

Managing Innovation in Boarding Schools to Develop Qur'anic Character in Public Senior High Schools

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the management strategies, implementation processes, and challenges of character education in boarding programs at two public high schools. Although national education policy emphasizes character development, empirical evidence on how such programs are planned, implemented, and evaluated in school settings remains limited. This study employed a qualitative approach, with data collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The results indicate that both schools systematically integrate character values into the curriculum, daily routines in the boarding school, and extracurricular activities through structured planning, implementation, and evaluation. However, significant challenges remain, such as the negative influence of mass media, inadequate facilities and infrastructure, low student motivation, and limited parental involvement. To address these challenges, the schools have implemented measures such as strengthening teacher leadership and capacity, improving facilities, developing extracurricular activities focused on character building, and increasing parental involvement through workshops and community programs. This study contributes to the theory and practice of character education in boarding schools by emphasizing the importance of context-responsive management strategies, strong stakeholder collaboration, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Keywords: *Character Education, Boarding Program, Parental Involvement, Leadership*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji strategi manajemen, proses implementasi, dan tantangan pendidikan karakter dalam program asrama di dua sekolah menengah atas negeri. Meskipun kebijakan pendidikan nasional menekankan pengembangan karakter, bukti empiris tentang bagaimana program semacam ini direncanakan, diimplementasikan, dan dievaluasi di lingkungan sekolah masih terbatas. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kedua sekolah secara sistematis mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai karakter ke dalam kurikulum, rutinitas harian di asrama, dan kegiatan ekstrakurikuler melalui tahapan perencanaan, pelaksanaan, dan evaluasi yang terstruktur. Akan tetapi, terdapat tantangan penting seperti pengaruh negatif media massa, fasilitas dan infrastruktur yang tidak memadai, motivasi belajar siswa yang rendah, serta keterlibatan orang tua yang terbatas. Untuk mengatasi masalah tersebut, sekolah telah menerapkan langkah-langkah seperti penguatan kepemimpinan dan kapasitas guru, perbaikan fasilitas, pengembangan kegiatan ekstrakurikuler yang berfokus pada pembentukan karakter, serta peningkatan keterlibatan orang tua melalui lokakarya dan program komunitas. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada teori dan praktik

pendidikan karakter di sekolah berasrama dengan menekankan pentingnya strategi manajemen yang responsif terhadap konteks, kolaborasi pemangku kepentingan yang kuat, serta pemantauan dan evaluasi yang berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Karakter, Program Asrama, Keterlibatan Orang Tua, Kepemimpinan

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INTRODUCTION

Education is the fundamental foundation in shaping the character and personality of the younger generation. In this era of globalization, marked by moral and social challenges, educational institutions are required not only to focus on academic achievement but also on the development of strong character. Therefore, the education sector needs to Design a system that can nurture students holistically, encompassing cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects (Ayeni et al., 2024; Chitra & Gurung, 2021; Kunwar et al., 2024). This urgency is supported by the results of the 2022 National Assessment Character Survey, which showed that the national average score for the discipline indicator among senior high school students was moderate, indicating the need to strengthen character education in schools. One of the emerging educational innovations today is the implementation of the boarding school system (Arifin, 2022; Asror et al., 2023; Salim et al., 2024). This model enables the creation of a controlled and conducive environment specifically designed to support the intensive cultivation of Qur'anic character values (Isbah & Sakhyya, 2023; Thoha & Hannan, 2022). In the *pesantren* tradition, students not only learn formal academic subjects but also live together in a structured community that integrates daily religious practices and ethical teachings rooted in Islamic principles.

In Indonesia, while *pesantren*-based education has long embodied this model, in recent years, some public senior high schools have begun adopting similar boarding school management concepts to strengthen character education by incorporating structured religious activities and fostering a value-based communal environment (Ansori et al., 2024; Purwowidodo & Zaini, 2024; Zubaidah et al., 2024). This innovation has emerged from the urgent need to strengthen religious values among students increasingly exposed to negative influences from the media and unrestricted social interactions (Ataman et al., 2024; Trisnowali et al., 2022). Therefore, public senior high schools strive to implement an integrated boarding-based education model with a Qur'anic approach (Ikhwan & Yuniana, 2022; Zahraini et al., 2022). A Qur'anic character is shaped by the values taught in the Qur'an, such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, and compassion (Elalami, 2023; Hasanah et al., 2024; Nurchayani et al., 2023). These values are highly relevant to the goals of national education, which aim to produce individuals who are faithful, pious, and possess noble character (Zguir et al., 2021). Therefore, the effort to shape a generation with Qur'anic character becomes a vital pursuit within the formal education system, including in public schools.

