

Cultivation of character education in the boarding school system: Case study of the tahfiz qur'an islamic boarding school tanjung morawa

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the extent to which the concept, as well as inhibiting factors and at the same time analyze efforts to overcome the behavior of students in instilling character education in the boarding school system at the Tahfiz Qur'an Fajar Islam Tanjung Morawa Islamic boarding school. This type of research is descriptive qualitative research, which aims to describe and analyze phenomena related to the instillation of character education in the boarding school system. The main data sources come from teachers, students, and related documents that support the learning process. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The validity of the data was tested through triangulation techniques, by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure the consistency and validity of the findings. Data analysis was carried out through the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The overall results of the study indicate that this Islamic boarding school has succeeded in implementing character education through a systematic and well-organized approach. However, strengthening is needed in the aspects of supervision and evaluation of the implementation of sanctions and rewards, in order to ensure that character values can be applied more consistently and sustainably.

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Introduction

The moral degradation among young people has become an increasingly common sight in society today. Acts of promiscuity, drug abuse, graffiti on school uniforms, and reckless convoys on the highway are troubling behaviors that highlight a growing issue in character development. Parents and educators alike find themselves deeply concerned about the future of the next generation, as these behaviors reflect a decline in ethical standards and values (Ellys Lossus Urbaningrum, at al., 2025).

One of the significant factors influencing this phenomenon is the pervasive impact of social media. The digital era has exposed young minds to a vast array of information, often without proper guidance on distinguishing positive influences from harmful ones. The glorification of reckless behavior, coupled with peer pressure, has contributed to a culture of rebellion and defiance against societal norms (Leli Patimah1, at al., 2021).

Another major issue is the weakening of character education within the school system. While academic excellence remains a priority, the development of ethical and moral values often takes a backseat. The absence of structured programs focusing on character building has led to a generation that struggles to uphold integrity and responsibility. Research suggests that Living Values Education could be an effective method in reinforcing moral principles among students, cultivating a sense of empathy, respect, and accountability (Muhammad Bagaskara Rizqy Harmadi, et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the decline in social oversight has allowed these behaviors to persist. The erosion of traditional norms and values, particularly those rooted in family and religious teachings, has weakened communal responsibility. The absence of strong moral leadership has left many young individuals without role models to guide their development.

To address this pressing issue, several initiatives could be pursued. First, the integration of comprehensive character education into school curricula can help foster ethical awareness among students. This approach would encourage schools to prioritize moral development alongside intellectual growth. Second, rehabilitative programs for drug abuse must shift toward a more supportive model, focusing on recovery rather than punitive measures. Third, communities and policymakers must collaborate to create youth engagement initiatives, offering constructive activities and mentorship programs to steer young individuals toward positive contributions.

In conclusion, reversing the trend of moral decline among young people requires a multi-faceted approach, blending education, social support, and community involvement. The responsibility to safeguard future generations falls upon parents, educators, and policymakers alike. It is only through collective effort that society can restore ethical values and ensure a brighter future for the youth.

According to Pohan, education has basically existed since the beginning of human existence on earth, although in a simple form, therefore the educational process develops along with the life journey of humans Pohan (2016). Character education is able to form good morals that will become an integral part of faith and determine the character of a Muslim (Khaidir & Qorib, 2023).

Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the national education system, character education actually occupies an important position, this can be seen from the purpose of national education which states that: "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, aiming to develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe and fear God Almighty, noble character, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and democratic and responsible citizens (Pohan & Zailani, 2016).

The cultivation of character education has a role in improving morals, as well as a tool that is able to direct a person to do good and is able to influence positive attitudes in their environment. Effective character education is able to have an impact on a person's development, especially in terms of personality, morals, and social (Oktaviyenna & Zailani, 2023). Character education is expected not only from learning at school, but also includes education provided by parents at home and community involvement in the surrounding environment, Nuryanto (2019).

To achieve the goal, educate intelligent and characterful individuals, the right method is needed. Ridwan, outlined the objectives of character education, including: a). Creating a supportive school atmosphere for students and all school residents in conducting educational interactions that are in line with character values. b). Developing students who have emotional and spiritual intelligence (ESQ). c). Strengthening various positive behaviors shown by students through learning activities and habits in the classroom and at school. d). Improving various negative behaviors shown by students both in the school environment and at home (Ridwan, 2016).

