

Character Education Management as a Strategy for the Holistic Character Formation of Madrasah Students

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Abstract

Character education is a fundamental aspect of the national education system that aims to shape students not only to excel academically, but also to have good attitudes, behavior, and morals. This study aims to analyze the implementation of character education management at MTs Al Mawaddah Warrahmah Kolaka and its impact on the formation of positive attitudes and behavior of seventh-grade students. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was carried out through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion, while data validity was tested using triangulation of sources, methods, and time. The results of the study indicate that the implementation of character education management at MTs Al Mawaddah Warrahmah Kolaka runs systematically through four management functions, namely planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating. Planning is carried out in a participatory manner and is integrated into the Madrasah Work Plan and dormitory program. Organization is demonstrated through a clear division of roles between the madrasah principal, teachers, and dormitory supervisors. The implementation of character education is carried out through the integration of values in learning, educator role models, and daily habits. Evaluation is carried out continuously using an educational, academic, and dormitory approach. The implementation of character education management has a positive impact on improving students' discipline, religiosity, responsibility, and social behavior. This study concludes that integrated and sustainable character education management is effective in shaping students' character holistically.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a key pillar in national development because it plays a strategic role in shaping the quality of human resources. In the context of modern society, education is understood not only as a process of transferring knowledge but also as a means of character formation and internalizing moral values. The success of a nation's education is not solely measured by academic achievement, but also by the quality of its students' character. Without strong character, knowledge and skills are potentially misused and negatively impact social life.

The urgency of character education is expressly stated in Article 3 of Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which states that national education aims to develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe in and fear God Almighty, have noble character, are intelligent, creative, independent, and responsible (Republic of Indonesia, 2003). The formulation of

this goal emphasizes that character education is the core of the national education system, not merely a complement to cognitive learning. Therefore, education must be directed at developing students' potential holistically, encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects.

However, the reality on the ground shows that the implementation of character education still faces various challenges. Various social phenomena, such as bullying, juvenile delinquency, low discipline in learning, and declining respect for teachers and parents, indicate a character crisis among students. These problems indicate that character education has not been fully internalized optimally in school life. This situation demands a more systematic, planned, and sustainable approach to managing character education.

One approach considered effective in shaping student character is through character education management. Muslich (2011) explains that character education management is the process of planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating character-building programs integrated into all school activities. This approach positions character education as an integral part of school management, rather than an incidental additional activity. With good management, character education can be implemented in a measurable, consistent manner and have a real impact on student behavior.

In line with this, Lickona (1991) emphasized that character education is a deliberate and planned effort to instill universal moral values such as responsibility, honesty, hard work, respect, and social concern. Systematically managed character education not only contributes to the formation of individual morals but also creates a conducive school climate oriented toward virtuous values. Therefore, the success of character education depends heavily on the quality of management implemented by educational institutions.

Schools, as social institutions, play a strategic role in shaping students' character. School culture, teacher role models, and interaction patterns among members of the school community are crucial factors in the internalization of character values. Suyanto (2013) emphasized that character education will be effective if supported by school management based on character values and actively involving the entire school community. Therefore, character education must be integrated into the curriculum, learning activities, daily habits, and extracurricular activities.

MTs Al Mawaddah Warrahmah Kolaka, as a junior high school Islamic educational institution, has a strong commitment to fostering students' morals and character. Various religious habituation programs and religious activities have been implemented to instill character values. However, particularly for seventh-grade students who are still adapting to the madrasah environment, challenges remain in developing learning interests, attitudes, and positive behaviors. Differences in student backgrounds, changes in the learning environment, and new patterns of social interaction are factors that influence the character-building process.

Based on these conditions, an in-depth study is needed regarding the implementation of character education management in grade VII of MTs Al Mawaddah Warrahmah Kolaka. This research is important to analyze the extent to which character education management has been implemented, identify supporting and inhibiting factors, and assess its impact on the development of student learning interests, attitudes, and behavior.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study research type. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research aims to understand in-depth social phenomena related to the implementation of character education management in developing students' learning interests, attitudes, and positive behavior. This approach

allows researchers to explore the meaning, processes, and dynamics that occur naturally in the educational context (Bachri, 2010). The case study was used because this research is focused on one specific context, namely, class VII MTs Al Mawaddah Warrahmah Kolaka, so that researchers can gain a comprehensive understanding of the character education management practices implemented at the madrasah.

