the internal capacity of the individual to process moral information.[16]

This transformation demonstrates that modeling agency can be conceptually reconstructed from a personal, figure-based nature into an impersonal, narrative-system-based nature. Within this

[14] Albert Bandura, "Social Foundations of Thought and Action," in *The Health Psychology Reader*, by David Marks (1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road, London EC1Y 1SP United Kingdom: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1986), 94–106, https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446221129.n6.

[15] Peggy A. Ertmer and Krista D. Glazewski, "Scaffolding in PBL Environments: Structuring and Problematizing Relevant Task Features," in *The Wiley Handbook of Problem-Based Learning*, 1st ed., ed. Mahnaz Moallem, Woei Hung, and Nada Dabbagh (Wiley, 2019), 321–42, https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119173243.ch14.

[16] Albert Bandura and Robert W. Jeffrey, "Role of Symbolic Coding and Rehearsal Processes in Observational Learning.," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 26, no. 1 (April 1973): 122–30, https://doi.org/10.1037/h0034205.

framework, the problem text in problem-based learning functions as a modeling agent that implicitly yet systematically delivers value orientations, cognitive directions, and the consequences of actions. Accordingly, *santri* acquire a moral compass that is no longer bound by geographical limitations or the physical presence of authority figures, but is instead embedded within a cognitive structure that can be accessed and activated across diverse situations, including the dynamic digital realm.

This reconstruction is not foreign to the Islamic intellectual tradition. The Qur'an conveys a large part of its moral teaching through narratives rather than through bare commands, and it states that in the stories of earlier peoples there is a lesson for those who reflect (Q. Yūsuf [12]: 111). In Bandura's terms, these narratives function as symbolic models: they present actors, choices, and consequences from which readers draw principles. *Pesantren* also have their own tradition of collective case analysis in *baḥtsul masāil*, where *santri* and teachers discuss actual problems and search for answers in the classical texts under the guidance of senior scholars. Problem-based learning scenarios can therefore be understood as a pedagogical extension of practices the *pesantren* already recognize, not as an imported model that competes with them.

For a scenario to function as a symbolic model, its design has to meet several conditions. First, it must be authentic, describing situations *santri* actually meet or are likely to meet, such as forwarding an unverified message in a class group chat. Second, it must contain genuine moral tension, so that the right answer cannot be found by recalling a single rule. Third, it must make the consequences of each possible action visible, because Bandura's theory holds that observed consequences shape what learners adopt. Fourth, it must be linked to classical concepts that *santri* have studied, such as *tabayyun* in Q. al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 6, so that analysis of the case leads back to the moral sources of the *pesantren*. Scenarios that fail these conditions risk becoming mere discussion exercises and lose their modeling function.

D. Reconstructing Moral Character Learning: The *Santri*'s Social Cognitive Mechanisms within the Problem-Based Learning Syntax

The argument of this section rests on a structural correspondence between the problem-based learning syntax and the four phases of observational learning. In the five-phase syntax commonly used in Indonesian classrooms, orienting students to the problem corresponds to the attention phase; organizing students and defining the problem corresponds to retention; guided investigation in groups corresponds to behavioral reproduction; and developing and presenting solutions corresponds to motivation. The fifth phase, analyzing and evaluating the problem-solving process, extends the model into Bandura's account of self-regulation. Each correspondence is examined below.

Within the socio-pedagogical architecture of problem-based learning, the processing of moral information is no longer centered on passive reception, but instead initiates through intensive cognitive activation. The contemporary moral dilemma scenarios presented at the problem-orientation stage

function as a form of symbolic modeling that initiates the attention phase within Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory. When *santri* are confronted with case narratives that represent actual realities, such as the impact of online gambling on family economics or the phenomenon of cyberbullying and its implications for adolescent mental health, an immediate cognitive appraisal process occurs. The high degree of contextual relevance successfully overcomes the cognitive boredom that frequently arises within normative, text-based learning, while simultaneously driving a selective attentional focus because *santri* perceive these issues as tangible threats within their own lives.

