



JSP: Jurnal Studi Pesantren

Published by the Magister's Program in Islamic Education,
Postgraduate of Annuqayah University, Sumenep, Indonesia

Vol. 4, No. 2, September 2025. Hal. 43 – 56

E-ISSN: 3062 – 6552

DOI: <https://10.59005/jsp.v4i2.1139>

Culture-Based Character Education Through the Roan Tradition at Pondok Pesantren Riyadlatul Ulum, Batanghari, East Lampung

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Article History

Submitted : 11-06-2025

Revised : 17-07-2025

Accepted : 19-08-2025

Published : 21-09-2025

Abstract

The Roan tradition — a collective environmental cleaning practice rooted in pesantren culture — represents one of the most enduring instruments of character formation in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools. However, amid increasing academic pressures and the rapid penetration of digital technology into students' daily lives, the motivational foundations of this tradition have begun to erode, raising critical questions about its continued effectiveness as a medium of moral education. This study aims to examine the implementation of the Roan tradition at Pondok Pesantren Riyadlatul Ulum, Batanghari, East Lampung, analyze its role in shaping students' discipline and social responsibility, and identify the supporting and inhibiting factors in its practice. This research employed a qualitative descriptive method with a case study approach. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving five informants comprising the dormitory head, administrators, and students, and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model. The findings indicate that the Roan tradition continues to be carried out regularly every Sunday morning with structured task distribution and direct supervision, functioning not only as a cleaning routine but also as a medium for internalizing discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and collective solidarity. Nevertheless, a decline in enthusiasm was observed among long-standing students who increasingly perceive Roan as a formal obligation rather than a moral practice. This study concludes that Roan constitutes a living implementation of ta'dib-based character education that requires purposeful revitalization to sustain its pedagogical significance amid contemporary challenges.

Key Word:

Roan Tradition,
Character Education,
Social Responsibility,
Pesantren Character
Building,

INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) occupy a foundational position in Indonesia's educational landscape, functioning not merely as centers of religious instruction but as total formative environments that shape the moral, social, and spiritual character of their students (Dhofier, 2011). Unlike formal schooling institutions, *pesantren* operate through a comprehensive system of communal living in which students (*santri*) are

immersed in daily practices that embody Islamic values (Yasid, 2018). Within this system, character formation does not occur through explicit verbal instruction alone; rather, it is enacted through sustained collective habits, rituals, and traditions that constitute the living moral curriculum of pesantren education (Karimah, 2018). Among these traditions, the practice of *Roan* — a weekly communal environmental cleaning activity — stands as one of the most enduring and culturally embedded expressions of pesantren life, functioning as a practical arena for the cultivation of discipline, responsibility, and collective solidarity.

The *Roan* tradition embodies the pesantren's broader pedagogical philosophy of forming character through direct experience and communal obligation. Rooted in the Islamic principle that cleanliness is part of faith (*al-nazāfah min al-īmān*), *Roan* requires all santri to participate in the collective maintenance of their shared environment — cleaning dormitories, mosques, kitchens, and courtyards — under a structured system of task distribution and administrative supervision (Saini, 2020). This practice reflects what Islamic educational scholars describe as *ta'dib*, a mode of education that cultivates moral awareness and a sense of responsibility through embodied action and communal discipline rather than through abstract instruction (Al-Attas, as cited in Ida Mariana et al., (2023). In this sense, *Roan* is not merely a hygiene routine but a pedagogical mechanism through which pesantren transmit core social and moral values across generations.

Scholarly attention to the *Roan* tradition has grown in recent years, reflecting broader recognition of the cultural richness of pesantren-based character education. Saini (2020) demonstrated that *Roan* functions as an effective medium for cultivating social character, discipline, and collective responsibility among santri at Pondok Pesantren Al-Qomar Wahid, Nganjuk. Similarly, Zahid et al. (2023) examined the role of *ro'an* in building ecological awareness at Mamba'us Sholihin Pesantren, Blitar, highlighting its significance as a practice that fosters environmental consciousness alongside communal solidarity. Muhakamurrohman (2014) further situated *Roan* within the broader tradition of pesantren adat, arguing that such practices constitute living cultural systems that continuously reproduce the identity and values of the pesantren community. These studies collectively affirm the educational significance of *Roan* as a culture-based character formation practice.

