



Synergy between Islamic boarding school and families in the formation of the character of students at the Islamic Boarding School Ma'had Daarul Muhsin State Islamic Senior High School in Palu city

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Abstract

This research aims to enrich studies on character education efforts through the internalization of religious values as one of the models of character education in Islamic boarding school-based madrasahs and to provide insight for academia regarding how parents can collaborate synergistically with Islamic boarding schools in fostering students' character development. This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. Data were collected through participatory observation, interviews, and documentation studies. Research participants consisted of boarding school leaders, supervising teachers, students at Islamic Boarding School Mahad Daarul Muhsin State Islamic Senior High Schools in Palu City, and parents selected purposively. Data analysis followed the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and technique triangulation. The findings indicate that the internalization of character education within the Islamic Boarding School Mahad Daarul Muhsin in Palu City is conducted systematically, interactively, and sustainably. Character education is not only implemented through formal learning. Still, it is also internalized through an integrated curriculum, habituation of worship practices, multi-layered supervision, exemplary conduct of educators, and a consistent dormitory culture. Religious values, discipline, responsibility, moral independence, and social awareness are cultivated through a combination of instruction, education, and nurturing. This study contributes to the development of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory within the context of Islamic boarding school education by emphasizing that holistic and sustainable character development can only be achieved through structured, consistent, and Islamic value-based synergy between the boarding school as the primary microsystem and the family as the first microsystem in students' lives.

Keywords: Islamic boarding school, Character education, Family involvement, Cooperation

Introduction

The existence of character education within the Indonesian national education law is not a new entity, merely complementary. Character education is a fundamental foundation that guides the direction and orientation of the entire national education system (Arif, Nurdin, & Elya, 2023; Nazriani, Siregar, & Tarmidi, 2026) ^[3, 8]. This is based on a theoretical foundation where character building has long been placed as the primary orientation in the construction of national education goals. The Law on the National Education System mandates that the goals of national education comprehensively encompass conscious efforts to develop students' potential to possess spiritual and religious strength, intelligence, personality, and noble morals. The Indonesian education system appears to be trapped in a paradigm that places too much emphasis on cognitive aspects over affective ones. The excesses of this imbalance are clearly visible in various social pathologies among adolescents, ranging from student brawls, sexual harassment, drug abuse, theft, bullying, and various other forms of juvenile delinquency. This dystopian condition strongly signals the existence of fundamental problems in the education system that demand in-depth investigation and improvement, both in the material dimension and in its technical implementation aspects.

In response to the crisis, many institutions are now offering boarding school models as a strategic solution for intensively monitoring student behavior and transforming their character (Nurdin, Pettalongi, & Mangasing, 2019) ^[11]. The Ministry of Religious Affairs, through the Directorate of Madrasah Education (PENMAD), is also mainstreaming Islamic boarding school-based madrasah policies as an effective instrument for internalizing moral and religious values. The Islamic Boarding School (IBS) environment, or Islamic boarding school, is considered to have a highly conducive atmosphere for instilling moral and religious values. The uniqueness of this model lies in the teacher-student relationship, which is based on respect and compassion, with the teacher acting as a spiritual guide. Character building in these madrasahs is reinforced through the study of classical moral literature, which provides a foundation for in-depth understanding. The distinctive culture of Islamic boarding schools, encompassing routines of worship, dhikr (remembrance of God), and an Islamic outlook on life, forms an ecosystem that supports the development of character. With a boarding school system, student behavior is better controlled, enabling the internalization of religious values to take place more effectively.

In response to the crisis, many institutions are now offering boarding school models as a strategic solution for intensively monitoring student behavior and transforming their character (Zhong, Feng, & Xu, 2024) ^[19]. The Ministry of Religious Affairs, through the Directorate of Madrasah Education (PENMAD), is also mainstreaming Islamic boarding school-based madrasah policies as an effective instrument for internalizing moral and religious values. The Islamic Boarding School (IBS) environment, or Islamic boarding school, is considered to have a highly conducive atmosphere for instilling moral and religious values. The uniqueness of this model lies in the teacher-student relationship, which is based on respect and compassion, with the teacher acting as a spiritual guide. Character building in these madrasahs is reinforced through the study of classical moral literature, which provides a foundation for in-depth understanding. The distinctive culture of Islamic boarding schools, encompassing routines of worship, dhikr (remembrance of God), and an Islamic outlook on life, forms an ecosystem that supports the development of character. With a boarding school system, student behavior is better controlled, enabling the internalization of religious values to take place more effectively.

