

Integrative Values-Based Leadership: A Holistic Model for Character Education in Islamic Boarding Schools

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Abstract:

This study analyzes the leadership strategies of madrasah principals to strengthen value-based character education within pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) through an integrated pesantren educational ecosystem approach. Using a qualitative approach with an instrumental case study design, the study collected data through semi-structured interviews with ten purposively selected informants, participant observation, and document analysis; the data were then analyzed using Braun and Clarke's Reflexive Thematic Analysis. The findings reveal three key themes: (1) strategic planning grounded in values and institutional vision; (2) value implementation through the integration of curriculum, dormitory life, habituation, student organizations, and educator role-modeling; and (3) moral-reflective evaluation as a mechanism for sustaining institutional values. These findings give rise to the concept of Integrative Values-Based Leadership (IVBL), which positions the madrasah principal as a value-guider, educational system manager, and moral exemplar in fostering a sustainable character ecosystem. The study's implications suggest that strengthening character in Islamic educational institutions requires integrating leadership, organizational culture, the educational environment, and mechanisms for reflecting on values.

Keywords: *Values-Based Leadership, Character Education, Pesantren Ecosystem*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis strategi kepemimpinan kepala madrasah dalam penguatan pendidikan karakter berbasis nilai di pondok pesantren melalui pendekatan ekosistem pendidikan pesantren yang terintegrasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus instrumental. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur terhadap sepuluh informan yang dipilih secara purposif, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumen, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan Reflexive Thematic Analysis Braun dan Clarke. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan tiga tema utama, yaitu (1) perencanaan strategis berbasis nilai dan visi kelembagaan; (2) implementasi nilai melalui integrasi kurikulum, kehidupan asrama, pembiasaan, organisasi santri, dan keteladanan pendidik; serta (3) evaluasi moral-reflektif sebagai mekanisme keberlanjutan nilai institusi. Temuan ini menghasilkan konsep Integrative Values-Based Leadership (IVBL) yang memandang kepala madrasah sebagai pengarah nilai, pengelola sistem pendidikan, dan teladan moral dalam membangun ekosistem karakter yang berkelanjutan. Implikasi penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penguatan karakter di lembaga pendidikan Islam memerlukan integrasi antara kepemimpinan, budaya organisasi, lingkungan pendidikan, dan mekanisme refleksi nilai.

Kata Kunci: *Kepemimpinan berbasis Nilai, Pendidikan Karakter, Ekosistem Pesantren*

INTRODUCTION

Moral values-based character education is a systematic process for shaping students' values, attitudes, and behaviours based on Islamic teachings and the moral traditions of Islamic boarding schools (Wahid et al., 2024; Nazilah et al., 2024; Safuan et al., 2024; Musthofa et al., 2026). This education is not just an additional program but the core of the Islamic education system, which aims to form human beings as a whole, intellectually, morally, and socially. Its urgency is growing stronger in the midst of the development of globalization and the digital revolution that brings easy access to information while increasing the vulnerability of the younger generation to moral crises, weakening integrity, and reducing social responsibility (Priatmoko et al., 2025; Putra et al., 2025; Rachman et al., 2023; Sabililhaq, 2024).

In this context, pesantren has a strategic position as a value-based education ecosystem that integrates learning, dormitory life, exemplarity, and institutional culture (Karanto et al., 2024; Komala & Sukandar, 2025). However, character education succeeds not only through the values taught but also through leadership's ability to translate those values into policies, organizational culture, educational practices, and daily life. Therefore, the head of the madrasah has an important role in integrating the institutional vision, directing the educational process, building a value-based culture, and ensuring that character education does not stop at the normative level but is truly internalized in the lives of students (Jumadi et al., 2024; Syulbi, 2023; Widat et al., 2022; Widiastri, 2023).

