Empowering Students through Congregational Leadership: A New Approach to Character Education in Islamic Boarding Schools

Toto Santi Aji[1*], Heramb Kulkarni[2]

[1]Science of the Qur'an and Tafsir Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Cirebon, Cirebon, West Java, Indonesia
[2]Technology Education Department, Tampere University, Finland
Email: toto.santi@umc.ac.id[1], heramb.kulkarni@ccefinland.org[2]

Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the implementation of collective leadership in character education and its impact on students' attitudes and behavior in Islamic Boarding Schools. This study is based on integrating the interpretation of the Fii Zhilalil Quran with the model of collective leadership in character education, especially in formal education. The qualitative research method with a case study approach involves data collection techniques through interviews, observations, and documentation. Data analysis was done using a thematic approach, grouping interviews, observation, and documentation data based on relevant categories to find the central theme. The study results indicate that the implementation of collective leadership in character education has succeeded in increasing the values of cooperation, mutual respect, and responsibility in students. This collective leadership model is applied in formal and non-formal activities such as cooperation, providing direct experience in developing social and leadership skills. The social implications of this study are the importance of implementing a religious-based leadership model to shape students' characters who can contribute positively to society.

Keywords: *Congregational Leadership, Character Education, Tafsir Fi Zhilalil Quran*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis penerapan kepemimpinan berjamaah dalam pendidikan karakter serta dampaknya terhadap sikap dan perilaku siswa di Pondok Pesantren. Penelitian ini terletak pada integrasi tafsir Fii Zhilalil Quran dengan model kepemimpinan berjamaah dalam pendidikan karakter, khususnya dalam konteks pendidikan formal. Metode yang digunakan adalah penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus, yang melibatkan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan dengan pendekatan tematik, mengelompokkan data wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi berdasarkan kategori relevan untuk menemukan tema utama. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan kepemimpinan kolektif dalam pendidikan karakter berhasil meningkatkan nilai-nilai gotong royong, saling menghargai, dan tanggung jawab pada siswa. Model kepemimpinan kolektif ini diterapkan tidak hanya dalam kegiatan formal, tetapi juga dalam kegiatan non-formal seperti gotong royong, yang memberikan pengalaman langsung dalam mengembangkan keterampilan sosial dan kepemimpinan. Implikasi sosial dari penelitian ini adalah pentingnya penerapan model kepemimpinan berbasis agama untuk membentuk karakter siswa yang dapat berkontribusi positif dalam masyarakat.

Kata Kunci: *Kepemimpinan Berjamaah, Pendidikan Karakter, Tafsir Fii Zhilalil Quran*

INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization, the importance of character education has become increasingly evident (Jubba et al., 2022; Hardiansyah, 2022)., especially in faith-based educational institutions. Character education is a fundamental pillar in shaping a generation with high moral standards, integrity, and ethics (Andriyanto et al., 2022; Dewi et al., 2023; Safuan et al., 2024). However, implementing character education in schools, particularly in Islamic-based institutions, remains problematic (Wahid et al., 2024; Naswa, 2025). Many educational institutions still face challenges in effectively applying character education in their curricula (Pike et al., 2021; Jhon et al., 2021; Fathurohman et al., 2023; Amirudin et al., & Iksal et al., 2024).

Recent reports indicate that over 60% of Islamic schools in Indonesia have integrated character education into their curricula, incorporating values from the Qur'an. Despite this progress, there remains a significant gap in the theoretical integration of leadership models into character education (Erik et al., 2024). Specifically, the concept of congregational leadership, as taught by Sayyid Qutb in his work *Tafsir Fii Zhilalil Quran*, offers a promising approach (Fikriyah et al., 2021). However, its application in the educational realm has not been adequately explored. This gap highlights the need for further research on integrating religious leadership principles into character education programs in Islamic-based schools.