In Islamic boarding schools, the rhythm of life is based on the habituation of regular worship, daily practices, and controlled Islamic character formation (Hefner, 2016) ^[6]. This integrated Islamic boarding school system does indeed stimulate independence and responsibility; however, if these same values do not find a balanced resonance in the family environment, especially when parents lack control and are permissive, children are at risk of experiencing discontinuities in discipline, such as delaying prayer or fading empathy. This phenomenon emphasizes the urgency of consistency between the Islamic boarding school ecosystem and the family in the process of character formation in children. The problem is further complicated by time constraints and parents' limited knowledge of appropriate parenting methodologies. In some cases, ironically, educational institutions face obstacles in involving parents in synchronizing character education programs. The phenomenon of small families caught up in work routines often results in an attitude of leaving the development of children's character entirely to the kiai and ustadz at the Islamic boarding school. This empirical reality and theoretical framework motivated researchers to investigate the significance of implementing character education patterns in Islamic boarding schools that are synchronized with family parenting patterns, especially when students return to their homes and communities.

Through this research, it is hoped that parents of Islamic boarding school students can develop a consensus on guidelines for implementing continuous character education from an early age to adulthood. The Islamic boarding school-based madrasa model, as implemented at the Islamic Boarding School (IBS) Ma'had Daarul Muhsin in Palu City, is one form of strengthening the influential boarding school system. Established in 2011, this institution strives to provide solutions to the need for character development through a semi-Islamic boarding school curriculum concept. The madrasa education

model, reinforced by the Islamic boarding school system, is recognized as an effective approach because it not only addresses cognitive aspects but also builds collective habituation to uphold knowledge in everyday life. Through positive habits carried out continuously under the guidance of ustadz and ustadzah, it is hoped that noble character will be formed that will benefit the future of the students.

Islamic boarding schools at the State Islamic Senior High School in Palu City have made character education an integral part of the curriculum, focusing on comprehensive religious values. As a manifestation of this commitment, the Islamic Boarding School was opened as an option for parents who desire a holistic education that combines Islamic principles, intelligence, skills, and morality. With the vision slogan "Realizing Boarding Schools as educational institutions that produce generations of 'Abid, Alim, and Hanif and environmentally conscious," IBS Ma'had Daarul Muhsin strives to produce Muslim cadres who are scientific, practical, pious, and skilled. Researchers view that studying the synergy between Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and the family environment is very urgent. The synergy between the two is expected to produce a generation with noble, independent, and steadfast personalities. From the researchers' perspective, this aspect of integration still requires more attention, considering the limited academic work that specifically examines the synergy between character education in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and family parenting patterns. Based on the arguments above, the researcher considers it important to conduct research with the title: "Synergy of Islamic Boarding School Education and Family Environment in the Formation of Character of Islamic Boarding School Students at Ma'had Daarul Muhsin, Palu City".

Literature review

Character education in Islamic boarding schools

The term "character" is rooted in the Latin "*charakter*," which encompasses disposition, nature, mental traits, morals, personality, and morals (Ab Rashid et al., 2020) ^[1]. In educational psychology, character is understood as a dynamic manifestation of human nature, formed through the dialectic between an individual's internal potential and various external factors in their life trajectory (Askar, Nurdin, Pettalongi, Pettalongi, & Basire, 2025) ^[4]. Character is a distinction or distinctive characteristic of the mind that distinguishes one individual from another. Character is synonymous with personality or morals, where personality is a person's unique characteristics derived from the crystallization of environmental influences, family upbringing during the formative period, and innate dispositions (Rustina et al., 2026) ^[17]. Meanwhile, the term "madrasah" technically refers to an institution or vehicle where students undergo a structured, guided, and controlled learning process. Although formally, a madrasah shares operational similarities with a school, culturally, it has a specific connotation as an educational institution that emphasizes the in-depth study of Islamic religious matters, thus commonly known as a religious school. Malik Fadjar, in his work *Madrasah and the Challenges of*

Modernity, emphasizes a sociological reality regarding the large number of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs), and Madrasah Aliyah (MA), which are under the umbrella of Islamic boarding schools.