In the context of a boarding school, educational management cannot be separated from strong and visionary leadership rooted in Qur'anic values.

Principles such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *musyawarah* (consultation), and *istiqamah* (consistency) inform not only the daily routines but also decision-making processes and the overall organizational culture (Herijanto, 2022). Effective Islamic educational leadership integrates spiritual values with practical management strategies to nurture students' character holistically (Hasbiallah et al., 2024; Rohmad et al., 2024). This approach is consistent with the *pesantren* tradition, in which the leader (*kyai*) serves as a moral and intellectual role model, and management practices are closely linked to Islamic teachings and communal life. The leadership of the principal and dormitory supervisors plays a crucial role in guiding the vision of Qur'anic education into every aspect of students' lives (Shobron et al., 2020). Effective leadership can create a religious organizational culture, foster harmonious communication, and encourage synergy among all components of the school and the dormitory.

Ethical leadership from educational institution leaders can provide clear direction and support the flow of positive education. Leaders who incorporate character values into their policies and decision-making processes can set a positive example for the entire community within the educational institution (Hasanah et al., 2024). Boarding school management in public senior high schools that uphold Qur'anic values must integrate leadership, learning, and character development. School leaders should be able to Design systematic religious programs, such as Qur'an memorization (*tahfiz*), congregational prayers, daily religious talks (*kultum*), and moral development (*akhlak*) (Nuriyah, 2024). Transformative leadership that inspires and sets an example will be the primary driver of consistent implementation of these programs (Mahsusni et al., 2024; Rosi et al., 2022). Initial observations conducted by the researcher in public senior high schools in Banda Aceh indicate that character development programs are considered essential for fostering students' values, ethics, and life skills. However, several persistent obstacles remain, including inadequate boarding school management strategies, limited supervision systems, and insufficient family and community support. These challenges highlight a critical research problem: how to Design and implement effective boarding school management strategies rooted in Qur'anic values to strengthen students' character in public school settings systematically.

While character education in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and the importance of leadership in integrating religious values into education have been extensively researched, research focusing on adapting Islamic boarding school management rooted in Quranic principles in public high schools remains limited. Most existing work emphasizes either *pesantren*-based traditions or general character education in formal schools, without providing a comprehensive framework that bridges both contexts. This study offers novelty by proposing an innovative management model that contextualizes Islamic boarding school practices within the general education system, ensuring that Quranic character education is holistically integrated into leadership, organizational culture, and student development programs.

This study aims to analyze innovative management strategies for integrating Qur'anic character education into public senior high school boarding

programs. The originality of this research lies in adapting the *pesantren*-based model to the context of public education, filling a gap in existing studies by offering a framework for implementing Qur'anic values within formal school management practices. This contribution is expected to support schools in developing more structured, value-based boarding systems that promote consistent moral and spiritual growth among students.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative, situational approach, aiming to systematically, factually, and accurately describe empirical field data on the implementation of boarding school management in shaping and enhancing students' character (Stanley, 2023). The qualitative approach was chosen because it can capture the dynamics of social reality holistically and in depth through the subjective meanings of the educational actors directly involved in the character development process within the boarding school environment. The primary focus of this research is to explore the processes, strategies, and managerial challenges the school faces in managing the boarding school as an instrument for character formation, including policy, program implementation, and evaluation and follow-up of the results achieved.

Tabel 1. Profile of Research Informants and Justification of Selection

Subject	Reason for Selection
Principal	Has a central role in policy-making, managing the boarding school program, and shaping students' character.
Vice Principal	Plays a role in implementing policies, supervising the boarding school program, and guiding students' character development.
Dormitory Supervisor	Interacts directly with students in dorm life and fosters character development outside class hours.
Teacher	Directly involved in teaching and in shaping students' character by integrating character values into learning activities.

The research subjects are key informants directly relevant to the study's focus: the principal, the vice principal for student affairs, dormitory supervisors (*wali asrama*), and subject teachers involved in character development activities. The selection of informants was purposive, based on their roles, involvement, and capacity to provide valid, in-depth information on boarding school management. The two selected schools, SMA Negeri 10 Fajar Harapan Kota Banda Aceh and SMA Negeri 2 Kota Banda Aceh, were chosen because both operate boarding schools, making them relevant cases for studying character education in such settings. These schools represent different models of state-run boarding schools in Indonesia.