However, existing scholarship on *Roan* has predominantly focused on its positive functions and outcomes, without adequately investigating the internal dynamics that threaten its sustainability as a meaningful educational practice. Neither Saini (2020) nor Zahid et al. (2023) examined the phenomenon of motivational decline among long-standing students who increasingly perceive *Roan* as a formal obligation rather than a

morally significant activity. Furthermore, no prior study has explored how the accelerating penetration of digital technology into santri daily life — reshaping patterns of attention, motivation, and social engagement — specifically affects participation and internalization of values within tradition-based communal activities such as *Roan*. This gap is theoretically significant, as it raises questions about the conditions under which culture-based character education retains its formative power in the face of contemporary social and technological change.

Pondok Pesantren Riyadlatul Ulum, located in Batanghari, East Lampung, provides a particularly relevant context for investigating this gap. At this institution, the *Roan* tradition has been maintained as a core element of pesantren life, carried out every Sunday morning through a structured system of task distribution across dormitory, mosque, kitchen, and courtyard areas. Yet preliminary observations reveal a discernible shift in santri motivation — particularly among students who have resided at the pesantren for extended periods — as some increasingly approach *Roan* as a compulsory routine rather than an act of conscious moral formation. This tension between the tradition's enduring structural practice and the erosion of its motivational foundations presents a compelling case for empirical investigation.

This study, therefore, aims to examine the implementation of the *Roan* tradition at Pondok Pesantren Riyadlatul Ulum, analyze its role in shaping students' discipline and social responsibility, and identify the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence its practice. By employing a qualitative case study approach, this research seeks to produce a contextually grounded account of how a culture-based character education tradition navigates the pressures of contemporary life. The findings are expected to contribute to the theoretical understanding of pesantren-based moral formation and to offer practical insights for educational leaders seeking to revitalize tradition-based character education practices in the digital era.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method with a case study design, selected on the grounds that it allows for an in-depth, contextually grounded examination of social and cultural phenomena within a specific institutional setting (Long, 1982; Stake, 2013). The case study approach is particularly suited to this research because it enables the researcher to investigate the *Roan* tradition not as an isolated variable but as a living practice embedded within the social, moral, and institutional fabric of Pondok Pesantren Riyadlatul Ulum, Batanghari, East Lampung. This design facilitates the integration of multiple data sources — observation, interview, and

documentation — to produce a comprehensive and nuanced account of how the tradition operates and what meanings it holds for its participants.

The research was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Riyadlatul Ulum, Batanghari, East Lampung, with data collection involving five informants selected through purposive sampling. Informant selection was guided by three criteria: direct and sustained involvement in the *Roan* tradition, diversity of role and length of stay at the pesantren, and capacity to provide informed and reflective accounts of the tradition's practice and significance. The selected informants comprised Khafidatul Mukarromah, a university-level student with five years of participation in *Roan*; Febcy Septi Lioni, a senior high school student with three years of residence; Nurul Hasanah, the female dormitory head (*lurah putri*) actively involved in the coordination and documentation of pesantren activities; and two dormitory administrators, including Siti Nur Rohaniyah, who is directly responsible for guiding and supervising santri during *Roan*. This combination of informants representing different roles and lengths of experience was designed to ensure that the data captured both the structural dimensions of *Roan*'s implementation and the experiential dimensions of student participation and motivation.

