

The Tradition of Sunnah Fasting in Forming Self-Discipline for Students at the Darussalam Simpang Mesir Islamic Boarding School

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Abstract

The tradition of sunnah fasting is one of the religious practices that has developed in the pesantren environment and is believed to play a role in shaping students' character. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the sunnah fasting tradition and its role in forming the self-discipline of students at Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Simpang Mesir. This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving students, ustaz/ustazah, and pesantren caregivers. The results show that the practice of sunnah fasting, such as Laduni fasting, 41-day fasting, Nyatus fasting, Naun fasting, and Dawud fasting, contributes to developing self-control, time management, patience, and students' obedience to pesantren rules. Sunnah fasting also encourages students to be more disciplined in performing religious worship, studying, and carrying out daily activities. Thus, sunnah fasting functions not only as a ritual act of worship but also as an effective medium of character education in shaping students' self-discipline in the pesantren environment. The contribution of this study is the development of a more nuanced understanding of sunnah fasting as a religiously embedded mechanism of self-regulation and character formation.

Keywords: Sunnah Fasting, Self-Discipline, Religious Practices

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are Islamic educational institutions that play a role not only in teaching religious knowledge but also in shaping the attitudes and personalities of their students. The educational process at Islamic boarding schools is carried out comprehensively through the study of Islamic texts, regular worship, and spiritual practice, which are part of the students' daily lives (Silfiyasari, 2020). According to Haidar, as quoted in Rodliyah (2014: 301), Islamic boarding schools are traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia that focus on the learning process and the application of Islamic teachings in daily life (Sari, 2025). One of the main values instilled in Islamic boarding school education is self-discipline, both in carrying out worship, participating in learning activities, and in behaving in social environments (Romdoni & Malihah, 2020).

A well-organized Islamic boarding school life system fosters positive habits that gradually shape the students' self-discipline (Mustofa & Arini, 2025).

In Islamic education, self-discipline is not only understood as compliance with rules, but also as a person's ability to control themselves, maintain consistency in worship,

and adhere to the values of piety (Harmathilda et al., 2024). Education has a very important and strategic role in providing a comprehensive understanding and knowledge of religion, both from the religious aspect, thinking ability, skills, and emotional development. According to Hasibuan (2002), discipline is an attitude of obedience reflected in respect and appreciation for regulations, both written and unwritten, accompanied by a willingness to accept the consequences or sanctions if there is a violation of the obligations and authorities that have been established (Asmawati et al., 2024).

Education plays a crucial and strategic role in providing comprehensive religious understanding and knowledge, encompassing aspects such as religious understanding, thinking skills, skills, and emotional development (Mahmudah et al., 2020). In any educational system, knowledge is inseparable from the surrounding social and cultural context (Zainal Arifin et al., 2024). Therefore, the Islamic education system, including Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), is required to continually evolve and develop to shape students with character and adaptability to the challenges of the times. Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) have a system that supports the formation of these attitudes through a regular schedule of activities and the continuous practice of worship. Various religious activities, such as congregational prayer, religious study, *dhikr* (remembrance of God), and voluntary fasting, are important tools for instilling character values in students (Temboro, 2020).

One form of habituation of worship that has high educational value in Islamic boarding schools is voluntary fasting. Voluntary fasting is a form of worship that not only has spiritual value but also has an educational function. According to Qardhawi (1998: 340), voluntary fasting is a form of worship that has high virtue because it is carried out based on a servant's awareness and personal commitment to obeying Allah's commands, even though the worship is not obligatory (Hadad et al., 2025). Through voluntary fasting, students are trained to control their desires, be patient, and develop sincerity in worship (Hasanah & Marianti, 2023). In Islamic boarding schools, voluntary fasting is not only carried out out of personal awareness but also becomes a tradition inherited and guided by caregivers and *ustaz* and *ustazah*. This practice of voluntary fasting trains students to manage their time well and comply with the rules that apply in the Islamic boarding school (Agnesti, 2022).

Darussalam Simpang Mesir Islamic Boarding School is one of the Islamic boarding schools that maintains the tradition of voluntary fasting as part of its student development. The types of voluntary fasting practiced include *Laduni* fasting, 41-day fasting, *Nyatus* fasting, *Naun* fasting, and *David* fasting. Located in Sumber Jaya Village, Gedung Aji Baru District, Tulang Bawang Regency, this Islamic boarding school houses approximately 1,000 male and female students. The implementation of voluntary fasting has been a tradition since the boarding school's inception and is implemented in stages according to the students' abilities. This tradition is not only carried out as additional worship, but is also seen as a form of asceticism and self-training so that students become disciplined, patient, and responsible individuals. The caretakers and *ustadz/ustadz* play an active role in providing guidance so that the values of discipline contained in voluntary fasting can be understood and practiced properly by the students. The Islamic boarding school does not require all students to participate. *Sunnah* fasting, but gives freedom to those who wish to do it according to their respective abilities.