This research was conducted at MTs Al Mawaddah Warrahmah Kolaka, located at Jl. Pondok Pesantren No. 10, Lamokato, Kolaka District, Kolaka Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, in May 2025. The selection of the research location was based on the consideration that the madrasah has a strong commitment in implementing character education based on Islamic values through habituation activities, school culture, and learning processes. The object of this research is the management of character education in developing learning interests, attitudes, and positive behavior of grade VII students.

The data in this study consists of information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation relevant to the research focus. The data consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly from primary sources through observations and interviews with the madrasah principal, teachers, and students. Secondary data was obtained through school documents, archives, activity reports, and other written sources supporting the research (Yusuf, 2017; Elvera, 2021). The data sources in this study came from the madrasah principal as the policymaker, teachers as the implementers of character education, and students as the primary subjects who directly experience the character-building process.

Data collection techniques were conducted through unstructured observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Unstructured observations were used to obtain an initial overview of the implementation of character education management and student behavior in natural situations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth information regarding the planning, implementation, and evaluation of character education by providing informants with the freedom to express their views and experiences (Sugiyono, 2017). Documentation was used to collect relevant written data, images, and school archives to strengthen the research findings (Saat, 2019).

The research instruments included observation sheets, interview guidelines, and documentation guidelines. Data analysis was conducted interactively through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by selecting and focusing on data relevant to the research objectives. Data presentation was conducted in a descriptive narrative format for ease of understanding, while conclusions were drawn gradually and continuously verified throughout the research process (Hamzah, 2019; Kurniawan, 2018). Data validity was maintained through triangulation techniques of sources, methods, and time to increase credibility and trust in the research results (Hadi, 2016).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Research Results

Research displays show that the implementation of character education management at MTs Al Mawaddah Warrahmah Kolaka has been carried out systematically, structured, and sustainable. The application of character education management at this madrasah includes four main management functions: planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating. These four functions are carried out in an integrated manner between academic activities at the madrasah and dormitory development at the Islamic boarding school, so that the formation of students' character takes place not only in the classroom, but also in the students' daily lives.

In terms of planning, the madrasah principal, along with the teaching staff and dormitory supervisors, developed a strategic character education plan integrated into the Madrasah Work Plan (RKM) and the annual Islamic boarding school program. This planning was based on an analysis of students' character development needs and the evaluation of the previous year's character education program. The main character values focused on strengthening include religiosity, discipline, responsibility, honesty, and social awareness. These values were chosen because they were considered relevant to the character development needs of students at the junior high school level, particularly seventh-grade students who are still in the adaptation phase.

Character education planning is carried out using a participatory approach through deliberations involving madrasah leaders, teachers, dormitory supervisors, and Islamic boarding school administrators. The madrasah principal emphasized that character education program planning is carried out through structured stages, starting from needs analysis, program formulation, synchronization between academic and dormitory activities, and program socialization to all madrasah members. This approach aims to ensure that every activity, both academic and non-academic, has a clear character-building content and is implemented consistently throughout the school year.

Furthermore, in terms of organization, the principal establishes a clear division of tasks and responsibilities within the character education implementation structure. Teachers are primarily responsible for instilling character values through classroom learning by integrating moral, spiritual, and social values into each subject. Homeroom teachers act as coordinators for student character development, monitoring the development of student attitudes and behavior, providing mentoring, and acting as liaisons between subject teachers and dormitory supervisors. Meanwhile, dormitory supervisors (musyrif and musyrifah) are responsible for fostering student character outside of formal learning hours through 24-hour supervision.

The principal of the madrasah plays the primary role of controlling the alignment between academic and dormitory activities. Intensive coordination is maintained between the madrasah and the Islamic boarding school supervisors to ensure that the character values instilled in the classroom are reinforced through habituation in the dormitory. The principal emphasizes that all members of the madrasah are expected to live in a moral environment, ensuring that character education is not solely the responsibility of individual teachers but a shared responsibility of all components of the educational institution.