As is the case with character cultivation in school dormitories, because dormitories function as residences for students and educators, which is currently often referred to as "Boarding School" (Saugi, 2020). According to the 2005 KBBI Indonesian Dictionary, a

dormitory is defined as a temporary residence for a person, which is managed by a dormitory head and has several rooms in it then interpreted into Indonesian as a boarding school.

The cultivation of character education in students in boarding school institutions aims to form the values of honesty, good manners, and morals in daily life formed from an environment that leads to the cultivation of systematic character education as a benchmark for the success of educational goals (Ujud, 2023). A dormitory is a residence intended for students, employees, or other parties, while a dormitory means living together in a certain building or area (Astuti, 2023).

Boarding schools as a current educational model are certainly inseparable from the concept of pesantren, therefore the learning objectives of boarding schools are also the same as those in Islamic boarding schools (Triyono, 2019). Pesantren is also an Islamic educational institution that is managed in a traditional manner and implements a dormitory system, where the kiai is the central figure in its implementation (Sabiq 2020).

The cultivation of character education in pesantren has the goal of forming the values of honesty, manners, and morals in daily life which are formed from the environment that leads to the cultivation of holistic character education. Boarding school is a place of boarding education, in the community it is also understood as a boarding school, which also has a residential (boarding system). Pesantren is also a solution that bridges the expectations of parents to provide education that includes religious lessons and at the same time general knowledge to children by prioritizing moral and ethical education (Manaf, 2022).

The results of the previous Nugraheni research journal, stated that the cultivation of character education in the boarding school system is more about instilling a sense of responsibility and involving students in organizational activities, all of which aim to make students able to interact socially with their environment, with this pattern students are also taught to maintain good manners with friends and peers who are more senior and practice 5S in daily life by greeting, greeting, smiling, manners and politeness, and being able to be responsible for mandates such as the picket duties that have been given, Nugraheni (2021).

The Tanjung Morawa Islamic Tahfiz Qur'an Islamic Boarding School is one of the Islamic boarding schools, which focuses on memorizing the Qur'an (Tahfiz) and several subject contents that complement the curriculum, such as Aqidah, fiqh, hadith, Adabul mufrad, Islamic history which is a complement to the curriculum as taught in pesantren in general. In addition, general lesson content such as mathematics, Indonesian, and science is also an integrated part of this boarding school institution. In addition to pursuing academic and religious achievements, this pesantren also prioritizes the cultivation of character values, such as discipline, responsibility, honesty, and cooperation, all of which are focused on the purpose of instilling character education.

At Tahfiz Qur'an Fajar Islam Islamic Boarding School in Tanjung Morawa, the occurrence of ghasab behavior where students use others' belongings without permission—can be traced back to the dynamics of boarding school life. In a communal setting where students share everything from study spaces to daily routines, certain behaviors develop over time and become ingrained in the school's social fabric. Among these behaviors, ghasab often emerges subtly, influenced by environmental factors, particularly the role of senior students in shaping the actions of their juniors.

Initially, ghasab may seem like a harmless borrowing habit, particularly when senior students casually take items without asking. For younger students who are still adjusting to boarding school life, this behavior can be perceived as normal, simply because it is practiced by those they look up to. The lack of clear consequences or corrective actions further reinforces its acceptance, making it difficult to distinguish between ethical borrowing and taking without consent. Over time, students begin mirroring this habit, not necessarily out of malice, but due to their environment subtly encouraging it.

According to Abdul Manaf (2022), senior students often introduce ghasab behavior to juniors who have little understanding of its ethical implications. In a traditional pesantren setting, students frequently observe and adopt behaviors demonstrated by their elders, whether positive or negative. This form of social learning gradually turns ghasab into an

unspoken norm, one that may even be perceived as a necessary survival skill within the boarding school environment.

Despite the sense of camaraderie and shared experiences among students, ghasab should not be ignored. Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of amanah (trustworthiness), reinforcing the principle that taking anything without permission no matter how trivial is impermissible. The concept of integrity is central to Islamic ethics, and fostering an environment where students actively respect ownership and seek permission is essential in shaping their moral development.

Addressing ghasab behavior requires a structured approach to character education. It begins with awareness, ensuring students understand why ghasab is wrong and how seemingly small acts can lead to greater ethical concerns. Teachers and senior students must become role models, demonstrating the importance of asking for permission, being mindful of others' belongings, and reinforcing Islamic values in every aspect of student life. Policies that encourage open communication and strict accountability can also be implemented to ensure students develop a strong sense of responsibility toward their actions.

