

# Implementation of Islamic Approach-based Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) Boarding School to Strengthen Students' Religious Character

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## Abstract

Religious character is one of the important characteristics to be developed, especially for students in the era of globalization. In fact, in some educational institutions, there is no particular curriculum to support the purpose of this study to examine in depth the implementation of the Islamic Approach-based curriculum as a medium to strengthen the religious character of Islamic boarding school madrasah ibtidaiyah students. The samples in this study were taken from madrasah ibtidaiyah in Tulungagung

and Ponorogo. This research is case study research with data sources in the form of learning processes and informants consisting of students and teachers. Data were collected by observation and in-depth interviews with teachers, *ustaz/ustazah*, and students. The sample in this study consisted of 5 teachers and 20 students in each school. The results showed that there is a curriculum to develop religious character, discipline, and responsibility. The curriculum in each madrasah ibtidaiyah Boarding School is implemented in programs, both curricular and extracurricular. The integration of the national curriculum with the hidden curriculum in each institution makes the character education process maximized. Implemented programs such as praying before starting learning, saying greetings, and asking for *ridho* to the teacher/*ustaz* for religious character development. The habit of arriving on time, cultivating queuing, and utilizing free time to strengthen student discipline. For the development of responsibility, there is a picket program and a reward and punishment system. In addition, there is good coordination between teachers, *ustaz*, dormitory caregivers, and the foundation in determining effective programs in order to develop student character.

**Keywords:** madrasah curriculum, islamic approach, religious character, madrasah ibtidaiyah boarding school

## INTRODUCTION

In this era of technological development, the flow of information and global issues is increasingly unstoppable. Globalization brings negative and positive impacts to several countries, especially developing countries that have cultural patterns and social patterns that still uphold traditional customs. The entry of the internet in various aspects of life from one side makes it easier for people to interact and connect without any distance and time limitations. On the one hand, the internet also has a negative impact if it is not balanced with a good information filter. The internet is very

vulnerable to being used by children without being accompanied by parents. This raises many parents' concerns about the negative influence of the internet, such as the spread of pornographic content, hoax issues, and the most severe cyberbullying (Gualdo et al., 2015). In addition to these concerns, parents are also worried about the disintegration of their children's character. This influence is indeed very possible, considering that globalization is also accompanied by the influx of external cultural influences, some of which are not in accordance with the values and norms prevailing in Indonesia.

Excessive use of the internet will undoubtedly have a negative impact, especially on the development of elementary / MI age children. A study by Isma et al. (2022) found the influence of the internet on students' interest in reading and learning. In addition, the internet can also cause symptoms of mental disorders, such as stress, lack of focus, emotional instability, or addiction for students (Alderete & Formichella, 2022; Lim & Jeong, 2022; Siregar & Yaswinda, 2022; Ula, 2023). For this reason, parents need to monitor children's activities, especially in the use of gadgets and the internet, so that children's growth and emotions can be maintained.

From the educational aspect, it is also necessary to provide a treatment or effort to overcome the effects of globalization and the flow of information from the internet. Adolescence or middle age is when a person is in the process of self-discovery and is very vulnerable to the negative influence of globalization (Zebua, 2020). Therefore, an education system that is truly oriented towards improving and strengthening the character of

students is needed. Currently, in Indonesia, a boarding-based school system is massively emerging and being developed. Boarding School provides a new breakthrough in the world of education by collaborating between the formal school curriculum and the boarding school curriculum.

The curriculum is very important in determining the success of the learning process. The curriculum is certainly a bridge used by educational institutions to arrive at learning objectives. The curriculum must include several components, which include planning, implementation (content), strategy, and evaluation components (Yusuf, 2023). Therefore, in the implementation process in the field, teachers must still refer to the four components of the curriculum. In this case, the curriculum developed in boarding school-based educational institutions certainly has an advantage over formal school institutions. As revealed by Indra (2019), one of the advantages of the Boarding School model is that the association and interaction of students become more secure with the assistance of teachers/ustaz who provide direct supervision both during formal schooling and while they are in the dormitory. On the other hand, Boarding School-based schools have undergone changes in curriculum and learning methods. This allows students to adapt to a new environment with supervision, direction, and guidance from caregivers so that there is a good character education pattern and academic achievement is guaranteed (Laiser & Makewa, 2016).