Although research on character education and pesantren has advanced, a gap remains. Previous studies tend to discuss pesantren from structural and cultural aspects, while character education studies focus more on curriculum and programs (Sartini et al., 2025; Suja'i et al., 2025; Syari'ah et al., 2025). At the same time, research on madrasah leadership and character formation is generally studied separately. Thus, research remains limited in explaining how the head of the madrasah integrates management functions – planning, implementation, and evaluation – with a moral value system as the core of education management in a modern pesantren ecosystem that operates 24 hours.

Theoretically, this research is based on Lickona's idea of character education that integrates moral knowledge, moral feeling, and moral action. The three strengthen each other in the process of character formation. This perspective is strengthened by Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes the importance of learning through example and observation of figures who have competence, consistency, and moral credibility (Aryani & Yuliarti, 2023; Fahrurrozi et al., 2025; Hildayatuzzahra & Kurniawan, 2025; Lisapaly et al., 2025; Priatmoko et al., 2025). In the context of pesantren with a 24-hour education system, intense interaction enables exemplification and value internalization to occur more sustainably.

Furthermore, leadership in Islamic boarding schools differs from that in conventional schools. A leader's authority comes not only from structural positions and managerial abilities, but also from knowledge, moral integrity, exemplarity, and the continuity of value transmission between generations (Hasanah et al., 2023; Karanto et al., 2024; Firdausiyah et al., 2026; Syadidunniam et al., 2026). The modern pesantren ecosystem, which combines moral-spiritual leadership, dormitory life, mosques, an integrative curriculum, and pesantren culture, forms an education system that strengthens one another in the process of character formation (Ningsih et al., 2025; Sartini et al., 2025).

In this context, Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor was chosen because it consistently integrates formal education, pesantren life, and character formation within its 24-hour educational ecosystem. Through Kulliyatul al-Islamiyyah, Gontor combines the academic curriculum, dormitory life coaching, and the internalization of moral values in a sustainable manner. This makes Gontor a relevant empirical context for examining how the head of the madrasah translates institutional values into the planning, implementation, and evaluation of character education. Therefore, this study aims to explore madrasah heads' leadership strategies for developing, implementing, and evaluating the management of character education based on moral values at Kulliyatul al-Islamiyyah Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with an instrumental case study design (Priya, 2021; Viera, 2023) to examine how Kulliyatul al-Islamiyyah Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor manages character education. The research location was selected because the institution implements an integrated 24-hour education system that combines academic learning, boarding activities, and daily life practices to foster students' character development. This study aims to explore in depth the strategies, processes, and practices involved in managing character education within the institution.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. The participants were purposively selected and comprised 10 informants: the madrasah head, vice heads, senior teachers, and dormitory caregivers. The research was conducted from January to March 2026 and included 21 days of participatory observation and analysis of 47 institutional documents. The number of informants was determined by information adequacy and thematic saturation.

The collected data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's Reflexive Thematic Analysis, which consists of six stages: data familiarization, initial coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and report writing. The analysis process generated 247 initial codes, which were further organized into several main themes related to the management of character education. The credibility of the findings was ensured through source and method triangulation, member checking with five informants, peer debriefing with two experts, and reflective journals. These strategies ensured that the research interpretations remained consistent, credible, and strongly grounded in empirical evidence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The analysis of 247 initial codes from the entire dataset resulted in three main themes that are interrelated and form a comprehensive picture of the strategy of madrasah heads in the management of moral and morality-based character education. In addition to these three main themes, the analysis also identified a cross-sectoral theme that emerged consistently across the data: Integrative Leadership as a Driver of the Value Ecosystem, which will be explained in more depth in the discussion section.

Value-Based Strategic Planning and Institutional Vision

Planning in managing character education is ideological and normative, not merely technical-administrative. Three sub-themes emerged consistently, namely: (a) the formulation and realization of visions based on moral character, (b) participatory strategic deliberation mechanisms, and (c) the integration of values into curriculum documents and institutional rules.