Once cognitive attention is established, the learning process transitions into the retention phase, which involves storing information in the form of structured mental representations. Albert Bandura asserts that the ability to reproduce behavior is heavily determined by the quality of cognitive coding for the information stored in memory. In traditional approaches, retention tends to be built through mechanistic memorization that is highly vulnerable to informational decay. Conversely, within problem-based learning, retention is constructed through active engagement in higher-order thinking, specifically when *santri* perform problem identification and formulation. At this stage, a process of cognitive coding and symbolic reorganization takes place, wherein classical moral character concepts such as *tabayyun* (verification), *ghibah* (backbiting), and *namimah* (tale-bearing) are no longer understood merely as normative definitions, but are reconstructed as analytical instruments to dissect the cases at hand. This deep cognitive engagement enables the formation of more stable and functional mental representation schemas, thereby embedding moral character values within long-term memory as operational principles that can be retrieved across diverse situations.

The learning process subsequently moves toward the behavioral reproduction phase, which transpires as *santri* enter the stages of independent investigation and group work. In this phase, the stored cognitive schemas begin to be expressed in the form of verbal actions and social interactions. According to Albert Bandura, behavioral reproduction involves the transformation of conceptions into actions guided by symbolic rehearsal and continuous feedback. Within the context of group discussions, *santri* are required to formulate ethical solutions to the analyzed dilemmas. As they articulate arguments grounded in moral character values, they simultaneously test the validity and consistency of their own cognitive structures. At this juncture, the mechanism of peer modeling plays a pivotal role, as *santri* mutually observe and adopt moral reasoning patterns from their peers that are deemed more accurate. This interaction establishes a cognitive feedback loop that allows for collective correction, refinement, and reinforcement of understanding.[17]

Through this process of dialogue and mutual evaluation, distortions in ethical reasoning can be progressively minimized, thereby yielding responses that are more mature and aligned with Islamic moral character principles. The open and reflective discussion environment also strengthens the *santri's*

[17] Dale H. Schunk, "Peer Models and Children's Behavioral Change," *Review of Educational Research* 57, no. 2 (June 1987): 149–74, https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543057002149.

capability to articulate moral values argumentatively rather than merely reproducing norms literally. Consequently, the production phase not only generates behavioral expressions but also enriches the quality of the moral understanding and skills possessed by the students.

The final stage in this mechanism is the motivation phase, which acts as the determinant for the sustainability of moral character behavior outside the learning environment. Albert Bandura emphasizes that behavior will not be consistently actualized without a powerful internal drive. Through the final syntax of problem-based learning, which demands the presentation and accountability of solutions before the class, *santri* attain authentic mastery experiences. Success in resolving complex cases and defending moral arguments in a public space provides significant psychological reinforcement to their self-belief. Furthermore, observing the success of other groups introduces vicarious experiences that expand the reference pool for collective success. These twin experiences, bolstered by social reinforcement from facilitators and peers, serve as the primary factors in constructing moral self-efficacy.

The shift that occurs during this phase is fundamental: moving from a motivation that previously relied on external factors to one that is intrinsic and agentic. *Santri* no longer act ethically purely due to external pressure or surveillance, but rather out of an internal conviction regarding their own capacity as moral agents. Once moral self-efficacy is firmly established, *santri* are capable of autonomously navigating various moral dilemmas, including within complex and anonymous digital contexts. Consequently, they develop into individuals who are not merely compliant with norms, but who possess a profound and sustainable sense of moral responsibility.

The fifth phase of the problem-based learning syntax, in which the facilitator and *santri* analyze and evaluate the problem-solving process, connects this motivation to Bandura's account of self-regulation. Bandura describes self-regulation as working through three sub-functions: self-observation, judgment of one's conduct against personal standards, and self-reaction in the form of satisfaction or self-censure. Reflective evaluation at the end of a problem-based learning cycle trains all three. *Santri* review how they reasoned, compare their reasoning with the standards of the texts and the guidance of the *ustadz*, and recognize where their judgment was hasty or incomplete. The *ustadz* also contributes a further source of self-efficacy, verbal persuasion, by affirming sound reasoning and correcting weak arguments. Over repeated cycles, the external standards of the *pesantren* become internal standards that *santri* apply to themselves. This is the point at which the situational compliance described earlier can turn into committed compliance.