During the implementation phase, character education at MTs Al Mawaddah Warrahmah Kolaka is implemented through three main approaches: learning, role modeling, and daily habits. During learning activities, teachers integrate character values into teaching materials and learning strategies. For example, science teachers instill the value of responsibility for the environment as God's creation, Indonesian teachers emphasize honesty and ethics in writing, and Islamic Religious Education teachers reinforce etiquette in learning and worship. This integration of character values is reflected in learning tools such as Lesson Plans (RPP) and attitude assessments in character reports.

Modeling is a crucial aspect in implementing character education. Madrasah principals, teachers, and dormitory supervisors strive to demonstrate discipline, honesty, courtesy, and responsibility in their daily lives. One teacher stated that character education doesn't require specific hours, as every subject can be a vehicle for instilling values if teachers are able to relate them to life's contexts. Teachers' exemplary behavior, such as arriving on time, speaking politely, and consistently enforcing rules, directly provides concrete examples for students in developing positive behavior.

Furthermore, daily habits serve as the primary means of internalizing character values. Routine activities such as congregational prayer, Quran recitation, morning literacy, cleaning duty, and social activities are carried out in a scheduled and consistent manner. In the dormitory environment, instructors accustom students to a regular lifestyle through a daily schedule that includes times for prayer, study, rest, and cleaning activities. Activities such as evening recitation, muhadharah (religious study), and community service are effective ways to foster discipline, independence, responsibility, and social awareness in students.

In terms of evaluation, character education is continuously evaluated through two main approaches: academic evaluation and dormitory evaluation. Academic evaluation is conducted through an assessment of spiritual and social attitudes, as outlined in students' character reports. Teachers and homeroom teachers monitor students' behavioral development throughout the learning process. Meanwhile, dormitory evaluation is conducted through monitoring students' daily behavior in the dormitory, recording it in a control book, and regularly reporting to the madrasah by dormitory supervisors.

In addition to individual evaluations, the madrasah also holds a monthly evaluation forum involving the principal, teachers, and dormitory supervisors. This forum is used to discuss student character development, identify emerging issues, and formulate follow-up guidance. Any findings of negative student behavior are addressed through a coaching and educational approach, rather than solely punishment, to foster moral awareness and responsibility for students' behavior.

Evaluation results indicate that the implementation of character education management has had a positive impact on student behavior. Teachers reported that students demonstrated increased discipline, enthusiasm for learning, and demonstrated politeness and responsibility in carrying out schoolwork. Students became more open to teacher direction, became more aware of the need to comply with rules, and exhibited more positive behavior in social interactions.

Thus, the results of this study indicate that the character education management system at MTs Al Mawaddah Warramah Kolaka runs in an integrated and sustainable manner. The integration of thorough planning, clear organization, consistent implementation, and ongoing evaluation makes character education not merely a formal program, but a madrasah culture that shapes students' character holistically, encompassing academic, spiritual, and social dimensions based on Islamic values.

3.2. Discussion

The research results show that character education management at MTs Al Mawaddah Warramah Kolaka is implemented in a structured manner through four management functions (planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating) integrated between the madrasah and the dormitory. This finding is consistent with the character education management model that emphasizes a whole-school approach and the integration of school culture into character-building programs (Marsakha, 2021; Marnayana, 2024).

First, the participatory planning function—involving the madrasah principal, teachers, dormitory supervisors, and Islamic boarding school administrators—demonstrates needs-based planning practices and the results of previous program evaluations. This participatory approach has been found effective in the literature because it increases implementer ownership and program sustainability (Silfanny, 2024). By integrating character content into the Madrasah Work Plan (RKM) and the annual Islamic boarding school program, the madrasah has implemented the principle

of alignment between the institution's vision and mission and operational activities—a step recommended in studies of school culture-based character management.

Second, clear organization—the division of roles between teachers, homeroom teachers, and dormitory supervisors—reflects the strength of an organizational structure that supports collective responsibility. Previous research confirms that the success of character education often depends on clear roles and coordination between stakeholders, particularly in the context of Islamic boarding schools where dormitories play a central role (Nurindarwati, 2019; Jallow, 2023). Intensive madrasah-dormitory coordination supports the transfer of values from the formal to the informal (dormitory) space, thus ensuring a more holistic internalization of character.