The head of the madrasah described the philosophy of planning carried out with significant reflective depth: "Planning that is not based on values only results in many activities without guaranteeing character building. Therefore, every program and policy must contain moral values and its implementation mechanism. Planning is not just about preparing programs and budgets, but designing character formation according to the institutional vision." (P1, Head of Madrasah)

The mechanism of participatory strategic deliberation is identified as an important component of the planning process. The Vice Chair of Curriculum explained: "Annual strategic planning is carried out through halaqah for two days, starting with an evaluation of moral values and continuing with the preparation of priority programs. Each program is directed at strengthening character so that planning focuses on the formation of student morale, not just activities." (P2, Deputy Head of Curriculum)

Integrating values into the curriculum presents a rich technical dimension. The curriculum development coordinator explained the mechanism referred to as 'cross-subject value mapping': "On the initiative of the head of the madrasah, we developed a curricular value map to map moral values in each subject. This map is a reference in the preparation of learning and assessment. As a result, teachers are increasingly aware of their role as character educators, not just material teachers." (P5, Senior Teacher/Curriculum Coordinator).

The findings reveal that character education management at Kulliyatul al-Islamiyyah Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor is built on an integrated educational ecosystem that combines formal learning, dormitory supervision, and daily activities as a continuous process of character formation. The 24-hour education system embeds character values not only through classroom instruction but also through discipline, religious practices, organizational activities, and social interactions among students. The management process demonstrates that character education is not treated as a separate program but as an institutional culture supported by clear regulations, educator role modeling, and consistent supervision. The involvement of madrasah leaders, teachers, and dormitory

caregivers indicates that character development is achieved through collective responsibility and structured management involving planning, implementation, and evaluation.

The analysis further indicates that integrating values, learning environments, and continuous habituation influences the effectiveness of character education management. The themes identified from the data highlight several key aspects, including value internalization, exemplary leadership, student discipline, and the role of boarding systems in strengthening character development. The findings suggest that the success of character education at Gontor depends not only on teaching moral concepts but on creating an environment where students consistently experience and practice these values. This model provides an empirical illustration that a holistic, integrated education system can effectively develop students' character through synergy among curriculum, institutional culture, and everyday educational practices.

Integrated Implementation in the Islamic Boarding School Environment

The strategy is implemented through four main mechanisms: *uswah hasanah*, 24-hour education habituation, student organization, and physical and social environment management. Although all of them are considered important, the effectiveness and challenges of their implementation are seen differently by each informant. This shows that character education in *pesantren* is a dynamic process shaped by each actor's role and experience.

Exemplary (Uswah Hasanah) as a Pedagogical Core

Exemplary (*uswah hasanah*) is the main mechanism of character education and, according to all informants, the foundation of it. For Islamic boarding school leaders, the exemplary function helps maintain harmony between institutional vision and educational practice. Therefore, the success of character education depends heavily on the consistency of leaders and educators in applying values through real behaviour to build an institutional culture.

"The vision of the *pesantren* will not live only in documents. The values we formulate should be reflected in the daily behaviour of leaders, teachers, and caregivers. The students learn not only from what we say, but from what they see every day. Therefore, example is the most effective way to keep the vision of the *pesantren* truly a shared culture." (P6, Interview)

In contrast, senior teachers emphasize the pedagogical dimension of exemplary as an educational process that unfolds continuously through daily interactions. One senior teacher who has served for more than fifteen years explained that students' character is not primarily formed through lectures or written rules, but through teachers' real behaviour, which students continue to observe and imitate in various situations.

"If you want to form students with good morals, teachers must first be an example. A teacher's attitude, discipline, responsibility, and way of respecting others are easier to imitate than just advice. Therefore, character education must start from real examples in daily life." (P4, Interview)

Teachers with shorter tenures realize that 24-hour exemplary behaviour requires readiness, self-control, and institutional support. Students said that

teachers' and caregivers' behaviour was more influential than advice. Therefore, role models are effective if all educators are consistent between the values taught and the behaviours displayed.