The existence of Islamic boarding school-based madrasas creates an integrative educational mechanism to address the lack of religious education material in the formal madrasa curriculum. This is a response to public criticism that the modern madrasa curriculum has the potential to result in a less profound understanding and appreciation of religion for students. Through this Islamic boarding school-based model, students are given ample space to deepen their Islamic knowledge through the study of classical texts outside of formal madrasa hours under the direct guidance of kiai or ustadz. By living in dormitories (pondok), students have a golden opportunity for more intensive spiritual guidance and religious practice. Based on the conceptual synthesis above, the researcher formulates that Character Education in Islamic Boarding School-Based Madrasas is all forms of efforts to internalize character values that are implemented holistically in the daily life trajectory of students, which is carried out through continuous habituation under the supervision and guidance of Islamic boarding school supervisors to achieve noble character and moral perfection (makarim al-akhlaq).

Character education in the family

The family is the primary and fundamental educational institution in laying the foundation of an individual's personality. Thomas Lickona (1999) ^[7] authoritatively emphasized the crucial role of the family by stating: *"The family is the first school of virtue. It is where we learn about love. It is where we learn about commitment, sacrifice, and faith in something larger than ourselves. The family lays down the moral foundation on which all other social institutions build"*. This statement provides a philosophical understanding that the family is the first madrasah for virtue. Within the family environment, a child first learns the essence of love, commitment, the spirit of sacrifice, and belief in the existence of transcendental values. Thus, the family serves as the foundation for the entire structure of human moral education. For Muslims, providing education within the family environment is an absolute obligation, an individual obligation, for every parent. The family is positioned as the primary pillar in instilling character values in children. Character education within the family is a sacred mandate for Muslim parents to instill the values of monotheism, foster awareness of worship to the One and Only God, maintain obedience to sharia, and foster noble ethics in transactions, including respect for elders and compassion for younger ones (Alhamuddin, Eko, & Revan Dwi, 2022) ^[2]. Consistently implementing good values through habituation from an early age will foster a strong character and resilience against all forms of evil in the social environment. This is the true orientation of character education in the family, namely saving children from moral decadence (sinfulness) for the sake of happiness in this world and the hereafter.

This study defines character education in the family as all efforts and strategies of parents in instilling the values of character education through parenting patterns and daily habits

that are carried out continuously and controlled (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004) ^[5]. To equip their sons and daughters to have the integrity of faith and istiqamah in carrying out the teachings of Allah SWT and the Prophet SAW. Conceptually, synergy refers to a form of interconnected relationship, an effort to build collective commitment, cooperation, and consensus to achieve common goals effectively and optimally. In the context of education, synergy involves the integration of roles between various educational ecosystems to avoid the dichotomy of values. The researcher provides a limitation that the Synergy of Education in Islamic Boarding Schools and Family Environments in this study is a form of shared commitment, memorandum of understanding, and strategic collaboration between the authorities of Islamic boarding schools in Palu City and the parents of students. This synergy is realized through the implementation of a program to form the values of the students' character that is carried out systematically, controlled, evaluated, and intensively and continuously. The goal is to create a golden generation of Islam that is intellectually intelligent but remains graceful in morals, has independent skills, and is consistent in carrying out worship and avoiding all His prohibitions.