Several previous studies have examined the role of voluntary fasting in character building and student discipline in Islamic boarding schools. Abdullah (2023) in his study found that the implementation of voluntary fasting on Mondays and Thursdays has a positive effect on improving student discipline, particularly in time management, adherence to Islamic boarding school regulations, and consistency in carrying out worship (Abdullah, 2023). Furthermore, Aulawi (2022) explained that the *Naun* fasting tradition

plays a role in shaping religious character while fostering students' social attitudes, such as patience, caring, and responsibility, although his study emphasized the spiritual and social aspects (Aulawi, 2022). Meanwhile, Rasya and Sa'dullah (2024) revealed that the implementation of the voluntary fasting program on Mondays and Thursdays in modern Islamic boarding schools can strengthen students' religious commitment and discipline (Fahreza & Sa'dullah, 2024). In general, these studies indicate that voluntary fasting has a positive contribution to the formation of students' character and discipline.. However, most studies focus on only one type of fast, such as the Monday-Thursday fast or the Naun fast. Few studies have examined the various types of voluntary fasting and how these traditions influence the development of self-discipline in Islamic boarding school students. Therefore, this study is novel because it examines the various voluntary fasting practices carried out collectively within the Islamic boarding school tradition and comprehensively examines their role in developing self-discipline in Islamic boarding school students. This study views voluntary fasting not only as a ritual act of worship but also as a means of character education integrated into the Islamic boarding school education system.

This study aims to describe the implementation of the sunnah fasting tradition at the Darussalam Simpang Mesir Islamic Boarding School and examine its role in shaping students' self-discipline. This research is expected to add to the body of research on Islamic boarding school education, particularly regarding the use of worship practices as a means of building character and discipline in students, and can serve as a reference for other Islamic boarding schools in developing character development based on religious traditions. Through this study, it is hoped that an understanding of the educational values of the sunnah fasting tradition can be clearer, and can be used as a consideration in developing character development methods in Islamic boarding schools.

METHODS

This type of research is a qualitative field study using descriptive methods, aimed at understanding in depth how the tradition of voluntary fasting is implemented and how it affects the discipline of students. Danin (2002) explains that qualitative research views truth as something that is not fixed, but rather constantly evolving and can only be understood through a process of in-depth study and understanding (Mappasere & Suyuti, 2019). A qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on the meanings, experiences, and social situations within the Islamic boarding school environment. This research was conducted at the Darussalam Simpang Mesir Islamic Boarding School, located in Sumber Jaya Village, Gedung Aji Baru District, Tulang Bawang Regency. The location was chosen based on the strong tradition of voluntary fasting practiced by the students, such as the Laduni fast, the 41-day fast, the Nyatus fast, the Naun fast, and the Daud fast.

The research informants consisted of students who regularly observe sunnah fasting, Islamic boarding school administrators, and religious teachers (ustaz/ustazah) who understand the practice. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, selecting individuals considered to be most knowledgeable and directly involved in the implementation of sunnah fasting (M. Husnullail Risnita M. Syahran Jailani, 2024). In this study, the researchers applied several data collection methods, including interviews, observation, and documentation (Romdona et al., 2025).

Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024). In the reduction stage, irrelevant data is filtered out so that only essential information is used. In the presentation stage, the research data are arranged in an easily understood form, making it easier for researchers to see emerging patterns. Next, conclusions are drawn based on the data analysis results. The validity of the data is strengthened by

triangulation of sources, namely comparing information from students, caregivers, and ustaz/ustazah to ensure the consistency and truth of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Sunnah Fasting and Islamic Boarding School Culture

