

Management of the Development Character Program for Students in Supporting the Independence of Islamic Boarding Schools

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Abstract

The development of students' character is an important aspect in Islamic boarding school education which aims to form independent, disciplined, and noble individuals. Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School applies various strategies in building students' character through habituation programs, role models, and extracurricular activities. This study aims to analyze the management of the student character development program at Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School, including strategies, challenges, and their impact on students' independence. This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with the boarding school caretaker, ustadz, and students, direct observation, and documentation. Data analysis was carried out using data reduction techniques, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study indicate that the management of the character development program at Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School is carried out systematically through careful planning. The role model method and mentoring system are the main strategies in forming students' character. However, there are obstacles such as limited resources, differences in students' backgrounds, and a less than optimal evaluation system. The implications of this study indicate that the success of the character development program for students depends on the synergy between Islamic boarding school managers, educators, and the social environment of this Islamic boarding school. The contribution of this research is to provide an empirical description and theoretical basis for designing an integrative and adaptive Islamic boarding school character development program to the challenges of the times.

Keywords: Development Character, Islamic Boarding School, Role Model, Student Independence

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INTRODUCTION

Character education is an important aspect in the education system in Indonesia, especially in the pesantren environment that instills moral values and independence in students. Pesantren have a strategic role in shaping the

personality of students so that they have strong, disciplined, and responsible characters (Mujahid, 2021). The management of character development programs in pesantren is crucial to ensure that the values taught can be applied in everyday life (Firmansyah & Abidin, 2024). This program is designed to shape the mentality of students to be ready to face future challenges with independent skills and attitudes. Therefore, the effectiveness of the management of character development programs needs to be studied in order to support the independence of pesantren in a sustainable manner.

The independence of Islamic boarding schools does not only depend on the economic aspects and institutional management, but also on the quality of human resources within them (Widiastuti et al., 2024). Students who have strong characters will be better able to contribute to building the independence of Islamic boarding schools, both in terms of leadership, creativity, and social responsibility (Mau, 2024). A structured character development program can help students internalize values such as hard work, discipline, and concern for the surrounding environment (Miller et al., 2024). In addition, the unique cultural approach of Islamic boarding schools is a major factor in the success of the program. Thus, the management of character development programs must consider the needs of students and the dynamics of Islamic boarding schools so that the results are optimal.

In its implementation, the management of character development programs in Islamic boarding schools involves various strategies, from formal learning to habituation in daily life (Muid et al., 2024). Activities such as halaqah, exemplary behavior from kyai and ustadz, and direct practice in Islamic boarding school life are the main means of forming the character of students (Munir, 2021). In addition, Islamic boarding schools also often integrate the values of independence in economic activities, such as independent businesses managed by students (Anggadwita et al., 2021). This approach aims for students to not only have a theoretical understanding of independence, but also be able to apply it in real life. Therefore, good management will ensure that this program runs effectively and has a positive impact on students and the Islamic boarding school as a whole.

This phenomenon shows that the management of the character development program for students has a significant role in shaping the independence of Islamic boarding schools (Bahri, 2024). The success of this program does not only depend on the curriculum applied, but also on the consistency in the habituation of character values in everyday life (Dwivedi et al., 2022). Islamic boarding schools that are able to manage character development programs well tend to produce students who have discipline, responsibility, and the ability to adapt to the environment (Hanafi et al., 2021). However, there are still various challenges in the implementation of this program, such as limited resources, lack of program evaluation, and adaptation to the development of the times (Baresi et al., 2025). Therefore, a comprehensive and innovative strategy is needed so that the character development program for students can run effectively and contribute to the independence of Islamic boarding schools.

The main problem in managing the character development program for students is the inconsistency in the application of character values in the pesantren environment. Many pesantren face obstacles in ensuring that all students receive

equal and sustainable guidance (Pujiyanto et al., 2021). In addition, the lack of human resources trained to guide students is a factor that inhibits the effectiveness of this program. Without a clear evaluation system, it is difficult to measure the extent to which this program is successful in forming student independence (Stewart-tufescu et al., 2025). Therefore, a more structured policy and support from various parties are needed so that the management of the character development program can run optimally.

