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Strengthening Students' Religious Character Through the Use of Social Media YouTube Religious Content, Student Islamic Boarding Schools and Al-Qur'an Memorization (Research at STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay with STAI Yamisa Soreang Bandung)

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ABSTRACT

This study is motivated by the challenges of strengthening students' religious character in the digital era, including social media influences, materialistic lifestyles, and the lack of integration between formal education and Islamic values. It aims to identify and describe the objectives, programs, implementation processes, supporting and inhibiting factors, evaluation, and impacts of strengthening students' religious character through YouTube-based Islamic content, pesantren student programs, and Qur'an memorization (tahfidz) at STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay and STAI Yamisa Soreang. This research employs a qualitative comparative case study approach. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using an inductive process involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that the programs aim to produce students who are faithful, pious, morally grounded, and resilient in the digital era. Implementation is carried out through digital Islamic literacy via YouTube, structured pesantren activities (such as congregational worship, classical Islamic studies, muhadharah, and moral training), and Qur'an memorization programs (tahsin and tahfidz). These processes are strengthened through habituation, reflection, and internalization of Islamic values. The study also identifies supporting factors, such as institutional leadership, educator competence, and student engagement, while challenges include technological limitations, diverse student backgrounds, and issues with content supervision. Overall, the programs contribute to improved discipline, empathy, patience, and the application of Islamic values in academic and social life, and produce an integrative model for strengthening students' religious character that combines digital media, pesantren-based education, and Qur'anic learning.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Strengthening of students' religious character in colleges, institutes, universities, or other higher education institutions is fundamentally shaped by the institution's mission. Based on the researcher's observations and analysis, both institutions under study are grounded in clear mission statements. For example, STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay Bandung aims to produce graduates who possess the qualifications of *mutadayyin* (religiously devoted), *mufakkir* (intellectual thinker), and *mujaddid* (reformer), commonly referred to as the 3M. Similarly, STAI Yamisa Soreang Bandung has a mission to prepare competitive human resources. The researcher identifies that both institutions share a common objective: achieving the 3M graduate profile and producing competitive human resources requires a strategic approach, one of which is strengthening students' religious character. There are many approaches to achieving this, but this study focuses on three main methods: strengthening religious character through YouTube-based religious content, student pesantren programs, and Qur'an memorization (tahfidz) programs.

Reinforcement is defined as any form of response, whether verbal or non-verbal, that serves as part of behavior modification. It is directed toward an individual's behavior to provide feedback regarding their actions. Reinforcement can also be understood as a form of appreciation given to someone for what they have done. It may take both positive and negative forms. Reinforcement theory, as a psychological principle, states that behavior is shaped by its consequences, and that individual behavior can be modified through reinforcement, punishment, or the elimination of certain responses. Reinforcement functions to strengthen or encourage desired behaviors, such as discipline and ritual worship. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), the role of the mother is crucial in shaping a child's independence, an aspiration for families in building a harmonious household.

The role of the mother is essential, as she is responsible for instilling Islamic values in children. Independence can be developed through consistent habituation provided by mothers at home. Mothers aspire for their children to grow into righteous individuals, while children also desire mothers who are wise and responsible. Likewise, fathers hope for intelligent, morally upright children. Based on these aspirations, it is natural that one of the goals of Islamic education is to foster children's independence.

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia [1], character education reinforcement is an educational effort in schools or institutions aimed at strengthening character by integrating the values of Pancasila through processes of transformation, transmission, and development of students' potential in ethical-spiritual, aesthetic, literacy, numeracy, and kinesthetic domains. The values of character education, derived from religion, Pancasila, culture, and national education goals, include religiosity, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, nationalism, patriotism, appreciation of achievement, communicativeness, love of peace, reading interest, environmental awareness, social concern, and responsibility. The success of character reinforcement implementation depends on stakeholders as key drivers within institutions. Trustworthy and visionary leaders can bring about meaningful moral

transformation. Being trustworthy within an institutional structure also implies being a competent institution, while being visionary reflects a forward-looking perspective on quality, uniqueness, and institutional identity.

Religious character itself refers to patterns of thinking and behavior that distinguish individuals in their interactions and cooperation within family, community, nation, and state contexts. Individuals with strong character can make decisions and take responsibility for their consequences. Character formation is one of the primary goals of national education [2]. Article 1 of the National Education System Law of 2003 states that one of the goals of national education is to develop students' potential to possess intelligence, personality, and noble character [3]. According to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) [4], "character" refers to traits, psychological attributes, morals, or manners that distinguish one individual from another. Character can also be interpreted as personality or moral conduct, which represents distinctive traits within an individual. Character is shaped by environmental influences, such as family and school environments during childhood, as well as innate factors.

Human beings are free to assign meaning to every situation, take responsibility for their decisions, and continuously develop relationships with others. Humans are noble beings endowed with the ability to think, making them multidimensional entities consisting of the physical body, spirit, and intellect. Based on this understanding, humans possess the capacity to think and to be accountable for their decisions, which is closely related to character strengthening. Educators play a crucial role in guiding and reinforcing students' character; however, students remain autonomous individuals capable of making their own choices. Therefore, the educators' role is to guide and support students in strengthening their character in the best possible way.

The concept of character, particularly in relation to social media, is often used interchangeably with terms such as ethics, morals (*akhlak*), and values, all of which relate to moral strength and carry a positive, rather than neutral, connotation. Therefore, character education can be broadly defined as an educational process that develops cultural values and national character within students, enabling them to internalize these values and apply them in their lives as members of society and as citizens who are religious, nationalistic, productive, and creative.

Character education represents a nation's aspiration for its people, as it is expected to produce individuals well-developed in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, enabling them to compete effectively in adulthood.

Allah states in Q.S. Al-Qalam (68:4): "Indeed, you are of a great moral character." The nobility of *akhlak* was one of the defining qualities of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), even before he was appointed as a رسول and role model for all humanity. More broadly, *khuluq* refers to an inner condition rather than outward appearance. From a psychological perspective, *khuluq* is equivalent to "character," meaning a distinctive disposition or enduring quality that consistently defines an individual.