Based on the research results obtained through interviews with female teachers and caretakers of the Darussalam Islamic Boarding School, the implementation of sunnah fasting has become an important part of the daily lives of students.. Based on the results of an interview with Luluk Handani, the female Islamic teacher who supervises the students, it was found that the implementation of sunnah fasting at the Darussalam Simpang Mesir Islamic Boarding School was running well and smoothly. Many students performed various types of sunnah fasting, such as Laduni fasting, 41-day fasting, nyatu fasting, and other sunnah fasting. According to her, students who regularly perform sunnah fasting, especially Laduni fasting, tend to have a better level of discipline. This is evident in their discipline in performing tahajud prayers, congregational prayers, and maintaining obligatory prayers on time. During the guidance process, the Islamic boarding school provides guidance to students who find it difficult or want to stop fasting through continuous advice, supervision, and direction so that the students remain steadfast. Challenges often faced in guidance are the students' physical condition, such as feeling weak, dizzy, or tired due to being unaccustomed to eating sahur and waking up late. Therefore, guidance is provided so that the implementation of sunnah fasting continues smoothly without harming the students' health. The Islamic boarding school ensures the impact of sunnah fasting on the discipline and behavior of students through monitoring daily activities, so that changes in the attitudes and behavior of students can be seen gradually.

Figure 1. Interview with Ustadzah



The research also revealed that the habit of observing voluntary fasting aligns with the Islamic boarding school education system, which emphasizes discipline and self-control. These findings suggest that voluntary fasting serves as an effective habit-forming tool in training students to comply with Islamic boarding school regulations and helping them manage their time better. Through the experience of fasting, students also learn to build physical and mental resilience, enabling them to optimally participate in the busy Islamic boarding school activities.

This discussion is reinforced by the perspective of a pesantren supervisor who emphasized that voluntary fasting plays a crucial role in the learning process at the pesantren. According to him, the practice of voluntary fasting is a form of direct application of the religious knowledge learned in Islamic jurisprudence books.. "Students who practice voluntary fasting are usually better at self-control and

more receptive to advice. The effects aren't always immediately visible, but they are quite noticeable to the students who practice them.” By regularly practicing voluntary fasting, students not only gain a theoretical understanding of religious teachings but also experience tangible spiritual benefits. Voluntary fasting fosters inner peace, increases commitment to learning, and strengthens students' spirituality. Therefore, voluntary fasting is viewed not only as a personal act of worship but also as part of the Islamic boarding school culture, contributing to the overall character development of students (Khaerunisa & Arifin, 2024)

In Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), the practice of voluntary fasting is inseparable from the value system and traditions deeply ingrained in the lives of students. Voluntary fasting is understood as a form of asceticism and spiritual practice that plays a role in fostering religious awareness while fostering disciplined behavior (Hanna, 2025). This tradition is continuously passed down and implemented through direct guidance from the guardians and the ustaz and ustazah (teacher). Therefore, students interpret voluntary fasting not only as a personal form of worship but also as part of the collective identity of the pesantren. Thus, the practice of voluntary fasting becomes an important element of Islamic boarding school culture, serving as a medium for internalizing the values of discipline, patience, and adherence to rules (Ahmad, 2025).

The Influence of Sunnah Fasting on the Discipline of Islamic Students

Interviews with students indicate that voluntary fasting significantly impacts their discipline in carrying out daily activities at the Islamic boarding school. Students feel that when they fast, they become more organized in their religious practices, more diligent in attending congregational prayers, and more punctual in their Islamic boarding school activities. Furthermore, fasting helps them better manage their time between studying, resting, and praying, allowing for a more orderly flow. Fasting also improves their emotional control, calmer demeanor, and more focused learning and memorization.

Figure 2. Interview with students



The experiences of several students reinforce these findings. One student, Diana Putri, revealed that sunnah fasting helped her become more disciplined and enthusiastic in worship. She stated: "Alhamdulillah, it really helps, miss. It really helps with discipline because when I fast, all activities feel lighter, maybe from religious attitudes, reciting the Koran, things like that feel lighter when I fast, it is very influential, for example, congregational prayer, congregational prayer becomes more disciplined because the effect of fasting is that the body feels lighter, lighter, and more enthusiastic." Another student, Adelia Zahrotul Ilmi, also said that sunnah fasting trains her to be more disciplined in managing her time. She said that: "Sunnah fasting helps me become more disciplined in managing my daily activities, especially in managing my time and following the Islamic boarding school activity schedule. I am more punctual in attending congregational prayers and other learning activities." Fitria Zati Al-Khusna had a similar experience, stating that

voluntary fasting fosters discipline and self-soothingness. She said: "It's very influential. Sunnah fasting has made me more disciplined in my daily activities and more disciplined in following the Islamic boarding school's rules. I've become more punctual in congregational prayers and more organized in managing my study and rest time."