Several Previous researchers, such as Aysen Kovan and Syaifur Rahman, have studied the importance of character development programs in shaping the independence of students in Islamic boarding schools. Kovan found that programs based on role models and habits have a positive impact on students' discipline and responsibility (Kovan et al., 2024). Meanwhile, Rahman highlighted that Islamic boarding schools that integrate the values of independence in economic activities and life skills tend to be more successful in producing independent students (Rahman et al., 2024). Another study by Berkat and Friends showed that systematic management of character development programs can improve students' leadership skills and initiative in everyday life (Berkat et al., 2025). However, these studies still do not discuss the aspects of program management in depth, including the strategies and challenges faced in its implementation. In addition, there has not been much research examining how Islamic boarding schools can optimize this program to be more adaptive to the times.

This study focuses on the analysis of the management of the character development program for students in supporting the independence of Islamic boarding schools. The aspects studied include planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs implemented in the Islamic boarding school environment. In addition, this study also examines the supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of the program. A qualitative approach is used to explore deeper the strategies applied in the formation of the character of students. Data will be collected through interviews, observations, and documentation studies in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding. Data analysis is carried out to identify patterns, challenges, and opportunities in the management of character development programs.

This study aims to analyze how the management of the character development program for students can support the independence of Islamic boarding schools. By understanding the strategies, challenges, and success factors in managing this program, it is hoped that this study can provide recommendations for Islamic boarding schools in optimizing their role as character-based educational institutions. The research method used will include a qualitative approach with interviews, observations, and documentation studies as data collection techniques. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of a more effective character program management model. Thus, Islamic boarding schools can continue to develop as educational institutions that not only produce students with noble character, but also independent in various aspects of life.

This research is important to understand how the management of character development programs for students can effectively support the independence of Islamic boarding schools. By identifying successful strategies, Islamic boarding

schools can optimize more systematic and sustainable character development methods. In addition, this research can also help overcome various challenges faced in implementing the program, such as limited resources and lack of structured evaluation. The findings of this study are expected to be a reference for other Islamic boarding schools in designing similar programs that are more innovative and adaptive to the development of the times. Thus, Islamic boarding schools can continue to produce students who not only have strong characters, but are also able to be independent in community life.

Theoretical Review

Character education is a process that aims to shape an individual's personality so that they have noble morals, social responsibility, and personal integrity. Character education involves teaching universal moral values that are applied in everyday life (Tadege et al., 2022). In the Islamic boarding school environment, character education is not only based on a formal curriculum, but is also integrated into the culture, traditions, and daily activities of students. Islamic boarding schools have a strategic role in producing people who have strong personalities and are able to face the challenges of the times. Therefore, character education in Islamic boarding schools is holistic, covering cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects.

Character development program management is a systematic process of planning, implementing, and evaluating to ensure that the expected values are truly internalized in the students. Management is a series of activities to achieve goals through planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising (Arévalo et al., 2025). In the context of Islamic boarding schools, character development management involves various parties, from caregivers, ustadz, to fellow students as agents of value socialization. Good management ensures continuity between the values taught and real behavior seen in everyday life. Without effective management, character education has the potential to become just a discourse without concrete implementation.

The independence of students is one of the important outcomes of the character development program in Islamic boarding schools. According to Alzubi & Nazim, independent individuals have intrinsic motivation to act based on the values and goals they believe in (Alzubi & Nazim, 2024). Independence in Islamic boarding schools includes the ability of students to manage themselves, make decisions, and contribute to the life of the Islamic boarding school and society. Through direct experience, such as entrepreneurial activities, management of student organizations, and daily life practices, students are trained to develop attitudes and skills that support independence. Therefore, the integration of independence values in character development programs is a very important aspect.

The cultural approach typical of Islamic boarding schools is a key factor in the success of character education. Islamic boarding schools develop an institutional culture that emphasizes the exemplary behavior of kiai and ustadz, the habituation of Islamic values, and intensive social interaction. According to Bandura's social learning theory in Kusuma, individuals learn a lot through observing respected models (Kusuma & Bela Nurzaman, 2024). In the context of

Islamic boarding schools, the figures of kiai and ustadz act as role models whose behavior is imitated by students. In addition, an environment full of religious and social activities provides a strong stimulus for the internalization of values.