Third, implementation that emphasizes the integration of values into learning, teacher role models, and daily habits are best practice often recommended in character education literature. Lickona (1991) and contemporary research suggest that the combination of a values curriculum, teacher role models, and daily routines accelerates the internalization of student character (Lickona, 1991; Cahyanto, 2023). At MTs Al Mawaddah, activities such as congregational prayer, tadarus (recitation of the Koran), cleaning duty, and morning literacy serve as mechanisms for ritualizing values—creating a stable habitus for students to act according to the values taught. This finding aligns with studies that emphasize daily habits as an effective tool for character formation in schools based on a positive culture.

Fourth, an evaluation system that combines character reports, dormitory control books, and monthly evaluation forums demonstrates a commitment to formative assessment and follow-up coaching—not just sanctions. This evaluation model reflects an educative evaluative approach (CIPP/formative), so behavioral improvements are focused on ongoing coaching (Murcahyanto, 2023; Silfanny, 2024). An evaluation approach that combines academic and behavioral data allows for faster problem identification and contextualized interventions.

However, several aspects identified in the field data require critical interpretation. First, successful implementation relies heavily on the personal commitment of madrasah principals, teachers, and dormitory supervisors—factors that are at risk of decline if there is a leadership rotation or vacancy. The literature demonstrates the need to institutionalize practices (standard policies and instruments) so that sustainability does not depend solely on individuals (Atika, 2021; Marsakha, 2021). Therefore, a practical recommendation is to strengthen SOPs, coaching modules, and ongoing training mechanisms to reduce reliance on a single figure.

Second, the data shows a strong emphasis on religious values—in line with the madrasah's character—which serve as a contextual strength. However, the literature highlights the importance of balancing religious values with universal social values (e.g., tolerance, critical thinking) to enable graduates to interact in a pluralistic society (Mujahid & Purwanto et al., 2023). Therefore, madrasahs are advised to formalize universal social values content in their RKM and local curricula to ensure character formation is comprehensive and responsive to current social needs.

Third, the challenge of parent-school coordination has not been widely discussed in the existing data. Other research shows that parent-school synergy strengthens the consistency of value instillation at home and school—a crucial factor for long-term behavioral transfer (Atika, 2021). Madrasahs can consider strengthening parent engagement programs through workshops, regular character reports, and home-boarding synergy programs.

Methodologically, these findings enrich the literature on character education management in the context of modern madrasahs/Islamic boarding schools with

empirical evidence that managerial integration (planning—organization—implementation—evaluation) and madrasah-boarding synergy result in positive behavioral outcomes for students. Consistent with the literature review on character management, a whole-school approach anchored by school culture and daily practices has proven effective when supported by formative evaluation and consistent leadership (Marnayana, 2024; Cahyanto, 2023).

Policy and practice implications: (1) Formalization of managerial instruments (SOP, detailed RKM, character report rubric) to ensure program continuity; (2) Ongoing training for teachers and dormitory supervisors to improve exemplary capacity and habituation techniques; (3) Expansion of universal social value content and parental involvement mechanisms; (4) Development of standardized evaluation indicators that combine quantitative and qualitative data so that monitoring and evaluation become more objective.

Overall, MTs Al Mawaddah Warramah Kolaka offers a model for implementing character education management that is relevant for other madrasas: integrative (madrasah-boarding school), based on a culture of habituation, and evaluated continuously, with the note that institutional strengthening is needed to maintain the sustainability and expansion of the content of universal social values.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of character education management at MTs Al Mawaddah Warramah Kolaka has been carried out systematically, integratively, and sustainably through the application of four management functions, namely planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating, which are integrated between madrasah academic activities and dormitory development at the Islamic boarding school. Planning based on needs analysis, clear organization of roles between the madrasah principal, teachers, and dormitory supervisors, implementation of character education through learning, role models, and daily habits, as well as educational and continuous evaluations have proven effective in shaping the character of students. The implementation of character education management has a positive impact on increasing discipline, religiosity, responsibility, independence, social attitudes, and positive attitudes of students in the learning process, thus indicating that character education managed in an integrated and consistent manner based on Islamic values can shape students' character holistically and can be used as a reference for the development of character education in other madrasahs.

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