



Blakasuta Epistemology and Construction Honesty Character Education: Integrating Tegal Local Wisdom in Madrasah Aliyah

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Submitted: February 17, 2026 / Revised: May 06, 2026 / Published: June 06, 2026

Abstract

The prevalence of adolescent moral degradation, such as cyberbullying and academic cheating, underscores the urgency of contextual character education. This study aims to reconstruct the epistemology of blakasuta, a local-wisdom character from Tegal, which emphasizes radical honesty as the foundation for the development of religious character in Madrasah Aliyah in Tegal Regency. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with Madrasah Aliyah teachers and students, participant observation, and documentation. The findings indicate that blakasuta provides empirical validation of the Islamic value of shiddiq, shifting character education from merely normative-theological to sociocultural experiences. Interview results indicate that students are more motivated to uphold integrity when their local identities are respected, and a safe space for honesty is provided. However, digital disruption poses challenges because the brecuh (rough) aspect of openness can be amplified into online hostility. This study concludes that strengthening adab as an ethical filter for blakasuta creates a resilient school culture. The results indicate that pedagogy based on the local wisdom of blakasuta improves students' intrinsic discipline and psychological well-being. This is reflected in a decrease in repeat violations in madrasah disciplinary records, as well as an increase in students' willingness to admit mistakes honestly, without fear. Furthermore, 9 out of 10 students reported feeling more confident and comfortable learning when their cultural identity is respected, creating a safe space for honesty and emotional well-being.

Keywords

Blakasuta; Honesty character; Integrating; Local wisdom



Introduction

Islamic education in the era of digital disruption faces a worrying moral paradox. On the one hand, advances in information technology offer broad access to religious knowledge; on the other, cyberbullying, the spread of hoaxes, and the erosion of academic honesty (plagiarism) are undermining adolescent character development. At the secondary level, such as Madrasah Aliyah (MA), this character crisis often manifests as a loss of respect for teachers' authority and a disregard for values of honesty in favor of pragmatic values. This condition is supported by statistical data demonstrating a vulnerability in integrity among students. Based on a Character Survey conducted by the Research and Development Agency for Training at the Madrasah and High School levels, 23.94% of students agreed to cheating on tests or exams, while 14.27% justified copying assignments written by peers (Aji Sofanudin dan Wahab, 2020). Furthermore, the 2024 Education Integrity Assessment Survey (SPI) released by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) revealed that cheating remains widespread in most schools, with 45% of students admitting to engaging in academic indiscipline such as tardiness. This phenomenon demonstrates that the internalization of religious values, which has been normative-theological in nature, has not fully addressed the challenges of the social realities faced by students.

Tegal Regency, as a region with a strong Islamic education base, is not immune to these dynamics. Based on the 2024 Human Development Index (HDI) data, Tegal Regency scored 71.70, which, although considered high, is at the lower end of Central Java (Ana Ittihada, 2026). This low HDI correlates with the competitiveness of secondary school graduates and the need to strengthen their character (Darius Ru'ung, 2021). Sociological issues in madrasahs in Tegal Regency also surfaced through sensitive matters that went viral on social media, such as miscommunication about disciplinary policies, sparking public debate (Indah, 2025). This phenomenon underscores the importance of reconstructing a school culture that is more transparent, honest, and philosophically grounded in local identity.

Culturally, the Tegal people have a *penginyongan* identity that stands in stark contrast to mainstream Javanese culture, which is often refined and rich in symbolism. This distinctive character is known as *cablaka* or *blakasuta*, which means pure honesty, speaking frankly, and without pretense (*thok-melong*). The etymology of *blakasuta*, derived from the Old Javanese words *balaka* (frank) and *suta* (child), depicts an innocent honesty, akin to a child's natural disposition (Nurdiyanto, 2021). From the perspective of Islamic educational philosophy, this



character is an empirical manifestation of the qualities of *shiddiq* (honesty) and *amanah* (trustworthiness), which are the foundation for the formation of a perfect human being (Amalia & Ramadhan, 2025). Unfortunately, these noble values are often considered "rude" or impolite by conventional educational standards, so their potential as socio-educational capital is often overlooked.