Methodology

This study uses qualitative methods. In qualitative research, theory serves only as a guide for data gathering and analysis (Nurdin & Pettalongi, 2022; Nurdin, Stockdale, & Scheepers, 2016) ^[9, 14]. The data were collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and written document analysis at the research site (Nurdin, Pettalongi, Ahsan, & Febrianti, 2023; Rusli, Hasyim, & Nurdin, 2021; Rusli & Nurdin, 2022) ^[10, 15, 16]. The research was conducted in a state Islamic senior high school boarding school in Palu City, Indonesia. The researcher chose the school because it has a boarding program and it is a reputable Islamic school that implements the boarding program effectively. The results of this study can later serve as a reference and guideline for building synergy between schools and students' families in character education building and become a model for other educational institutions. Data were collected through direct observation, focus group discussion, in-depth interviews, and written document analysis. The interviews involved the school principal, five teachers, and ten students. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were consulted with participants to obtain their consent (Nurdin, Scheepers, & Stockdale, 2022; Nurdin, Stockdale, & Scheepers, 2014) ^[12, 13]. The data analysis used a deductive approach, which can be interpreted as a research procedure that produces deductive data from interviews and field notes. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis from Strauss and Corbin (1998) ^[18]. The analysis started with open, axial, and selective coding. The final result of the data analysis is the set of themes identified.

Results and Discussion

The relationship between Islamic boarding school education and the family environment

The synergy between educational institutions and the family environment is a key variable and fundamental determinant in

the success of character formation of students at the Intensive Boarding School Ma'had Daarul Muhsin (IBSDM). This relationship is not based solely on administrative-transactional relationships between educational service providers and service users. The relationship is built on a foundation of deep trust and a shared vision of transcendental education. In contrast to the conventional boarding school model, which sometimes inadvertently creates emotional distance or disconnection between children and parents, IBSDM consciously positions the family as a strategic partner who still plays a central role in the educational process. Analysis of this interaction pattern shows the existence of a collaborative education model that strives to maintain consistency of values between home and boarding school, so that there is no dualism of values that can confuse students in the process of self-identification.

Family involvement in the IBSDM ecosystem begins rigorously from the initial stages of student recruitment. In

addition to academic selection, prospective students are required to undergo a readiness interview process aimed at aligning the Ma'had's vision and family expectations. During this process, the Ma'had disseminates a philosophical understanding of the guidance system, strict disciplinary rules, and spiritual targets, such as memorizing the Quran and deepening the study of classical texts. Parental commitment to fully support the Ma'had's regulations is an absolute prerequisite for this educational contract. This is based on the analytical awareness that inconsistencies between parenting styles at home and fostering patterns in the dormitory can trigger identity conflicts and hinder the effective internalization of values in students. Therefore, early alignment of vision is the key to successful character education at the Ma'had. The synergy is then manifested through various forms of structured collaboration. Functionally, this relationship can be mapped into several interconnected axiological dimensions:

Table 1: Synergy matrix of Ma'had education and family environment

Dimension of synergy	Forms of collaborative activities	Impact on the character of students
Informative communication	Periodic reports on moral and academic development via digital platforms and control books.	Strengthening students' attitudes of responsibility and openness towards self-evaluation.
Pedagogical consultation	In-depth interviews with parents at the selection stage and periodic guardian meetings.	Alignment of consistent parenting patterns between home and dormitory.
Psychosocial support	Emotional support for families during long-distance visits and motivation.	Increasing the mental resilience of students in facing the rhythm of the dormitory.
Integration of local values	Involvement of parents in Islamic holidays and tahfidz graduation ceremonies.	Strengthening religious identity and pride in spiritual achievements.

The first form of collaboration, through intensive communication between supervisors and parents, serves as a crucial information bridge. The use of modern communication technology allows supervisors to provide real-time reports on students' behavioral development. This communication extends beyond disciplinary issues to include progress in Quran memorization and emotional stability. Second, through regular meetings with guardians, a dialogue space is created for collective evaluation of the Ma'had program. This forum serves as a space for listening to the aspirations and input of students' families, ensuring that Ma'had policies remain relevant to children's developmental needs in the digital age. Third, family psychosocial support is a determining factor in students' mental resilience in undertaking the tahfidz program and competitive academic pursuits. Given that IBSDM students come from diverse regional backgrounds, not only from Palu City but also from various districts in Central Sulawesi, the geographical distance demands more meaningful communication. Parents are encouraged not to relinquish educational responsibility entirely to the Ma'had, but rather to remain the primary motivators, supporting their children in adapting to the busy pace of the dormitory. The emotional presence of parents, even though physically limited by the walls of the dormitory, provides a sense of security that accelerates the process of internalizing the values of independence and simplicity.