E. Triadic Reciprocal Causation Resolution in Moral Character Formation

Albert Bandura posits that human behavior is shaped through the reciprocal interaction among three core components: cognitive or personal factors, behavioral factors, and environmental factors. This interaction is neither static nor symmetrical; rather, it is dynamic and highly contextual, depending on

the characteristics of the social environment in which the individual is embedded. Within the *pesantren* context, environmental factors possess a dominant influence because they are structured by an established value system, an organized institutional framework, and the *kyai* figure as the epicenter of religious authority. This environment functions not merely as a background setting, but as a system that actively filters, directs, and solidifies the *santri's* moral orientation through repetitive devotional practices, collective discipline, and the internalization of spiritual values.

The integration of problem-based learning into instruction is not intended to alter this environmental structure, but rather to intervene in and optimize the cognitive factors of the *santri*. Hitherto, unidirectional learning processes have tended to restrict the space for critical thinking exploration. By introducing contemporary problem scenarios, problem-based learning presents stimuli that compel *santri* to engage in autonomous analysis, reflection, and moral reasoning. Consequently, the activation of cognitive factors does not occur in an unguided vacuum, but remains anchored within the value framework constructed by the *pesantren* environment.

Within this reciprocal relationship, environmental factors act as a stabilizer and alignment mechanism for developing cognitive activities. When *santri* dissect social phenomena, such as digital hoaxes or online gambling practices through a problem-based learning approach, their critical thinking skills are utilized to evaluate the issue rationally. However, the foundational moral orientation for this evaluation consistently references the Islamic values internalized within the *pesantren* culture. This yields a synthesis between cognitive activation and environmental value reinforcement, resulting in behavior that is not only rational but also profoundly rooted in religious ethics.

The outcome of this interaction is reflected in the formation of integrative *santri* behaviors, characterized by the ability to think critically while maintaining a respectful stance toward scholarly authority. *Santri* do not develop into individuals who reject authority; instead, they become moral agents capable of navigating social complexities with a robust value foundation. They can objectively critique moral disruption phenomena in society without losing their spiritual awareness and commitment to religious norms.

This synthesis also changes how the role of the *ustadz* should be understood. Symbolic-problem modeling does not remove the teacher from the learning process. It shifts the teacher's modeling function from displaying conduct to displaying reasoning. The *ustadz* designs or selects the scenarios, which means that the values carried by each symbolic model are curated by a figure whose authority *santri* already accept. During discussion, the *ustadz* can model the steps of moral reasoning aloud, showing how a case is read in light of the texts, a form of verbal and cognitive modeling that Bandura's theory recognizes. At the end of the cycle, the *ustadz* confirms or corrects the solutions the groups have produced, much as senior scholars do in *baḥtsul masāil*. Authority is therefore not bypassed. It moves from the beginning of the learning process, where it supplies ready answers, to the end, where it validates answers that *santri* have worked out themselves.

Furthermore, this integration carries significant implications for preventing moral disengagement, a condition wherein individuals detach their internal moral self-regulation, enabling them to execute actions that violate their values without experiencing guilt.[18] This phenomenon is highly prevalent within digital spaces characterized by anonymity and weak social controls. Through problem-based learning, *santri* are trained to recognize the mechanisms that trigger moral disengagement, such as euphemistic labeling, dehumanizing victims, or diffusing responsibility across the many users who share the same content.

Simultaneously, the *pesantren* environment provides the value reinforcement necessary to ensure that these analytical capabilities remain oriented toward Islamic ethics. Consequently, critical reasoning does not develop into a destructive tool that undermines the value system, but instead serves to strengthen moral character internalization. *Santri* utilize their cognitive capacity to resolve social issues constructively rather than to contest religious authority.