To date, studies on religious character development in madrasa environments, tend to remain trapped in strengthening formal-ritualistic aspects through daily worship habituation programs (Nursyda & Rivauzi, 2025; Rahma & Kabibuloh, 2025). This approach, while capable of creating orderly behavior, often fails to reach the depth of students' identities due to its top-down, administrative nature. On the other hand, sociological studies on the *penginyongan* culture have indeed succeeded in mapping the value of *blakasuta* as a pillar of honesty in local communities (Herusatoto, 2008; Subekti, 2018), but unfortunately this value is still placed outside the fence of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum. As a result, a value dichotomy arises: students become formally religious in the classroom, but lose their cultural identity outside the madrasa. This study aims to bridge this gap by positioning *blakasuta* not merely as an oral tradition, but as an epistemological system. The focus of this research is no longer only on 'what' students do routinely, but 'how' local honesty is validated as a source of moral truth that is integrated with the transcendental values of revelation in Islamic Education learning.

Based on this research gap, this article aims to reconstruct *blakasuta's* epistemology as a foundation for developing the religious character of Madrasah Aliyah students in Tegal Regency. This research is highly relevant to the spirit of the Independent Curriculum, which provides flexibility for educational units to contextualize learning in ways that reflect students' cultural backgrounds. By bridging the *blakasuta* value of honesty into the madrasah ecosystem, it is hoped that a character education model will be created that is not only theocentric but also humanistic and responsive to the identity of the Tegal community. The main focus of this study is to analyze how the reconstruction of *blakasuta* values can strengthen students' religious integrity amidst the current moral degradation of the digital era.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to uncover the deepest meaning and essence of individual experiences related to local wisdom values (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The use of a phenomenological design was deemed most appropriate because this study sought to describe in detail how



educational subjects (teachers and students) interpret and live out the *blakasuta* values as the basis for religious character in daily life at madrasah.

The research was conducted in several Madrasah Aliyah (Islamic Senior High Schools) in Tegal Regency, representing the cultural characteristics of the community. The research subjects were selected using a purposive sampling technique, consisting of: (a) one Madrasah Principal as the authority on school culture policy; (b) two teachers, one Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and one Guidance and Counseling (BK) as the main facilitators of character value internalization; and (c) ten 10th and 11th grade students as actors who directly experienced the process of reconstructing these values.

Data analysis refers to an interactive model and is carried out continuously until saturation is reached (Miles et al., 2014). The steps include: first, data condensation, where the researcher selects, focuses, and simplifies raw data from field notes and interview transcripts related to the *blakasuta* phenomenon. Next, the data presentation stage (Data Display) presents the data in the form of narrative text, a value categorization matrix, and a relationship chart between religious character variables. The final stage is conclusion drawing (Conclusion Drawing/Verification), where the researcher continuously verifies throughout the study to draw valid final conclusions regarding the reconstruction of *blakasuta's* epistemology.

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To ensure the credibility of the findings, this study employed source triangulation techniques (comparing data from the principal, teachers, and students) and technical triangulation (comparing interview results with field observations). The researcher also conducted member checking to ensure that the written descriptions of the phenomena align with the experiences of the participants.



Results

This study identified several key themes related to the reconstruction of the *blakasuta* epistemology and its role in shaping the religious character of Madrasah Aliyah students in Tegal Regency. The findings are presented based on in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies.

1. Teacher and Student Perceptions of *Blakasuta* as a Value of Honesty

All informants Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and students recognized and identified *blakasuta/cablaka* as a defining characteristic of the Tegal community, understood as the habit of speaking frankly, straightforwardly, and without pretense (*thok-melong*). When asked about the cultural identity of Tegal people in terms of communication, the responses were immediate and uniform. One Islamic Religious Education teacher emphasized during a classroom observation:

When Tegal people speak, they are truly honest, sir! This means being honest and truthful, without hiding anything. And this is what *cablaka* means (Islamic Religious Education Teacher, Classroom Observation).