The process of education and character development in boarding school-based schools also tends to be more effective than in formal schools

in general. This is evidenced by the increasing number of boarding schools in Indonesia (Islam, 2021). Each of these boarding schools offers a varied curriculum and learning programme. This programme is of course, related to the development and education of student character integrated into curricular and extracurricular activities. The pattern of character education applied in schools is not taught in special subjects. However, it is implemented through daily learning that has been running at school. Therefore, character education in Islamic Boarding schools is integrated into school culture.

Studies on character education in boarding schools have been an important issue and have been discussed by researchers (Arifin, 2022; Ikhwan & Yuniana, 2022; Surface-Evans, 2016; Zaki et al., 2020). From some of these studies, it was found that there are specific characteristics in the learning process in boarding schools. The integration of the national curriculum and the hidden curriculum owned by each school makes it a novelty and a new breakthrough in the world of education. Related to character education, of course, in boarding-based schools, it is prioritized with more intensive supervision from ustadz or teachers who also double as dormitory assistants.

This paper aims specifically to examine and complement previous studies on how the integration and implementation of an Islamic Approach-based curriculum in order to strengthen the religious character education of students who attend boarding school-based Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. The focus in this study is divided into 3 parts, namely the development of

religious character, disciplinary character, and responsibility character of MI Islamic boarding school students. This paper also examines whether the learning process and character development applied have been well actualized and in accordance with the principles of education.

## **METHODS**

The form of this research is qualitative research with a case study approach. Case studies were conducted by researchers in several MI Boarding schools located in Tulungagung Regency and Ponorogo Regency. The research sample conducted was one of MI Al Asror Tulungagung and MI Darul Huda Mayak Ponorogo. Sampling was carried out using a probability approach researchers usually use (Ishtiaq, 2019). In this study, the sample was taken randomly from representatives of teachers, ustaz, and students with a total of 5 teachers/ustaz and 20 students in each school. The researcher deliberately used this sampling method because it was an option that would be the door to obtaining comprehensive data related to how the implementation of the Islamic Approach-based curriculum and religious character education in the research location. This method allows researchers to obtain various things that have to do with actualizing students' religious character education in MI boarding schools, including religious character, discipline, and responsibility. Data collection was carried out by observation and in-depth interviews, observations were made related to the question of how the actualization of religious character education at MI Islamic Boarding School related to religious character, discipline, and responsibility.

In this study, in-depth interviews were conducted, and observations were then analyzed using content analysis. Data analysis in this study used interactive analysis with a case study approach. The analysis technique used, namely data reduction, data presentation, and analysis, then drawing conclusions. To test the validity of the research data, researchers used data source triangulation techniques and triangulation of data collection methods.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Character education is an integral part of learning, much needed in strengthening the social competence of students or early adolescents (Singh, 2019). In shaping and processing character education in MI boarding schools, schools can actualize several forms of policies taken from the deliberations of the assembly council in the form of rules that all boarding school residents must obey. The involvement of teachers at school, peers, and elements of the community is vital in supporting these rules because when they are outside, they will always interact with the wider community (Annisa, 2018). The school includes the principal, teachers, administrative staff, and peers who provide direction when students make some deviations or mistakes. This is certainly supported through policies, school programs, and discipline mechanisms in intracurricular and extracurricular activities (Hasanah et al., 2022). Existing studies state that character values can be formed by integrating materials in non-formal institutions such as dormitories and extracurricular activities.