These findings indicate that voluntary fasting serves as an effective self-discipline practice in developing orderly and organized living habits. Discipline is a crucial aspect in education because it plays a role in creating an orderly and conducive learning environment (Jubair et al., 2026). Susilo (1993) stated that discipline is a crucial aspect of education that needs to be instilled from an early age to shape the overall personality of a person. Education serves not only as a means of imparting knowledge but also as a process of fostering attitudes and behavior (Sembiring et al., 2025). Voluntary fasting serves as a structured means of self-control training, as its implementation requires commitment, consistency, and individual awareness (Nasif, 2025). Through this process, habits of adhering to time regulations, the ability to restrain desires, and steadfastness in maintaining positive behavior are formed. Thus, voluntary fasting can be positioned as a form of non-formal education that is effective in instilling the value of discipline sustainably in daily life (Aulawi, 2022).

The results of this study confirm the findings of previous studies which stated that the implementation of sunnah fasting has an influence on the development of discipline and self-control in students. Abdullah (2023) and Fahreza and Sa'dullah (2024) showed that Monday-Thursday sunnah fasting contributes to increasing students' compliance with Islamic boarding school regulations. However, this study shows a broader scope because it does not only focus on one type of sunnah fasting, but also examines various forms of sunnah fasting that are carried out simultaneously within the Islamic boarding school tradition. The diversity of sunnah fasting practices strengthens the habituation process and deepens its influence on the development of self-discipline in students (Rad, 2023). Furthermore, the success of the habituation of sunnah fasting is also influenced by the active role of the Islamic boarding school through mentoring, supervision, and role models provided by the ustaz and ustazah. The Islamic boarding school environment, which has a clear activity structure and a conducive religious atmosphere, supports the process of internalizing disciplinary values in students (Putra et al., 2025). This finding is in line with the opinion of Febrian and Harmanto (2022) who emphasized that character building will be more effective if supported by a consistent and supportive educational environment.ung (Febrian & Harmanto, 2022).

Overall, these findings indicate that sunnah fasting plays an important role in developing self-discipline (*self-discipline*) students. Practicing self-restraint from eating, drinking, and other things that break the fast helps students learn to control their desires and emotions. This habit ultimately develops self-regulation skills that are evident in their daily behavior. Thus, voluntary fasting not only provides spiritual value but also serves as an effective medium for forming positive habits, cultivating patience, increasing focus on learning, and strengthening students' self-awareness in living a responsible Islamic boarding school life (Agustianty & Komariah, 2025).

Thus, the practice of voluntary fasting in the context of Islamic boarding schools not only improves the spirituality of students but also serves as an effective non-formal educational tool for fostering sustainable self-discipline. Through this habituation process, students become better able to control their behavior, value time, and carry out their responsibilities in daily Islamic boarding school life.

Challenges in Carrying Out Sunnah Fasting

Although voluntary fasting offers many benefits, students still face several challenges when practicing it. The religious teacher explained that the most common challenges are physical, such as feeling weak, dizzy, or easily tired. Based on interviews with students, Fitria stated: "The challenge is feeling tired and sleepy, especially when I

have to wake up at night for Tahajud and Suhoor. But I use it as a way to practice patience.". This is a common experience for most Islamic boarding school students (santri) who fast voluntarily. This is considered normal, as the body needs time to adjust. Furthermore, the busy schedule of Islamic boarding school activities also requires extra stamina to keep up with all the activities. Adelia stated, "The biggest challenge is that I often feel tired because the activities at this Islamic boarding school are quite busy."

In addition to physical challenges, students also face psychological ones. One student expressed fear and anxiety when performing certain practices during the Laduni fast, which requires independent nighttime worship. Diana Putri explained: "When performing the Laduni fast, I have to perform the practices alone at night. Sometimes I feel afraid and anxious, especially in the quiet and dark environment." The quiet and dark environment is a factor that influences the students' mental readiness. This challenge demonstrates that performing the sunnah fast requires not only physical readiness, but also courage and mental fortitude.

However, these challenges do not deter students from fasting. Instead, they become part of the character-building process at Islamic boarding schools. Through these difficulties, students learn patience, determination, and consistency in worship. The role of the ustaz and ustazah is crucial in providing guidance, motivation, and supervision to ensure students remain enthusiastic and persistent. The supportive environment of Islamic boarding schools also strengthens students in facing challenges, enabling them to observe the voluntary fast with greater consistency and direction (Najib, 2020).