In its entirety, the integration of problem-based learning and Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory demonstrates that constructivism and paternalism do not need to be positioned as a dichotomy. Both can harmoniously co-exist within the *pesantren* educational ecosystem through mutually complementary roles. This approach enables the cultivation of a generation of *santri* who possess not only the rational intelligence required to face contemporary challenges but also the spiritual depth and robust moral commitment as the foundation of their daily behavior.

F. Theoretical Implications: The Formulation of the Critical-*Takzim* Model for Contemporary Islamic Education

As a crystallization of the entire theoretical analysis, this study formulates a new pedagogical model termed the *Critical-Takzim Learning Model*. This model stands as the primary theoretical implication of deconstructing and reconstructing modeling agency within Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory, integrated into the operational syntax of problem-based learning. This formulation demonstrates that the constructivism paradigm, which is oriented toward the development of critical reasoning, does not have to be positioned dichotomously against the theocentric traditionalism of Islamic education. Conversely, both paradigms can be integrally combined to forge a learning approach that is simultaneously adaptive and deeply rooted in spiritual values.

Epistemologically, the *Critical-Takzim* model re-positions the concept of exemplarity within the framework of Islamic education. Exemplarity is no longer narrowly interpreted as a process of directly imitating the physical behaviors of a teacher or *kyai* figure, but is expanded into a cognitive capacity to comprehend, internalize, and actualize moral values across diverse life contexts. In the context of the digital era, exemplarity needs to be transformed into a reflective and analytical capacity, wherein *santri*

[18] Albert Bandura, "Moral Disengagement in the Perpetration of Inhumanities," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 3, no. 3 (August 1999): 193–209, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr0303_3.

are capable of identifying, evaluating, and resolving abstract and complex moral issues through the mechanism of symbolic-problem modeling. Consequently, the measure of success in moral character education is no longer determined by the uniformity of external behaviors, but by the strength of the moral agency constructed within the *santri*.

Operationally, this model works through two mutually reinforcing anchors. First, the *cognitive-critical anchor* is manifested through the implementation of problem-based learning syntax, which drives the transformation of learning from passive memorization patterns toward an active, problem-based investigation process. Within this framework, contemporary moral cases function as symbolic models that trigger ethical reasoning and reflective decision-making. Second, the *sociocultural anchor of takzim* is preserved through the sustainability of the *pesantren* environment as a hidden curriculum that internalizes spiritual values, discipline, and reverence for scholarly authority. The synergy between these two anchors yields a balance between developing intellectual capacity and reinforcing the affective-spiritual dimension within the *santri*.

The theoretical implications of this model open a pathway for the reorientation of the *pesantren* educational curriculum, particularly in the fields of moral character and social transactions. It is no longer sufficient for the curriculum to rely solely on textual approaches that are normative; rather, it needs to be developed into a transformative curriculum grounded in real-world problem analysis. Contemporary moral crisis scenarios can be introduced as instructional vehicles that function as cognitive laboratories to authentically test and reinforce the *santri's* moral self-efficacy. Through this approach, *santri* do not merely comprehend norms but are also capable of applying them contextually within a dynamic social life.

Furthermore, the *Critical-Takzim* model asserts that methodological transformation in moral character education does not have to sacrifice the traditional roots of the *pesantren*, which have proven resilient in shaping character. On the contrary, pedagogical innovation can be achieved while maintaining fundamental values such as sincerity, the blessing of the scholarly lineage, and reverence for religious authority. Within this framework, the reinforcement of critical reasoning through problem-based learning is not directed toward challenging authority, but rather toward enriching the *santri's* ability to comprehend and implement Islamic teachings in a deeper and more contextual manner.

The model must also address two foreseeable objections. The first is that open discussion of moral cases may lead to relativism, where every opinion is treated as equally valid. The model answers this by placing the classical texts and the validation of the *ustadz* as the final reference for each case, so that discussion widens the reasoning of *santri* without dissolving the normative boundaries of Islamic ethics. The second objection concerns the culture of reverence itself. *Santri* who have been taught to stay silent before teachers may hesitate to express disagreement, fearing that it signals poor manners. Here the *pesantren* tradition offers its own resource in *adab al-baḥth wa al-munāẓarah*, the etiquette of scholarly discussion, which permits disagreement as long as it is expressed with courtesy and directed at the

argument rather than the person. Teaching *santri* this etiquette alongside problem-based learning allows critical reasoning and *takzim* to be practiced in the same act.