"We are easier to emulate than just advice. When teachers show discipline, patience, and caring, we can see and imitate them firsthand. On the contrary, the mismatch between the values conveyed and the teacher's behaviour can cause confusion. Therefore, the example must be applied consistently by all educators." (Student, Interviewer)

The findings show that exemplification is the main mechanism of character education, with different perspectives between groups. Leaders see it as a driver of institutional culture, teachers as pedagogical strategies, and students as the compatibility between values and behaviour. Thus, *uswah hasanah* is a dynamic process shaped by institutional values, educational practices, and *pesantren* residents' experiences.

Structured Habituation in a 24-Hour Routine

The senior dormitory caregiver provides an in-depth description of how each segment of time in a student's 24-hour life is designed as a character-building arena: "Gontor's dormitory life forms character through a consistent routine. Waking up early in the morning, queuing, praying in congregation, and reading the Qur'an and *muraja'ah* instills discipline, spirituality, and care. Thus, character is formed through simple habits that are carried out every day."

The findings indicate that character formation at Gontor is achieved through a structured habituation process embedded in students' daily routines within the 24-hour boarding system. The statement from the senior dormitory caregiver highlights that ordinary activities, such as waking up early, queuing, performing congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation, and *muraja'ah*, function as intentional educational practices that cultivate discipline, spiritual awareness, responsibility, and social concern. These routines show that character education is not limited to theoretical instruction but develops through continuous practice and direct experiences in students' daily lives. The consistency of these activities creates an environment where positive values become internalized behaviors, showing that the dormitory system effectively transforms moral concepts into concrete character traits through repetition, supervision, and collective participation.

The Santri Organizational System as a Container for Leadership Practice

The student organization system in Gontor is known as OPPM (Modern Pondok Student Organization), which the head of the madrasah considers the most strategic forum for implementing character. The Vice Chair of Student Affairs explained the philosophy and mechanism: "The student organization forms leadership through real experience. The responsibility and guidance of the head of the madrasah fosters an attitude of discipline, example, and care." (P4, Deputy Head of Student Affairs)

The findings demonstrate that the OPPM (Modern Pondok Student Organization) functions as a strategic platform for character development through experiential learning and student leadership practices. The organization gives

students opportunities to experience responsibility, decision-making, teamwork, and problem-solving under the guidance of institutional leaders and teachers. Student involvement in organizational roles helps develop character values such as discipline, leadership, accountability, initiative, and social awareness through real-life practice rather than mere theoretical understanding. This indicates that Gontor's character education management extends beyond classroom and dormitory routines by utilizing student organizations as an educational environment where students actively construct their character through continuous responsibility, supervision, and exemplary guidance.

Physical and Social Environment as a Character Education Media

This teacher of the daily Islamic program reveals things that often receive less attention, namely the design of the physical and social environment that is deliberately designed to reinforce the internalization of values: "The Gontor environment is a medium for character building. Cleanliness fosters responsibility, mosques strengthen spirituality, and libraries and Arabic-English encourage a love of knowledge and insight." (P6, Senior Teacher).

The findings show that Gontor's physical and social environment is intentionally designed as an educational medium that supports the internalization of character values. The senior teacher's statement indicates that every element of the institutional environment, including cleanliness practices, mosque activities, libraries, and Arabic-English communication, serves an educational function beyond its practical purpose. A clean environment cultivates responsibility and awareness of shared ownership, while religious facilities strengthen spiritual values and academic spaces encourage intellectual curiosity and lifelong learning. This finding shows that character education at Gontor is implemented through an ecological approach, where values are embedded not only through direct instruction and supervision but also through the surrounding environment that continuously shapes students' attitudes, behaviors, and habits.