Data sources were obtained through three main techniques: (1) in-depth interviews to explore the perspectives and experiences of the informants; (2) participatory observation, both directly in the dormitory environment and in character development activities outside of formal class hours; and (3) documentation, including school policy documents, boarding activity agendas, character evaluation reports, as well as photos or videos related to the study (Rahim, 2021). The trustworthiness of the data was maintained through four

criteria in qualitative research: (1) Credibility, ensured by data, method, and time triangulation, and by member checking with four key informants after transcription; (2) Transferability, supported by detailed contextual descriptions; (3) Dependability, strengthened through an audit trail of procedures; and (4) Confirmability, maintained by keeping complete documentation of the process and findings (Maxwell, 2020). The researcher served as the main instrument, demonstrating methodological skill and contextual sensitivity.

The data analysis in this study followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which was applied iteratively through three integrated steps: (1) Data reduction was done by selecting, focusing, and simplifying field data through coding and categorization into initial themes related to boarding school management and character education. (2) Data display involved organizing these themes in descriptive narrative form, supported by matrices and tables to show relationships among categories. (3) Conclusion drawing and verification were conducted continuously by comparing emerging patterns across informants and checking their consistency with field notes (Urcia, 2021). Member checking with key informants also helped confirm the validity of interpretations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Design and Content of the Boarding School Program

The boarding school program consists of activities aimed at achieving the goals of character education improvement, in line with the strategies and educational policies that have been established. The school is responsible for designing the school program as a form of education that aligns with the direction set by the government. The character improvement program has been implemented in accordance with the planning, organization, execution, and supervision processes, which are structured, systematic, and efficient. Below are the research findings from the two schools.

Table 2. Boarding School Program

Aspect	SMA Negeri 10 Fajar Harapan	SMA Negeri 2 Banda Aceh
Program Objective	To enhance students' character through additional curriculum and boarding activities.	To enhance students' character through habituation, learning, and boarding activities.
Program Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Curriculum (morning-afternoon) - Supplementary Curriculum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Character Education (evening): Aqidah (Creed), Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence), Noble Character (<i>Akhilak Karimah</i>), Qur'an Reading 2. Enrichment Subjects: Mathematics/Sciences, English, Japanese 3. Leadership, life skills, social projects, mentoring, extracurricular activities, and reward system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Curriculum - Supplementary Curriculum 1. Learning Qur'an Reading, Fiqh, etc. 2. Religious Activities (prayers, congregational prayer) 3. Character Education: patriotism, democracy, cooperation, independence, integrity 4. Character habituation in daily activities and extracurricular programs

Character Values Developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aqidah (faith) - Taqwa (piety) - Noble character - Independence - Discipline - Care - Responsibility - Leadership - Empathy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Religious - Patriotism - Democracy - Mutual cooperation - Independence - Integrity (honesty, responsibility, courage, discipline, fairness, hard work, simplicity)
Integration in Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrated into curriculum (teaching modules) - Evening lessons - Extracurriculars and habituation - Attitude assessment in learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrated into: 1. National curriculum 2. Extracurricular activities 3. Daily dormitory and school routines 4. Attitude assessment through observation
Implementation & Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Designed through internal school meetings - Supported by principal and teachers - Follows stages: planning, implementation, evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordination meetings and program socialization with teachers and parents - Management based on planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation
Role of Stakeholders	Principal, teachers, dormitory supervisors, and school committee actively involved in program implementation and supervision	Principal, vice principals, teachers, dormitory supervisors, and parents involved in planning and implementation
Supporting Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dhuha Prayer - Rotating public speaking - Commemoration of national/religious days (e.g., Maulid, Independence Day) - Character training and mentoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Congregational prayers - Mutual cooperation activities - Student independence habituation
Focus of Additional Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Aqidah, Fiqih, Akhlak</i> - English, Japanese - Mathematics/Science - Ethics and social skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Daily prayers - Learning Qur'an Reading, Fiqh, etc. - Character value learning in every class session - Attitude assessment and LKS as measurement tools

As shown in Table 2 above, both schools share the same goal of enhancing students' character through boarding school activities. SMA Negeri 10 Fajar Harapan implements its program through the National Curriculum and a Plus Curriculum, which includes evening character education (*Aqidah, Fiqih, Akhlak*, and Qur'an recitation), enrichment learning (Mathematics, English, and Japanese), as well as leadership, life skills, and mentoring activities. Meanwhile, SMA Negeri 2 Banda Aceh emphasizes routine religious practices and character values (patriotism, cooperation, independence, and integrity) through daily activities, extracurricular programs, and classroom instruction. The character values developed in both schools include religiosity, responsibility, independence, discipline, empathy, and integrity.