According to Umaroh (2018), character is a system of beliefs and habits that shapes individual actions. Character is formed through the roles of schools, families, and communities. This aligns with Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, which states that the

surrounding socio-cultural environment influences human development. Character is further strengthened by what individuals learn through experiences with others, learning media, technology, and related factors.

Although character inherently exists within every individual, it does not develop automatically. The most crucial aspect of character formation lies in how education fosters learners' awareness. Religious character is one of the essential components of character values, emphasizing an individual's relationship with God. However, these religious values must also be applied in daily life, particularly in interactions with others and the surrounding environment. Religious character is fundamental because it influences other character traits.

Religious character refers to a person's disposition, attitude, personality, and willingness to obey and practice their religion's teachings, as well as their tolerance toward others in religious practices. In this context, religious character relates to students' attitudes in practicing their religious obligations. As stated in a hadith: "*Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should speak good or remain silent*" (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim).

Religious character is closely related to faith (*iman*) and piety (*taqwa*) toward God. Islamic teachings consist of three main components: *aqidah* (belief), *akhlaq* (morality), and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). In this regard, technology serves as a supporting factor in strengthening character. Social media, in particular, has become one of the most widely used communication tools, often surpassing direct interpersonal communication. According to Hootsuite (2019), social media users in Indonesia are distributed as follows: ages 13–17 (15%), 18–24 (33%), 25–34 (33%), 35–44 (12%), 45–54 (4.4%), 55–64 (1.2%), and 65+ (2%).

In addition to serving as a communication tool, social media can also serve as a learning platform for students through platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Brainly. Among these, YouTube is one of the most widely used platforms for learning, watching content, and entertainment. As a form of communication technology, YouTube is a media-sharing platform that enables users to share video content. Content creation is the process of creating and distributing information in the form of images, videos, or written materials through digital platforms.

Among social media platforms, YouTube has the highest usage rate at 88%, followed by WhatsApp (83%), Facebook (81%), and Instagram (80%). These platforms significantly influence personal development, particularly in strengthening adolescent character. This indicates the high level of interest in YouTube usage. The researcher conducted a preliminary survey to identify how individuals use YouTube, aiming to obtain empirical evidence of existing issues and to explore its potential as a learning medium.

Teachers' strategies in utilizing YouTube represent an effort to optimize classroom learning. Using YouTube can greatly support the teaching and learning process, as teachers can integrate it directly into classroom instruction, while students can revisit the material at home through the same platform. Thus, YouTube's use in this context serves as an example of an instructional model that effectively achieves learning objectives.

YouTube, a modern internet platform, disseminates a wide range of information and entertainment. **In the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, YouTube has contributed**

positively to digitalization across various aspects of social life. It has become an effective medium for delivering and receiving messages, including for Islamic preachers (*da'i*). The presence of YouTube is no longer limited to entertainment; it is now widely used for *da'wah* and as a learning platform. Therefore, this study aims to explore how YouTube can be optimized as a medium of *da'wah* for the millennial generation. Moreover, YouTube has increasingly been used for religious outreach, especially in situations that require people to stay at home, making it a highly suitable and recommended platform for *da'wah* activities.

Student pesantren (Islamic boarding programs for university students) are Islamic educational institutions that provide religious education and instruction specifically for students, often emphasizing moral values and daily behavior. This model represents an adaptation of traditional pesantren, which historically focused on younger students (*santri*), and has emerged in response to contemporary societal dynamics. Student pesantren serve to complement existing pesantren models.

Pesantren themselves are among the oldest Islamic educational institutions in several ASEAN countries, including Indonesia, Malaysia, and Southern Thailand. Their historical role has significantly contributed to the development of these societies. Traditionally, pesantren consist of essential elements such as *kyai* (religious leaders), *santri* (students), dormitories, mosques, and classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*).

In recent developments, two notable phenomena have emerged in the pesantren system. First, pesantren have adapted to modern civilization to sustain their existence, as seen in their establishment of higher education institutions offering not only religious studies but also general academic programs. Second, formal education institutions have adopted certain aspects of the pesantren system, recognizing its strengths, particularly in character and moral education.

STAI Yamisa Soreang is an Islamic higher education institution located in Soreang, Bandung Regency, offering programs such as Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Sharia Economic Law (HES), both accredited "B." Its vision is to develop superior, competitive Islamic education programs grounded in Indonesian pesantren values by 2040. The emphasis on pesantren values implies that students are expected to embody these principles, similar to those at STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay Bandung. STAI Yamisa also implements student pesantren programs at certain times and includes Qur'an memorization (*tahfidz*) as part of its curriculum, emphasizing simplicity and independence as key strengths.

STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay Bandung has a mission to produce graduates with the qualifications of *Mutadayyin* (devout), *Mufakkir* (intellectual), and *Mujaddid* (reformer), collectively known as the 3M. These qualifications represent the ideal profile of a Muslim who embodies *Khaira Ummah* (Q.S. Ali Imran [3]:110) and *Rahmatan lil' Alamin* (Q.S. Al-Anbiya [21]:38). Achieving these qualifications requires systematic, continuous effort.

Objectively, students at STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay Bandung come from diverse educational backgrounds, with varying levels of knowledge and experience. Therefore, attending regular lectures alone is insufficient. To achieve the 3M qualifications, students must participate in pesantren programs that instill Islamic values (*ruhul Islam*) and develop essential religious competencies. This requirement is supported by national regulations,

including Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System and Law No. 12 of 2012 on Higher Education, and is mandatory for sixth-semester students as a graduation requirement in Islamic education programs.

Similarly, the tahfidz (Qur'an memorization) program is an essential effort to produce graduates who meet the 3M criteria. Becoming devout, intellectual, and reform-oriented individuals requires a deep engagement with the Qur'an, including memorization. Without mastery of the Qur'an, it is difficult to achieve such qualifications. Likewise, at STAI Yamisa Soreang, the mission of producing competitive human resources aligns with the inclusion of tahfidz as part of pesantren-based values. Qur'an memorization is thus considered a key component in developing competitive and spiritually grounded graduates.