The Role of Islamic Boarding Schools in Habituation and Character Building

Islamic boarding schools play a significant role in ensuring that students regularly observe voluntary fasting and positively impact their character development. This habituation process does not occur suddenly, but rather through various planned and continuous steps (Siregar, 2023). According to Abdullah Nasih Ulwan, educating through consistent habits is a highly effective way to foster faith, develop good morals, and develop a person's personality. Essentially, the habituation process occurs through the continuous repetition of behavior (Melianti, 2023). Ustaz and ustazah (Islamic teachers) provide regular motivation, whether through advice, direct guidance, or concrete examples in their daily lives. This motivation encourages students to observe voluntary fasting voluntarily, not under pressure or coercion.

The planned habituation process can be seen from the existence of a definite schedule, the implementation of worship that is carried out routinely, and supervision of the students' activities in carrying out sunnah fasting.. Apart from going through a structured habituation process, Islamic boarding schools also strengthen the spirituality of their students through activities such as religious study, istighotsah (religious reflection), congregational prayer, and various other forms of worship. These activities help students understand the benefits of voluntary fasting and foster a desire to practice it. Supervision of students' routines is also an important part of this development. With this supervision, students are trained to be disciplined, adhere to the Islamic boarding school's schedule, and consistently practice voluntary practices (Basyaruddin & Khoiruddin, 2020).

Congregational worship activities are also an effective means of developing character and discipline in students. Through shared activities such as congregational prayer, Tahajud, and Dhuha prayers, students learn to value time, cooperate, and follow the rules of the Islamic boarding school (Damayanti et al., 2025). The Islamic boarding school supervisor explained that the habit of sunnah fasting is not intended to burden students, but rather to develop religious and disciplined individuals. "Although its implementation is sunnah and not obligatory for all students, sunnah fasting is highly recommended because it has a positive impact on developing students' discipline and behavior." As students become accustomed to fasting, traits such as patience, perseverance, self-control, and respect for time will naturally develop. These values then

become part of the students' character as they navigate Islamic boarding school life. Therefore, Islamic boarding schools play a crucial role in creating an environment that supports character development through the practice of voluntary fasting (Angel et al., 2024).

The exemplary behavior demonstrated by religious teachers (ustaz and ustazah) is a crucial factor in the successful practice of voluntary fasting in Islamic boarding schools. When educators participate in voluntary fasting and apply discipline in their daily activities, students are more likely to imitate and internalize these behaviors. This demonstrates that the character-building process is not solely determined by the existence of written rules, but is strongly influenced by the concrete examples set by educators as role models in Islamic boarding school life (Wahyudi & Khoir, 2025).

In character education, habituation is seen as an effective way to instill positive values through the continuous repetition of good behavior until it becomes part of the student's personality (Febrian & Harmanto, 2022). In Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), character development is carried out comprehensively by combining knowledge learning, attitude formation, and behavioral practice through the example of educators, regular supervision, and a supportive religious atmosphere. Islamic boarding schools serve as places of social and spiritual development that help shape the personalities of students through the implementation of worship, the application of discipline, and the instilling of moral values (Yusuf & Al Rosid, 2025). Therefore, worship such as voluntary fasting is not only understood as a religious activity, but also as a means to continuously cultivate discipline, a sense of responsibility, and self-control (Sabir & Srikandi, 2025).

Based on the results of research conducted at the Darussalam Simpang Mesir Islamic Boarding School, the practice of voluntary fasting carried out by students has been proven to make a significant contribution to the formation of self-discipline. Various forms of voluntary fasting, such as the Laduni fast, the 41-day fast, the Nyatus fast, the Naun fast, and the Daud fast, are not only understood as voluntary worship practices, but also function as an integral part of the process of character development of students in the Islamic boarding school environment. The results show that students who consistently carry out voluntary fasting tend to have a better level of discipline, especially in the implementation of worship such as congregational prayers and night prayers, as well as in punctuality in participating in various Islamic boarding school activities. In addition, the practice of voluntary fasting trains students to manage their time in a balanced manner between study, worship, and rest, so that daily routines can be carried out more regularly and systematically. In addition to the discipline aspect, sunnah fasting also plays a role in developing self-control and emotional stability in students, which is reflected in a more patient, calm attitude, and the ability to control impulses and desires both physically and psychologically, thus having an impact on increasing compliance with Islamic boarding school regulations and awareness in carrying out daily responsibilities. Other findings show that the success of habituating sunnah fasting is inseparable from the active role of Islamic boarding schools through mentoring, supervision, and role models shown by caregivers and ustaz/ustazah, where the religious Islamic boarding school environment and structured activity system also support the process of internalizing disciplinary values gradually and continuously.