Programs in both schools are integrated into the curriculum, daily activities, and attitude assessment systems. Program implementation is managed through planning, execution, and evaluation, with active support from school principals, teachers, dormitory supervisors, and other stakeholders, including parents. Supporting activities such as *dhuha* prayer, rotating speeches, celebration of national or religious days, and routines like prayer and communal service help reinforce character development. SMA Negeri 10 Fajar Harapan emphasizes academic and ethical development, while SMA Negeri 2 Banda Aceh focuses more on integrating character values into daily classroom instruction.

Implementation Strategies and Management

A strategy is a set of planned activities designed to achieve educational goals, particularly the success of the boarding school program in strengthening student character. The management strategy involves five main stages: program planning, organization, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Character development is carried out through the internalization of positive values by all school members, integration of values and ethics across all subjects, character training and habituation, direct modeling by teachers, and the creation of a school environment that supports character values. The principal of SMAN 2 Banda Aceh stated that the character education strategy is implemented in an integrated manner across learning, extracurricular activities, habituation, and cultural practices, involving all teachers—not just religious or civics education teachers. Teachers are expected to serve as role models so that students can emulate positive traits. The Vice Principal of Curriculum at SMAN 10 Fajar Harapan added that the boarding school program is designed through annual work meetings involving all stakeholders, with clearly defined roles, and its implementation is integrated into various school activities. In learning activities, teachers encourage joint prayer, polite communication, student motivation, and character value reinforcement both inside and outside the classroom.

Vice Principal for Public Relations at SMAN 10 Fajar Harapan emphasized that the management strategy begins with collective planning, shared control, and the integration of character values into teaching and daily routines, such as cleanliness, orderliness, friendliness, and discipline. Regular activities like Yasin recitation every Friday, flag ceremonies, class duty rosters, and congregational prayers are part of character cultivation. The Vice Principal of Public Relations at SMAN 2 Banda Aceh also explained that routine activities (ceremonies, class duties, prayer, greetings), incidental events (fundraising for social causes), and various extracurricular programs (bilingual speeches, scouting, sports, arts, and Red Cross) further strengthen students' character. Dormitory supervisors from both schools emphasized the importance of teacher role models in maintaining discipline, administering educational sanctions for violations, and fostering a peaceful and comfortable school atmosphere.

Challenges and Solutions in Character Education

Character education is an essential program for shaping individual character and personality in the context of nation-building. However, many challenges still hinder the effective implementation of character education

programs. As we know, challenges are obstacles or conditions that limit, obstruct, or prevent the achievement of goals. Therefore, boarding schools face several challenges in enhancing student character.

Table 3. Challenges and Solutions

School	Challenges	Solutions
SMAN 2 Banda Aceh	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Negative impact of mass media and technological advancements on students' character. 2. Limited capability of dormitory supervisors in managing students' potential. 3. Inadequate facilities and infrastructure. 4. Lack of parental support. 5. Low student motivation and interest in the boarding program. 6. Students' poor time and task management skills. 7. Lack of integration between boarding programs and school curriculum. 8. Low parental participation. 9. Lack of program evaluation and monitoring. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhance the principal's leadership and management skills. 2. Provide better facilities and infrastructure (books, learning materials, activity rooms). 3. Facilitate extracurricular activities that promote leadership and collaboration. 4. Involve parents and the community through seminars or workshops. 5. Give rewards and recognition for positive behavior. 6. Increase awareness and training on character education for all teachers.
SMAN 10 Fajar Harapan Banda Aceh	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Long learning hours in the dormitory. 2. Negative impact of mass media and technological advancements on students' character. 3. Lack of understanding among teachers and dormitory supervisors about character education student. 4. Lack of parental support in supervising children's behavior at home. 5. Home and community environments do not support character values. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recruit additional dormitory staff to assist teachers. 2. Improve school facilities and infrastructure to support character programs. 3. Facilitate extracurricular activities that build character, such as social clubs and volunteering. 4. Involve parents and communities in character education through workshops or seminars. 5. Provide awards to students who display good behavior. 6. Enhance teachers' understanding of the importance of character education.

The challenges in enhancing students' character at SMAN 2 Banda Aceh include the negative impact of mass media and technological advancement, the limited capabilities of dormitory supervisors, inadequate facilities and infrastructure, low student motivation, lack of parental support, and weak integration between the boarding school program and the school curriculum. To address these issues, the school has strengthened the principal's leadership, improved facilities and infrastructure, facilitated extracurricular activities, engaged parents and the community through seminars, recognized good behavior, and increased teachers' socialization in character education.