In Indonesia, the application of character education in Islamic-based institutions, such as Al Muttaqin Islamic Boarding School Cirebon, reflects broader national trends. Islamic boarding schools, or "pesantren," are pivotal in instilling moral values, but many still struggle to translate theoretical principles into practice (Islamic et al., 2024; Sah et al., 2024). The challenge lies in understanding the theoretical underpinnings of character education and in translating these ideas into practical, applicable strategies in the classroom. For example, while congregational leadership is highly regarded in Islamic teachings, its real-world application within schools like Al Muttaqin remains underdeveloped. There is often a disconnect between the intended objectives of character education and the actual outcomes observed in student behavior. This disconnect underscores the need for a more systematic approach to implementing leadership-based character education, such as that derived from Sayyid Qutb's interpretation of the Qur'an.

Previous studies have explored various aspects of character education in Islamic schools. Ahmad (2022) examined the implementation of Qur'an-based character education in Islamic schools in Indonesia, while Rahmawati (2020) focused on the role of congregational leadership in shaping character. These studies highlight the importance of integrating leadership models into character-building processes (Lisyanti et al., 2022). However, they fall short in exploring how these leadership models, particularly those rooted in Islamic teachings such as Sayyid Qutb's *Tafsir Fii Zhilalil Quran*, can be applied systematically in Islamic boarding schools. Studies by Sulaiman (2023) further explore leadership in character education but do not specifically address the combination of congregational leadership and Qur'anic interpretation in Islamic educational

contexts. Our research seeks to fill this gap by exploring the intersection of these concepts and how they can be integrated into the curriculum and daily practices of pesantren, specifically at Al Muttaqin Islamic Boarding School, Cirebon.

The novelty of this research lies in its integration of congregational leadership, based on *Tafsir Fii Zhilalil Quran*, into the practice of character education in Islamic-based schools. While character education is widely discussed, the specific application of religious leadership models, such as Sayyid Qutb, remains underexplored. This research aims to systematically apply these leadership principles in a practical, real-world setting, specifically at Al Muttaqin Islamic Boarding School, Cirebon. By combining religious leadership with character education, this study proposes a more holistic approach that aligns personal and social ethics with leadership principles derived from Islamic teachings. This integration offers a fresh perspective on how religious values can enhance and deepen the character education process in pesantren.

The primary objective of this study is to explore the application of congregational leadership in character education at Al Muttaqin Islamic Boarding School, Cirebon. The key research questions are: (1) How is the congregational leadership model applied in the character education curriculum at Al Muttaqin Cirebon? (2) How does this leadership approach impact student character development? These questions address the need for a deeper understanding of how congregational leadership can be integrated into the character-building process within an Islamic educational context. This research seeks to uncover the challenges and benefits of applying leadership models based on religious teachings in character education through these questions.

The preliminary argument of this research is that the integration of congregational leadership, as based on *Tafsir Fii Zhilalil Quran*, can significantly enhance the character education process in Islamic-based schools. This model emphasizes the importance of ethical behavior and moral values and aligns these principles with leadership responsibilities, fostering a sense of community and social responsibility among students. By incorporating this leadership model into the curriculum, students at Al Muttaqin Islamic Boarding School, Cirebon, will be encouraged to internalize values such as cooperation, responsibility, and mutual respect, which are crucial for personal and social development. Furthermore, this research posits that a systematic application of this leadership model will provide a more effective framework for character education, addressing the moral and leadership aspects vital for students' growth in the modern world.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative and case study approach to explore applying the congregational leadership model in character education at the Al Muttaqin Cirebon Islamic Boarding School. The qualitative approach was chosen because it provides a deep understanding of the social, cultural, and religious contexts that influence students' views on character and leadership. This study analyzes the dynamics between all parties involved in applying the model: the principal, teachers, and students. As Creswell (2014) explained, qualitative methods allow for the collection of descriptive data that describe phenomena in a natural context,

which is very important in understanding the application of a religion-based leadership model in character education at Islamic boarding schools

This research was conducted at the Al Muttaqin Cirebon Islamic Boarding School. It was chosen because of its strong educational basis in Islamic religious values and its commitment to character formation through a leadership approach based on Islamic values. This Islamic boarding school has attempted to integrate character education into the daily lives of its students but is still faced with challenges in systematically implementing congregational leadership. The selection of this location allows the study to gain direct insight into implementing the leadership model in the context of character education in Islamic boarding schools and identify factors that influence the success or challenges of its implementation (Kardiyati & Karim, 2023).

