Implementation of School Culture in Improving Religious Character in Islamic Boarding Schools

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the implementation of school culture in supporting the improvement of students' religious character building in pesantren-based schools and identify the strategies and elements of school culture. Based schools, as well as identifying the most effective strategies and elements of school culture in integrating academic achievement with most effective in integrating academic achievement with Islamic values. The approach used is qualitative, with data collection techniques in the form of observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The research informants comprised principals, teachers, students, and other related parties involved in implementing school culture and the implementation of school culture. Data analysis was conducted by using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana through stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Results The results showed that the three primary forms of school culture that proved effective in shaping students' religious character are the recitation of the Qur'an before teaching and learning activities, yellow book studies, and mujahadah and prayer together. Together. These three activities are routinely structured and sustainably to form a religious habitus. Continuously forming a religious habitus in students' daily lives. Students' daily lives. This finding provides a strategic contribution for pesantren-based schools in strengthening character education based schools in strengthening character education while supporting academic achievement that is aligned with Islamic values.

Keyword: Islamic Boarding School, School Culture, Religious Character

Abstrak: *Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji implementasi budaya sekolah dalam mendukung peningkatan pembentukan karakter religius siswa pada sekolah berbasis pesantren, serta mengidentifikasi strategi dan elemen budaya sekolah yang paling efektif dalam mengintegrasikan pencapaian akademik dengan nilai-nilai keislaman. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kualitatif, dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Informan penelitian terdiri dari kepala sekolah, guru, siswa, dan pihak terkait lainnya yang terlibat dalam pelaksanaan budaya sekolah. Analisis data dilakukan dengan menggunakan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldana melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tiga bentuk utama budaya sekolah yang terbukti efektif dalam membentuk karakter religius siswa adalah pembacaan Al-Qur'an sebelum kegiatan belajar mengajar, kajian kitab kuning, serta mujahadah dan doa bersama. Ketiga kegiatan ini dilaksanakan secara rutin, terstruktur, dan berkesinambungan sehingga membentuk habitus religius dalam kehidupan sehari-hari siswa. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi*

strategis bagi sekolah berbasis pesantren dalam memperkuat pendidikan karakter sekaligus mendukung pencapaian akademik yang selaras dengan nilai-nilai Islam.

Kata kunci : *Sekolah Berbasis Pesantren, Budaya Sekolah, Karakter Religius*

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Introduction

Islamic boarding schools, which combine formal education systems and religious values, are responsible for instilling spiritual values and noble morals in students (Muttaqin & Maulidin, 2024; Hasan et al., 2023). However, social reality shows that even though students are in an Islamic boarding school environment, many of them still show undisciplined behavior, lack of responsibility, and minimal religious awareness in their daily lives. This phenomenon shows a gap between the religious values taught and the real behavior of students, so more systematic efforts are needed to shape religious character through implementing an effective school culture.

School culture strategically shapes students' character because it reflects a system of values, habits, and norms that are consistently applied in the educational environment (Fahruddin, 2025; Ainiyah et al., 2025). In Islamic boarding schools, school culture can be realized through congregational prayers, regular religious studies, reading the Qur'an, and internalizing manners towards teachers and others (Yulianto & Huda, 2023). If applied consistently and supported by all elements of the school, this culture can shape a religious character that is deeply embedded in students. Therefore, strengthening school culture is not only a symbol of the identity of Islamic boarding schools but also an important strategy in fostering a religious character that aligns with Islamic education's goals, namely to produce knowledgeable, faithful, and noble people.

Many studies have been conducted on implementing school culture and religious character. For example, a study by Rahmah (2022) found that a school environment that supports religious values significantly contributes to developing students' character. However, this study focuses more on public schools and does not highlight the context of Islamic boarding schools. Meanwhile, research by Rozak (2023) identified that teacher involvement in building a religious culture in schools significantly improves students' religious character. However, this study has not examined how other elements of school culture, such as traditions and rules, affect students' character as a whole. From the literature review, there is a research gap, namely the lack of exploration of the holistic implementation of school culture in the context of Islamic boarding schools. In addition, little research

integrates character education theory with social learning theory to analyze students' religious character formation.