In addition to these things, MI Boarding School also applies binding rules. This is the hallmark of MI boarding school, in shaping religious character, discipline, and responsibility. Religious character is implemented in the form of awareness, increasing the value of individual religiosity, and immediately followed by the value of social spirituality (Muawwanah & Darmiyanti, 2022). This will provide an understanding that religion is a right of every human being and does not impose on others, problems in society try to be associated with norms so that they understand religion comprehensively. Many cases of student discipline violations at school illustrate the unsuccessfulness of school management in the learning process in the classroom (Amalia & Zuhro, 2022). For this reason, in the process of discipline character education, it is important to make intensive observations of student behavior and sanctions for violations committed. The character of responsibility will be closely related to the religiosity and discipline of students because the value of responsibility will depend on the side of mental maturity, when religiosity is immature it will be very difficult for them to have a sense of responsibility (Halimah et al., 2020).

### **Religious Character Education at MI Boarding School**

Religious character education that has been practiced at MI Boarding School mainly includes three things: always saying greetings before and after the implementation of learning, praying before and after carrying out the learning process, and the habit of shaking hands with ustadz/ustadzah after and before the learning process begins.



In terms of instilling religious character through the activities of saying and answering greetings to students before and after class learning activities are always instilled as conveyed by one of the teachers at one of the MI Boarding schools in Tulungagung:

(R1) *"I require myself that every time I start and end the lesson by saying greetings and we require students to answer my greetings if we do this repeatedly it will become a very good habit, because you also know that greetings are a form of our prayers to the people we greet, by giving greetings to each other then we actually pray for each other".*

Mutual greetings are also carried out by all residents of the dormitory, even all visitors to the dormitory or cottage are required to say greetings. Thus, the interaction process at MI Boarding School has an interesting motto, namely the 3 S (smile, greeting, and greeting).

Before the learning process, they make it a habit for the class leader to lead the prayer to ask for keridloan and blessings if they carry out learning activities. At the end of the lesson, they pray again which is like the previous activity but with the content of the reading that has a different purpose from what is read, namely wanting the benefits of the knowledge that has been learned and keridloan. Prayer activities are also carried out through both five-time fard prayers and sunnah prayers in the congregation to foster the spirit of carrying out religious orders and instill religious character.

Thus, reading prayer activities before and after learning activities will be able to instill students' religious character in a sustainable and integrated manner in the process of teaching and learning activities (Saeful et al.,

2019). Still in the form of religious character education at MI Boarding school also provides habituation to students to shake hands by kissing the hands of teachers and ustadz / ustadzah before, and after the learning process even when they meet anywhere. As revealed by one of the ustadzah at MI Darul Huda Mayak Ponorogo:

(R 2) *"One of our efforts so that they remain respectful to others is that every time we meet with the same sex, we always shake hands by kissing the hands of ustadz / ustadzah who are more senior, so we also do in the classes the students always shake our hands by kissing them as a form of respect and ask for blessings, keridloan and the benefits of knowledge to the ustadz who have given their knowledge"*.

In recognition by one of the students interviewed has felt that the habits that exist in MI Boarding school have brought direct benefits to him: (P1) *"I have felt that I used to never kiss my parents' hands when I came back from holiday my parents' attitude was different, they loved me more and paid more attention"*.

### **The Actualisation of Discipline Character Education at MI Boarding School**

The awareness of disciplinary character education is actualized continuously between students and teachers and ustadz/ustadzah through neatly scheduled activities, namely getting used to being on time for every activity, cultivating queuing attitudes, and habituation to use free time.

