

Formation of Religious Character through the Boarding School Program among Students at MAN 1 Jepara

Nur Cholid^{a,1}, Laqoniyatu Hilma^{b,2}

^{a,b} Universitas Wahid Hasyim Semarang

¹ nurcholid@unwahas.ac.id ; ² yudi40467@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The character crisis among today's young generation, particularly teenagers pursuing education in schools or madrasas, is evident through numerous cases such as bullying, brawls, social issues and other incidents. This affects students' character values, necessitating character. This research aims to analyze religious character building through the boarding school program for students at MAN 1 Jepara. The research focuses on 1) How religious character is built through the boarding school program for students at MAN 1 Jepara; 2) What are the supporting and inhibiting factors in religious character building through the boarding school program for students at MAN 1 Jepara. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach. Data collection methods include observation, interviews, and documentation. The research findings show that religious character building is implemented through three main methods: 1) Habituation, which includes five-time congregational prayers, Quran recitation, tahsin, ziyadah and diniyah studies; and 3) Disciplinary measures or punishment for rule violations. Supporting factors in building religious character through the boarding school program include caregiver/murobbi role modelling, boarding school environment and infrastructure facilities. Meanwhile, inhibiting factors in religious character building through the boarding school program include differences in student backgrounds, communication with parents, student mindsets and bullying in boarding schools.

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Introduction

Education is a process through which a person acquires knowledge, experience, and also improvement in skills, habits, and attitudes that help make life feel meaningful and complete. Education itself is regarded as a place for character formation besides the role of parents. Education does not only teach general knowledge, such as Biology, Physics, Mathematics, Sociology, Anthropology, and others, but also teaches religious knowledge so that it can balance the educational environment in the current era of globalization, where the character of today's younger generation tends to be negatively influenced.

Character issues have now become a particular concern within society, because people realize that one of the major problems faced by this nation is the low level of character possessed by its people. In Indonesia especially, character has deviated far from the fundamental values of the nation. Character is a set of value systems formed within an individual that distinguishes one person from another in terms of thinking, attitudes, and

behavior. A person's character can be seen from their behavior, attitudes, and actions.

The character crisis among today's young generation is evident from the many cases involving adolescents who are still in school, such as bullying, student brawls, promiscuity, and other cases. This situation shows serious concern regarding the character values of the current young generation. Education therefore becomes one of the important options that plays a strategic role in developing the character of young people, especially students. Nevertheless, concrete efforts are needed to strengthen students' character. The goal of education through character education is to help individuals develop their potential so that their lives feel meaningful and complete (*insan kamil*).

According to the Ministry of National Education (Kemendiknas), character education includes 18 character values that must be instilled. These 18 character values are derived from religion, Pancasila, culture, and the goals of national education, which are known as national character values. They include: religiosity, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, national spirit, love for the homeland, appreciation of achievement, friendliness/communicativeness, love of peace, fondness for reading, environmental awareness, social concern, and responsibility. One of the most important character values is religiosity. Religiosity, as a noun, refers to religion or belief in the existence of a natural power that governs human actions. Religion is related to God and is personal in nature. A religious person is characterized by faith and consistency in practicing religious worship in daily life. Therefore, religious character values must be implemented in education. To instill religious character, education must have a systematic learning plan in order to produce students who are well-mannered, ethical, moral, polite, and possess noble character within society.

Character education is an educational process that instills and develops both the physical and spiritual aspects of children toward becoming better individuals with good morals, which are applied and practiced in daily life. Currently, character education has become very important, not only in the school environment but also within the family and the community, and even throughout a person's life from childhood to adulthood. As stated in the Hadith narrated by Ibn Majah:

حَدَّثَنَا الْعَبَّاسُ بْنُ الْوَلِيدِ الْدِمَشْقِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا عَلِيُّ بْنُ عَاشٍ، حَدَّثَنَا سَعِيدُ بْنُ عَمَّارَةَ، أَخْبَرَنَا
الْأَرْثُ بْنُ النَّعْمَانِ، سَمِعْتُ أَنَسَ بْنَ مَالِكٍ، يُدِثُّ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّهُ قَالَ
" أَكْرَمُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ وَأَحْسِنُوا أَدَبَكُمْ "

"Honor your children and educate them with good character." (H.R. Ibnu Majah).