This study offers novelty in several aspects. First, this study uses a holistic approach to analyze the implementation of school culture in the context of Islamic boarding schools, which has not been widely discussed in previous literature. Second, this study integrates Lickona's (1991) character education theory and Bandura's (1977) social learning theory to provide a more comprehensive perspective on understanding students' religious character formation. Third, this study develops a model of school culture implementation that can be used as a practical guide for Islamic boarding schools to improve students' religious character. This novelty is expected to contribute significantly to theoretical and practical areas.

This study aims to examine the implementation of school culture in supporting the improvement of students' religious character formation in one of the educational institutions under the auspices of an Islamic boarding school in Probolinggo. In addition, this study also aims to identify the most effective strategies and elements of school culture in integrating academic achievement with strengthening Islamic values. The results of this study are expected to provide strategic recommendations for Islamic boarding school-based schools, especially in the Probolinggo area, in utilizing school culture as an instrument of character education. Thus, this study is expected to create a school environment that supports academic success while forming a young generation with moral, spiritual, and social integrity by Islamic principles.

Field studies reveal variations in the application of school culture to strengthen students' religious character, although most Islamic boarding schools have placed religious education as a top priority. A deep understanding of how the applied school culture plays a role in shaping students' religious character amidst the dynamics of the modern era is an aspect that needs to be explored further through the experiences and perspectives of students and educators. In this context, the researcher determined MA Darullughah Wal Karomah as the object of research. An Islamic boarding school located under the auspices of the Darullughah Wal Karomah Islamic Boarding School in Probolinggo Regency.

Method

This study uses a qualitative and descriptive approach to examine in depth the implementation of school culture in improving the religious character of students in Islamic boarding schools. The study location was at MA Darullughah Wal Karomah, which is under the auspices of the Darullughah Wal Karomah Islamic Boarding School in Probolinggo Regency. Research informants included the principal, teachers, students, and other parties who were directly involved in

implementing school culture. Data collection techniques included observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation aims to observe activities that reflect the implementation of school culture directly. In-depth interviews used a semi-structured approach to obtain detailed information from informants, while documentation was used to collect data in the form of official documents, such as the school's vision and mission, regulations, work programs, and documentation of school activities. The data obtained were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Najiburrahman et al., 2024). Reduction is done by filtering relevant data, presenting data in the form of descriptive narratives or tables, and conclusions are drawn inductively based on the findings. The validity of the data is guaranteed through triangulation of sources, techniques, and time by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. This method is expected to be able to produce a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of school culture in shaping students' religious character.

Results And Discussions

Results

Based on the results of research conducted by researchers through a series of observations, interviews, and documentation at Madrasah Aliyah Darullughah Wal Karomah, several pieces of evidence were found that show how the implementation of school culture is able to shape and improve students' religious character. Islamic values are applied consistently in various school activities, creating a conducive environment for character building. The findings will be presented in the following section.

Improving Discipline in Worship

The improvement of discipline in worship at MA Darullughah Wal Karomah is evident through the implementation of congregational dhuha prayers which are carried out routinely every morning. This activity has become part of the routine of students and teachers which is carried out consistently and in a structured manner. Based on the results of interviews with the head of the madrasah, this activity was indeed designed as a concrete step to foster spiritual discipline among students. The head of the madrasah stated that the presence of all students in the activity was directly supervised by the teachers and supervisors, who also participated in its implementation.

One of the teachers said that this discipline was formed through an intensive coaching process, both in the form of daily direction and personal motivation for students. In addition, students also feel helped by the worship scheduling system that has been established by the madrasah. In an interview, a

student said that through systematic guidance, he felt that worship was no longer a burden, but had changed into a habit that was carried out with awareness and comfort.