Accordingly, the theoretical synthesis offered through the *Critical-Takzim* model presents a new paradigm in contemporary Islamic education. This model not only possesses a robust foundation in social cognitive psychology theory but is also highly aligned with the methodological principles of modern learning and Islamic theological values. The result is an educational approach capable of cultivating a generation of *santri* who possess intellectual intelligence, moral resilience, and spiritual depth, thereby enabling them to adapt to contemporary dynamics without losing their Islamic identity.

G. Conclusion

This conceptual literature study reconstructs the moral character learning model for *santri* by integrating problem-based learning with Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory. The primary scientific novelty produced lies in the reconstruction of the modeling agency locus, specifically shifting from a reliance on physical live models toward the utilizing of symbolic-problem modeling. Within this framework, contemporary moral dilemma scenarios structured inside the initial syntax of problem-based learning prove theoretically capable of functioning as effective symbolic models to complement the direct exemplary role of *kyai* or *ustadz* figures by carrying their moral guidance into situations where they cannot be physically present.

Through an analysis of social cognitive mechanisms, this integration demonstrates a systematic operation across Bandura's four observational learning phases. In the attention phase, contemporary moral crisis narratives relevant to the *santri's* lives selectively capture cognitive focus due to their high contextual value. In the retention phase, the critical thinking activities involved in analyzing cases foster cognitive coding that transforms classical moral character concepts into operational schemas within long-term memory. Subsequently, in the reproduction phase, interactions during group discussions facilitate peer modeling and corrective feedback that enrich and mature the *santri's* moral reasoning. Lastly, in the motivation phase, success in resolving problems yields authentic mastery experiences that significantly reinforce moral self-efficacy as the baseline for the formation of autonomous moral agency.

Furthermore, the epistemological tension between the constructivist nature of problem-based learning, which emphasizes critical reasoning and the *pesantren* culture which upholds obedience is successfully reconciled through the concept of triadic reciprocal causation. Within this framework, the robust and established *pesantren* environment functions as an environmental factor that directs and balances the cognitive activation triggered by problem-based learning. This interaction generates a synthesized behavior wherein *santri* are capable of developing critical thinking capacities to navigate modern social complexities without losing their respectful stance toward scholarly authority.

The ultimate outcome of this reconstruction is the formulation of the *Critical-Takzim Learning Model*, a pedagogical model that integrates analytical capacity with spiritual depth in a balanced manner. This

model produces *santri* who possess not only the cognitive acuity to untangle moral issues within the social sphere but also consistently preserve their commitment to Islamic values and *pesantren* traditions.

The theoretical implications of this study offer a new direction for the curriculum development of contemporary Islamic education. Curricula need to be directed toward more active, reflective, and problem-oriented approaches without disregarding the traditional value foundations that define the *pesantren's* identity. Consequently, the proposed pedagogical transformation is not deconstructive toward tradition; rather, it is integrative, thereby enabling the cultivation of a generation of *santri* who are adaptive to changing times while remaining profoundly rooted in Islamic moral character principles.

As a conceptual study, this research has limitations. The propositions it formulates are derived from theoretical analysis and have not been tested in *pesantren* classrooms. Their validity may also differ between *salaf pesantren*, which rely heavily on *kitab kuning* instruction, and *khalaf pesantren*, which already combine formal school curricula. Future research can test the Critical-*Takzim* Learning Model through quasi-experimental or design-based studies that measure changes in moral self-efficacy, moral disengagement, and moral reasoning among *santri*. Classroom observation and interviews would also help to show whether *santri* actually extract general principles from scenarios, as this study proposes, or simply look for the answer they expect the *ustadz* to approve. Such studies would determine how far symbolic-problem modeling can extend the reach of exemplarity in *pesantren* moral education.

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