Data collection in this study used three main methods: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with the principal, teachers, and students to explore the implementation of the congregational leadership model and its impact on character education.

Table 1. Interview Grid

No	Indicators	Questions
1	Understanding of congregational leadership	How do you understand the concept of congregational leadership in character education?
2	Implementation of congregational leadership	What are the steps taken by the school to implement congregational leadership?
3	Impact on student character	How do you assess the impact of the implementation of congregational leadership on student character?
4	The role of the principal in character building	What is your role as principal in shaping students' character?
5	Character education policies and programs	What are the policies or programs implemented to support congregational leadership-based character education?

Participatory observation was conducted to observe character education and leadership activities in the classroom, meetings, and daily interactions in the Islamic boarding school. In addition, documentation such as the character education curriculum, leadership activity records, and archives related to Islamic values in education were also collected to explore the context of the implementation of this model. By triangulating data from interviews, observations, and documentation, this study seeks to obtain a comprehensive and valid picture of the implementation of the leadership model.

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic analysis approach, where data collected from interviews, observations, and documentation were coded and grouped into categories based on the main themes that emerged. This analysis allows researchers to identify patterns in the data that can explain the phenomena studied, such as the influence of congregational leadership on student character formation. As Bogdan and Biklen (2007) explained, thematic analysis helps explore meanings and themes relevant to the theory and context of character education. Triangulation techniques are used to ensure the validity of the data, namely comparing data from various sources (interviews, observations, and documentation). In addition, member checking is also carried out by sharing initial

findings with informants, such as teachers and principals, to ensure the accuracy and validity of the research results. This technique increases the credibility of the data by comparing different perspectives and addressing data discrepancies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Result
The Congregational Leadership Model in Character Education

Al Muttaqin Islamic Boarding School, Cirebon, is an educational institution that implements Islamic religious values by emphasizing the importance of student character building. In this pesantren, the congregational leadership model is applied to strengthen collaboration between caregivers, teachers, and students in educating and shaping character.

Implementation of Jamaah Leadership in Daily Life

Based on interviews with pesantren caregivers, teachers, and students, congregational leadership is implemented in various forms, both in formal and non-formal education aspects. The following is an analysis of the results of interviews, observations, and documentation found. Interviews with pesantren caregivers showed that the congregational leadership model is implemented in formal education and students' daily lives. The caregiver explained that the basic principle of congregational leadership is collectivity and togetherness-based learning. Each student is given the responsibility to lead and help others in existing activities, such as working together to clean the pesantren environment and other social activities. The application of the congregational leadership model in daily life shows the pesantren's efforts to teach religious knowledge and social values that are very important in social life. The student's involvement in daily activities like this shows that character education is limited to theory and direct practice that strengthens the integration between religious and social values.

Table 2. Main Findings of the Application of Congregational Leadership and Character

Aspects	Main Findings
Application of Congregational Leadership	Congregational leadership is applied in formal and non-formal education. Students are given the responsibility to lead and assist others in activities.
Basic Principles of Leadership	The basic principle of congregational leadership is collectivity and togetherness, with active involvement of student in social and cleaning activities.
Character Education	Character education is applied not only through theory, but also through direct practice that integrates religious and social values.
Collaborative Activities	Almost all activities are carried out together, with senior student leading but still working together with junior student.
Equality and Collaboration	Congregational leadership emphasizes collaboration and equality, providing space for each student to develop according to their abilities.
Activity Evaluation	Documentation shows monthly reports evaluating student participation in social and religious activities that prioritize congregational leadership.