The results of the researcher's observations on May 19-24, 2025 showed that the implementation of congregational dhuha prayers took place in an orderly manner. All students entered the prayer room neatly and on time, and showed solemnity during the prayer. The supervising teachers were seen actively giving directions before the prayer began, while also supervising the progress of the activity until it was finished. Supervision was carried out with a persuasive and close approach, so that students felt comfortable but still felt responsible for their discipline.

Table 01. Observation Aspects of the Implementation of Dhuha Prayer in Congregation

Observed Aspects	**Description of Observation Results**
Regularity of Activities	Congregational Dhuha prayers take place every morning according to the set schedule without any delay.
Participation	Students and teachers actively participate in congregational prayers with full attention and reverence.
The Role of Teachers	The supervising teacher is present on time, provides direction and supervision during the prayer.
Coaching Methods	Supervision and motivation are carried out directly with a friendly and consistent approach.
Role of Students	Students showed high awareness and discipline, following the entire series of prayers devoutly.

Based on the observation data, it can be concluded that the culture of congregational dhuha prayer has formed a pattern of student discipline that is integrated into their daily lives. The role of teachers as consistent mentors, a comprehensive coaching system, and active student participation are important elements in the success of this practice. This shows that the habit of worship in an educational environment not only forms religious behavior, but also instills the values of discipline and responsibility in a sustainable manner.

Formation of Responsible and Independent Attitudes

At Madrasah Aliyah Darullughah Wal Karomah, the formation of students' attitudes of responsibility and independence is realized through routine activities of reading the Qur'an together before the start of the teaching and learning process. Based on the results of the researcher's observations, this activity is carried out alternately where each day one student is appointed to lead the reading. This activity is a medium for character learning, as well as training students to appear confident, manage tasks, and be responsible for the roles they are entrusted with.

In an interview with the head of the madrasah, it was explained that the involvement of students as leaders of the reading of the Qur'an was indeed designed to instill the value of responsibility as well as shape student independence in a religious and educational atmosphere. The head of the madrasah emphasized that through this role, students are challenged to be mentally prepared, disciplined with time, and able to lead their friends in a calm and solemn atmosphere.

The supervising teacher who was met in the interview added that this activity was carried out using the bandongan method, namely one student leads the reading first, then followed by other students simultaneously. This method not only trains reading and pronunciation skills, but also encourages students to be mentally prepared to bear responsibility for the smooth running of the activity.

One of the students interviewed revealed that involvement in this activity provided valuable experience that influenced learning readiness. According to him, leading the reading of the Qur'an is not just a daily task, but an important part of preparing oneself to face lessons with calm and focus. In fact, students call this activity a form of "spiritual warm-up" that makes the mood more peaceful and the enthusiasm for learning increases. The results of the researcher's observations also showed that the Qur'an reading activity was carried out regularly and solemnly. The students on duty seemed serious in carrying out their roles, while the other students followed enthusiastically and orderly. The accompanying teacher was present to accompany the activity, providing light guidance if needed, but more letting the students manage the activities themselves as a form of responsibility training.

Figure 1. Reading the Qur'an together before the lesson begins

This activity is not only a spiritual routine, but has become ingrained as part of character building. Through the process of taking turns leading and actively participating in activities, students are accustomed to managing tasks independently and learn to be responsible for the roles given. This habit pattern also has an impact on students' mental readiness in facing lessons, because they are accustomed to starting the day with regular and meaningful activities. Thus, religious habits integrated into daily school activities have proven effective in fostering students' attitudes of responsibility and independence. This process not only shapes behavior, but also builds character through direct experience and active involvement in concrete roles.

Strengthening Noble Morals in Daily Interactions

At MA Darullughah Wal Karomah, the strengthening of students' noble morals is carried out consistently through various routine activities that are integrated into daily life. One of the main activities that is a means of forming morals is the study of the Akhlāqu Lilbanīn book which is held once every two weeks. Based on the results of an interview with the Deputy Head of Madrasah for Student Affairs, this activity was designed as a medium for practical ethics and manners education, such as how to speak politely, respect others, and maintain good behavior in social interactions. This program is considered effective in accustoming students to be polite, humble, and responsible in their daily lives.