This Hadith explains the importance of honoring and educating children by providing them with proper education, guiding them in the right direction, and doing good deeds in order to cultivate noble character in children. This Hadith also contains teachings about education. More importantly, this Hadith reflects the behavior and personality of the Prophet Muhammad SAW as an exemplary role model who deserves to be emulated by every Muslim personality.

Based on **UU No 20 Tahun 2003 Pasal 3 tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional**, national education functions to develop abilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to educate the life of the nation. It aims to develop the potential of learners so that they become human beings who are faithful and devoted to Tuhan Yang Maha Esa, possess noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens.

However, current education has not fully fulfilled the function of national education. In many educational institutions today, there are still numerous students who do not comply with school regulations, cheat, fail to complete assignments, use inappropriate language, arrive late, and disobey teachers. All of these behaviors stem from the lack of religious character education, which is often obtained only through Islamic Religious Education subjects.

Observing this phenomenon, many schools have sought to strengthen religious character by implementing boarding school programs.

One example is MAN 1 Jepara, which is a formal educational institution with a boarding school program that is expected to become an ideal place for students to learn and actualize religious values in their daily lives. Based on a statement from the Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs of MAN 1 Jepara, Tafrikan, the effort to develop dormitory facilities serves as a starting point for the development of scientific knowledge, especially religious knowledge. The goal is for students of MAN 1 Jepara not only to master science and technology, but also to acquire religious knowledge as a provision for their personal lives and for society.

This study aims to examine in depth the process of forming religious character through the boarding school program at MAN 1 Jepara, as well as to identify the factors that support and hinder the process. The results of this research are expected to make a significant contribution to the development of an effective boarding school-based character education model.

Research Method

This study is a field research, namely research conducted directly in the field on the object being studied in order to obtain and collect the required data. Methodologically, this research is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is a type of research that produces findings that cannot be obtained through statistical procedures or other forms of quantification (measurement). This means that the data obtained are in the form of descriptions, such as written or spoken words from individuals and observed behaviors, which are then developed and followed by data analysis. Therefore, the data collected are not in the form of numerical figures.

The data collection methods used in this study include observation, interviews, and documentation. The research location is MAN 1 Jepara. The sources of data in this study consist of the vice principal for curriculum affairs, boarding school caregivers/murobbi, and students of MAN 1 Jepara. The data analysis methods applied include data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and verification. To ensure data validity, this study employs source triangulation. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach, which aims to accurately explain events and the characteristics of specific individuals or groups in describing the process of forming religious character through the boarding school program among students at MAN 1 Jepara.

Result and Discussion

1. Formation of Religious Character through the Boarding School Program among Students at MAN 1 Jepara

Religious character is a form of character that has deep significance in shaping mature student character. This religious character functions as an important parameter in developing positive habits, enabling students to apply moral, spiritual, or religious values that they have acquired from the family, school, and community environments in their daily lives. An example of this is MAN 1 Jepara with its boarding school program, which is expected to shape students' religious character. The formation of religious character at MAN 1 Jepara through the boarding school program is implemented through habituation, role modeling, and *takziran*.

One of the reasons MAN 1 Jepara established the boarding school program in 2018 was the community's need for a madrasah that could accommodate children in Jepara by integrating general knowledge and religious knowledge within a single vision of the madrasah. *Al Fikra* is the name of the boarding school at MAN 1 Jepara, which means "intellectual," with the aim of producing students who are intellectually capable, virtuous, and humanistic. This is realized through the tahfidz and science class programs that are offered.

The boarding school at MAN 1 Jepara applies the habituation method in forming students'

religious character through Islamic habituation. This is because character formation cannot be achieved solely through the delivery of material, but must also be supported by practice, namely continuous habituation so that students become accustomed to performing it. The following are several ways of forming students' character through the habituation method, including:

a. **Congregational Prayers.** Students are required to perform the five daily congregational prayers at the boarding school. This aims to cultivate discipline and punctuality in worship. The habituation of congregational prayers is directly supervised by the caregivers, with the assistance of boarding school administrators for both male and female students who coordinate attendance during congregational prayers.

b. **Qur'anic Recitation (Tadarus), Tahsin, and Ziyadah.** Forming religious character is not merely about teaching rituals, but about fostering deep spiritual awareness. Understanding and improving the recitation of the Qur'an through tadarus, tahsin, and ziyadah is therefore essential.

c. **Diniyah.** In the diniyah program, students receive instruction in several classical Islamic texts taught by ustadz/ustadzah according to a predetermined schedule. The purpose is not only for students to obtain general literacy lessons in the morning, but also to participate in evening diniyah sessions so that their character can be shaped. This includes character toward Allah, parents/teachers, peers, and oneself. The texts taught include *Hidayatul Mustafid*, *Aqidatul Awam*, *Ta'lim Muta'alim*, *Risalatul Mahid*, and *Fathul Qorib*.