This statement reflects not only a descriptive awareness of the local cultural trait, but also a normative valuation of it as a moral virtue. Teachers across the observed madrasahs consistently associated *blakasuta* with the Islamic value of *shiddiq*, framing the local tradition as an empirical embodiment of Prophetic honesty. This cultural-religious linkage was intentionally constructed in pedagogical practice, as observed in the way teachers opened *akidah akhlak* lessons by invoking students' identities before introducing Islamic concepts.

Student responses further confirmed this cultural identification. A grade 11 student (Informant B) revealed a significant behavioral shift resulting from this pedagogical approach:

I used to often say I had done my homework when I had not, because I was afraid of being scolded. But after the teacher gave me space to speak frankly, I became more courageous in speaking honestly, even when I was wrong (Grade 11 Student, Informant B).

This testimony illustrates a critical transformation: the reduction of fear-based dishonesty and the emergence of integrity-based self-disclosure. The data indicate that when students felt their cultural identity was affirmed in the classroom, they were more willing to admit mistakes rather than construct false narratives to avoid punishment. Of the ten students interviewed, nine reported feeling more motivated and comfortable in the learning environment when their cultural backgrounds were respected and validated at school.

A tenth-grade student elaborated on this psychological shift:



If I can speak frankly, I feel more confident. I am no longer afraid of being considered impolite; instead, I feel that honesty is part of being from Tegal (Interview, Grade 10 Student).

These findings indicate that the integration of *blakasuta* into the pedagogical framework successfully repositioned honesty from a perceived social liability being labeled rude into a valued cultural identity. This shift is foundational to the broader character education outcomes observed in this study.

2. Pedagogical Practices Developed in Madrasah Aliyah

Observations across multiple madrasah sites indicate that several institutions have systematically integrated *blakasuta* values into their Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum, particularly within *akidah akhlak* material on the virtue of *shiddiq*. Teachers employed culturally grounded questions to connect Islamic concepts to students' lived identities. A common pedagogical entry point observed was the question:

How do Tegal people actually speak? *cablaka* Pak! It means honest, as it is, and not hiding anything (Interview, Madrasah Teacher).

In addition to classroom strategies, the local tradition of *moci karo ndopok* (drinking tea while chatting) was adopted as part of classroom management and counseling. These sessions were held regularly — both during morning routines after reciting the asmaul husna, and during mediation of disciplinary matters. The madrasah principal articulated the philosophy behind this approach:

We don't want students to obey only because of formal rules. We want obedience to arise from honest intentions. Therefore, mediation and dialogue are key. If there are violations, we call parents and students to discuss the issue, finding the root of the problem together, rather than simply imposing sanctions (Interview, Head of Madrasah).

Student disciplinary records from participating madrasahs showed a decrease in repeat violations in institutions that implemented this dialogical approach, suggesting a meaningful correlation between *blakasuta*-based mediation and improved student conduct. Although specific quantitative comparison data were not available, teacher and counselor records consistently noted this trend across all observed sites.

3. Impact on Students of Madrasah Aliyah

Field observations revealed positive and consistent changes in students' attitudes toward honesty and self-expression across madrasahs that implemented *blakasuta*-based pedagogy. Students showed a greater willingness to openly admit academic shortcomings such as not completing an assignment rather than offer fabricated excuses. This behavioral shift was observed across different classrooms



and grade levels, suggesting that the internalization of values was not limited to individual teachers but was embedded in the broader school culture.

Guidance counselor records further confirmed this transformation. A school counselor noted:

Students are more open during counseling sessions; they are willing to admit personal problems without hesitation, using the local wisdom integration approach in counseling sessions at the Madrasah (Interview, School Guidance Counselor).

This openness extended beyond academic honesty to personal and emotional matters. Students who previously concealed personal difficulties — family problems, learning struggles, peer conflicts — were now voluntarily disclosing these in counseling sessions. This finding suggests that the psychologically safe space created by *blakasuta*-informed pedagogy functions as an enabling condition for broader emotional transparency and well-being.