Studies on voluntary fasting and the character development of Islamic boarding school students have been conducted by a number of previous researchers with diverse focuses and approaches. Abdullah (2023) in his study revealed that the implementation of voluntary fasting on Mondays and Thursdays has a positive impact on improving the discipline of Islamic boarding school students, especially in time management and compliance with Islamic boarding school regulations. That study focused on one type of voluntary fasting, while this study examines various types of voluntary fasting practiced

simultaneously in Islamic boarding school traditions, thus producing a more comprehensive understanding of the habit of voluntary fasting. Aulawi (2022) examined the practice of Naun fasting and found that this tradition plays a role in the formation of religious character and social awareness in Islamic boarding school students. The difference with this study lies in the focus of the study, where Aulawi's study focused more on the spiritual and social dimensions, while this study specifically examines the role of voluntary fasting in shaping the self-discipline of Islamic boarding school students as part of character education.

Fahreza and Sa'dullah's (2024) study examined the implementation of Monday-Thursday sunnah fasting in modern Islamic boarding schools and concluded that the program was able to strengthen the religious commitment and discipline of students. Despite similarities in disciplinary aspects, this study expands the study by examining the context of Salaf Islamic boarding schools that maintain various sunnah fasting traditions and view the habit of sunnah fasting as part of the *pesantren* culture, not simply a formal activity program. Furthermore, Rosidi and Salim (2025) explained that the habit of voluntarily fasting on Mondays and Thursdays can improve students' spiritual intelligence. This indicates that voluntary fasting plays a crucial role in fostering students' spiritual values. This study reinforces these findings by demonstrating that voluntary fasting not only impacts spiritual aspects but also contributes to the development of self-discipline and regular behavior in students' daily lives within the Islamic boarding school environment (Faruq et al., 2025). Hasanah and Marianti (2023) examined the relationship between the implementation of sunnah fasting and *self-control* on college students and found a positive relationship between the two (Hasanah et al., 2023). Unlike that study, this study was conducted in the context of Islamic boarding schools with students as subjects and emphasized the process of habituating worship within a structured educational environment. Thus, this study expands the study of voluntary fasting from the context of higher education to the traditional Islamic boarding school environment. Based on this comparison, it can be concluded that this study not only differs from previous research but also complements and expands the study of voluntary fasting. Its novelty lies in its examination of various types of voluntary fasting within a single Islamic boarding school environment and its comprehensive analysis of their role in fostering self-discipline in students through a planned and ongoing habituation process.

DISCUSSION

The novelty of this study lies in its examination of sunnah fasting as a multidimensional and culturally embedded practice of self-discipline within the institutional ecology of an Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*). Unlike previous studies that predominantly examine a single form of sunnah fasting, such as Monday–Thursday fasting or Naun fasting, this study investigates several fasting traditions practiced within the same *pesantren* environment, namely Laduni fasting, 41-day fasting, Nyatus fasting, Naun fasting, and Dawud fasting. The study therefore moves beyond understanding fasting merely as an individual religious ritual and conceptualizes it as a repeated educational practice embedded in the daily routines, supervision, religious norms, and social relationships of *pesantren* life. This is particularly important because the findings indicate that the disciplinary value of fasting does not operate in isolation; rather, it is reinforced by structured schedules, guidance from *ustaz* and *ustazah*, role modeling, peer environments, and continuous habituation. The study consequently offers a more contextualized understanding of how religious practices may become mechanisms for cultivating self-regulation and disciplined behavior among students. This perspective extends the existing literature by shifting attention from the question of whether fasting is beneficial to the more analytically important question of how repeated religious practices become internalized as everyday self-discipline within a structured educational

environment. The findings are consistent with the broader qualitative literature showing that fasting experiences involve interactions between personal, behavioral, and environmental processes rather than being exclusively individual experience.