Meanwhile, at SMAN 10 Fajar Harapan Banda Aceh, the main obstacles are the negative influence of the mass media, limited understanding among

teachers of character development, a lack of parental support, an unsupportive home environment, and a tendency among some teachers to focus solely on academic instruction. Solutions implemented include adding dormitory caregivers to assist teachers, improving school facilities and infrastructure, strengthening extracurricular activities, engaging parents and the community in character education through workshops or seminars, rewarding students who display good behavior, and enhancing teachers' understanding of the importance of character education.

Discussion

The findings in Table 2 above show that both SMAN 10 Fajar Harapan and SMAN 2 Banda Aceh share the same goal of enhancing students' character through structured boarding school programs. However, the approaches differ in focus. SMAN 10 Fajar Harapan combines the National Curriculum with a Plus Curriculum emphasizing evening character education (Aqidah, Fiqh, Akhlaq) and academic enrichment (Mathematics, English, Japanese), while SMAN 2 Banda Aceh emphasizes daily habituation of religious and character values such as patriotism, cooperation, independence, and integrity through dormitory and school routines. This difference in approach supports the idea that character education can be implemented through both formal instruction and informal daily routines (Basori et al., 2023; Istikhorai et al., 2023). The integration of character values into the curriculum and extracurricular activities aligns with Gimbert et al. (2023) on comprehensive character education, which emphasizes planned, school-wide strategies. Moreover, the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes observed in both schools reflect effective school management practices as recommended by Suryadi et al. (2024), who highlight the importance of systematic planning and stakeholder involvement in education programs.

One key reason for the difference in program emphasis is contextual: SMAN 10 Fajar Harapan's additional academic curriculum reflects its mission as a flagship school aiming for academic excellence alongside character formation. Meanwhile, SMAN 2 Banda Aceh focuses on consistent religious routines and the habituation of values to address students' everyday behavior and social interactions. This contextual adaptation is consistent with research suggesting that successful character education must align with school goals, student needs, and local culture (Abidin et al., 2023; Munawwar, 2020). Stakeholder involvement is also critical to implementation. Both schools involve principals, teachers, dormitory supervisors, and parents, reflecting collaborative management strategies that strengthen program effectiveness (Shobron et al., 2020). Teachers' role modeling and daily monitoring help internalize positive values, supporting the "values-in-action" approach in character education.

However, both schools face challenges that threaten the success of their programs. SMAN 2 Banda Aceh faces challenges due to the negative influence of mass media, low student motivation, and insufficient integration of the boarding program with the school curriculum. These findings are consistent with previous studies that have noted the disruptive role of technology and the need for curriculum alignment (Basori et al., 2023; Hidayat & Patimah, 2023). Similarly,

SMAN 10 Fajar Harapan faces challenges, including teachers' limited understanding of character education and a lack of parental support, echoing Ilham et al. (2023), who highlight the importance of teacher training and parental involvement in character education programs. The solutions implemented, such as improving facilities, adding dormitory supervisors, involving parents through workshops, and awarding good behavior, demonstrate practical steps schools can take to address these barriers. These solutions align with recent recommendations for character education programs to prioritize stakeholder engagement, facility adequacy, and teacher capacity-building.

The implications of these findings are significant. Schools seeking to strengthen students' character through boarding programs should Design context-appropriate curricula that combine academic enrichment with daily habituation of values. Leadership commitment, teacher training, and parental involvement are essential to sustain program quality and ensure that students develop not only academic excellence but also integrity, responsibility, and empathy. Future research could further explore how variations in school context and resources shape the effectiveness of boarding school-based character education programs.

CONCLUSION

The boarding school programs at SMAN 2 Banda Aceh and SMAN 10 Fajar Harapan Banda Aceh have been designed to enhance students' character through activities integrated into learning, extracurriculars, and dormitory life, with active support from all school stakeholders. Although both have similar goals, their approaches differ slightly: SMAN 10 Fajar Harapan focuses more on the "plus curriculum," emphasizing academic and religious strengthening, while SMAN 2 Banda Aceh focuses on instilling character values through daily activities. The management strategy is carried out systematically through planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation, with an emphasis on teacher role modeling and community involvement. The challenges faced include the negative influence of the media, lack of facilities, and minimal parental support and participation. These issues are addressed through various solutions, such as more intensive parental involvement, the provision of supporting facilities, the strengthening of teachers' roles, and the rewarding of positive student behavior to build character sustainably.

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