4. The Challenge of Openness Turning into *Brecuh*

Alongside its positive manifestations, this study identified significant challenges in implementing the *blakasuta* approach. A recurring finding across interviews was the tendency for cultural openness to blur into *brecuh* a Tegal term for vulgar, harsh, or socially inappropriate speech particularly in digital spaces. One student openly admitted:

In WhatsApp groups, sometimes speaking bluntly becomes rude. My friends think it is normal, but they often make a fuss (Interview, Grade 11 Student).

An Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher expressed a similar concern regarding students' online behavior:

On social media, *blakasuta*'s openness is often misinterpreted as breaching. Students feel free to say harsh words, even though it violates Islamic etiquette (Interview, PAI Teacher).

Field observations of students' online discussion groups corroborated these testimonies. Comments containing sarcasm, ridicule, and provocation were identified in multiple online platforms. In several instances, students appeared to justify these expressions as natural extensions of "speaking honestly," without recognizing the harm they caused to others. This misappropriation of the *blakasuta* value suggests that without ethical scaffolding, openness can devolve into communicative aggression, particularly in digital environments where social cues and tonal context are absent.

5. Mitigation Efforts Undertaken by the Madrasah

To address the challenge of *brecuh*, participating madrasahs introduced targeted programs to guide students toward responsible, ethically grounded communication. These initiatives included: (1) *adab*-based communication training



integrated into PAI lessons; (2) the *detoks peradaban* (Civilization Detox) program, focusing on digital ethics grounded in Islamic values; and (3) *tabayyun* (clarification) exercises taught as mandatory steps before information sharing. A school guidance *counselor* articulated the core principle underlying these efforts:

We teach that being honest does not mean being rude. *blakasuta* must remain within the framework of etiquette (*adab*). Otherwise, it could become *brecuh* (Interview, School Guidance Counselor).

Through these combined interventions, madrasahs sought to preserve the positive core of *blakasuta* radical honesty and cultural pride while establishing Islamic ethical norms as its boundary conditions. Teachers and counselors consistently reinforced the message that authentic openness must be accompanied by wisdom (*hikmah*) and consideration for others' dignity. Preliminary observation data indicated that students who participated in these programs became more selective in their language choices and more reflective about the impact of their words, both in face-to-face and online interactions.

Discussion

1. The Essence of *Blakasuta* Epistemology in the Perspective of Islamic Education

The findings of this study reveal a significant paradigm shift in the epistemological construction of Islamic education at Madrasah Aliyah in Tegal Regency: a movement away from a theocentric-dogmatic model of knowledge transmission toward an integrative approach grounded in students' empirical experience. Philosophically, the epistemology of Islamic education is not limited to methods of acquiring knowledge; it constitutes a process of truth validation that integrates three foundational pillars — divine revelation (*naqli*), reason (*aqli*), and lived experience (*tajribi*) (Oktarini et al., 2025). Within this framework, the local wisdom of *blakasuta* — which etymologically signifies speaking honestly and innocently, as a child (*balaka*: child; *suta*: born of) — is reconstructed from a mere regional linguistic style into an epistemic instrument that provides tangible, culturally grounded evidence for the Islamic virtue of *shiddiq*.

This reconstruction is theoretically significant because character education in madrasahs has historically been trapped in a dichotomy between religious texts, perceived as elevated and universal, and local cultural behaviors, perceived as ordinary and particular. When honesty is taught solely through scriptural definitions in *akidah akhlak* textbooks, students tend to receive it as a normative obligation alien to their lived identity. The pedagogical strategy of foregrounding *blakasuta* as the cultural equivalent of *shiddiq* dissolves this dichotomy: it builds an



epistemological bridge through which students discover that Islamic truthfulness is not foreign but is already embodied in who they are as Tegal people. This finding resonates with the broader literature on culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2018), confirming that value internalization is most effective when it proceeds from identity recognition rather than doctrinal imposition.