The findings demonstrate that sunnah fasting is perceived by participating students, ustaz/ustazah, and pesantren caregivers as contributing to several dimensions of self-discipline, particularly self-control, time management, patience, consistency in worship, punctuality, and adherence to pesantren regulations. Students reported becoming more organized in balancing worship, learning, rest, and other daily activities, while teachers and caregivers observed greater consistency among students who regularly practiced sunnah fasting. The findings also show that fasting functions through a process of repeated habituation: students must regulate eating and drinking, wake for sahur, maintain religious practices, participate in congregational prayer, and continue their academic and pesantren activities despite physical or psychological discomfort. At the same time, the study identifies important challenges, including fatigue, sleepiness, physical weakness, and anxiety during some forms of Laduni practice. Rather than undermining the significance of the findings, these challenges reveal that self-discipline is developed through the process of negotiating constraints and maintaining commitment despite discomfort. Importantly, the study also finds that the role of the pesantren is central because teachers provide encouragement, supervision, guidance, and examples that support students' persistence. These findings are therefore significant because they suggest that the disciplinary function of fasting is best understood not simply as an outcome of abstinence, but as a process of repeated self-regulation supported by a structured religious-educational environment. The manuscript's empirical evidence particularly highlights the relationship between fasting, punctuality in worship, time management, emotional control, and adherence to daily pesantren routines.

The present findings generally align with, but also extend, five previous studies addressing fasting, self-control, spirituality, and student discipline. First, Abdullah (2023) found that Monday–Thursday fasting was associated with improved discipline among pesantren students, particularly in time management, compliance with pesantren regulations, and consistency in worship. This is consistent with the present findings, especially regarding punctuality and adherence to religious routines. However, the present study expands Abdullah's work by examining multiple forms of sunnah fasting rather than focusing exclusively on Monday–Thursday fasting. Second, Aulawi (2022) reported that the Naun fasting tradition contributed to religious character as well as social qualities such as patience, concern for others, and responsibility. The present findings similarly identify patience, self-control, and responsibility, but place greater emphasis on self-discipline as a behavioral process involving time regulation and routine consistency. Third, Fahreza and Sa'dullah (2024) found that Monday–Thursday fasting strengthened religious commitment and discipline among students in a modern pesantren. The present study supports this finding but differs in its focus on a pesantren that preserves several forms of fasting as part of its religious-cultural tradition rather than treating fasting primarily as a formal program. Fourth, Hasanah et al. (2023) identified a positive relationship between sunnah fasting and self-control among university students. This is compatible with the present finding that fasting requires students to regulate impulses, emotions, and daily behavior. However, the present study demonstrates how self-control is experienced within the distinctive institutional structure of pesantren rather than among university students. Fifth, Agustianty and Komariah (2025) reported that Monday–Thursday fasting was associated with emotional and spiritual development among Muslim university students. The present study similarly identifies emotional calmness, patience, and spiritual commitment, but extends these findings by showing how these qualities are translated into observable everyday disciplinary practices such as punctuality, participation in congregational prayer, study routines, and compliance with pesantren

schedules. These findings also resonate with qualitative research on Ramadan fasting by Roy, Hamidan, and Singh (2011), which demonstrated that fasting experiences encompass physical, mental, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual dimensions that change across the fasting period. Thus, the present study is broadly consistent with existing evidence while contributing a more institutionally situated interpretation of fasting and self-discipline. The manuscript itself already establishes these five comparison points and identifies the movement from single fasting practices toward a broader examination of multiple practices.

The similarities between the present study and previous research may be explained by several common mechanisms. First, fasting inherently requires behavioral restraint, which creates repeated opportunities for individuals to regulate impulses and desires. Second, repeated fasting practices can establish routines that encourage temporal organization and consistency. Third, the religious meaning attached to fasting provides an intrinsic motivational basis that may strengthen commitment beyond externally imposed rules. Fourth, the collective environment of the pesantren provides social reinforcement through teachers, peers, and shared religious routines. Fifth, repeated practice may facilitate habituation, allowing initially effortful behaviors to become increasingly familiar and integrated into daily life. Nevertheless, the present findings differ from previous studies in at least five important respects. First, the type of fasting differs: previous studies have frequently focused on Monday–Thursday or Naun fasting, whereas this study examines multiple fasting traditions simultaneously. Second, the research context differs: studies involving university students or modern pesantren cannot fully capture the distinctive cultural and institutional dynamics of a pesantren that preserves locally embedded fasting traditions. Third, the population differs: the present participants are santri whose daily lives are highly regulated by religious and educational routines, meaning that fasting interacts with an already structured disciplinary environment. Fourth, the methodological focus differs: the present study uses qualitative interviews, observation, and documentation to explore participants' experiences and institutional practices, whereas some previous studies use quantitative measures or focus on specific outcomes such as self-control, religiosity, or spiritual intelligence. Fifth, the present study identifies the importance of institutional mediation, particularly the roles of supervision, encouragement, and teacher modeling. This suggests that discipline may not be attributable to fasting alone but emerges from the interaction between individual religious practice and the broader pesantren environment. This interpretation is important because contemporary research also cautions against assuming that fasting automatically produces improved self-regulation. For example, experimental research on Ramadan fasting has found that temporary self-deprivation can impair certain forms of cognitive control under conditions in which food is salient, demonstrating that fasting experiences can have complex and context-dependent effects. Conversely, more recent research has reported improvements in emotional clarity, self-control, emotional acceptance, and distress management following Ramadan, while also identifying increased sleep difficulties. These apparently divergent findings reinforce the argument that the consequences of fasting should be understood through the interaction of religious meaning, behavioral practice, environmental structure, individual differences, and the duration and form of fasting, rather than through a simple assumption of universally positive effects.