Data were collected through three complementary techniques. Observation was conducted to document the direct implementation of *Roan* at the pesantren, focusing on patterns of participation, task distribution across areas including the mosque, dormitories, kitchen, and courtyard, and observable behavioral indicators of student engagement and motivation. In-depth interviews were carried out with each informant to elicit their perspectives, experiences, and interpretations of the *Roan* tradition — including its educational significance, the challenges they perceive, and the factors they identify as supporting or inhibiting meaningful participation. Documentation was gathered from written pesantren records, activity schedules, student regulations, and photographic evidence, serving to corroborate and contextualize the observational and interview data.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, comprising three iterative stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). In the data reduction stage, the researcher systematically selected and focused on data relevant to the three research objectives — the implementation of *Roan*, its role in character formation, and its supporting and inhibiting factors. The data display stage involved the organization of reduced data into coherent narrative descriptions that accurately represent the field reality. In the conclusion drawing stage, the researcher

sought to identify patterns of meaning that illuminate the deeper pedagogical significance of *Roan* and the dynamics affecting its practice.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, triangulation of both data sources and collection methods was applied throughout the research process. Source triangulation involved cross-verifying information obtained from students, administrators, and the dormitory head to identify points of convergence and divergence in their accounts. Methodological triangulation was achieved by comparing data from observation, interviews, and documentation, ensuring that findings were not dependent on any single data collection technique. These validity measures are consistent with established standards for qualitative credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and ensure that the findings presented in this study reflect the actual social reality at Pondok Pesantren Riyadlatul Ulum rather than the interpretive assumptions of the researcher alone.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Concept of Roan

Roan is a communal cleaning tradition carried out by santri to maintain the pesantren environment, and in Salafiyah pesantren it has long become a deeply rooted practice passed down from one generation to the next. In several pesantren in Yogyakarta, such as Al Munawwir and Ali Maksum, the activity is even mandatory, and santri who violate it may receive sanctions. It is usually conducted on Fridays, the day off in the boarding school, with a focus on cleaning the pesantren courtyard, the *ndalem* of the kyai, and other shared areas.

In practice, Roan is understood not only as a cleaning activity but also as a training ground for discipline and care for oneself and the environment. NU Online explains that santri are assigned different tasks, such as pulling weeds, cleaning the yard, disposing of garbage, and arranging books, so that each santri has a clear role in the collective work. In the same source, an administrator of Pondok Pesantren Nailul Ula Center, Sleman, stated that Roan is a habit that had already been practiced by earlier santri and is still maintained today with the aim of cultivating discipline and environmental concern.

At Pondok Pesantren Riyadlatul Ulum, Roan is carried out regularly every Sunday morning after breakfast at 08.00 WIB. Each santri is responsible for a specific area such as the mosque, dormitory, kitchen, courtyard, and bathroom, with a rotating schedule directly supervised by the dormitory administrators. In practice, the activity is understood as part of the pesantren routine that not only keeps the environment physically clean but also builds orderly habits within a collective setting.

Nurul Hasanah emphasized that the activity is not merely cleaning work, but rather *"a training ground for responsibility and togetherness among the santri."* This statement shows that Roan is positioned as a structured practice with social and educational functions, not simply as routine labor. Therefore, Roan in the pesantren appears as a tradition that connects cleanliness, order, and togetherness in a repeated collective activity.

Character Values in Roan

Observation and interview data show that Roan serves as a concrete medium for santri to practice discipline, responsibility, and togetherness. Santri who arrive on time and complete their assigned areas thoroughly demonstrate a disciplined pattern formed through consistent weekly habituation. The administrators also take part directly in the activity, creating a situation that is not one-way supervision but a shared effort that encourages active participation from all santri.

Khafidatul Mukarromah, an active santri at Pondok Pesantren Riyadlatul Ulum, Batanghari, Lampung Timur, who has participated in Roan for five years, said, *"We feel like a family. When cleaning, everyone joins in, and even the administrators help."* This statement shows that Roan builds a sense of belonging to the pesantren environment collectively, rather than placing responsibility only on individuals for their assigned areas. The shared involvement of santri and administrators also affirms the solidarity that is central to pesantren life.

Febcy Septi Lioni, a santri at Pondok Pesantren Riyadlatul Ulum, Batanghari, Lampung Timur, who has been living in the boarding school for three years, stated, *"Sometimes I feel lazy about Roan, but once I start, I feel happy because the boarding school becomes clean."* This experience shows that Roan gives santri space to overcome laziness through direct action and then experience satisfaction after seeing the results of their collective work. In this way, the activity does not only produce a clean environment, but also an emotional experience that strengthens santri's acceptance of the value of cooperation.