Reflective-Moral Evaluation as a Value Purification Mechanism

The evaluation system developed by the head of the madrasah goes beyond conventional quality control, serving as a mechanism for refining sustainable values. Three sub-themes emerged, namely: (a) multidimensional character evaluation based on behavioural evidence, (b) student self-evaluation as the formation of moral awareness, and (c) educator evaluation as exemplary reflection. The Deputy Head of Student Affairs explained the evaluation philosophy that distinguishes the system at Gontor from the conventional character assessment system:

"Character evaluation is carried out through observation of the real behaviour of students in daily life. The results are the basis for student development as well as the reflection of educators to strengthen their example." (P4, Deputy Head of Student Affairs). P4's statement shows that character evaluation is carried out through observation of students' real behaviour in various situations, not just a cognitive test. The results of the evaluation are the

basis for coaching as well as reflection for educators to strengthen the consistency of example. Thus, character evaluation encourages shared responsibility and supports improving the quality of educator examples.

The innovation of student self-evaluation introduced by the head of the madrasah received special attention from senior teachers who witnessed the impact: "Character reflection encourages students to admit their weaknesses and build moral awareness. Thus, self-reflection becomes a means of controlling behaviour based on awareness, not merely supervision or punishment." (P7, Senior Teacher)

P7's findings show a shift from external evaluation to self-awareness. Through a reflection journal, students can recognize weaknesses and gaps between behaviour and perceived values. Thus, self-reflection is not only an instrument of evaluation, but also a means of building awareness and moral control so that students can do good without depending on supervision or punishment.

Senior dormitory caregivers reveal post-evaluation coaching mechanisms that prioritize a humanist-educational approach: "When character problems are found, coaching begins with dialogue, not punishment, to understand the condition and causes. Thus, students are seen as individuals who need to be understood and fostered appropriately." (P9, Dormitory Nanny). The findings of P9 suggest that character evaluation is followed by recovery-oriented coaching, not punishment. Through dialogue and an empathetic approach, educators try to understand the root of the problem behind students' behaviour so coaching is more appropriate and humane. Thus, reflection, example, and understanding of students are the basis for character development that is not solely punishment-oriented.

The forward-oriented dimension of evaluation—through alumni tracking—was revealed by the alumni coordinator, who is also a senior teacher: "Character evaluation continues through monitoring behaviour, integrity, and alumni contributions in society. The results are the basis for improving education, as well as measuring the ability of alumni to maintain the values that have been instilled." (P10, Alumni Coordinator and Senior Teacher). The findings in P10 confirm that character evaluation continues in alum life. The success of education is measured by the ability to maintain values and integrity in society. These findings complement P4, P7, and P9, which state that evaluation continues through behavioural observation, moral awareness, humanist coaching, and alumni monitoring. Thus, character evaluation forms an integrated and sustainable reflective system.

The findings show that Gontor's character evaluation system is a comprehensive, sustainable approach that goes beyond conventional outcome-focused assessment. The system implements character evaluation through continuous observation of students' actual behaviors, self-reflection activities, educator role modeling, and post-evaluation guidance, indicating that character development is viewed as a dynamic process rather than a final achievement. The evaluation system emphasizes behavioral evidence, where students' daily actions

become the primary indicators of character growth, while self-evaluation encourages internal moral awareness and personal responsibility. Furthermore, the humanistic coaching approach demonstrates that character issues are addressed through dialogue and understanding rather than punishment, positioning students as individuals who require guidance and development. Educators' involvement in reflective evaluation and monitoring of student integrity further shows that character education at Gontor is a lifelong process, where the sustainability of values is measured by students' ability to practice and maintain them within broader social contexts consistently.

Discussion

The findings indicate that no single leadership theory fully explains the head of madrasah's leadership at Kulliyatul al-Islamiyyah. Transformational, servant, instructional, and authentic leadership explain certain dimensions. However, they do not comprehensively capture the integration of moral-spiritual authority, managerial responsibility, pedagogical roles, exemplary behavior, and value reflection within a 24-hour Islamic boarding school system. Transformational leadership emphasizes vision and change but lacks attention to moral integrity and exemplary aspects (Imaduddin et al., 2022; Jauhari et al., 2025; Hasanah et al., 2026; S et al., 2025); servant leadership focuses on service but does not fully explain moral authority; instructional leadership is limited to academic contexts (Fanani & Ma'arif, 2025; Farlow, 2023; Fuadi et al., 2025; Hasanah et al., 2024; Heru & Bali, 2024; Sailin et al., 2024)), while authentic leadership has not fully described the formation of collective moral culture. Therefore, this study proposes Integrative Values-Based Leadership (IVBL) as a framework to explain leadership practices in value-based Islamic education.