Evaluation of character building programs is very important to ensure the effectiveness and relevance of the program to the needs of the times. According to Kirkpatrick in Zainuddin, evaluation of educational programs should cover four levels: reaction, learning, behavior, and results (Zainuddin et al., 2023). In the context of Islamic boarding schools, evaluation can be carried out through observation of student behavior, assessment of social competence, and personal reflection. Good evaluation will help Islamic boarding school managers improve strategies and methods of program implementation. Thus, adaptive and data-based management will make character building programs more relevant to societal developments and global challenges.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to deeply understand the management of the character development program for students in supporting the independence of Islamic boarding schools (Pahleviannur et al., 2022). Case studies were chosen because they allow for a comprehensive exploration of the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes of the program in the Islamic boarding school environment. This study focuses on one or several Islamic boarding schools that have an ongoing character development program. This approach aims to explore the experiences, strategies, and challenges faced in implementing the program. Thus, the results of the study can provide a clearer picture of the effectiveness of the management of the character development program for students.

The data in this study were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation studies (Sugiyono, 2023). Interviews were conducted with Islamic boarding school managers, ustadz, and students to obtain diverse perspectives related to the character development program. Observations were conducted directly in the Islamic boarding school environment to see how this program is implemented in daily activities. Documentation studies were used to analyze related documents, such as curriculum, learning modules, and program evaluation reports. This combination of techniques aims to obtain more comprehensive and in-depth data regarding the management of the character development program for students.

The main data sources in this study were the caretakers of the Islamic boarding school, ustadz, students, and official documents related to the character development program. Information from the caretakers and ustadz was used to understand the policies and strategies implemented in program management. Data from students were collected to determine the impact of the program on their character development and independence. In addition, documents such as learning guidelines, evaluation records, and activity archives were also analyzed as secondary data sources. With these various data sources, the study was able to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the program being implemented.

Data analysis was carried out descriptively qualitatively through three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction was carried out by sorting relevant information from the results of interviews, observations, and documentation to focus more on the research objectives. Data presentation was carried out in the form of descriptive narratives to facilitate understanding of the patterns and relationships between variables found. Furthermore, conclusions were drawn by interpreting the data that had been analyzed in order to gain a deeper understanding. This process was carried out repeatedly so that the analysis results were more valid and accurate.

The validity of the data in this study is guaranteed through triangulation techniques of sources, methods, and time. Source triangulation is carried out by comparing information from various sources, such as Islamic boarding school caretakers, ustadz, and students. Method triangulation is carried out using various data collection techniques, namely interviews, observations, and documentation studies, to obtain more objective data. Meanwhile, time triangulation is carried out by collecting data in different periods to ensure consistency of findings. With this technique, the data obtained is more reliable and supports the validity of the research results.

The conclusions in this study are drawn through a reflective and inductive process based on the results of the data analysis that has been carried out. The reflective process is carried out by re-examining the data that has been collected to ensure that it is in accordance with the research objectives. The inductive approach is used to draw conclusions from the patterns that emerge in the data analyzed. In addition, the conclusions produced are also confirmed through discussions with sources to ensure that the research findings truly reflect the reality in the field. With this method, the conclusions produced are not only descriptive but also have practical implications for the management of character development programs for students in Islamic boarding schools.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that the management of the character development program for students at the Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School is carried out through systematic planning. The Islamic boarding school has a special curriculum that integrates character building into the learning activities and daily lives of students. This program includes routine activities such as religious studies, worship habits, and life skills training that support the independence of students. In addition, the Islamic boarding school actively involves caregivers, ustadz, and senior students as role models in shaping the character of students. This program is also strengthened by the existence of strict rules that discipline students in living their lives at the Islamic boarding school. Thus, careful planning is the main basis for shaping the character and independence of students in a sustainable manner.