Memorizing the Qur'an (*tahfidz*) is a long-standing tradition within Muslim communities, reflecting their commitment to integrating the Qur'an into daily life. This practice is commonly found in Islamic institutions such as pesantren and *majlis ta'lim*. In Indonesia, it has become a deeply rooted cultural tradition, particularly among *santri*. The Qur'an is regarded as sacred and highly revered, and memorizing it is considered a noble act that brings spiritual blessings (*barakah*). Not everyone can memorize the Qur'an, making it a distinguished achievement for Muslims. However, with strong intention and determination, memorization becomes attainable, as evidenced by millions of Muslims who have successfully memorized all 30 *juz* of the Qur'an despite the complexity of its verses.

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that students possess diverse characteristics and individual approaches to personal development. Character education is therefore crucial in higher education, especially in the modern era, when social media use is pervasive. Among various platforms, YouTube stands out as one of the most widely used applications, serving purposes such as entertainment, information, and learning.

Based on these considerations, and in relation to the concept of strengthening students' religious character, this study aims to examine the extent to which religious character can be reinforced through the use of YouTube religious content, student pesantren programs, and Qur'an memorization programs at STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay Bandung and STAI Yamisa Soreang Bandung. Accordingly, the title of this research is: Strengthening Students' Religious Character Through the Use of Social Media YouTube Religious Content, Student Islamic Boarding Schools and Al-Qur'an Memorization (Research at STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay with STAI Yamisa Soreang Bandung)

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Religious Character Education

According to Zubaedi [5], character education is an educational process that fosters character values in learners, enabling them to possess and apply these values in their lives as religious, nationalistic, productive, and creative citizens. Mustadi et al. in [6] explain that character education is a movement within the Indonesian education system implemented in accordance with the nation's identity and characteristics, aiming to cultivate positive attitudes and behaviors in children from an early age.

Koesoema [7] states that character education is also an effort to develop various dimensions of an individual's personality, enabling them to be responsible for themselves and to interact effectively with others. Meanwhile, Damayanti in [8] explains that character education aims to create an educational environment that fosters ethics, responsibility, and good character values. It can also be understood as moral education that integrates knowledge, feelings, and actions, all of which are closely interconnected.

From the definitions above, it can be concluded that character education has a deeper meaning than moral education, as it involves not only learning but also the development and habituation of good behavior.

Religious Character

According to [9], character inherently exists within every individual, but it does not develop automatically. The process of character formation largely depends on how education raises learners' awareness. Religious character is one of the essential components of character values, emphasizing an individual's relationship with God. However, these values are also reflected in daily life, particularly in interactions with others and the surrounding environment. Religious character is highly important because it influences other character traits. Furthermore, [9] explains that religious character refers to a person's disposition, attitude, personality, and willingness to obey and practice religious teachings, as well as their tolerance toward others in practicing their faith. In this context, religious character relates to students' attitudes in performing their religious obligations.

YouTube Social Media

According to Gerlach & Ely [10], media broadly refers to humans, materials, or events that create conditions that enable students to acquire knowledge, skills, or attitudes. Panjaitan et al. (cited in [11]) define social media as an online platform that enables users to easily participate, share, and create content, including blogs, social networks, wikis, forums, and virtual worlds. Blogs, social networking sites, and wikis are among the most commonly used forms of social media worldwide. Another perspective in [12] states that social media is an online medium that supports social interaction and utilizes web-based technology to transform communication into interactive dialogue.

Student Pesantren

According to Bakar (2014), student pesantren is an educational concept that integrates Islamic values with higher education. This concept aims to maintain a balance between academic demands in higher education and the development of character and faith through religious education. In addition, student pesantren provide opportunities for students not only to pursue worldly knowledge but also to deepen their understanding of Islam and strengthen their spirituality. It serves as a platform for integrating academic education with the reinforcement of faith and religious skills. Student pesantren do not solely focus on religious education but also allow students to explore general knowledge while deepening their religious understanding.

Qur'an Memorization (Tahfidz) for Students

In terminology, according to Afidah (2022), student tahfidz is a program designed to assist university students in memorizing the Qur'an during their higher education. This program aims to produce a generation of scholars who excel academically while maintaining a strong spiritual connection with the Qur'an. The memorization process is generally carried out through methods such as *muraja'ah* (repetition), *talaqqi* (recitation directly in front of a mentor), and *tasmi'* (reciting memorized verses to a mentor or peers). This program is often complemented by guidance in Qur'anic interpretation (*tafsir*) and understanding of its content, ensuring that students not only memorize but also comprehend its meaning.

3. METHOD

According to Rahardjo, as cited in [13], a research method is a way of seeking and obtaining truth that is tentative rather than absolute, producing what is known as scientific truth. Scientific truth remains open to continuous testing, criticism, and revision. Therefore, there is no single best method for discovering truth; rather, the appropriateness of a method depends on the research objectives and the phenomena being studied. Budiharto, as cited in [14], also emphasizes that selecting a research method should align with the nature of the study to ensure optimal results.

This research, which examines the strengthening of students' religious character through YouTube religious content, student pesantren programs, and Qur'an memorization (tahfidz), employs a descriptive study method. According to Nana Syaodih Sukmadinata [15], qualitative descriptive research aims to describe and portray existing phenomena, whether natural or human-made, with a focus on their characteristics, qualities, and relationships among activities. Furthermore, Sukmadinata, as cited in [16], explains that descriptive research does not involve manipulating or treating variables but instead presents conditions as they naturally occur. The only intervention is the research process itself, conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation.

The approach used in this study is qualitative. According to Iskandar in [17], qualitative research is widely used in social sciences, including education. Iskandar further explains in [18] that qualitative research is a process of inquiry and understanding based on methods that explore social phenomena and human problems. This study specifically adopts a field research approach, as stated in [19], which is aligned with the primary objective of describing and analyzing real-world phenomena. Through this method, the researcher can explain the research problems in depth [20].

Bungin, as cited in [21], states that qualitative descriptive research aims to depict social situations, conditions, or phenomena within society and bring these realities to the surface as representations of specific conditions. In this context, the study seeks to provide an analytical description of the role of strengthening students' religious character through YouTube religious content, student pesantren programs, and tahfidz activities.