Philosophically, this pedagogical approach constitutes a manifestation of the "humanization of Islamic education" — a process in which transcendental divine values (faith and *ihsan*) are translated into a contextual human dimension that students can directly experience and reflect upon (Sunarya & Sassi, 2025). *Blakasuta* epistemology effectively dismantles the wall separating sacred teaching from cultural practice, so that truth is discovered not through instructional coercion but through self-reflection on local identity. This self-validating process produces a more durable religious character because the values it generates are rooted in an intrinsic awareness of identity, rather than administrative compliance (Nurjihan & Ainurahmah, 2021; Subandi et al., 2025). Ultimately, the epistemological reconstruction of *blakasuta* gives rise to Muslims who are radically honest yet remain within the ethical framework of Islamic manners (Arif et al., 2024), achieving a harmony between individual piety and pride in local cultural heritage (Rabbaniyah et al., 2024).

2. Epistemological Integration: *Blakasuta* as Empirical Validation of Shiddiq Values

The results of this study affirm that the most pedagogically effective pathway for instilling the value of *shiddiq* in Madrasah Aliyah students is through empirical validation within the students' own cultural system. This finding extends existing debates in Islamic educational epistemology about the relationship between revelation-based knowledge and experiential knowledge. In classical Islamic thought, *tajribi* (experiential knowledge) is recognized as one of the legitimate sources of epistemic certainty when it aligns with *naqli* and *aqli* foundations (Al-Attas, 1995). *Blakasuta*, as observed in this study, functions precisely as this empirical dimension: it provides students with lived, observable instances of the virtue they are taught to internalize.

The pedagogical strategy of using students' cultural self-identification — Tegal people is *cablaka* — as a gateway to *akidah akhlak* content demonstrates a sophisticated epistemological move. By anchoring abstract religious concepts to concrete cultural practices, teachers enable students to perform what Vygotsky (1978) terms zone of proximal development learning: moving from the culturally familiar to the religiously meaningful with scaffolded support. The result is not superficial memorization of definitions but a deep internalization of integrity as a



constitutive element of identity. Students do not merely learn that the Prophet Muhammad was honest; they discover that they, as Tegal people, share in that tradition of honesty — and that Islamic education affirms rather than erases their cultural roots.

This integration model also carries implications for the broader discourse on decolonizing Islamic education in Indonesia. Rather than positioning Western pedagogical frameworks or purely text-based Islamic traditions as the normative standard, the Tegal madrasahs studied here demonstrate that local epistemologies can serve as legitimate and powerful educational foundations. This supports Farid Esack's argument (2010) that authentic Islamic education in diverse cultural contexts must engage seriously with local wisdom as a site of theological and moral truth, not merely as a decorative supplement to the curriculum.

3. School Cultural Reconstruction: Integrating Between the *Moci* Tradition and a Dialogical-Pedagogical Approach

One of the most distinctive findings of this study is the systematic adoption of the *moci* karo *ndopok* tradition as a framework for classroom management and institutional counseling. The ritual of drinking tea from a shared pot while engaging in open, egalitarian conversation embodies core social values of the Tegal community: equality (*musawah*), reciprocity, and collective truth-seeking. By integrating this tradition into the school's daily routines, the madrasahs studied here effect a profound reconstruction of school culture — shifting from hierarchical, authoritarian structures to dialogical, egalitarian ones.

This finding is theoretically consistent with Paolo Freire's (1970) critique of the "banking model" of education, in which students are passive recipients of teacher-deposited knowledge. The *moci* pedagogy, as practiced in these madrasahs, instantiates a Freirean dialogical model: teachers and students engage as co-investigators of truth, with the teacher's authority resting on moral exemplarity (*uswah hasanah*) rather than institutional power. This structural shift has measurable outcomes — reduced disciplinary violations, greater student openness in counseling, and stronger teacher-student relational bonds — all of which are documented in this study's results.