This is based on the results of an interview with one of the caretakers of the Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School, Ustadz Agus stated, *“We designed the Islamic boarding school curriculum to develop the character of the students systematically. Every student is required to follow a program of daily worship habits such as congregational prayer, reciting the Koran, and morning and evening dhikr.*

This is an important part of forming their discipline and spiritual closeness.” He also added, “We implement a mentoring system, where senior students guide junior students so that they can better understand and practice the values of life in the Islamic boarding school well.”

In a separate interview, Fajar, a final year student, shared his experience, *“I feel more responsible and independent after participating in various activities set by the Islamic boarding school. All of these activities helped me become a person who is more prepared to face life in the future.”*

The interview shows that the management of the character development program for students at Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School has been carried out in a structured and sustainable manner. The involvement of caregivers, ustadz, and senior students in guiding and providing role models is an important factor in the success of this program. The habit of daily worship, such as congregational prayer, reciting the Koran, and dhikr, not only functions as spiritual practice, but also as a method of discipline that helps students develop responsibility and independence. The mentoring system implemented provides social support for students, especially for those who have just joined, thus facilitating the process of adapting to the Islamic boarding school environment. Thus, the strategy implemented at Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School not only forms the character of students individually, but also creates an Islamic boarding school culture that supports the values of independence and role models in everyday life.

In the implementation stage, Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School applies various strategies to ensure that the character development program runs well. The exemplary-based learning method is the main approach in instilling character values in students. In addition, a mentoring system is also applied, where senior students guide junior students in living life at the Islamic boarding school. Extracurricular activities such as entrepreneurship training, community service, and leadership are also part of this program. Students are encouraged to actively participate in activities that train their independence and responsibility. Overall, the implementation of this program at Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School runs effectively with the involvement of all elements of the Islamic boarding school in shaping the character of students.

In an interview related to this matter, Ustadz Agus at the Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School, said, *“The exemplary approach and mentoring system that we apply have proven effective in shaping the character of students. They are not only taught character values in theory, but also witness firsthand how the ustadz and senior students live out these values in everyday life.”*

He also emphasized the importance of extracurricular activities by saying, *“The active involvement of students in extracurricular activities, such as entrepreneurship training and community service, is an important means of fostering their sense of responsibility and independence.”*

Meanwhile, Fajar, a final year student, also shared his experience, *“Through the program at this Islamic boarding school, I feel more responsible and ready to face challenges outside later. I have learned many things, not only about knowledge, but also about living independently and being disciplined.”*

From the interview, it shows that Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School has a structured and effective character development program management system.

The application of exemplary methods and mentoring systems have a positive impact on forming attitudes of discipline, responsibility, and independence of students. In addition, active involvement in extracurricular activities such as entrepreneurship and leadership further strengthens the character of students in facing life outside the Islamic boarding school. Support from caregivers, ustadz, and senior students is also an important factor in the success of this program. With a comprehensive approach, the character development program at this Islamic boarding school can be a model for other educational institutions in fostering a generation with noble and independent morals.

Figure 1. Development of Student Independence



However, this study also found several challenges in implementing the character development program for students at Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School. One of the main obstacles is limited resources, both in terms of teaching staff, facilities, and funding for character development activities. In addition, differences in the backgrounds of students are also a challenge in themselves, because not all students have the same readiness to follow the program. Some students have difficulty adjusting to the strict rules of the Islamic boarding school, so they need a special approach in their development. Evaluation of the program at Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School has also not been carried out optimally, so a more structured monitoring system is needed. Therefore, Islamic boarding schools need to find innovative solutions to overcome these obstacles so that the program can run more effectively and provide maximum impact on the development of students' character.

This is based on an interview with Ustadz Hasan, who is also one of the caretakers at the Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School, he explained that the Islamic boarding school continues to strive to improve the effectiveness of the character development program for students. He said that one of the biggest challenges is building discipline in students who come from different backgrounds. To overcome this, the Islamic boarding school implements a personal approach system, where students who have difficulty adapting will receive special guidance from the ustadz or senior students. In addition, the Islamic boarding school has also begun to collaborate with various parties to obtain support in procuring supporting facilities for learning and entrepreneurship training. Ustadz Hasan emphasized that although there are still obstacles, the Islamic boarding school remains committed to forming students who have strong characters and are able to live independently after completing their education at the Islamic boarding school.