In the formation of students' character in the boarding school, role modeling from each caregiver (*pengasuh/murobbi*) is also necessary, because students frequently, or almost every day, interact with their caregivers. One form of role modeling practiced by caregivers is performing the five daily congregational prayers. Such actions serve as examples of goodness and exemplary conduct for students in shaping their character. In relation to this, a boarding school caregiver explained as follows:

"Pembentukan karakter religus yang efektif lainnya yaitu ketika pengasuh memberikan contoh atau teladan yang baik seperti siswa wajib shalat berjamaah murobbi juga wajib berjamaah, jadi di sini memang murobbi setiap jamaah harus kelihatan sama anak-anak sebagai contoh. Karena kan ada pengasuh yang kurang jamaah sebab memang ada kegiatan, jadi anak-anak bertanya kok pengasuh itu ngga pernah jamaah. Hal inilah yang menjadi PR tersendiri bagi para murobbi dan sebagai evaluasi kami, karena kami di sini sebagai orang tua kedua, jadi memang harus mencontohkan yang baik untuk anak-anak".

Another form of role modeling demonstrated by caregivers is smiling, greeting, and engaging in friendly interaction whenever they meet students. This is done so that students imitate and apply it in their daily lives when meeting anyone, whether caregivers, friends, or their daytime teachers. Through this example, students become accustomed to smiling and develop good manners (*unggah-ungguh*).

Regarding this matter, a boarding school caregiver explained as follows:

"Pengasuh ketika bertemu siswa memang harus senyum, salam dan sapa tidak ada yang namanya judes gitu. Yang murobbi lakukan ini agar siswa boarding meniru dan mencontoh ketika bertemu banyak orang mereka akan terbiasa dengan unggah ungguhnya yang baik".

Role modeling in teaching is an important aspect that every educator must possess. Therefore, caregivers or *murobbi* at the boarding school of MAN 1 Jepara are required to meet criteria determined by the madrasah. Those involved in the tahfidz program must maintain

strong memorization and have a recognized chain of transmission (*bersanad*), while those in the science program are expected to have achievements in science, research, or academics. However, the madrasah does not only seek individuals who are intellectually capable, but also those with good moral character. Boarding school caregivers, in addition to being educated, generally have strong backgrounds, such as having studied in Islamic boarding schools, and some are even graduates from Egypt. With their experiences in pesantren, caregivers are expected to guide students not only in scientific knowledge but also in religious knowledge and moral conduct, so that students are formed to be not only academically and non-academically competent, but also strong in their religious character.

The formation of students' religious character also requires the implementation of *takziran*. *Takzir* is a form of accountability for violations of boarding school rules. Students who receive *takzir* often experience intense inner conflict, including feelings of anger toward the disciplinary authority and a sense of shame among fellow students. In addition, they experience deep regret over their actions. This process ultimately builds students' awareness not to repeat similar mistakes.

The implementation of *takziran* at the boarding school of MAN 1 Jepara is educational in nature and beneficial for everyone, not only for those who commit violations. For example, students may be assigned to clean the mosque, mop and sweep floors, or clean dirty areas of the boarding school such as storage rooms or bathrooms. *Takziran* can be considered successful if students do not repeat their mistakes or if the frequency of *takzir* decreases.

Regarding this matter, a boarding school caregiver explained as follows:

"Tapi takzirnya bukan yang cuman membaca Al Qur'an, itu kan biasa, saya suruh bersih-bersih. Tak suruh bersihin masjid, dipel, disapu, atau tak suruh bersihin di boarding yang kotor, gudang, atau tempat mandi dan kemarin saya tanyain berapa takzirannya, katanya baru dua Alhamdulillahlah ada peningkatan dengan diterapkannya takziran ini."

The formation of students' religious character through the boarding school system at MAN 1 Jepara is still an ongoing process, starting from students' activities in the morning until night, and the programs continue to be improved. Overall, the boarding school caregivers at MAN 1 Jepara strive to provide the best for their students and aspire to develop a boarding school similar to other pesantren, although current conditions have not yet fully allowed this to be realized.

2. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Formation of Religious Character through the Boarding School Program among Students at MAN 1 Jepara

Supporting Factors

The supporting factors in the formation of religious character through the boarding school program among students at MAN 1 Jepara include the role modeling of caregivers (*pengasuh/murobbi*), the boarding school environment, and the availability of facilities and infrastructure.

a. Role Modeling of Caregivers (*Pengasuh/Murobbi*). A caregiver serves as a role model and example for students. When caregivers possess good habits in terms of morals, actions, and discipline, these qualities are reflected in the students. The caregivers at the boarding school of MAN 1 Jepara consistently apply the 3S principle—smile, greeting, and friendly interaction (*senyum, salam, dan sapa*)—when meeting students. They also demonstrate discipline by actively participating in and attending daily activities, such as congregational prayers, while setting a positive example for students, as the boarding school requires the performance of the

five daily congregational prayers.

b. Boarding School Environment. The environment plays a significant role in shaping students' religious character, because a comfortable and positive environment leads to the development of good and religious character. It is evident that some students at the boarding school of MAN 1 Jepara had never previously experienced living in a pesantren or boarding school, and they perceived a significant difference after entering the boarding school. This is because the environment of the MAN 1 Jepara boarding school closely resembles that of Islamic boarding schools (*pondok pesantren*) in terms of daily activities, including Islamic habituation and social conditions.

c. Facilities and Infrastructure. Masjid Quba is one of the main facilities, where religious activities at MAN 1 Jepara are conducted. These activities include congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation, *Maulid al-Barzanji* recitation, *wirid*, and other religious activities.

Inhibiting Factors

The inhibiting factors in the formation of religious character through the boarding school program among students at MAN 1 Jepara include differences in students' backgrounds, communication with parents, students' mindsets, and bullying.

a. Students' Backgrounds. The diverse backgrounds of boarding school students, including differences in prior knowledge and social status, constitute an obstacle to the formation of religious character. Some students at the boarding school of MAN 1 Jepara come from prominent families, such as officials or entrepreneurs, which can pose challenges in shaping religious character.

b. Communication with Parents. Communication between parents and caregivers is very important. However, some parents or guardians experience miscommunication and find it difficult to understand or accept the regulations applied in the boarding school, such as rules regarding visits (*sambangan*) or the sending of snacks, which are strictly prohibited.

c. Students' Mindsets. Students' ways of thinking or mindsets can also hinder the formation of religious character. When their mindsets do not align with the expectations set upon entering the boarding school, they tend to be more difficult to guide.

d. Bullying. Bullying can be a serious inhibiting factor in the formation of religious character. When bullying occurs, the boarding school environment, which should be conducive, instead becomes uncomfortable for students. Although bullying in the boarding school tends to be verbal in nature, it can still cause psychological pressure, decreased self-confidence, and prolonged trauma for students.

To overcome the existing obstacles, caregivers need to provide understanding and carry out a more personal approach, especially toward students who come from affluent families, through a heart-to-heart approach. In this way, the students' learning process can be properly monitored. Caregivers must also consistently provide motivation to their students. In addition, stronger communication with students' parents is emphasized so that parents can be more cooperative regarding the regulations applied in the boarding school. Firmness in handling bullying cases within the boarding school is also essential.

Conclusion

The Al Fikra boarding school program at MAN 1 Jepara, which began in 2018, was established in response to the community's need for an educational model that integrates general knowledge and religious education. The formation of religious character is

implemented through three main and complementary methods. The first is Islamic habituation, which includes activities such as congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation, tahsin, ziyadah, and diniyah. The second is role modeling by caregivers (*pengasuh/murobbi*) in various aspects of daily life, and the third is the application of educational *takziran* as a form of learning consequence.

The success of this program is supported by several key factors, including the consistent role modeling of caregivers in providing positive examples, a boarding school environment that is conducive to learning and character formation, and the availability of adequate facilities and infrastructure, particularly Masjid Quba as the center of religious activities.

Nevertheless, the program also faces several challenges in its implementation. Differences in students' backgrounds, challenges in communication with parents, diversity in students' mindsets, and issues of verbal bullying are inhibiting factors that need to be addressed. To overcome these challenges, the school has implemented various solutions, such as a personal approach toward students, improved communication with parents, consistent motivation, and firm action in handling bullying cases.

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