Table 1. Recunstructed character model based on integration

Stages	Local Cultural Activities	Internalization of Islamic Values	Character Output
Input	<i>Moci</i> Culture (Equality)	<i>Musawah & Ukhuwah</i>	Inclusiveness
Process	<i>Cablaka</i> Dialogue (Openness)	<i>Ash-Shiddiq & Tabligh</i>	Integrity



Output	<i>Thok-melong</i> Attitude (Courage)	<i>Asy-Syaja'ah</i>	Moral Fortitude
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As the model illustrates, the three stages of character reconstruction — Input, Process, and Output — map precisely onto the progression from cultural practice to Islamic value to behavioral character. The *moci* culture, with its inherent egalitarianism, nurtures the values of *musawah* (equality) and *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), yielding an inclusive institutional ethos. *Cablaka* dialogue, as the processual medium, builds on this foundation to internalize *ash-shiddiq* (truthfulness) and *tabligh* (communicating truth), generating integrity as a stable character trait. Finally, the *thok-melong* attitude — the willingness to face reality without flinching — cultivates *asy-syaja'ah* (moral courage), producing graduates with genuine moral fortitude. This three-stage model offers a replicable framework for character education programs in other cultural contexts beyond Tegal.

The integration of local values through this model also yields a significant secondary effect: the strengthening of religious moderation (*moderasi beragama*) among students. The open, populist ethos of *blakasuta* cultivates adaptability in engaging with differing opinions and cultural diversity. In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, this contributes directly to the Pancasila Student Profile — particularly the dimensions of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy to all creation), *tawassuth* (moderation), *i'tidal* (fairness), and *tasamuh* (tolerance) (Hilmin, 2024).

4. The Dilemma of Openness in the Digital Space: From Blakasuta to Brecuh

While the results confirm the transformative potential of *blakasuta* epistemology in face-to-face educational settings, this study simultaneously identifies a significant and complex challenge in the digital domain: the mutation of culturally valued openness into *brecuh* vulgar, socially harmful speech. This finding represents the central tension of the study and demands careful theoretical analysis.

In the oral tradition of Tegal society, *brecuh* is used in contexts of close familiarity (*glewehan*) as affectionate banter that signals intimacy. Its social function is relational rather than harmful and is governed by unspoken norms of context, relationship, and reciprocity. However, when transported into digital environments social media platforms, WhatsApp groups, online comment sections these contextual regulators disappear. The absence of physical presence, vocal intonation, and relational history transforms what was culturally coded as playful frankness into communications that can constitute cyberbullying or hate speech (Boyd, 2014).

This sociolinguistic displacement is exacerbated by the influence of global digital culture, which often valorizes provocative, confrontational, and hyperbolically expressive communication as markers of authenticity and social capital (Turkle, 2015). Students in this study who participated in online groups were



observed navigating an ambiguous boundary between *blakasuta* as integrity and *brecuh*-as-performance. Several students justified their use of harsh language as being real a discursive move that colonizes the cultural value of *Blakasuta* to legitimize behavior that violates its ethical foundation. This highlights the vulnerability of locally grounded values to distortion when they encounter globally mediated digital cultures without adequate ethical scaffolding.

From an Islamic educational perspective, this phenomenon underscores the urgency of embedding *pharusavaca* (right speech; the prohibition of coarse language) as a normative framework in digital literacy education. The Quranic principle of *qawlan sadida* (truthful and precise speech) and *qawlan karima* (honorable speech) must be taught not only as abstract commandments but as practical ethical guides for communicating in digital spaces (Haryanti & Indriani, 2025). The challenge, as this study shows, is that students often lack the critical media literacy to recognize when their "honest" expression crosses into harmful territory a gap that the madrasahs are now actively working to close.

5. *Adab* as an Ethical Filter: Toward Sharia-Based Digital Literacy

The madrasahs' response to the *brecuh* challenge the systematic integration of *adab* (Islamic etiquette) as an ethical filter for digital communication constitutes one of the most practically significant contributions of this study. The concept of *adab* in Islamic thought is not merely about manners; it is a comprehensive ordering of human faculties and actions in alignment with divine purpose and human dignity (Al-Attas, 1995). By positioning *adab* as the regulatory principle that channels *blakasuta* within its proper ethical bounds, the madrasahs studied here develop a sophisticated framework for Islamic digital citizenship.