Bogdan and Taylor in [22] define qualitative research methodology as procedures that produce descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words and observable

behaviors. In this study, the researcher constructs a comprehensive picture by examining participants' perspectives and analyzing natural settings.

In general, techniques are understood as practical means of carrying out systematic work carefully to achieve specific objectives. Although research is a scientific endeavor, it involves systematic efforts to collect reliable data to uncover the truth. Research methodology thus serves as a tool for addressing research problems [23]

This study also employs a literature review approach, which requires references from books, scientific articles, and other relevant sources, both printed and online, to support the research topic and problem [24]. Data collection techniques are essential in gathering information from various sources. According to Amir Hamzah in [25], data collection is an effort to gather information related to the research focus. The researcher applies library research methods by collecting data from books, journals, encyclopedias, papers, and other relevant sources.

Furthermore, Amir Hamzah in [26] explains that data collection involves various efforts to gather facts related to the research topic, which may be found in scientific literature, theses, dissertations, and other written sources. As noted in [27], data collection can be conducted under different conditions, using various sources and techniques.

According to Sopwandin, data collection in qualitative research is commonly conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation, followed by data analysis processes including data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. In this study, data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, direct observation of relevant practices, and documentation studies of institutional records.

Observation is a direct research process used to examine phenomena under study [28], allowing researchers to experience the real conditions of the research subjects. Interviews in this study are structured and conducted according to predetermined guidelines to ensure that all necessary empirical data are systematically obtained [29].

Meanwhile, documentation is a technique of collecting data through written records such as books, reports, meeting minutes, and other archives [30]. Moleong in [31] defines documentation as a method of collecting data through examining documents and records, which further supports data validity [32].

Data analysis in this study follows the interactive model proposed by Moleong in [33], consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Syarifah et al. [34] explain that data reduction involves selecting relevant information, data display is presented in systematic narratives, and conclusions are drawn from research findings. To ensure data validity, this study employs source triangulation by comparing information from multiple informants. According to Moleong, triangulation enhances the credibility of research findings by incorporating different perspectives.

Finally, Muhadjir in [35] defines data analysis as the systematic process of organizing, interpreting, and presenting findings obtained through observation and interviews. The analysis in this study follows the model of Miles and Huberman in [36], which includes data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Objective of Strengthening Students' Religious Character through YouTube-Based Religious Content, Student Pesantren, and Qur'an Memorization Programs at STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay Bandung and STAI Yamisa Soreang Bandung

The findings from research conducted at STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay and STAI Yamisa Soreang reveal how students interpret and embody religiosity in their daily lives. The study, carried out through observation, in-depth interviews, and field descriptions, captures students' real experiences in internalizing religious values.

Based on these findings, students' religiosity is not limited to formal religious rituals; it has become an integral part of their daily behavior and decision-making. At STIT At-Taqwa, religiosity is reflected in the habituation of moral conduct, discipline, and responsibility, as seen in punctuality, honesty, and commitment to academic activities. Meanwhile, at STAI Yamisa, religiosity is internalized in both personal and social decision-making, including choices of academic major, social interactions, and participation in community activities aligned with Islamic values.

Thus, it can be concluded that students' religiosity develops through a combination of behavioral habituation, role modeling, and contextual relevance. Islamic values are not merely theoretical knowledge but serve as practical guidelines in students' everyday lives.

Campus activities further demonstrate the integration of spiritual and social learning. At STIT At-Taqwa, student pesantren programs and tahfidz activities function as means of instilling discipline, patience, and value-based habits. Students are trained to live responsibly and to show social concern. At STAI Yamisa, integrating religious values with real-life issues—such as career planning and social media use—encourages reflective thinking and wise decision-making.

In addition, YouTube and digital da'wah content play a significant role as learning media. Students can explore diverse perspectives from scholars and intellectuals in a flexible manner. This aligns with Piaget's constructivist theory [37], which emphasizes active learning through exploration of various knowledge sources.

These findings are also consistent with Al-Ghazali's perspective in *Ihya Ulum al-Din*, which emphasizes the development of noble character as the primary goal of Islamic education, as well as with Marzuki et al. (2011), who highlight the importance of strengthening religious character through cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions. The cognitive dimension is reflected in students' understanding of Islamic teachings through studies and digital content; the affective dimension is seen in their inner peace and spiritual motivation after participating in religious activities; and the psychomotor dimension is evident in their actual behavior, discipline, and daily worship practices.

The strengthening of religious character in both institutions is complementary. STIT At-Taqwa emphasizes integrity, discipline, and responsibility as the foundation of social ethics, while STAI Yamisa emphasizes reflection and value-based decision-making. Together, these approaches produce well-balanced students who are devout in worship, possess noble character, act responsibly, and make wise decisions.

The role of lecturers, academic leaders, and da'wah communities is highly significant in shaping students' motivation and consistency. Students tend to emulate behaviors they directly observe rather than merely listening to theoretical instruction. A supportive environment, consistent value habituation, and social interaction within religious communities further reinforce the internalization of religious character.

This study confirms that strengthening religious character is not merely ceremonial but leads to tangible changes in students' attitudes, mindsets, and behaviors. Students become more disciplined, socially aware, reflective, and wise, and are better prepared to serve as agents of positive change in modern society. Therefore, graduates are expected not only to excel intellectually but also to possess strong spiritual maturity, enabling them to face contemporary challenges with a solid foundation of Islamic values.

Program for Strengthening Students' Religious Character through YouTube-Based Religious Content, Student Pesantren, and Qur'an Memorization at STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay and STAI Yamisa Soreang Bandung

The findings from research conducted at STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay and STAI Yamisa Soreang indicate that strengthening students' religious character is carried out through the integration of several complementary programs: student pesantren, Qur'an memorization (*tahfidz*), and the use of religious content on social media. These three programs collectively shape students' religious experiences comprehensively, through community-based activities and digital spaces closely connected to the lives of the younger generation.

The first program uses YouTube as a medium for religious content, designed to encourage students to use technology wisely to enhance their Islamic knowledge. Students are accustomed to accessing, observing, and discussing religious content, so that digital activities are not merely for entertainment but also serve as a means of reflection and internalization of Islamic values [38].