From the interview, it is known that Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School has tried to overcome various challenges in implementing the character development program for students. One of the steps taken is to improve training for teaching staff to be more effective in guiding students. In addition, the Islamic boarding school has also begun to seek support from various parties, such as alumni and donors, to help provide facilities and program funding. A more flexible approach is also applied to students who have difficulty adapting to the rules of the Islamic boarding school, such as providing special guidance and more intensive mentoring. Although there are still several obstacles, the efforts made by the Islamic boarding school show a strong commitment to building the character of students to be more independent and ready to face challenges in the future. The following is a table that summarizes the results of research related to the management of the character development program for students at the Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School:

Table 1. Research Results on the Management of the Character Development Program for Students

Aspect	Research Findings	Impact
Planning	Islamic boarding schools have a special curriculum that integrates character building into the students' learning and daily activities.	Students are more disciplined and accustomed to the character values that have been instilled from the start.
Implementation	The exemplary method, senior-junior student mentoring system, and extracurricular activities such as entrepreneurship, community service, and leadership are implemented.	Students are more independent, have leadership qualities, and are able to work together in groups.
The Role of Islamic Boarding School Caregivers & Teachers	The Islamic boarding school supervisors and teachers act as role models in shaping the character of students and providing personal guidance for students who experience difficulties.	Students are more motivated and have role models in carrying out their daily lives at the Islamic boarding school.
Challenge	Limited resources (teaching staff, facilities, funding), as well as differences in the backgrounds of students that influence their readiness to participate in the program.	Some students had difficulty adapting, and the effectiveness of the program was not optimal.
Implemented Solutions	Improving training for teaching staff, a personal	The program can run more effectively and

	approach system for students who have difficulty adapting, and cooperation with alumni and donors.	students who experience problems receive special attention.
Program Evaluation	There is still a need for a more structured monitoring system to ensure the effectiveness of the student character development program.	With better evaluation, Islamic boarding schools can identify shortcomings and improve programs periodically.

From the table above, it can be concluded that Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School has implemented a systematic management of the character development program for students through planning, implementation, and the involvement of caregivers and ustadz as role models. Careful planning, such as the preparation of a special curriculum, contributes to the formation of discipline and character of students in everyday life. At the implementation stage, the exemplary method and mentoring system have proven effective in increasing the independence and responsibility of students. However, the study also found several obstacles, especially related to limited resources and differences in students' readiness to adapt to the rules of the Islamic boarding school. Therefore, solutions in the form of increasing teacher training, a personal approach for students who experience difficulties, and optimizing the evaluation system need to be implemented so that the character development program for students can run more effectively and sustainably.

Thus, the character development program for students has a positive impact on their independence. Students who participate in this program consistently show improvements in discipline, responsibility, and life skills that support their independence in the future. In addition, the habituation of character values such as honesty, hard work, and social concern is increasingly embedded in their daily lives. Although there are still some obstacles in its implementation, the Islamic boarding school continues to make improvements so that this program is more optimal. Support from various parties, including caregivers, ustadz, and parents of students, plays a major role in the success of this program. With better management, the character development program for students can be an effective model in forming a generation of students who are independent and have noble morals.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that the Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School has successfully implemented a systematic character development program for students through careful planning, structured implementation, and active involvement of caregivers and ustadz as role models. A special curriculum that integrates religious learning, worship habits, and life skills training contributes positively to forming attitudes of discipline, responsibility, and independence of students. The exemplary method and mentoring system between senior and junior students create a conducive learning atmosphere and strengthen students' adaptation to the Islamic boarding school environment. In addition, active

involvement in extracurricular activities such as entrepreneurship, community service, and leadership further enriches the development of students' character and social skills.

However, this study also found challenges in implementing the program, including limited human resources, supporting facilities, and differences in the backgrounds of students that affect their readiness to participate in the program. Not all students adapt easily, so a personal approach and special guidance are needed. In addition, the existing evaluation system still needs to be improved so that the effectiveness of the program can be better measured. To overcome this, Islamic boarding schools have begun to improve training for teaching staff, expand cooperation with alumni and donors, and implement innovative approaches in character building. With continuous efforts and system improvements, this program is expected to be increasingly optimal and become a model for character building in other Islamic boarding schools.