The integration of *adab* into digital literacy education proceeds through multiple channels in these institutions. The principle of *tabayyun* (verification before sharing) is taught as a mandatory communicative norm to address the epidemic of misinformation and slander that characterizes much of digital communication (Haryanti & Indriani, 2025). The civilization detox program creates a structured space for students to critically reflect on their digital habits, comparing them against Islamic standards of beneficial speech (Giri et al., 2025). Teacher exemplars in digital communication further provide *uswah hasanah* lived models of how to be honest, direct, and culturally authentic while remaining within the ethical framework of Islamic communication.

Axiologically, this integration of *adab* and *blakasuta* has significant implications for school culture and student formation. Research shows that students taught to view *adab* as a cultural filter rather than an external restraint — tend to develop more refined self-regulatory capacities in their communications (Safitri &



Nurlina, 2024). This internalization of ethical communication as an expression of identity, rather than institutional compliance, mirrors the same epistemological move that makes *blakasuta's* pedagogy effective in academic settings: values become durable when they are owned, not merely obeyed.

Furthermore, the *adab* framework successfully synthesizes the Islamic communicative ideal with the Tegal cultural communicative norm. *Blakasuta*, properly understood, already contains within it the seeds of *adab*: the innocence and purity implied by *balaka-suta* suggest a speech that is clean, sincere, and free from the social performance of deception. By recovering and foregrounding this ethical dimension of *blakasuta*, the madrasahs are not imposing external Islamic norms onto a resistant local culture, but rather drawing out the Islamic values that were always latent within the tradition itself. This hermeneutic move strengthens the coherence and authenticity of the entire pedagogical project.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the epistemological reconstruction of *blakasuta* constitutes a theoretically grounded and empirically validated framework for developing the religious character of Madrasah Aliyah students in Tegal Regency. Three principal conclusions emerge from the findings. First, *blakasuta* functions as a legitimate epistemic bridge between local cultural identity and Islamic moral values. By repositioning the Tegal cultural tradition of frank, unadorned speech as an empirical manifestation of the Prophetic virtue of *shiddiq*, teachers successfully dissolved the perceived dichotomy between religious normativity and students' lived cultural experience. Field data confirmed that students who felt their cultural identity was affirmed within the madrasah environment demonstrated greater willingness to practice honesty intrinsically not out of fear of punishment, but out of a deepened sense of self. This finding affirms that effective character education must proceed from identity recognition before doctrinal instruction. Second, the dialogical-pedagogical approach embodied in the *moci* and *ndopok* tradition proved to be an effective institutional mechanism for internalizing Islamic values. By restructuring the teacher-student relationship from hierarchical authority to egalitarian dialogue, participating madrasahs created a psychologically safe space in which honesty became a practiced virtue rather than an enforced compliance. Evidence of this was consistent across interview data, counselor records, and disciplinary trend observations all pointing toward reduced repeat violations, greater student openness, and stronger moral agency. Third, this study identifies the challenge of *brecuh* the distortion of cultural openness into socially harmful speech,



particularly in digital spaces as an inherent tension within the *blakasuta* pedagogical project that demands active institutional response. The integration of *adab*-based digital literacy, the *tabayyun* principle, and the civilization detox program represents a promising model for equipping students to navigate this tension. Honesty, the findings confirm, must always be channeled through the ethical framework of Islamic *adab* to remain virtuous rather than harmful. The implications of this study are threefold. At the curricular level, madrasahs are encouraged to develop PAI teaching modules that explicitly map local wisdom onto Islamic character competencies, particularly within *akidah akhlak* material. At the institutional level, the *moci* pedagogy model with its emphasis on egalitarian mediation over punitive sanction warrants broader adoption as a framework for school culture development. At the policy level, the integration of *adab*-based digital ethics into the madrasah curriculum should be treated as a priority, given the documented vulnerability of culturally grounded values to distortion in digital environments. Ultimately, this study affirms that character education ceases to be merely instructional and becomes transformative when it is rooted in students' authentic cultural identity. The *blakasuta* reconstruction offers not only a solution to the moral challenges facing madrasah education in Tegal, but a replicable model for Islamic educational institutions across diverse cultural contexts in Indonesia seeking to produce graduates who are simultaneously rooted in their local heritage and grounded in universal Islamic values.

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