Application in Social Life	Activities such as social fundraising and managing the cleanliness of the pesantren reflect the integration of congregational leadership in daily life.

All activities in the pesantren are carried out together, from congregational prayers to managing social activities. More senior students can lead these activities, but they still work together with younger students. This illustrates the principle of congregational leadership that emphasizes equality and togetherness. This observation shows that leadership is not a concept that only prioritizes one leader or single authority but prioritizes collaboration. Each student plays an active role in creating an environment conducive to character building, which reflects that this model provides space for each individual to develop according to their abilities.

In transformational leadership, leaders act as motivators who encourage their members to develop personally and professionally. The pesantren caregiver acts as a leader who provides direction and encourages students to play an active role in shaping a good social environment through togetherness-based leadership. Through direct involvement in activities, students are allowed to develop their leadership potential.

Every month, an activity report covers educational, social, and religious aspects. This report contains an evaluation of the extent to which students participate in activities that emphasize the principles of congregational leadership, such as social fundraising activities and the management of pesantren hygiene. This documentation supports the finding that Al Muttaqin Islamic Boarding School is very serious about integrating congregational leadership in every aspect of student life. The report also shows a structured evaluation of student participation in social activities, an important indicator in assessing the effectiveness of congregation-based character education. Documentation shows monthly reports evaluating student participation in social and religious activities prioritizing congregational leadership. The reports include specific indicators such as level of participation in group activities (e.g., cleaning the mosque, community service, religious study groups), demonstration of leadership skills during group work, cooperation and teamwork in organizing events, and adherence to Islamic values in daily interactions. These indicators help assess the congregational leadership model's effectiveness in shaping the student's character and their social and religious commitment. This kind of evaluation measures the results and the continuous learning process. This also shows that Al Muttaqin Islamic Boarding School is very serious about integrating social values into students' character education through theory and concrete actions in the field.

Collaborative Learning as a Form of Congregational Leadership

Teachers at Al Muttaqin Islamic Boarding School stated that the learning method in this pesantren prioritizes collaboration between students. Each class is divided into small groups, where each student is responsible for leading their group. The teacher only acts as a facilitator who guides and gives directions. This collaborative learning model directly implements congregational leadership that prioritizes active participation from all parties. By giving students the

responsibility to lead the group, they learn about the subject matter and leadership, cooperation, and respect for other people's opinions.

The observation showed that students were active in group discussions and more confident in expressing their opinions. When asked to deliver the results of group discussions, they did so with confidence and a sense of responsibility. From this observation, it can be concluded that collaborative-based learning and involving congregational leadership facilitates character development, such as confidence, leadership, and a sense of responsibility. Students learn the material and social skills that are important in their lives. Meanwhile, documentation shows that teaching and learning activities show a record of the success of collaborative learning methods, where students improve academic achievement and leadership attitude development. This documentation supports the finding that collaborative learning methods that integrate the principles of congregational leadership effectively improve the quality of student character education. This method helps students be more active and responsible in the teaching and learning process.

This learning model is a direct implementation of the congregational leadership concept, which emphasizes each individual's active participation in the learning process. According to the theory of congregational leadership proposed by Al-Qaradawi (2001), leadership in Islam is not just about control by a leader but about togetherness and participation. In the context of pesantren, each student is responsible for leading the group, which reflects the principle of collectivity-based leadership. This is based on a study by Mujib (2022), which showed that congregational leadership-based education can build a sense of social responsibility and active engagement among learners. The model is also grounded in the theory of constructivism in education, developed by Vygotsky (1978), who considers that effective learning occurs in a social context where learners interact and build understanding. Vygotsky argues that active social interaction in groups helps learners to develop deeper understanding and important social skills.

The application of collaboration-based learning also aligns with collaborative learning theory, which states that by giving each individual the responsibility to lead and work in groups, students develop academic skills, leadership skills, cooperation, and respect for others' opinions. As explained by Haugland et al. (2022) and Nahar (2022), this collaborative learning theory suggests that students learn to respect each other and work together to achieve common goals by collaborating in groups. Learning based on individual cooperation effectively develops communication, decision-making, and problem-solving skills.