The supervising teacher who was met added that the formation of morals is not only carried out through studying the book, but also through the habit of praying together every morning before learning activities begin, as well as instilling time discipline in daily routines. This habituation is carried out directly and repeatedly to instill the values of honesty, patience, and respect for teachers and parents. According to the teacher, through this structured habit, students are

accustomed to acting in accordance with the religious values that have been instilled.

One of the students interviewed said that these activities helped increase his awareness to behave politely and responsibly, both at school and at home. He said that the values learned at the madrasah were not only applied when interacting with teachers and friends, but also brought home and practiced in life with the family. The results of the researcher's observations in the classroom also supported this statement. The interaction between teachers and students took place in an atmosphere full of respect and emotional closeness. Teachers not only taught subjects, but also set an example in their attitudes and speech. Students also demonstrated polite behavior, listened attentively, and maintained order during learning. This conducive classroom atmosphere strengthened the process of internalizing noble morals naturally and sustainably.
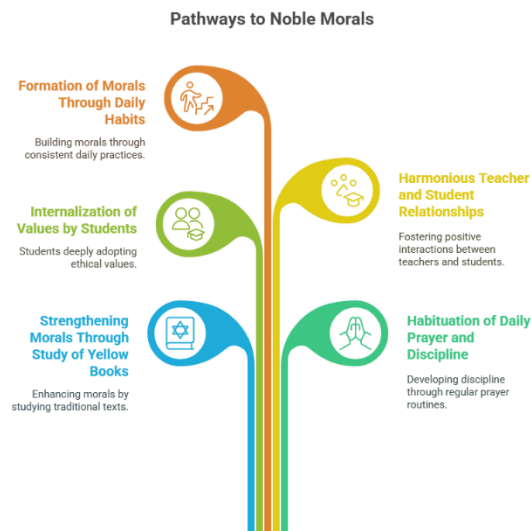

Diagram 1. Efforts to Form Noble Morals at MA Darullughah Wal Karomah

The five elements in the diagram work in an integrated manner in shaping students' character. Studying the book provides a practical understanding of moral values, while daily activities such as prayer and time discipline become a means of real practice. The interaction built between teachers and students strengthens the learning of these values in everyday situations, so that students not only know the values of noble morals theoretically, but also practice them in their actions and behavior. Thus, the strengthening of noble morals at MA Darullughah Wal Karomah is not formalistic, but rather integrated into the school culture and occurs naturally in students' daily interactions. This approach shows that religious values can be formed and developed through patterns of habituation, role models, and the active involvement of all elements of the madrasah.

Internalization of Moral Values through the Role Models of Teachers and Caregivers

At MA Darullughah Wal Karomah, internalization of moral values is carried out through direct role models from teachers and caregivers who are an important part of students' daily lives. Based on the results of interviews with the Vice Principal for Student Affairs, it was explained that teachers are always directed to be real examples in speech, attitude, and behavior. According to him, character education is not enough with just instructions or teaching, but must be realized through behavior that can be seen and imitated directly by students.

The principal also said that this effort has become the main strategy in Islamic boarding school-based education. Teachers and caregivers not only teach in class, but also actively accompany students in the dormitory environment. They are expected to demonstrate discipline, responsibility, and perseverance in carrying out daily worship. With this consistency, students naturally absorb the values displayed and use them as guidelines for behavior.

In addition, routine activities such as visiting the founders and dzurriyah of the Islamic boarding school which are held once a month are part of the formation of morals rooted in respect for scholars and strengthening students' spirituality. The principal of the madrasah emphasized that this activity provided a deep spiritual experience for students, while also forming an attitude of humility and respect for the scientific heritage that they were studying.

A grade XII student majoring in PK who was interviewed said that he was motivated to improve his morals and strengthen his worship after witnessing the discipline, patience, and politeness of the teachers and caregivers. He considered that habits such as greeting each other, maintaining good manners, and the discipline of worship of educators indirectly formed his awareness to behave better, both inside and outside the madrasah.