This program includes several sub-components. First is Islamic digital literacy, which involves the ability to select credible religious sources, distinguish authentic Islamic content from misleading information, and use digital media to deepen religious understanding. Using YouTube as a religious learning platform enables students to access Islamic lectures by scholars and academics, tutorials on worship practices, short sermons, and Islamic podcasts. Furthermore, students are guided to engage in religious reflection through digital content, such as writing summaries, participating in group discussions, and maintaining reflective journals that are submitted periodically. In addition, religious content analysis activities (*bedah konten*) emphasize students' critical thinking skills in evaluating the alignment of content with the Qur'an, Hadith, and scholarly opinions, ensuring that they are not easily misled by inaccurate information.

The second program, student pesantren, emphasizes the habituation of noble character in daily life. Students are encouraged to live in a strongly Islamic environment through congregational prayers and *qiyamul lail*, the study of classical Islamic texts (*kitab turats*), and training in preaching (*muhadharah*) and sermon delivery. Moreover, practical religious practices (*amaliyah ibadah*) strengthen both understanding and the skills needed

to perform worship in accordance with Islamic teachings. Character development and pesantren culture instill discipline, responsibility, and politeness in social interactions. This aligns with Al-Ghazali's perspective [39], which emphasizes the formation of noble character through real-life experience and highlights that Islamic education encompasses not only cognitive but also affective and psychomotor dimensions.

The integration of these three programs creates a balance between tradition and modernity. Student pesantren and tahfidz are rooted in Islamic tradition, fostering discipline, manners (*adab*), and moral character, while digital media adapts to contemporary developments, offering flexibility and easier access to religious knowledge. Students can watch lectures anytime, compare different scholars' perspectives, and select materials according to their needs, making learning no longer limited by space and time.

This approach is also consistent with modern educational theories. The use of direct experience in student pesantren supports Kolb's experiential learning theory [40], while the use of digital media aligns with Vygotsky's constructivist theory [41], which emphasizes active interaction with diverse sources of knowledge. Marzuki et al. (2011) further highlight that strengthening religious character should encompass cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions, reflected in religious understanding, inner peace, and observable behavior.

The findings show that students who participate in these three programs are not only religious in ritual practice but also critical, adaptive, and moderate. They can filter information, engage with technology effectively, and maintain their Islamic identity. Student pesantren foster consistency in worship and moral conduct, tahfidz strengthens discipline and perseverance, while digital media expands knowledge and access to information. These three programs operate harmoniously and reinforce one another.

Overall, the integration of student pesantren, Qur'an memorization, and digital media represents an effective strategy for Generation Z. Students gain strong value foundations alongside broad intellectual insight, enabling them to become graduates who are academically competent, spiritually mature, morally upright, and capable of contributing positively to society. This model demonstrates that Islamic higher education can successfully combine tradition and innovation to strengthen students' religious character holistically.

The Process of Strengthening Students' Religious Character through YouTube-Based Religious Content, Student Pesantren, and Qur'an Memorization at STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay and STAI Yamisa Soreang Bandung

The findings indicate that the strengthening of students' religious character at STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay and STAI Yamisa Soreang is carried out systematically and continuously through a combination of habituation, community involvement, and personal guidance. Students do not merely learn theoretical concepts in the classroom, but also gain understanding through direct experience, collective activities, and reflective engagement with religious content. This process enables religious values to be deeply internalized, becoming part of daily behavior and shaping consistent character.

1. Character Strengthening through Habituation

At STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay, religious habituation is implemented through routines such as congregational prayers, the study of classical Islamic texts, discussions on Islamic values, and interactions that emphasize proper conduct (*adab*). The Head of the Islamic Education Program highlights the importance of a campus environment that fosters the internalization of values, creating a conducive atmosphere for developing positive habits. This aligns with [42], which emphasizes that an environment rich in good role models and habits is a key prerequisite for successful character education.

Congregational worship and *qiyamul lail* foster discipline and spiritual focus. The study of *kitab kuning* (classical texts) not only emphasizes theoretical understanding but also provides practical relevance to students' daily behavior. Discussions on Islamic values and *adab*-based interactions train students to respect differences, prioritize deliberation (*musyawarah*), and internalize noble character. Through these routines, students connect theory with practice, allowing religious character to develop naturally.

2. Character Strengthening through Community

Student *pesantren* activities serve as a social environment that nurtures Islamic values in daily life. Within this setting, students learn cooperation, mutual respect, and collective decision-making. This process strengthens the social-religious dimension referred to by Zakiah Daradjat in [43] as *akhlaq jama'i* (collective morality). These activities foster solidarity, empathy, and a sense of belonging, making religious values not only personal but also embedded in the social fabric of campus life.

Qur'an memorization (*tahfidz*) also serves as a community-based activity, in which students engage in group *muraja'ah*, motivate one another, and provide mutual support. This process cultivates discipline, patience, commitment, and confidence in public performance, thereby building resilience and consistency [44]. Such social interaction aligns with Bandura's social learning theory [45], which highlights that observing credible role models significantly influences the formation of attitudes and values.

3. Character Strengthening through Personal Guidance

At STAI Yamisa Soreang, the process emphasizes a more personal and emotional approach. Lecturers act not only as instructors but also as mentors who understand students' psychological conditions. The Head of the Study Program emphasizes that emotional engagement from lecturers is a key factor in developing deep character formation. This approach is consistent with Carl Rogers' humanistic theory, which stresses empathy, unconditional positive regard, and authenticity in guiding learners.

Personal guidance is implemented through group discussions, spiritual counseling, and academic mentoring, providing students with both emotional support and practical direction. This individualized approach enables students to recognize their strengths and weaknesses while applying Islamic values reflectively in life decisions and social interactions.

4. The Role of Social Media in Character Strengthening

The use of social media, particularly YouTube, serves as a complementary strategy in character development. Students do not simply watch lectures or sermons; they analyze, discuss, and critically interpret the content. This fosters reflective, self-directed learning, enabling students to apply religious values in real-world contexts.