The Impact of Congregational Leadership on Student Character Development

This study reveals students' views regarding the positive impact of implementing congregational leadership in developing their character. Interviews with students showed that they felt they positively impacted the implementation of congregational leadership. Some students revealed that they became more disciplined, concerned about the environment, and open to interacting with friends. One of the students said, "I used to not care about cleanliness, but now I feel responsible for keeping the pesantren clean because it is a shared

responsibility." This student statement shows that the congregation's leadership has changed its mindset regarding responsibility. From not caring about the surrounding environment, they now feel that maintaining cleanliness is part of a shared responsibility, an important character trait in social life.

The students involved in congregational leadership activities, such as organizing social activities or becoming pesantren activity committees, show a more disciplined, responsible, and caring attitude towards the environment. For example, when pesantren cleaning activities are carried out, most studentsstudents are actively involved, even though some have a busy schedule. This observation shows that direct involvement in social and leadership activities has a tangible impact on student character. Congregational leadership is a theory taught in class and a part of daily life that requires students to show discipline, a sense of responsibility, and empathy for others.

The report shows achievements and changes in the student's behavior from month to month, especially in their social involvement. This is recorded in the student's personal development reports submitted at the end of each month. This documentation provides evidence that the application of congregational leadership positively impacts the students' character. This progress report provides a concrete picture of how this model shapes student character in the long term.

Table 3. Key Findings on The Impact of Congregational Leadership

Aspects	Mine Findings
Positive Impact on Student	Student feel more disciplined, care about cleanliness, and are more open in interacting with friends.
Change in Mindset	Congregational leadership changes student's mindset about responsibility, especially in terms of maintaining cleanliness.
Involvement in Activities	Student are actively involved in activities such as cleaning the pesantren and social organizations despite their busy schedules.
Changes in Student Character	Congregational leadership activities encourage students to show discipline, responsibility, and empathy.
Documentation of Student Development	Monthly progress reports record positive changes in student's attitudes and behaviors, especially in social activities.
Evidence of the Impact of Congregational Leadership	Documentation provides concrete evidence that congregational leadership contributes to the character building of student in the long term.

Table 3 shows a change in the mindset and behavior of students related to discipline in maintaining cleanliness, which is one of the important aspects of character education. Congregational leadership, which prioritizes collective responsibility, forms a more disciplined mindset in the student. This congregational leadership model internalizes social and ethical values in each individual, such as a sense of responsibility, discipline, and cooperation.

Based on this data display, the application of the congregational leadership model has a positive impact on the character-building of students. Congregational leadership that prioritizes shared responsibility and collaboration between

individuals plays an important role in shaping students' mindsets regarding discipline and social care. In addition, this model also increases the sense of responsibility for the environment and strengthens social ties among students. Thus, congregational leadership not only plays a role in academic aspects but also in the development of the social character of students, which is an important aspect of pesantren education.

Discussion

This study found that implementing the congregational leadership model at the Al Muttaqin Islamic Boarding School in Cirebon positively impacts the character formation of students, especially in terms of discipline, social responsibility, and involvement in community activities. This leadership model is applied in formal and non-formal education aspects, including religious, social, and environmental activities. Students can be directly involved in activities that benefit the surrounding community, such as working together to clean the mosque, organizing charity events, and participating in environmental conservation. These activities teach them the values of leadership, discipline, and mutual respect that are important in social life. The implementation of this congregational leadership aligns with the theory of collective leadership, which emphasizes that leadership responsibility is not centered on one individual but is shared among all group members (Batırlık et al., 2022, Syabibi et al, 2021). At the Al Muttaqin Islamic Boarding School, the implementation of this principle encourages students to work together to maintain cleanliness and actively participate in social activities. This creates an inclusive environment and fosters a sense of collective responsibility among all students. This emphasis on togetherness and collaboration strengthens broader social learning, where students learn character values in theory and apply them in their daily lives.