Theoretically, the relationships developed at IBSDM reflect what is known as the mesosystem in Bronfenbrenner's developmental ecology theory. From this perspective, the

relationship between two primary environments—the family (the first microsystem) and the madrasah/dormitory (the second microsystem)—directly influences the quality of an individual's character development. At IBSDM, families not only act as educational donors but also transform into active companions in the educational process. This synergy ensures that values such as role models (*uswah*), habituation (*ta'dib*), and supervision (*ri'ayah*) taught in the dormitory are maintained and consistently practiced when students return to their families during the holidays. The rich social dynamics at the Ma'had, fueled by a family background that is highly aware of the balance between general and religious education, create a solid learning community. This pattern of interaction confirms that the character development of students at IBSDM is the result of collective work involving all elements within the educational ecosystem. This strong synergy ultimately becomes the key to producing graduates who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also morally resilient and possess integrity that aligns with the Islamic values of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

The process of internalizing character education values

Based on in-depth observations during the research at Ma'had Daarul Muhsin in Palu City, the researcher developed a comprehensive analytical framework regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the character education system implemented in the institution. Ma'had Daarul Muhsin operates as an Islamic Boarding School (IBS) that is

structurally integrated with a state madrasah, thus possessing institutional characteristics that differ from traditional Islamic boarding schools or boarding schools in general. This position makes the ma'had not only a supporting unit for formal education, but also the main space for the development of the students' overall personality. In this context, character education is not understood as an additional program or incidental activity, but rather as the core of the entire educational process that takes place continuously. The analysis results show that the internalization of character values in the Ma'had Daarul Muhsin environment occurs through a holistic educational process designed to reach all dimensions of the students' lives. The boarding education system allows this institution to manage the students' space, time, activities, and social relations within a controlled educational ecosystem. The 24-hour educational system implemented is not simply intended to extend the learning period, but to create continuity between the values taught and the realities of the students' lives. Thus, the character education process does not stop at the cognitive or normative level, but continues with the habituation of attitudes, the strengthening of behaviors, and the formation of relatively stable moral dispositions.

The operational foundation of Ma'had Daarul Muhsin rests on an institutional philosophy that emphasizes the development of Muslim believers with noble morals, broad scientific insight, and social maturity in community life. This philosophy is not formulated abstractly, but is elaborated in the vision, mission, and educational objectives, which are then translated into a system of rules, regulations, and boarding culture. Five student characteristics are required: religious values, social ethics, discipline, responsibility, and independence. These five characteristics are not merely institutional slogans but are institutionalized through structured and consistent educational mechanisms. This demonstrates that character education at Ma'had Daarul Muhsin is systemic, not personalistic, and not dependent on a specific figure. The internalization of character education values at the Islamic Boarding School Ma'had Daarul Muhsin in Palu City does not occur partially or sporadically. Instead, these values are developed through an integrated educational system that combines academic, spiritual, cultural, and structural dimensions within a unified educational practice. This classification is important to emphasize so that the construction of character education in this study is not understood as a collection of stand-alone activities, but rather as a pedagogical system intertwined in shaping students' personalities holistically. The academic dimension serves as a vehicle for students' intellectual development through the integration of the formal madrasah curriculum with boarding programs such as memorizing the Quran, studying the scriptures, language familiarization, and a continuous learning achievement evaluation system. In this context, the academic process is not only directed at cognitive achievement, but also at developing an ethos of discipline, responsibility, and independent learning.

The spiritual dimension is manifested through the habituation of congregational worship, the strengthening of religious values, the internalization of manners, and an educational

orientation that places devotion to God Almighty as the fundamental goal of character formation. This dimension serves as the moral foundation that frames all educational activities in the boarding school environment. Meanwhile, the cultural dimension is evident in the formation of the Islamic boarding school habitus through collective life in the dormitory, a culture of discipline, simplicity, respect for teachers, and exemplary practices that occur in daily interactions. In this dimension, character is not taught verbally, but is instilled through a continuous process of social habituation. Furthermore, the structural dimension is reflected in the existence of a system of rules, a strict activity schedule, a multi-layered supervisory mechanism, and institutional communication patterns that connect the Islamic boarding school with the students' families. This institutional structure functions as both a control instrument and a pedagogical space that ensures the consistent internalization of values both in the dormitory environment and when the students are at home.