The results of the researcher's observations in the madrasah environment also showed that the interaction between teachers, caregivers, and students took place with full respect. Teachers not only gave instructions, but were also present as good listeners, wise reprimands, and patient guides. In the classroom, the calm and controlled attitude of the teachers created an orderly learning atmosphere. Meanwhile, in the dormitory, caregivers were seen involved in students' daily worship and activities, without showing rigid social distancing.

With a pattern of involvement that integrates formal education and daily coaching, teachers and caregivers at MA Darullughah Wal Karomah consistently become the main figures in instilling moral values. Internalization of these values occurs naturally, through observation, shared habits, and emotional relationships that are built in daily life at the Islamic boarding school. Students are not only

taught about the importance of morals, but also see and experience how these values are manifested in real terms by the figures they respect.

Discussion

Improving Discipline in Worship

Increasing discipline in carrying out worship in educational institutions, especially in Islamic boarding school-based educational units, represents an integral strategy in the systematic reconstruction of students' religious character. (Hakim et al., 2025; Ma'arif & Rofiq, 2019). The practice of cultivating values through internalizing the routine of congregational worship, especially in the implementation of the dhuha prayer, shows a positive correlation to the formation of a consistent habitus of spiritual discipline. In the framework of transcendental pedagogy, the dhuha prayer is not merely seen as a sunnah ritual practice, but is interpreted as an educational instrument that is full of symbolic and functional meaning, playing a role in building an ethos of temporal order, spiritual-reflective awareness, and ontological submission to Allah SWT. In line with Rizqiyah's (2025) holistic view of education, it cannot be separated from the dimension of spirituality that blends harmoniously with the cognitive and affective aspects of students. This integration is the basis for the development of a complete character, where spirituality is not only used as an educational ornament, but the main spirit in forming a personality that is obedient, disciplined, and morally responsible. Thus, the implementation of worship values in the daily structure of students in Islamic boarding schools is a concrete manifestation of value-based education that has a divine dimension and has a long-term impact on the formation of a complete human being.

School culture that consistently includes worship as a daily activity is the foundation for creating an internal value system for students. The internalization of these religious values occurs gradually and sustainably through a conducive environment, where teachers and caregivers not only act as supervisors, but also as role models in carrying out worship and behaving with noble character. This is in line with Bandura's (1986) social learning theory, which emphasizes that individuals learn through observation and imitation of the behavior of others who are considered significant (Hartati, 2022). Thus, the practice of worship that is carried out collectively and in a structured manner becomes a means of psychomotor and affective habituation that strengthens religious awareness.

More than just a formal routine, this daily worship culture functions as a hidden curriculum that forms internal motivation in students to practice religious teachings sincerely and responsibly. The implementation of worship integrated into the rhythm of school life encourages the internalization of noble values such as sincerity, perseverance, personal responsibility, and time discipline, essential

values in the formation of religious character. As explained by Lickona (1991), a strong character is not only formed by moral knowledge, but also by moral habits that are carried out consistently and repeatedly. The spiritual atmosphere created by this culture of congregational worship also has implications for interpersonal relationships between school residents. Interactions based on Islamic values such as mutual respect, honesty, patience, and empathy are the characteristics of an ideal Islamic boarding school educational environment. In the long term, this approach contributes to the formation of moral integrity and spiritual maturity of students, which are key elements in character education from an Islamic perspective (Syifa & Ridwan, 2024; Masrufa, 2024). Thus, Islamic boarding school-based education is able to produce a generation that is not only intellectually competent but also superior in spiritual and social dimensions.