Over time, with proper guidance, students at Tahfiz Qur'an Fajar Islam will come to understand that trust and respect are fundamental to their education. By gradually shifting the culture away from ghasab tolerance, the boarding school can instill lasting values that shape students into ethical and principled individuals, ensuring their behavior aligns with the teachings of Islamic integrity.

Method

The study conducted at the Tahfiz Qur'an Islamic Boarding School in Tanjung Morawa aimed to explore the dynamics of moral and character education within a structured Islamic learning environment. Employing a qualitative approach, this research sought to understand and interpret the prevailing phenomenon by deeply engaging with the subjects and their surroundings.

The researcher served as the primary instrument, ensuring that data collection was purposeful and comprehensive (Dede Ridho Firdaus, 2023). Snowball sampling was used to identify key informants who could provide rich insights into the educational system. The study commenced with preliminary observations on April 3, 2024, and continued until its conclusion in November of the same year.

The research subjects included 50 students from the Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) level, alongside teachers, the boarding school director, and other relevant stakeholders. The study gathered data from diverse sources, including direct observations of learning activities, interviews with educators and administrators, and official documentation related to the school's curriculum and policies.

To ensure the validity of the findings, triangulation was employed, combining multiple data collection methods. In-depth interviews provided firsthand accounts of experiences and perspectives, while participant observation allowed for real-time insights into the students' daily interactions and learning processes. Additionally, documentation served as a supplementary source of verification, reinforcing the credibility of the gathered information (Titin Ijah, 2020).

The findings revealed a strong emphasis on character development through Qur'anic memorization and religious instruction. The boarding school environment fostered discipline, resilience, and a deep spiritual connection among students. However, the study also identified challenges, such as the need for curriculum adaptations to integrate modern educational methodologies while maintaining traditional values (Muh Idris, et al., 2023).

Results and Discussion

Results

After conducting observations, interviews and documentation related to the Cultivation of Character Education in the boarding school system at the Tahfiz Qur'an Islamic Boarding School Tanjung Morawa are as follows:

1. Integrating Islamic values into the daily activities of a tahfiz Qur'an Islamic boarding school plays a crucial role in shaping student behavior and instilling character education. A holistic approach ensures that students not only memorize the Qur'an but also internalize its teachings in their everyday lives. This is achieved through structured religious practices, ethical teachings, and the active participation of both students and teachers in fostering a spiritually enriching environment. One of the key activities in this system is the practice of qiyamullail (night prayer), which serves as a means of spiritual discipline and devotion. By engaging in this practice collectively, students develop a sense of commitment to worship and strengthen their faith. The communal aspect of qiyamullail fosters unity and shared spiritual growth, reinforcing the importance of perseverance and sincerity in religious observance (Muhammad Fakri Nasruddin, et al., 2022).

Additionally, the study of Islamic adab books every Saturday night is a fundamental component of character education. This session is attended by all students and teachers, ensuring that the principles of Islamic etiquette and morality are not only taught but also exemplified by educators. The involvement of senior teachers and a kiyai in leading these discussions underscores the significance of these teachings, as they provide authoritative guidance on proper conduct, respect for elders, and adherence to Islamic ethics. The sensitivity of these discussions necessitates careful handling, ensuring that students grasp the depth of Islamic manners and their application in daily interactions.

Research highlights the effectiveness of behavioral approaches in Islamic boarding schools for character formation. A study on Islamic education values in boarding schools emphasizes that structured religious practices, such as Qur'an memorization and ethical habituation, significantly impact students' discipline, faith, and moral development. Another study on character education implementation in pesantren underscores the role of exemplary behavior, habituation, and direct guidance in shaping students' moral outlook. Furthermore, literature on Islamic psychology perspectives in boarding school education discusses how Islamic values contribute to holistic character formation, reinforcing obedience to God and respect for teachers and peers.

By embedding these practices into the boarding school system, students not only develop strong religious foundations but also cultivate respect, discipline, and ethical awareness. The integration of Islamic values into structured activities ensures that character education is not merely theoretical but actively lived and reinforced within the school environment. This approach fosters a deep-rooted sense of responsibility and devotion, preparing students to embody Islamic principles in their personal and communal lives.