Character education at IBS Ma'had Daarul Muhsin Palu City cannot be understood solely as a moral development program, but rather as an educational ecosystem that works through the simultaneous and continuous integration of academic, spiritual, cultural, and structural dimensions. Within this framework, the formation of the students' character is not achieved through an indoctrination approach or moral lectures alone, but through a long process that involves repeated habituation, exemplary behavior from educators and caregivers, ongoing supervision, and reflection of values in concrete experiences of daily life. Students learn about discipline not only from normative explanations, but from strict and consistent time management. They understand responsibility not through conceptual definitions, but through collective tasks that must be fulfilled together. Likewise, the values of honesty, independence, and social concern grow through real interactions in dormitory life that require the active involvement of each individual.

From an Islamic educational perspective, the character education model implemented at Ma'had Daarul Muhsin demonstrates a shift in approach from instructional moral education to experiential moral education. Moral values are no longer positioned as teaching materials delivered verbally, but as life experiences that students repeatedly experience, internalize, and reflect upon. Pesantren culture serves as the primary medium for internalizing values, where norms and ethics are not only stated explicitly but also embodied in concrete daily practices. Thus, character education is not understood as a process of value transfer, but rather as a process of personality transformation. The excellence of the character education system at Ma'had Daarul Muhsin lies in its ability to integrate Islamic values into all aspects of students' lives without creating a dichotomy between learning and living spaces. Worship activities, formal learning, social activities, and even free time management are all placed within a coherent framework of values. This creates an educational atmosphere conducive to the growth of moral awareness that is not situational, but inherent in the students' personalities. Religious values are not only present in ritual moments.

Furthermore, the 24-hour educational system implemented allows for a multi-layered and continuous process of internalizing values. Supervision by caregivers and educators serves not merely as external control but as a means of educational development. Through intense and ongoing interaction, students receive direct feedback on their behavior, allowing for a reflective character-building process. In this context, discipline is not interpreted as a repressive restriction, but rather as a pedagogical instrument that guides students toward more mature self-management skills. This pattern of character education demonstrates that Ma'had Daarul Muhsin is not solely oriented toward achieving short-term goals, but rather toward the ongoing development of students' personalities. Character is understood as the result of a long process that requires consistency of values, pedagogical patience, and integration between the institution's systems and culture. Therefore, the effectiveness of character education at this school cannot be measured solely through momentary behavioral indicators, but through the tendencies of attitudes and moral dispositions that develop over time.



Fig 1: Students' evening activities

Conclusion

The research findings indicate that the character formation of students is not only carried out through a cognitive approach in the learning process, but also through practical habits manifested in the implementation of congregational prayer, Al-Qur'an recitation, moral development, environmental cleanliness management, and strengthening Islamic life order in the school. This process is strengthened through a multi-layered supervision mechanism involving teachers, school supervisors, and dormitory administrators so that the internalization of character values takes place consistently and in a controlled manner. Internalization of character education values in the Islamic Boarding School Ma'had Daarul Muhsin environment in Palu City is implemented through an integrated curriculum system that combines madrasah academic learning with Islamic boarding school development in the school. The internalization process takes place through formal learning activities, habituation of worship, exemplary behavior of teachers and supervisors, enforcement of discipline, and the formation of a religious culture in the daily lives of students. Character values such as religiosity, discipline, responsibility,

independence, cooperation, and social concern are systematically instilled through structured activities that take place continuously in the madrasah and dormitory environments. Internalization of character education values within the family environment of students at the Ma'had Daarul Muhsin Islamic Boarding School in Palu City occurs through strengthening habits, role models, and parental supervision of students' religious behavior and activities at home. The family serves as a continuing educational environment that reinforces the character values developed at the madrasah and ma'had, particularly in aspects of religious discipline, manners, responsibility, and control of children's social behavior.

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