The main findings of this study show that the integration of a special curriculum that combines character building with life skills training and strengthening the senior-junior student mentoring system has a significant impact on the formation of student independence and responsibility. The findings of this study show that the integration of the character building curriculum with life skills training at the Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School shows a striking difference compared to the research of Chatia Hastasari and Ahnar Khafid, which emphasizes the habituation of worship rituals as the main approach in forming the character of students (Hastasari et al., 2022) (Camelia Safitri, Kansha Dianita Pramesti, Muhammad Fahmil Kamal, 2024). In both studies, the success of character building is more measured by the level of perseverance of students in carrying out rituals such as congregational prayer, reciting the Koran, and dhikr. Meanwhile, at Manbaul Ulum, the development of student character does not only rely on ritual worship, but is also enriched with entrepreneurship, leadership, and life skills training that support student independence.

In addition, the character development approach in Manbaul Ulum is also different from Muhyiddin's research which highlights the dominance of the kyai figure as a central figure in the character education process (Muhyiddin et al., 2022), and Herlinawati, which emphasizes the importance of curriculum planning but has not integrated life skills training as part of the process (Herlinawati et al., 2024). In Manbaul Ulum, in addition to the kyai and ustadz, senior students are also actively involved in the mentoring process and become agents of character change for their juniors.

The findings of this study also differ from the results of studies (Masemola et al., 2025) and (Yang et al., 2025), which highlighted the limitations of human resources, facilities, and funding as the main obstacles to the effectiveness of character building programs. Both studies considered these limitations to be external factors that were difficult to overcome. However, in Manbaul Ulum, proactive efforts were found to overcome these obstacles through strengthening internal capacity, such as increasing training for teaching staff, and external collaboration with alumni and donors.

Furthermore, in contrast to Anzaikhan's research, which focuses more on traditional parenting patterns based on strict supervision by ustadz (Anzaikhan et

al., 2023), and (Samhudi & Ahmad Sani, 2024), which have not directly linked extracurricular activities to strengthening the character of students, this study shows that the involvement of students in entrepreneurial activities, community service, and leadership accelerates the internalization of the values of independence and responsibility.

This study is in line with the findings put forward by Ratnawati and friends who highlighted the importance of careful planning in developing the character of students in Islamic boarding schools. Ratnawati stated that a curriculum that integrates character building into students' daily activities plays an important role in instilling the values of discipline, responsibility, and independence (Ratnawati et al., 2024). This is evident at the Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School, where the special curriculum implemented includes daily worship habits, religious studies, and life skills training. This approach not only strengthens students' religious understanding but also supports their readiness to face challenges outside the Islamic boarding school. Thus, this strategy confirms that a value-based curriculum has a significant impact on the formation of students' character.

In addition, the results of this study also strengthen the findings of research conducted by Kistoro and friends regarding the effectiveness of the exemplary method and mentoring system in shaping the character of students. Kistoro highlighted that the involvement of senior students as mentors for junior students was able to create a conducive atmosphere for character learning based on real experiences (Kistoro et al., 2021). This is in accordance with the practices implemented at the Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School, where senior students play an active role in guiding their juniors. As a result, students feel more comfortable and can easily adapt to the Islamic boarding school environment which has strict rules. This method shows that an intensive interpersonal approach can accelerate the process of character formation of students.

This study also supports the results of a study conducted by Suryati which highlighted the challenges in implementing character development programs in Islamic boarding schools. Suryati and friends found that the main obstacles in implementing this program were limited resources and differences in the backgrounds of students (Suryati et al., 2023). This finding is in accordance with the conditions at the Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School, where limited teaching staff and facilities are challenges in supporting character development activities optimally. However, this study highlights the importance of innovative approaches, such as involving senior students and utilizing extracurricular activities, to overcome these obstacles. With this strategy, the Islamic boarding school was able to maintain the effectiveness of the program despite facing various challenges.