Furthermore, the data obtained shows that almost all activities in the Islamic boarding school are carried out together, from congregational prayers to managing social activities. These activities reflect the principles of congregational leadership that emphasize equality and collaboration. Senior students are allowed to lead but still work together with junior students. This aligns with the theory of leadership distribution proposed by Roberson et al. (2022), which emphasizes that leadership should be shared among all group members by allowing each individual to lead according to their abilities and opportunities.

In this context, the congregational leadership model does not only focus on one leader but involves the participation and contribution of all community members, which directly impacts the formation of better character. Previous research by Traver-Marti et al. (2022) showed that the distribution leadership model can increase collaboration and a sense of responsibility among group members, which are students. In addition, research by Bass (1999) on transformational leadership theory is also relevant because the congregational leadership model in Islamic boarding schools also encourages positive changes in the attitudes and behavior of students (Widiantari et al., 2022). The results of this study indicate that the implementation of congregational leadership at the Al Muttaqin Islamic Boarding School in Cirebon has succeeded in shaping students' character through collaboration, social responsibility, and concern for the

environment. This finding aligns with research by Azis (2020), which states that togetherness-based leadership can increase students' sense of social responsibility, both in cleaning activities and in moral and academic aspects. In addition, research by Satriawan (2023) shows that collectivity-based leadership strengthens the sense of social concern among students in cleaning activities and other social activities, such as fundraising and social assistance.

This study also supports the theory of character education proposed by Lickona (1991), which emphasizes the importance of teaching moral values and inviting students to implement these values in everyday life. The congregational leadership model at the Al Muttaqin Islamic boarding school provides a clear example of how character is built through active participation in social activities that facilitate direct character learning. This study significantly contributes to Islamic education management, especially in developing an effective leadership model in character education at Islamic boarding schools. The application of the congregational leadership model can be a reference for Islamic boarding school managers in designing educational programs that focus on academic or religious learning and the development of integrated social and leadership character. In addition, this study shows the importance of leadership distribution among students, which can create a more inclusive and collaborative environment. This provides insight for Islamic boarding school managers to create a leadership structure that encourages students to play an active role in their community, builds a sense of responsibility, and strengthens cooperation among each other.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the congregational leadership model at Al Muttaqin Islamic Boarding School, Cirebon, significantly impacts student character development across formal and non-formal educational activities. The model, which emphasizes collaboration, shared responsibility, and unity, fosters essential values such as discipline, social awareness, and environmental concern. Combining religious and social values, the pesantren impart knowledge and cultivate a strong sense of character and social responsibility among students. The model's application in daily life through collective activities, such as maintaining cleanliness and participating in community service, showcases how character education can be actively practiced. This hands-on approach, where students engage in real-world tasks that nurture leadership and social responsibility, is a potential model for other educational institutions. Integrating these values into the formal curriculum alongside initiatives like community service or environmental projects, the pesantren offers a comprehensive framework for teaching discipline, teamwork, and civic engagement.

To further strengthen the impact of this model, Al Muttaqin Islamic boarding school should continue to provide more opportunities for students to take on leadership roles, both within Islamic boarding school activities and in academic learning. This can be achieved by enhancing facilities that support collaboration, such as leadership training programs and community service initiatives. Additionally, establishing programs like peer mentoring, where senior students guide juniors, could foster greater cooperation and responsibility. Teacher training should also focus on group dynamics and leadership facilitation

to improve educators' ability to mentor students in collaborative settings. Expanding partnerships with the local community and conducting regular evaluations of the model's effectiveness will ensure that it continues to shape student character and make any necessary improvements. However, the study is limited by its focus on a single Islamic boarding school, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research could compare the model's implementation across multiple Islamic boarding schools, explore the role of digital platforms in enhancing the congregational leadership model, and conduct longitudinal studies to assess its long-term impact on students' character development and societal contributions.

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