Formation of Responsible and Independent Attitudes

The habit of collectively reading the Qur'an before the start of the learning process at Madrasah Aliyah Darullughah Wal Karomah is a form of pedagogical strategy that has proven effective in fostering a sense of responsibility and independence in students. This activity is not merely ritualistic in value, but has a transformative function in internalizing character values that are fundamental to students' psychosocial development. As expressed by Lickona (1991), successful character education does not only rely on verbal instructions, but requires repeated concrete habits in a supportive environment (Tabroni & Purnamasari, 2022). In practice, students are given the mandate to lead the reading in turns, which implicitly trains courage, initiative, self-confidence, and awareness of collective responsibility. Through this active involvement, students are formed to become subjects in the learning process, not just objects that receive knowledge. The process of internalizing responsibility in a religious context strengthens students' independence in decision-making, time management, and in dealing with social dynamics in the school environment. This is in line with the concept of self-regulated learning proposed by Fazli & Nirwana (2025), which emphasizes the importance of developing individual abilities in controlling cognitive, motivational, and behavioral aspects independently in the learning process. Thus, this spiritual habituation not only forms aspects of spirituality but also stimulates the development of personal integrity and self-efficacy in students from an early age.

The consistency of the implementation of daily reading of the Qur'an also creates a school atmosphere that is full of religious values and collective discipline. The learning environment formed from this positive practice becomes a social arena that fosters solidarity, a spirit of togetherness, and the mental and spiritual readiness of students in facing the academic process and life challenges. In this

context, spiritual habituation acts as a social script that strengthens religious identity and equips students with character resilience in various situations. Emphasizes that character education integrated with religious teachings is able to create individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also ethical and moral.

Therefore, the integration of religious values in educational practices should not be considered as a complementary element of the curriculum, but as the core of the process of forming a complete human being. Educational institutions, especially those based on religion, should design character development programs that are contextual, applicable, and responsive to the social and psychological conditions of students. This approach supports the vision of national education as stipulated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which emphasizes the importance of developing students' potential holistically, covering cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects in order to realize a generation that is competitive, resilient, and has noble character.

Strengthening Noble Morals in Daily Interactions

Strengthening noble morals in an Islamic boarding school-based educational environment, such as that implemented in Madrasah Aliyah Darullughah Wal Karomah, represents a harmonious integration between the values of classical Islamic tradition and a modern character education approach. In this context, the use of classical books such as Akhlāqul Banīn is not only interpreted as preserving the treasury of religious literature but also as an adaptive and relevant pedagogical instrument in conveying moral values contextually and applicably to students. This approach is in line with Vygotsky's (1978) idea of sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of the social and cultural environment in shaping the structure of individual thinking and behavior (Huda et al., 2025). Moral education in an Islamic boarding school environment is not only oriented towards normative delivery, but also emphasizes the process of internalizing values carried out through real practices in daily interactions. Interpersonal relationships between teachers, caregivers, and students are the main medium in the process of transferring values through role models, dialogue, and consistent habits. As explained by Thomas Lickona (1991), the formation of a strong character can only be achieved when moral values are instilled through an environment rich in role models, emotional experiences, and active involvement of students (Damariswara et al., 2021).

The success of this model is largely determined by the existence of systemic consistency in school culture, as well as the active participation of all elements of education, from the management of the institution to students. Schools as moral communities must be able to create a social ecosystem that supports the growth of noble values organically and sustainably. This is reflected not only in the existence

of formal learning about morals but also in the structure of school life that cultivates manners in every dimension, such as speaking politely, respecting differences, helping others, and maintaining cleanliness.

Furthermore, moral education in the Islamic boarding school environment is not reactive, namely responding to violations with punishment, but is proactive by creating a system that allows good values to grow from within students. Values such as ta'zim (respect for teachers), ukhuwah (brotherhood), and tawadhu' (humility) are not only taught but are experienced directly through daily habits and structures that form ethical awareness. Thus, strengthening religious character in the context of Islamic boarding schools can be understood as a cultural and continuous process that forms character as a whole, including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects.

From the perspective of Islamic education, morality is the main foundation in the formation of insan kamil, namely a complete human being who is balanced between spirituality and sociality. Therefore, a moral education strategy like this is of high urgency in the midst of the modern morality crisis, and it tends to prioritize cognitive aspects alone. Islamic boarding school-based character education is able to provide alternative practices that not only enlighten the mind but also nourish the soul and form social politeness.