Observations show that students who are actively engaged in Islamic digital literacy are better able to filter information, understand religious teachings in context, and internalize values effectively. They also tend to model positive behaviors observed from scholars, lecturers, and peers, which is consistent with Bandura's social learning theory [46].

5. Synergy of Habituation, Community, and Guidance

The study highlights that the success of strengthening religious character lies in the integration of three main elements:

- a. Consistent habituation occurs as values are internalized through continuous daily practice.
- b. Supportive community, as social interaction fosters belonging and reinforces commitment to shared values.
- c. Empathetic personal guidance is necessary, as each student has a unique background, needs, and learning process in character development.

This combination ensures that students not only understand religious concepts but also embody them in real actions. Thus, the process implemented at STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay and STAI Yamisa Soreang can serve as a model for integrating traditional habituation, modern digital-based learning, and humanistic personal development.

Overall, the process of strengthening religious character through habituation, community, and guidance demonstrates that character education in both institutions is holistic, sustainable, and adaptive. Students learn through direct experience, social interaction, and reflection on religious content, resulting in individuals who are not only ritualistically religious but also mature in character, adaptive, critical, and capable of applying Islamic values in everyday life.

Evaluation of Strengthening Students' Religious Character through YouTube-Based Religious Content, Student Pesantren, and Qur'an Memorization at STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay Bandung and STAI Yamisa Soreang Bandung

The evaluation process at STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay is the final stage of the program, which aims to strengthen students' religious character through YouTube-based religious content, student pesantren activities, and Qur'an memorization (*tahfidz*). This stage seeks to assess the extent to which students have internalized Islamic values and consistently practiced religious teachings both on campus and within the broader community.

Based on observations, the evaluation is conducted comprehensively across multiple layers, involving lecturers, program administrators, and students themselves. The process includes routine monitoring, observation records, peer assessment, activity reports, and self-reflection. Importantly, evaluation does not focus solely on administrative

formalities but emphasizes the extent to which religious habits have become part of students' daily lives.

Evaluation Techniques at STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay:

1. Observation and Monitoring by Lecturers/Supervisors
Lecturers use observation sheets to assess students' participation in student pesantren, consistency in congregational prayers, and progress in Qur'an memorization. Indicators include both positive religious behaviors and areas requiring improvement.
2. Peer Assessment
Students evaluate their peers on attendance at congregational prayers, participation in muraja'ah, and engagement in YouTube-based religious studies. This system fosters collective responsibility and personal awareness of religious behavior.
3. Tahfidz Evaluation
At the end of each semester, students' memorization is tested directly by supervisors or external examiners. Students who do not meet the target receive additional guidance until they complete it.
4. Evaluation of YouTube Usage
Students' activities in watching, reviewing, and producing religious content are assessed. They are required to write reflections or participate in group discussions based on the online da'wah content they have engaged with.
5. Qualitative Assessment
Evaluation is categorized into:
 - a. PB (Needs Guidance): Students are not yet consistent in religious behavior.
 - b. MT (Beginning to Develop): students show initial religious behavior but lack consistency.
 - c. ST (Well Established): Students consistently demonstrate the indicated religious behavior.

Family involvement also contributes indirectly through informal communication, providing feedback on students' behavior at home, such as discipline in prayer, adherence to routines, and application of Islamic morals. The results indicate that most students have reached the ST (Well Established) category, although some working students still require additional guidance due to time constraints.

At STAI Yamisa Soreang Bandung, evaluation similarly aims to measure the extent to which students internalize Islamic values and practice them consistently in both academic and social life. The evaluation involves lecturers, program administrators, and students through observation, peer assessment, activity reports, and self-reflection.

Evaluation Techniques at STAI Yamisa Soreang:

1. Observation and Monitoring by Lecturers
Lecturers monitor students' discipline in participating in tahfidz, student pesantren, congregational prayers, and engagement with YouTube religious content using structured observation instruments.
2. Peer Assessment
Students assess their peers using simple checklists that record participation in *muraja'ah*, religious studies, and other activities.

3. Tahfidz Evaluation

Memorization is tested at the end of each semester by supervisors or external examiners, with additional guidance provided to those who have not met the required standards.

4. Evaluation of YouTube Utilization

Students prepare reflections or short reports on religious content they have consumed and how it is applied in daily life, indicating their level of understanding and internalization.

5. Qualitative Assessment

Categories include:

- a. BT (Not Yet Visible): no observable religious behavior.
- b. MT (Beginning to Appear): initial signs of religious behavior, but inconsistent.
- c. MB (Developing): consistent religious behavior is emerging.
- d. MK (Internalized/Habitual): religious behavior is consistently practiced and has become a habit.

Family feedback also plays an indirect role in assessing behavioral changes at home, including prayer discipline, Qur'an recitation, and moral conduct. The results show that most students fall within the MB (Developing) to MK (Habitual) categories, although working students may require additional support to maintain consistency.

Overall, the evaluation of religious character strengthening at both institutions highlights that assessment extends beyond academic achievement. It focuses on the extent to which students apply Islamic values in daily life, including worship practices, social responsibility, community engagement, and consistent moral behavior in both physical and digital environments.

Academic performance alone is insufficient to measure religious character; thus, evaluation emphasizes direct observation of daily behavior, participation in religious and social activities, and interpersonal interactions reflecting moral values. Documentation such as activity reports and tahfidz records provides objective data, while interviews offer deeper insights into students' personal experiences, challenges, and motivations.

Both institutions emphasize that evaluation must be holistic, informal, and continuous. A holistic approach ensures that academic, spiritual, social, and moral aspects are assessed comprehensively. Informal evaluation allows for natural observation of authentic behavior in everyday situations. Continuous evaluation acknowledges that character formation is a long-term process requiring consistent monitoring and improvement.

This perspective aligns with Lickona (2013), who asserts that character is formed through continuous habituation. In the digital era, evaluation also considers students' use of social media, particularly YouTube, as an indicator of how they engage with religious knowledge and apply it in real life.