2. At Tahfiz Qur'an Fajar Islam Islamic Boarding School in Tanjung Morawa, the integration of religious values into students' daily lives is not merely theoretical it is deeply ingrained in their character education system. The institution does not focus solely on memorizing the Qur'an but ensures that students embody moral and ethical principles in their interactions and responsibilities. One of the key approaches employed in this process is the 3S principle smile, greet, and welcome guests, a simple yet profound practice that cultivates respect, hospitality, and positive social engagement. Each morning, students begin their day by smiling, offering greetings, and exchanging warm welcomes with peers and teachers. This practice not only fosters a sense of unity but also instills kindness and mutual respect, reflecting Islamic teachings on exemplary behavior. When visitors arrive at the boarding school, students instinctively apply the 3S principle—welcoming guests politely, offering a sincere smile, and greeting them with respect. This habitual behavior strengthens their awareness of Islamic etiquette and social responsibility (Imam Fauzi, et al., 2022).

The ustaz and kyai play a crucial role in ensuring that students internalize the 3S principle, not only by providing guidance but also by demonstrating these values in their daily interactions. Every conversation whether between teachers and students or among peers embodies politeness, warmth, and care for other. Through consistent practice, students naturally develop a character that appreciates the value of kindness and respect, understanding that small gestures can have a significant impact on social harmony.

Research in character education highlights the psychological and social benefits of habitual practices like the 3S principle. Studies on Islamic education in boarding schools indicate that positive interactions based on religious values strengthen students' discipline and emotional intelligence. Another study on character development in Islamic institutions reveals that habitual communication practices, such as smiling and greeting, enhance students' ability to foster peaceful and respectful relationships.

Over time, the 3S principle becomes an integral part of student life at Tahfiz Qur'an Fajar Islam, shaping their interactions both within and beyond the school environment. They carry these values into their broader social circles, ensuring that their character education is not confined to academic settings but is fully reflected in their everyday conduct. Through smiling, greeting, and welcoming guests, students learn not only how to interact with others but also how to embody the Islamic principles of compassion and respect, preparing them to become individuals who uphold both spiritual and moral integrity.

3. In addition to social practices, students are trained to uphold cleanliness and responsibility by tidying up scattered sandals and maintaining a disciplined attitude in all environments. These activities emphasize attentiveness, self-awareness, and respect for communal spaces, ensuring that students internalize values of orderliness and cooperation. Such structured character development contributes to shaping individuals who are mindful of their surroundings and exhibit strong moral integrity.

However, despite these strengths, certain behavioral challenges persist, particularly regarding ghasop behavior the act of taking or using others' belongings without permission. Addressing this issue requires a multi-faceted approach, as external influences, including peer relationships, often hinder the complete internalization of moral teachings. Friendships play a significant role in shaping students' behavioral tendencies, and while social bonds are essential for growth, they can also contribute to negative patterns if not guided properly.

To mitigate such issues, strengthening the value of respecting others' property must be prioritized. One effective strategy is the implementation of ethical discussions where students reflect on the importance of ownership and trust. Through Qur'anic studies and hadith lessons, they can better understand the significance of honesty and integrity. These teachings should be reinforced through interactive dialogues and real-life case studies, allowing students to see the consequences of dishonesty and the benefits of ethical behavior.

Additionally, continuous monitoring and targeted interventions are necessary to ensure that character education remains consistent and effective. One approach is establishing a mentorship system, where senior students or educators provide personalized guidance to those struggling with behavioral adjustments. Regular evaluations can help identify recurring patterns of misconduct, enabling educators to tailor corrective measures that focus on moral reflection rather than punitive action.

The role of educators and administrators is crucial in sustaining the pesantren's mission of moral development. By fostering a supportive, discipline-oriented atmosphere, teachers can ensure that students maintain ethical behavior beyond structured settings. Encouraging peer accountability through group

initiatives can also be an effective strategy in discouraging negative habits while reinforcing communal responsibility.

Discussion

The cultivation of character education within the boarding school system at Tahfiz Qur'an Fajar Islam Islamic Boarding School in Tanjung Morawa showcases a structured approach to instilling moral values and discipline among students. The system effectively integrates religious teachings with daily practices, shaping a learning environment where students develop a deep sense of responsibility, independence, and ethical awareness. Students benefit from a meticulously designed curriculum that combines Qur'anic memorization with practical applications of Islamic teachings. Within this framework, discipline is instilled through daily routines, prayer schedules, and adherence to strict regulations that promote self-governance. The boarding school environment fosters a close-knit community where students learn not only from their instructors but also from their peers, reinforcing values of respect, humility, and cooperation.