Nurul Hasanah also stressed the meaning of the activity from the perspective of pesantren leadership by stating, *"Roan is part of tarbiyah. Santri are trained to be obedient, disciplined, and to care for the environment."* This statement indicates that Roan is understood as a means of habituated education that instills values through direct practice rather than through advice alone. In practice, Roan also becomes a space for cultivating mutual help, because santri who have not finished are assisted by others before the entire group cleans their rooms block by block.

In addition, NU Online notes that some santri welcomed Roan with joy because they regarded it as a form of *ngalap berkah* from the kyai, and after the activity they usually ate together in a simple but warm atmosphere. The same source also reports that the santri experienced the activity with laughter and lightheartedness, which reduced fatigue. This finding reinforces that Roan not only builds discipline, but also maintains emotional bonds and togetherness among santri.

Supporting and Hindering Factors

The consistent implementation of Roan cannot be separated from several supporting factors identified through observation and interviews. A fixed Sunday morning schedule provides structural certainty that makes the activity difficult to ignore. A clear division of tasks by area and by dormitory minimizes overlapping responsibilities and ensures that each santri has a concrete role. The active involvement of administrators and *ustazah* who accompany the process directly also helps keep the activity orderly.

Field findings also show that social support among santri is an important factor in maintaining the smooth running of Roan. In practice, if one santri has not finished a task, other santri will help until the whole job is completed. This pattern shows that the continuity of the activity is sustained not only by supervisory structure, but also by a sense of solidarity among santri that has become part of the pesantren's shared work culture.

However, the interviews reveal a real challenge that threatens the sustainability of Roan as a character-building activity. Siti Nur Rohaniyah stated, "*Some santri think Roan is just an obligation, no longer part of character training. Sometimes, if the administrators are not watching, they do it carelessly.*" This is reinforced by field observation showing that several santri carried out their tasks with minimal engagement, physically present but motivationally absent.

This decline is more visible among santri who have lived in the pesantren for a long time. Nurul Hasanah noted, "*Now the challenge is different. Many of them resist when instructed by administrators, and their focus is divided by things outside pesantren activities.*" Observation shows that new santri tend to be more enthusiastic, while senior santri appear more passive and seem to treat Roan merely as a formal obligation.

Another inhibiting factor is the lack of innovation in how the activity is carried out, as well as the influence of technological development that diverts santri's attention. Based on observation, some santri seemed to hurry through their tasks so that they could return to personal activities. This condition shows that although the structure of Roan

remains intact, the spirit and appreciation of the values behind it are eroding and need to be addressed seriously by the pesantren management.

Discussion

Roan Practice as Organized Tradition

At Pondok Pesantren Riyadlatul Ulum, the Roan tradition is carried out every Sunday morning under dormitory supervision, and Saini (2020) together with Zahid et al. (2023) show that such structured collective work strengthens discipline, responsibility, and cooperation. The findings indicate that each santri is assigned a specific area, such as the mosque, dormitory, kitchen, or courtyard, so the task is distributed rather than left to individual initiative alone. This arrangement makes Roan more than a cleaning routine because it functions as a socially regulated practice that trains students to participate in a shared moral order. In educational terms, the activity reinforces discipline through repetition and makes responsibility visible through direct participation, which is why it remains meaningful even when repeated weekly.

Karimah (2018) and Ida Mariana et al. (2023) help explain why the routine character of Roan retains pedagogical value even when the activity becomes familiar and predictable. Santri are expected to take part not because the task is optional, but because participation has become part of the pesantren's normative life. This habituated pattern gradually shapes conduct by linking repeated action with moral awareness, so discipline is experienced as a daily practice rather than an external command. In this sense, Roan works through embodied learning: students internalize responsibility by doing it together, consistently, and in a setting where collective obligation is normalized rather than merely announced.