The principal contribution of this study is the development of a more nuanced understanding of sunnah fasting as a religiously embedded mechanism of self-regulation and character formation. The study advances existing research in three ways. First, at the empirical level, it documents several forms of sunnah fasting that are practiced together within a single pesantren, thereby providing evidence from a context that has received relatively limited attention in the existing literature. Second, at the conceptual level, the

findings suggest that the relationship between fasting and discipline should not be conceptualized as a simple direct relationship. Instead, sunnah fasting appears to operate through a process involving repeated restraint, temporal regulation, emotional management, persistence, and habituation, while the pesantren environment provides institutional reinforcement through supervision, role modeling, structured schedules, and collective religious norms. Third, at the educational level, the study demonstrates how a religious practice can function simultaneously as worship and as an experiential form of character education. This interpretation extends previous studies that primarily associate fasting with spirituality, religiosity, or self-control by demonstrating how these internal processes may become visible through everyday disciplinary behaviors. Recent research on Islamic boarding schools similarly emphasizes that discipline develops through interconnected mechanisms such as role modeling, habituation, organized activities, caregiver involvement, supervision, and evaluation. The distinctive contribution of the present study, therefore, is not simply the finding that fasting is associated with discipline, but the proposition that the disciplinary potential of fasting is strengthened when religious self-restraint is repeatedly practiced within a supportive institutional ecology. In this sense, the study fills an important contextual gap by connecting religious ritual, self-regulation, habituation, and pesantren-based character education within a single analytical framework.

The findings have several practical, academic, and policy implications. Practically, pesantren administrators and Islamic educators can consider sunnah fasting as one component of character education, particularly when it is implemented voluntarily, developmentally, and with appropriate mentoring rather than through coercion. The findings indicate that the effectiveness of such practices depends substantially on supportive supervision, teacher role modeling, clear schedules, encouragement, and sensitivity to students' physical and psychological conditions. This is consistent with broader evidence that discipline in pesantren is strengthened through habituation, supervision, role modeling, and consistent institutional practices. Academically, the study provides a basis for integrating Islamic educational scholarship with broader theoretical discussions of self-regulation, habit formation, religious socialization, and character education. Future research should therefore investigate the mechanisms through which repeated religious practices become internalized as self-regulatory behavior rather than treating discipline simply as an outcome. At the policy level, Islamic educational institutions could develop character-development frameworks that recognize religious practices as experiential learning activities while ensuring that participation remains ethically appropriate, voluntary where religiously appropriate, and responsive to students' physical and psychological needs. This is particularly important because the present study documents fatigue, sleepiness, physical weakness, and anxiety among some participants. Future studies should employ longitudinal, comparative, or mixed-method designs involving several pesantren and should include both students who regularly practice sunnah fasting and those who do not. Quantitative measures of self-control and discipline could complement qualitative accounts, while longitudinal research could determine whether behavioral changes associated with fasting persist beyond the pesantren environment. The manuscript itself appropriately recognizes the limitations of its single-site qualitative design and recommends multi-site, mixed-method, and longitudinal research.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the tradition of voluntary fasting plays a significant role in fostering discipline among students at the Darussalam Simpang Mesir Islamic Boarding School. The various forms of voluntary fasting practiced by students are not only acts of worship but also a means of cultivating habits that foster self-control, time management,

patience, and commitment. Students who observe voluntary fasting tend to be more organized in participating in Islamic boarding school activities, more focused in their studies, and better able to maintain their daily behavior. The supportive Islamic boarding school environment and the example set by the teachers contribute to strengthening this discipline-building process. Therefore, voluntary fasting can be an effective strategy for developing the character and discipline of students in their daily lives and throughout their educational process at the Islamic boarding school.

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