In carrying out their learning activities, teachers always start to be present 15 minutes before the lesson starts, as told by one of the teachers at one of the MI Boarding schools in Tulungagung:

(R 3) *"I always arrive on time 15 minutes before it starts when I have teaching hours on that day. The lesson usually starts after the morning prayer. For me, shaping the character of discipline to students cannot only be done with the subject matter but must be given by example".*

In addition, the character of discipline is also developed outside the classroom learning process. One of them is carried out by the room companion who oversees accompanying students, waking up for night prayers, and supervising during the implementation of the dormitory program. As stated below:

(R 4) *"My job as a room companion is to secure the policies of the assembly, I as a room companion also take part in encouraging students, we wake them up at 03.00 in the morning to do the sunnah tahajud prayer".*

With this pattern of habituation, students will become accustomed to it, even though initially they experience rejection or feel heavy, but over time they will get used to it. This is as expressed by one of the students who felt there was a change in his disciplinary character:

(P 2) *"At first I couldn't be on time because I wasn't used to waking up early at home, but here I am reminded every day so I am embarrassed if I am late".*

The culture of queuing is also one way of shaping the disciplinary character of the students. One way to foster this character is by queuing so that students respect each other. It is implemented when in the dormitory, students are cultivated to queue, take food, bathe, or take ablution water for prayer. Students are taught not to scramble with friends and must be in order. This is to instill discipline and respect in students.

Furthermore, the discipline character education program for students is to instill a mindset about the importance of respecting time. This is because MI Boarding school students must study in formal schools and learn religious lessons outside formal school hours. For this reason, they must be trained to be able to utilize and divide their time between formal school and religious school in the dormitory or cottage.

### **The Actualization of Responsibility Character Education at MI Boarding School**

Responsibility character education in MI Boarding school is instilled with three things: students are required to do all assignments properly and on time, carry out daily pickets both in the school environment or room and are educated to dare to take responsibility for their actions.

Cultivating a sense of responsibility is done by integrating in the form of assignments from teachers to students, both in the form of assignments in formal schools and assignments in dormitories such as giving assignments to memorize material that has been taught. This was also revealed by one of the teachers at MI Boarding School in the following quote:

(R5) *"usually I and my fellow ustadz/ustadzah here before ending the lesson first give an assignment of several stanzas to be memorised at the next week's meeting, so at the next meeting I always ask students to memorize"*.

In line with what was conveyed by one of the students to form responsibility by being given the task of memorizing several memorizes such as short letters in juz amma that have been determined. On the one hand,

the boarding school gives responsibility to students in the form of environmental hygiene awareness the form of cleaning rooms and dormitory environments (Husniah et al., 2022). The students are accustomed to living clean and are taught to be responsible for maintaining the natural environment that is their daily place and environmental health. Students are trained to carry out daily cleaning pickets in class according to a predetermined schedule.

Responsibility for all their actions is also taught by inserting several rules that have been made by the board and the person in charge of the dormitory as a form of student actualization of the risks of their actions. MI Boarding School applies the reward and punishment method to students. This is considered effective for shaping the character of responsibility in students.

### **Implementation of Islamic Approach-based Curriculum at MI Boarding School**

This research has shown at least three important things in the learning process at MI Boarding School: integrating an Islamic Approach-based learning curriculum to strengthen students' religious character. This religious character consists of 3 main indicators: religious character, disciplinary character, and responsibility character.

Religious character education always emphasizes students getting used to carrying out their religious activities normatively and applicatively so that students experience changes in their spiritual behavior as capital for life in the future (Hasyim, 2016). Disciplinary character education

emphasizes students through programs integrated into the form of routine and incidental activities in line with previous findings that the disciplinary character of students is strongly influenced by teachers, parents, and education personnel at each institution (Hamidaturrohmah et al., 2022). In addition, discipline will arise if the institution has a commitment to character education in line with local wisdom and culture in the school environment (Hidayati et al., 2020; Wallenius, 2022). Education for the development of the character of responsibility is embedded through activities outside the subject matter, for example, through picket activities to clean the class, the dormitory has been intervened in the form of rules with the reward and punishment program. Thus, this study shows that the implementation of an Islamic Approach-based curriculum for the development of religious characters must always be through formal activities but can also be done with extra-curricular activities.