Yet the data also reveal a gradual shift in meaning among some senior santri, who increasingly see Roan as a formal duty rather than a formative experience. Here, Idris (2011) and Sadali (2020) are useful because they show how changing social and technological conditions can alter students' attention and motivation, thereby affecting how tradition is understood and lived. This means that institutional continuity does not automatically guarantee internalization of values. When a tradition becomes routine without sustained reflection, its educational force may weaken even if the external form remains intact. The issue, therefore, is not disappearance but reduced meaning, which can slowly erode the tradition's formative power.

At the same time, the Roan tradition continues to shape the pesantren environment as a shared educational space. The repetition of collective cleaning, task rotation, and direct supervision creates a visible structure of responsibility that santri encounter every week. This visibility matters because it transforms discipline into a lived practice rather than a verbal ideal. Over time, students learn that caring for the environment is not

separate from moral formation; instead, it is one of the clearest ways in which character becomes observable in daily life.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Continuity

Several factors support the continuity of Roan at Riyadlatul Ulum, and Saini (2020) and Zahid et al. (2023) point to the importance of structure in sustaining communal educational practices. The first supporting factor is the presence of a fixed schedule, which gives the activity an expected rhythm and prevents it from being treated as incidental. The second is the clear division of tasks, which reduces confusion and encourages accountability. The third is the active role of dormitory administrators, who monitor participation and ensure that the activity is completed collectively. Together, these elements create an environment in which Roan is not left to chance but is embedded in an organized pesantren culture.

The findings also show that the pesantren's broader disciplinary system contributes to the endurance of the tradition. Because Roan is embedded in the daily and weekly rhythm of boarding-school life, it is not easily detached from the broader educational environment. Karimah (2018) and Sadali (2020) emphasize that traditions are more likely to survive when they are supported by routine management and shared expectations, and this helps explain why Roan remains stable despite changing student attitudes. In this sense, Roan reflects a managed culture of participation rather than a spontaneous event, and the strength of that culture lies in the repetition of collective responsibility across time.

The study also identifies factors that weaken continuity and reduce enthusiasm among some students. Limited awareness of the educational meaning behind Roan makes the activity appear repetitive rather than formative, while boredom grows among those who have followed the same pattern for years. Idris (2011) and Sadali (2020) help interpret this condition because they show how digital habits and academic pressure can compete with collective physical work and weaken the internalization of communal values. The result is not the disappearance of Roan, but a decline in enthusiasm that can gradually weaken its moral depth.

These inhibiting factors are important because they show that tradition does not survive only through structure. Even a well-organized system can lose vitality if participants no longer experience its meaning. For that reason, sustaining Roan requires more than supervision; it also requires continual clarification of purpose so that students understand why collective labor remains educationally important.

Character Formation Through Practice

Despite these challenges, Roan remains significant as a medium of character formation because it requires santri to cooperate, share responsibility, and maintain environmental cleanliness. Ida Mariana et al. (2023) connect this kind of habituated conduct to the concept of *ta'dib*, which emphasizes the formation of adab through moral discipline rather than mere verbal instruction. The activity therefore functions as a lived educational practice in which students learn to act responsibly within a communal environment. By working together in a shared space, they internalize not only cleanliness but also social awareness and care for the pesantren as a collective home.

The moral impact of Roan is also visible in the emotional responses of santri. Several participants reported that they may feel reluctant at the beginning, but later experience satisfaction once the work is completed and the environment becomes clean. Saini (2020) and Zahid et al. (2023) describe a similar pattern, noting that Roan encourages togetherness and social responsibility among santri, and this helps explain why collective labor can generate positive moral experience. The transition from reluctance to pleasure matters because it shows that students do not only complete a task; they also experience the ethical and emotional reward of shared accomplishment, which strengthens the tradition's formative significance.

From a broader theoretical perspective, Roan should be understood as a form of culture-based character education. It preserves pesantren identity while also developing habits of cooperation, humility, and care for shared space. Karimah (2018) and Sadali (2020) show that pesantren traditions remain strong only when routine practice is continually connected to reflection, explanation, and moral reinforcement. This is important because a tradition can lose its educational power when it becomes empty obligation. Roan therefore needs continuous revitalization so that its structure continues to serve character formation, rather than becoming a mechanical routine detached from ethical meaning.