Student pesantren environments provide a practical context for evaluating discipline, social harmony, and religious commitment, while tahfidz programs require specific assessment of memorization accuracy, consistency, and internalization of

28 meaning. Lecturers and mentors play a crucial role not only as evaluators but also as role models, influencing students through their attitudes and behavior.

From the researcher's perspective, evaluation should integrate both quantitative (e.g., academic achievement, memorization targets, participation rates) and qualitative (e.g., attitudes, behavior, sincerity in practicing values) dimensions. These two dimensions complement each other in providing a comprehensive understanding of students' religious character development.

1 In conclusion, the evaluation of religious character strengthening at STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay Bandung and STAI Yamisa Soreang Bandung emphasizes a holistic approach that goes beyond measurable academic outcomes to encompass students' daily lives and the internalization of values. Evaluation is not merely an administrative requirement but an integral part of the character education process, ensuring that students develop into knowledgeable, morally grounded, and socially responsible individuals who can contribute positively to society.

1 The Impact of Strengthening Students' Religious Character Through the Use of YouTube Religious Content, Student Islamic Boarding School (Pesantren Mahasiswa), and Qur'an Memorization (Tahfidz) at STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay Bandung and STAI Yamisa Soreang Bandung

1. The Impact at STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay Bandung

1 The impact of strengthening students' religious character through these programs at STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay Bandung cannot be directly observed in the same way as academic cognitive assessments. The success of the program is more evident in the affective and psychomotor domains, particularly in how students develop habits of noble character (akhlaqul karimah), discipline in worship, and active involvement in religious activities. Over time, students' religious behavior becomes more visible and gradually becomes part of their daily culture, though some still need reminders to maintain consistency.

1 The impact of strengthening students' religious character through YouTube religious content, student pesantren, and tahfidz programs is more pronounced in the affective and psychomotor aspects than in cognitive academic evaluation. The program's success is reflected in students' habituation to worship practices, discipline in religious activities, and active participation in various religious programs. Gradually, religious behavior becomes embedded in daily life, although some students still need reminders to remain consistent. The observed impacts include:

a. Discipline in Worship

Students are accustomed to performing the five daily prayers in congregation at the campus mosque, performing sunnah prayers such as Duha, and regularly reciting the Qur'an.

b. Enthusiasm for Memorizing the Qur'an

Students show greater consistency in participating in tahfidz programs, completing specific juz memorization targets, and regularly conducting muroja'ah (revision).

c. Active Participation in Religious Activities

Students actively engage in regular religious studies, student pesantren activities, discussions, and the creation of religious content on YouTube.

d. Development of Social Attitudes and Care

Students remind one another to perform worship, participate in Islamic social activities, and engage in community service.

e. Internalization of Islamic Values in Daily Life

Students begin to apply Islamic etiquette in daily interactions, maintain good character, and restrain themselves from negative behavior.

Thus, strengthening religious character through the combination of social media, student pesantren, and tahfidz programs produces tangible positive impacts, including worship discipline, strengthened Qur'an memorization, character development, and social awareness.

2. The Impact at STAI Yamisa Soreang Bandung

At STAI Yamisa Soreang, the impact of the religious character strengthening program is also evident in the affective and psychomotor domains. Students develop habits of noble character, discipline in worship, and active involvement in religious activities. Over time, religious behavior becomes ingrained, although some students still require reminders to maintain consistency. The observed impacts include:

a. Worship Discipline

Students regularly perform the five daily prayers in congregation, sunnah prayers such as Duha, and routine Qur'an recitation.

b. Strengthening of Qur'an Memorization

Students consistently participate in tahfidz programs, complete memorization targets, and regularly conduct muroja'ah.

c. Active Participation in Religious Activities

Students are involved in student pesantren, regular studies, and the creation and discussion of religious content on social media.

d. Development of Social Responsibility and Care

Students remind one another to worship, participate in Islamic social activities, and demonstrate responsibility toward their community.

e. Internalization of Islamic Values in Daily Life

Students apply Islamic etiquette, maintain good character, and avoid negative behavior in campus, family, and community environments.

Based on documentation and observation:

- 1) Students regularly perform the five daily prayers in congregation at the campus mosque.
- 2) Students memorize Qur'anic chapters in accordance with the tahfidz program targets.
- 3) Students perform sunnah prayers such as Duha and Tahajjud.
- 4) Students actively participate in regular studies and discuss religious content through YouTube.

- 5) Students routinely read the Qur'an and are motivated to increase their memorization.
- 6) Students actively participate in pesantren activities with discipline and responsibility.
- 7) Students demonstrate religious behavior in social interactions on campus, within families, and in the community (STAI Yamisa Soreang Program Document, 2024).

Thus, religious social media programs, student pesantren, and Qur'an memorization (tahfidz) at STAI Yamisa Soreang have demonstrated clear positive impacts, including improved discipline in worship, strengthened Qur'anic memorization, active engagement, moral development, and enhanced social awareness among students. The positive effects of religious character strengthening programs at STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay Bandung and STAI Yamisa Soreang Bandung are evident across various aspects of student life. Programs that integrate YouTube-based religious content, student pesantren, and Qur'an memorization have led to significant transformations across the spiritual, social, and personal dimensions. Research findings indicate that this integrated approach produces students who are more disciplined, confident in engaging in da'wah, socially concerned, and characterized by gentleness and patience.

The use of social media, such as YouTube, for religious content serves as an effective medium to enhance students' religious understanding, as they tend to absorb information more easily when it is presented in a visual, interactive format. On the other hand, student pesantren function not only as residential facilities but also as spaces for nurturing religious character through collective worship, regular study sessions, and daily behavioral supervision. The Qur'an memorization program instills discipline, consistency, and sincerity, making it a sustainable means of developing students' religious character. Therefore, strengthening students' religious character requires a combination of digital technology, community-based guidance, and consistent worship practices to internalize religious values in everyday life.

The formation of religious character is essentially a long-term process that requires consistency, guidance, and the involvement of multiple stakeholders. Students cannot rely solely on classroom theories; they need environments that support the habituation of religious values. In this context, collaboration between lecturers, institutions, and digital technology creates a conducive environment for character development. Lecturers and pesantren provide direct guidance, while YouTube serves as a reinforcing and relevant medium in students' daily lives.