This research has reflected that character education implemented in MI Boarding schools has shown real results in stemming the nation's moral crisis and is in line with the development goals of Islamic education for harmony and peace (Hidayati et al., 2022; Putro & Suryono, 2019). This is certainly an early fortress from the decline of national character values that the founding fathers instilled. Character education must be interpreted as a planned, systematic, and sustainable approach model packaged in an Islamic Approach-based learning curriculum. This certainly aims to develop students' religious character, a sense of discipline, and responsibility. Furthermore, it is necessary to instill an awareness in the general public that

character education is not only discussed but must be carried out in a planned, structured, and comprehensive manner (Muhajir, 2022).

The results show the awareness of the community, especially parents of students, of the importance of choosing educational institutions that can develop the character and attitudes of students. High public awareness is a form of awakening and at the same time an important moment to hold national consolidation in various elements. The implementation of character education that has been running should be evaluated and analyzed so that educational actors have a reference in making an instrument (Saifulloh & Neoh, 2022). The moment of consolidation and good cooperation between parents, teachers, and education organizers must immediately get a response from the government to facilitate both learning policies and adequate infrastructure (Setyawan, 2021).

The results of this study fostered a new breakthrough program that has yet to be maximized, namely the integration of the hidden curriculum of boarding school institutions with the national curriculum in formal schools. The curriculum integration in question combines general subjects with religious subjects as a characteristic of each institution or boarding school. This process can be packaged in the form of thematic learning and will be very interesting if general subject teachers are given an understanding of religious values, religiosity, independence, and decency so that they will easily associate general subjects with religious character education values. Subject conversion is needed to avoid the repetition of subjects, especially in religious subjects (Small, 2020). This is because when MI Boarding school

students take learning programmes outside formal classes using the boarding school curriculum, some religious materials or subjects are taught. Of course, there is a separation of these subjects in order to avoid boredom among students considering that religious material is taught in dormitories at a higher level than that taught at school (Hastasari et al., 2022).

With the research results that have shown some of these facts, serious support is needed from several government circles, social organizations, political organizations, the community, parents, and all boarding school residents ranging from students, Foundation administrators, kyai, caregivers, ustadz/ustadzah, and administrative staff. This awareness must be structured and implemented together to pay special attention to the education of students' religious character in Boarding School-based MI. Of course, the role of policymakers, in this case, the Head of Madrasah or the Head of the Foundation, is very important in determining the direction and objectives of the educational process (Huda & Usman, 2020; Setyosari & Kamdi, 2021). In its actualization, it is necessary to plan, implement the learning process, implement extracurricular activities, and conduct regular evaluations both in terms of curriculum, facilities and infrastructure, and facilities at MI Boarding School.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings in this study allow for further discussion, although MI Boarding school character building has been carried out, especially in terms



of religious character, discipline, and responsibility. Overall, the obstacles experienced are the diversity of MI Boarding school student input, which will certainly make a difference in providing material both during class learning and learning in the dormitory. In addition, the absence of supporting facilities and infrastructure certainly makes the character-building process at MI Boarding School less than optimal.

The findings of this study have implications for the policies of Islamic education institutions, especially those providing education through non-formal channels, to maximize the integration of religious character education for students. In fact, the MI Boarding school model can answer various challenges of the times, especially in terms of religious character building, discipline, and responsibility. The existence of an Islamic Approach-based curriculum makes a good integration between the national and boarding school curricula. This allows for good cooperation between teachers in formal schools and boarding school coaches in terms of the programmes implemented.

Furthermore, this research is still limited to the domains of religious character, discipline, and responsibility so that it has not examined other aspects of character building, even though there are many characters that must be possessed by students. On the other hand, this study also did not involve the students' parents to be sampled in the research because parents are also the most important component in students' character building. Thus, there are still many opportunities to study other sides related to student character such as the character of tolerance, hard work, creativity,

independence, democracy, curiosity, national spirit, love for the country, respect for achievement, friendly/communicative, peace-loving, fond of reading, environmental care, social care.

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