These findings have important implications for curriculum development in Islamic boarding schools. A curriculum that not only focuses on strengthening morals and worship, but also integrates life skills and social skills, has been proven to enrich the process of character formation of students more comprehensively. Other Islamic boarding schools can learn from the integrative approach in Manbaul Ulum, especially in designing programs that combine religious values with life skills that are relevant to the demands of the times. Thus, graduates of Islamic boarding schools are expected to not only have noble morals, but also have the

independence, adaptability, and social competence needed in a dynamic modern society.

In addition, the findings on the effectiveness of the inter-student mentoring system imply that the role of senior students needs to be more formalized and strengthened as part of the character building program. The active involvement of senior students as mentors has created a more intimate, humanistic learning climate and supports the process of internalizing values naturally. Other Islamic boarding schools should develop a more structured and systematic mentoring mechanism, not just informal relationships, so that the adaptation of new students can run more smoothly while encouraging the growth of a sense of responsibility and leadership among senior students. On the other hand, Manbaul Ulum's success in building external networks—through collaboration with alumni, donors, the business world, and local governments—is an important example that strengthening social capital is an effective strategy to overcome the constraints of internal Islamic boarding school resources.

From an evaluation perspective, this study also emphasizes the importance of developing more systematic, quantitative, and sustainable evaluation instruments to measure the success of character building programs. So far, the evaluation of character education programs in many Islamic boarding schools has been qualitative or based on informal observations, so it is less than optimal in identifying aspects that need to be improved. With more measurable evaluation instruments, Islamic boarding schools can periodically adjust their programs according to the development of the needs of students and the challenges of the times. In addition, strengthening the evaluation system also opens up opportunities to develop a model of Islamic boarding school-based character education that can be replicated in various regions, so that the contribution of Islamic boarding schools in producing a generation with noble and independent characters is increasingly evident.

From the research results that have been presented, of course there are still some shortcomings that need to be considered as important notes for the development of further research. One of the main shortcomings in this study is the limitation in data coverage, which only focuses on one Islamic boarding school so that the generalization of findings to other Islamic boarding schools is still limited. In addition, this study has not fully explored the quantitative aspects of program evaluation or used standardized measurement instruments to objectively assess the effectiveness of character development programs. This study also still predominantly uses a descriptive qualitative approach without deeper data triangulation through participatory observation or longitudinal studies to see the long-term impact on students.

Based on these shortcomings, the recommendation that can be put forward is the importance of developing a more systematic evaluative instrument to measure the development of the character of students in a measurable and sustainable manner. Further research is also suggested to involve more Islamic boarding school locations as study objects in order to enrich the comparison between loci and expand the reach of the findings. A mixed methods approach can also be a potential methodological strategy to gain a more holistic understanding, both in terms of process and results.

The main contribution of this study is to provide an empirical description of how character development programs can be designed and implemented systematically in Islamic boarding schools through an exemplary approach, mentoring system, and habituation of worship activities and life skills. These findings strengthen the theoretical basis for the importance of integration between value learning, interpersonal mentoring, and the formation of institutional culture in building the character of students. This study also serves as a starting point for other researchers to explore Islamic boarding school-based character education models that are adaptive to the challenges of the times, including digitalization and differentiation of student backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

From the research and discussion above, it can be concluded that the management of the character development program for students at the Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School is carried out through systematic and structured planning. This program integrates character values into the daily activities of students, such as religious studies, worship habits, and life skills training. The implementation of the program is carried out with an exemplary approach, a mentoring system, and extracurricular activities that encourage student independence. The involvement of caregivers, ustadz, and senior students is an important factor in the success of this program. However, the study also found several obstacles, such as limited resources and differences in student backgrounds that affect the effectiveness of the program. Program evaluation still needs improvement in order to ensure the sustainability and improvement of the quality of character development. Overall, this program has a positive impact on forming students who are disciplined, independent, and have strong Islamic values. The results of this study are in line with previous studies that emphasize the importance of planning, exemplary methods, and evaluation in character development programs in Islamic boarding schools. Therefore, more adaptive innovations and strategies are needed to overcome existing challenges. Thus, Manbaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School can continue to optimize the character development program of students to support the independence of the Islamic boarding school in a sustainable manner.

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