Internalization of Moral Values through the Role Models of Teachers and Caregivers.

The process of internalizing moral values through the exemplary behavior of teachers and caregivers at Madrasah Aliyah Darullughah Wal Karomah reflects an integrative, holistic, and contextual educational approach. Exemplary behavior not only functions as a method of conveying values but also as a cultural bridge that connects normative Islamic teachings with real behavior that can be imitated by students. In the context of Islamic boarding school education, the figures of teachers and caregivers have a strategic position as murabbi, namely, educators who not only teach knowledge but also instill values and guide the heart (Widyatmoko, 2023). This internalization process takes place systematically through daily interactions, positive behavioral habits, and implicit instillation of values in various educational activities. The teacher's exemplary behavior in being polite, disciplined, patient, and consistent in worship provides a strong affective stimulus for students to adopt similar behavior. Bandura's social learning theory (1986) emphasizes that humans learn through observation of behavioral models that are considered credible and respected (Fazli & Nirwana, 2025). In this case, teachers and caregivers become ideal models whose behavior is not only observed but also interpreted and internalized by students gradually.

The success of internalizing moral values in the madrasah environment is marked by the formation of an educational atmosphere that is full of nuances of religiosity and collective ethics. This environment allows students to experience, not just understand, values such as honesty, responsibility, humility, and compassion. Structured religious practices and community activities such as halaqah, regular religious studies, and congregational prayers become an arena for character formation that fosters moral awareness naturally and sustainably. This is in accordance with Narvaez's (2006) idea of integrated ethical education, which emphasizes that moral values must be practiced in real contexts so that they can be truly embedded in students (Wilder et al., 2025).

The presence of supporting programs such as spiritual guidance, religious mentoring, and behavioral guidance also strengthens the function of role models within the framework of Islamic boarding school culture. Role models here are not verbalistic, but living values that are brought to life in daily life practices. Through this approach, Islamic values do not stop at the cognitive level, but are transformed into functional behavior that is relevant to the dynamics of adolescent psychosocial development in the madrasah environment. Thus, internalization of morals through exemplary figures is not just an educational method, but becomes a transformative cultural process. Exemplary behavior becomes a real form of integration between spirituality, sociality, and character education that forms a complete person (insan kamil). Within this framework, Islamic boarding school education is able to offer a character education model that not only forms the mind but also touches the heart and builds the soul. This is fully in line with the mission of national education to form a generation that is faithful, pious, and has noble character as mandated in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of a pesantren-based school culture can significantly contribute to improving students' religious character. Spiritual habituation activities such as reading the Qur'an before lessons, consistent teacher guidance, and role models in daily life are key in the process of internalizing religious values. An important lesson that can be learned is that character formation does not only depend on teaching materials, but is also greatly determined by the practice of a down-to-earth school culture that is carried out sustainably. With this holistic approach, the school environment becomes an effective place to instill deep spiritual values in students. This study contributes to science by enriching the understanding of the role of school culture in character education, especially in the context of pesantren-based institutions. Theoretically, this study strengthens the relevance of Lickona's character education theory and

Bandura's social learning in the context of Islamic education, showing that the formation of religious character can be strongly influenced by the environment and role models. In addition, the qualitative approach in this study broadens the methodological horizon by drawing data from real practices in the field, which are rarely explored in similar studies. This study also presents an integrative model between the pesantren tradition and the modern approach in shaping students' character as a whole.

However, this study has several limitations. The case study only focuses on one institution, namely, MA Darullughah Wal Karomah, so the findings of other Islamic boarding schools must be generalized carefully. In addition, focusing on one level of education and a certain age range (adolescents) also limits the scope of understanding of the dynamics of religious character at other levels and ages. Therefore, it is recommended that further research cover various levels of education and geographic locations, as well as use a quantitative or mixed approach in order to obtain more comprehensive and widely comparable results.

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