One of the most prominent positive impacts is the improvement in worship discipline. Students become more consistent in performing prayers on time, in reciting the Qur'an, and in practicing voluntary (sunnah) acts of worship. This demonstrates that religious character development extends beyond cognitive understanding into the practical domain of daily life. Such discipline is further strengthened by structured pesantren schedules and tahfidz programs that emphasize continuous memorization targets.

This strengthening of worship discipline aligns with the thought of Imam Al-Ghazali in *Ihya Ulumuddin*, who emphasizes that habituation in worship is the key to developing noble character. Consistency in worship fosters spiritual closeness, which in

turn influences daily attitudes and behavior. Thus, worship becomes not merely a routine but also a source of moral strength in facing various life challenges.

In addition to improvements in worship, another positive impact is the emergence of confidence in engaging in da'wah. Students not only acquire religious knowledge for themselves but are also motivated to disseminate it to the wider community. They take on roles as Qur'anic teachers, young preachers, and even initiators of religious community movements in their respective environments. This confidence in da'wah indicates that religious character strengthening programs extend beyond internalization, encouraging students to externalize values through preaching and community service.

This phenomenon can be understood as a tangible manifestation of the success of Islamic education, as emphasized by Yusuf al-Qaradawi [47], who states that da'wah is the manifestation of knowledge, faith, and action. Students who actively engage in da'wah demonstrate a comprehensive level of religiosity, in which their religious knowledge serves as a driving force to guide others toward goodness. Therefore, Islamic education is proven not only to shape pious individuals but also to produce agents of social change.

Another positive impact is the development of a strong sense of social responsibility. Students become more concerned about societal conditions, actively participate in social service activities, fundraising initiatives, and assist peers who are experiencing difficulties. This social awareness demonstrates that religious character is not only reflected in acts of worship but also in concrete actions aimed at alleviating others' burdens. Students come to understand that true religiosity is always manifested in harmonious social relationships. This aligns with Nurcholish Madjid's [48] view, which emphasizes that authentic faith inevitably fosters social sensitivity. Students who are diligent in worship but indifferent to social suffering do not yet reflect mature religiosity. Therefore, student involvement in various social initiatives indicates that the religious character-strengthening programs at both institutions have successfully created a balance between individual piety and social responsibility.

Changes in attitude toward greater gentleness, patience, and tolerance are also tangible outcomes of the religious character development process. Through habitual Qur'an recitation, participation in moral (akhlaq) studies, and living in a pesantren environment, students learn to control their anger, respect others, and appreciate differences. These values are essential in a multicultural campus setting, where interactions across diverse backgrounds require openness and mutual understanding.

Students' gentleness and patience are further reinforced through exposure to da'wah content on YouTube, which frequently emphasizes the importance of noble character (akhlaq karimah). This digital influence provides strong reinforcement for the values taught in pesantren. As a result, students receive dual reinforcement: formal guidance through face-to-face activities and informal reinforcement through personal media access. This synergy facilitates the internalization of moral values in their daily lives.

A long-term impact that can be observed is the formation of graduates who benefit society. Many alums from both institutions contribute as religious teachers, preachers, mosque administrators, and social activists. Their involvement in educational and religious

community activities demonstrates that religious character strengthening produces not only immediate benefits but also long-term contributions.

The active role of alums serves as concrete evidence of the transformative power of religious character education. Graduates carry not only academic qualifications but also moral values, a sense of responsibility, and social skills needed in society. This indicates that the success of Islamic education at both institutions is measured not only by academic achievement but also by tangible societal contributions.

The synergy between traditional values and digital technology is a key factor behind this success. Traditional elements such as teacher role modeling, habituation to worship, and communal life in pesantren provide a strong moral foundation. Meanwhile, digital technology—particularly YouTube—serves as a flexible, accessible medium for delivering messages aligned with students' learning styles. These two approaches complement each other, enabling the development of religious character to reach students more effectively.

Regular evaluation is also crucial to ensure that these positive impacts are sustained. Evaluation allows lecturers and program administrators to monitor student progress and identify emerging challenges. Through continuous evaluation, programs can be refined and adapted to meet students' needs and respond to evolving societal demands.

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that strengthening the religious character of students at STIT At-Taqwa Ciparay Bandung and STAI Yamisa Soreang Bandung has produced significant positive impacts. Students not only become more disciplined in worship but also develop into individuals who are confident in da'wah, socially responsible, gentle, and patient. The graduates are also able to make substantial contributions to society, particularly in education and religious life.

Ultimately, this success demonstrates that integrating traditional education with digital media is not only possible but also highly effective in shaping knowledgeable, ethical, and socially contributive individuals. Strengthening religious character thus represents a long-term educational investment capable of producing a generation of Muslims who are well-prepared to face contemporary challenges without losing their religious identity.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, this study concludes that strengthening students' religious character is most effectively achieved through the integration of digital religious media, structured pesantren-based habituation, and Qur'an memorization programs. Each component contributes to different dimensions of character formation: digital platforms support cognitive religious understanding, pesantren environments strengthen behavioral and social discipline, while tahfidz activities deepen spiritual resilience and moral integrity. The synergy among these three approaches forms a comprehensive model for character development in contemporary Islamic higher education contexts.

The study implies that Islamic higher education institutions need to design integrated character-building systems that combine digital literacy with structured religious

habituation. Lecturers and educational staff are expected to act not only as instructors but also as moral and spiritual role models, actively guiding students in both academic and non-academic environments. For students, active and selective engagement with digital religious content is essential to ensure that technology becomes a tool for positive spiritual development rather than a source of distraction.

This research is limited to two Islamic higher education institutions, so the findings cannot be fully generalized to other contexts with different institutional cultures or student characteristics. The study also focuses on qualitative perceptions rather than quantitatively measuring character development over time. Future research is recommended to use mixed-method or experimental designs to more objectively measure the effectiveness of integrated character-building models. The development of standardized instruments to assess religious character in digital and pesantren environments is also needed. Overall, this study offers a practical, integrative framework for educators and institutions to strengthen students' religious character in the digital era.

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