Reward and punishment mechanisms further solidify students' moral development. Achievements in Qur'anic recitation and exemplary behavior are recognized, motivating students to strive for self-improvement. Conversely, corrective measures for behavioral missteps are applied with the aim of guiding students toward self-awareness rather than punitive deterrence. This balance ensures that discipline is instilled not out of fear but through an understanding of personal accountability.

Beyond the structured curriculum, extracurricular activities such as tadabbur alam a reflective practice where students engage with nature to contemplate divine creation play a crucial role in strengthening spiritual insight and emotional maturity. Preaching assignments provide students with opportunities to refine their communication skills, develop confidence, and foster meaningful social interactions. Through these activities, students cultivate leadership traits that prepare them to navigate broader societal roles with wisdom and integrity.

Despite these strengths, the system also faces challenges that require ongoing refinement. While discipline and structured routines create a stable learning environment, deeper efforts are needed to strengthen core values such as honesty, empathy, and accountability beyond the confines of institutional rules. Enhancing mentorship programs and fostering peer-based moral development could enrich students' emotional resilience and ethical reasoning, ensuring that they internalize these values as guiding principles for life.

Moreover, the integration of modern pedagogical approaches could further amplify character education. Digital tools and contemporary Islamic scholarship can serve as invaluable resources to bridge traditional teachings with present-day applications, making lessons more dynamic and relevant. By adapting methodologies without compromising Islamic values, the boarding school can enhance its approach to moral development, ensuring that students emerge as well-rounded individuals equipped to contribute meaningfully to society.

In conclusion, the boarding school system at Tahfiz Qur'an Fajar Islam has made commendable efforts in shaping the character of its students. However, the journey toward comprehensive and sustainable character education is an evolving process that demands continuous refinement. Strengthening mentorship, adapting pedagogical tools, and reinforcing internal values will further solidify the foundation upon which students develop into principled, responsible individuals. The integration of discipline, faith, and personal development within this system has the potential to create a generation of leaders who uphold moral integrity while navigating the complexities of the modern world.

Conclusion

The cultivation of character education at Tahfiz Qur'an Fajar Islam Islamic Boarding School in Tanjung Morawa demonstrates a highly structured approach rooted in Islamic values and worship practices. Through consistent adherence to religious rituals such as the Fardhu prayer at designated times and Qiyamullail (night prayers), students develop strong spiritual discipline and an intrinsic connection to their faith. The integration of tadabbur Qur'an a reflective practice that encourages deep contemplation of Qur'anic verses further strengthens

their moral and ethical awareness, ensuring that character-building is ingrained within their daily routines.

One of the key components of this educational model is the requirement for students to arrive at the mosque 15 minutes before the call to prayer. This structured practice instills a strong sense of discipline and commitment to worship, emphasizing the importance of punctuality and adherence to obligations. Beyond religious duties, this habit serves as a philosophical foundation for time management, reinforcing students' ability to fulfill responsibilities in a timely and organized manner.

The boarding school system has proven to be an effective mechanism for character development, with students benefiting from an environment that nurtures discipline, independence, and social awareness. Reward and punishment mechanisms play a crucial role in reinforcing desirable behaviors, ensuring that students internalize values such as honesty, responsibility, and accountability. Extracurricular activities, including preaching assignments and nature reflections, foster confidence, public speaking skills, and social engagement, further shaping students into well-rounded individuals. Despite these successes, continuous improvements are necessary to enhance the consistency and effectiveness of character education. Strengthening supervision mechanisms will allow for more thorough monitoring of student behavior and progress, ensuring that moral and ethical development remains a primary focus. Evaluation strategies should be refined to measure the long-term impact of character-building efforts, identifying areas for enhancement and adaptation. Additionally, refining punishment and reward systems to align more closely with Islamic principles could improve students' motivation to uphold ethical values voluntarily rather than out of obligation.

Overall, the boarding school system at Tahfiz Qur'an Fajar Islam has successfully established a structured, faith-based approach to character education. Through worship, discipline, and reflective learning, students are shaped into individuals who embody Islamic values in their daily lives. However, continued development in supervision, evaluation, and reinforcement strategies is essential to ensure that this model remains sustainable, adaptable, and capable of addressing emerging challenges in modern Islamic education. By maintaining a balance between traditional religious instruction and contemporary pedagogical approaches, pesantren can further strengthen their role in producing highly principled leaders and contributors to society.

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