The continuing relevance of Roan also depends on whether administrators and santri treat it as a meaningful moral exercise rather than a mere obligation. When the activity is interpreted in that way, it becomes a practical arena in which discipline and humility are learned together, and this strengthens the pesantren's wider educational mission. In this sense, Roan does not stand outside formal learning; it works alongside it by shaping habits, attitudes, and collective responsibility through repeated experience.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The study contributes to the literature by showing that pesantren traditions are most effective when they combine structure with meaning. Roan is sustained by schedules,

supervision, and collective rules, but its educational value depends on whether santri understand it as a moral practice rather than a mechanical task. Muhakamurrohman (2014) and Sadali (2020) help explain this point by highlighting that tradition in pesantren settings carries symbolic and ethical content that must remain intelligible to the learners who carry it forward. In other words, continuity alone is not enough, because a tradition only remains educational when its meaning is still actively recognized and shared.

The findings also have practical implications for pesantren management, especially in how administrators shape participation. Yasid (2018) and Zahid et al. (2023) support the view that pesantren traditions are not only cultural inheritances but also active educational resources that can be strengthened through thoughtful management. Administrators should therefore preserve the routine framework of Roan while adding reflective elements that help students connect the activity to responsibility, cooperation, and environmental ethics. Such reinforcement may include short moral reminders, clearer explanations of purpose, and visible recognition of collective effort. These steps are important because character education becomes more durable when habitual practice is accompanied by conscious understanding.

Overall, Roan can be interpreted as a living pedagogical system that links collective labor with moral formation. Its enduring value lies in its ability to organize participation, create shared responsibility, and transmit character through daily practice. Yet the study also shows that traditions are vulnerable when their meaning is no longer actively renewed. Karimah (2018) and Saini (2020) support this conclusion by indicating that pesantren traditions remain relevant when they continue to generate moral awareness and communal discipline, rather than merely surviving as formal rituals.

CONCLUSION

The Roan tradition at Pondok Pesantren Riyadlatul Ulum, Batanghari, East Lampung, is implemented as a structured weekly communal activity conducted every Sunday morning, with each santri assigned to specific areas including the mosque, dormitories, kitchen, courtyard, and bathroom under direct administrative supervision. This organized framework transforms Roan from a mere cleaning routine into a socially regulated educational practice that distributes responsibility, normalizes collective participation, and embeds moral habits within the daily rhythm of pesantren life. The tradition's structural consistency across generations confirms its foundational role as a culture-based character education mechanism that operates through embodied action rather than verbal instruction alone.

As a medium of character formation, Roan demonstrably cultivates discipline, social responsibility, and collective solidarity among santri. The shared labor of maintaining a communal environment requires students to act reliably within an organized system, cooperate with peers across assigned areas, and sustain commitment even in the absence of immediate personal benefit. These experiences align with the pedagogical concept of *ta'dib*, in which character is formed through habituated moral practice rather than formal instruction. The emotional dimension of the activity — particularly the transition from initial reluctance to collective satisfaction — further deepens its formative significance by linking disciplined conduct with a sense of shared accomplishment and communal belonging.

Several factors shape the sustainability of Roan as a meaningful educational practice. Supporting factors include the presence of a fixed schedule, a clear system of task distribution, and the active supervisory engagement of dormitory administrators, all of which sustain participation and collective accountability. Conversely, motivational decline among long-standing santri, the absence of regular reflective reinforcement, and the competing demands of digital habits and personal activities constitute significant inhibiting factors. These findings indicate that structural continuity alone is insufficient to preserve the tradition's educational depth; its formative power depends equally on participants' ongoing recognition of its moral purpose.

This study ultimately demonstrates that culture-based character education traditions such as Roan retain their pedagogical relevance only when routine practice is continuously renewed through meaningful engagement. Pesantren administrators are encouraged to complement the structural framework of Roan with regular moral reflection, purposeful explanation of its educational significance, and visible recognition of collective effort. Future research should examine how digital engagement specifically mediates santri motivation in tradition-based activities, and whether structured reflective interventions can measurably strengthen value internalization within communal pesantren practices.

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