Based on the synthesis of three main themes—value-based planning, character education ecosystem implementation, and moral-reflective evaluation—IVBL is conceptualized as an integrative leadership model that combines organizational management, educational guidance, moral exemplification, and value internalization. This concept does not replace existing leadership theories but expands their application by positioning leaders as value directors, educational system managers, moral role models, and facilitators of collective reflection. Leadership effectiveness is therefore measured not only by institutional achievements but also by the ability to embed values into policies, educational practices, institutional culture, and daily student experiences.

The IVBL model consists of four interconnected dimensions: moral-spiritual authority, integrated managerial-pedagogical functions, exemplary leadership, and evaluation as collective moral reflection. Moral-spiritual authority provides leadership legitimacy through integrity, knowledge, and consistent behavior; managerial-pedagogical functions translate values into educational systems and practices; exemplary leadership transforms values into lived experiences through daily actions; and reflective evaluation ensures continuous improvement among students, educators, and leaders. These dimensions form a continuous cycle in which values are not only formulated but also implemented, practiced, and sustained throughout the educational ecosystem.

Table 1. IVBL differentiation

Leadership Perspective	Key Focus	Limitations in Islamic Boarding School Character Education	IVBL Specific Contributions
Transformational Leadership	Vision, organizational change, motivation, and commitment of members	It has not been explained in depth the moral legitimacy of leaders as a source of character learning	Integrating organizational transformation with the moral-spiritual authority of the leader
Servant Leadership	Service, care, empowerment, and individual development	Has not explained the leader's position as an institutional value model	Expanding service to become a moral example that shapes the organization's culture
Instructional Leadership	Quality of learning, supervision, and academic effectiveness	Limited to formal learning spaces	Expanding leadership towards a 24-hour character education ecosystem
Authentic Leadership	Self-awareness, consistency of values, and trusted relationships	Emphasizing the authenticity of the individual leader rather than the reproduction of collective values	Developing personal authenticity into a moral reflection of the community values
Integrative Value-Based Leadership (IVBL)	Integration of moral-spiritual values, management, pedagogy, example, and collective reflection	-	Explain how character leadership takes place as an integrated value ecosystem

The novelty of Integrative Values-Based Leadership (IVBL) lies not in creating a completely new leadership theory, but in reconfiguring the relationship among leadership dimensions that have been explained separately. IVBL integrates these dimensions into a coherent conceptual framework to explain how value-based leadership works in an integrated manner in character education in Islamic boarding schools. The framework shows that character education leadership is not adequately explained through the leader's ability to transform an organization, serve members, or improve the quality of learning. Instead, leadership effectiveness emerges from the interconnectedness of moral-spiritual authority, managerial-pedagogical functions, exemplary practice as a mechanism for transmitting values, and evaluation as a space for collective reflection. The four dimensions do not work separately, but reinforce each other to maintain the consistency of values in institutional life. This configuration is IVBL's main contribution, as shown in Figure 1.

The findings demonstrate that the 24-hour education system in Islamic boarding schools requires leadership that integrates moral consistency, educational management, and exemplary behavior. Unlike formal education, pesantren life blends learning with daily experiences, making leaders' and educators' actions a direct means of character formation through observation, habituation, and value internalization. Therefore, Integrative Values-Based Leadership (IVBL) expands the concept of character education leadership by emphasizing the integration of moral-spiritual authority, managerial-pedagogical functions, exemplary, and collective reflection as a continuous process of formulating, implementing, evaluating, and sustaining values.

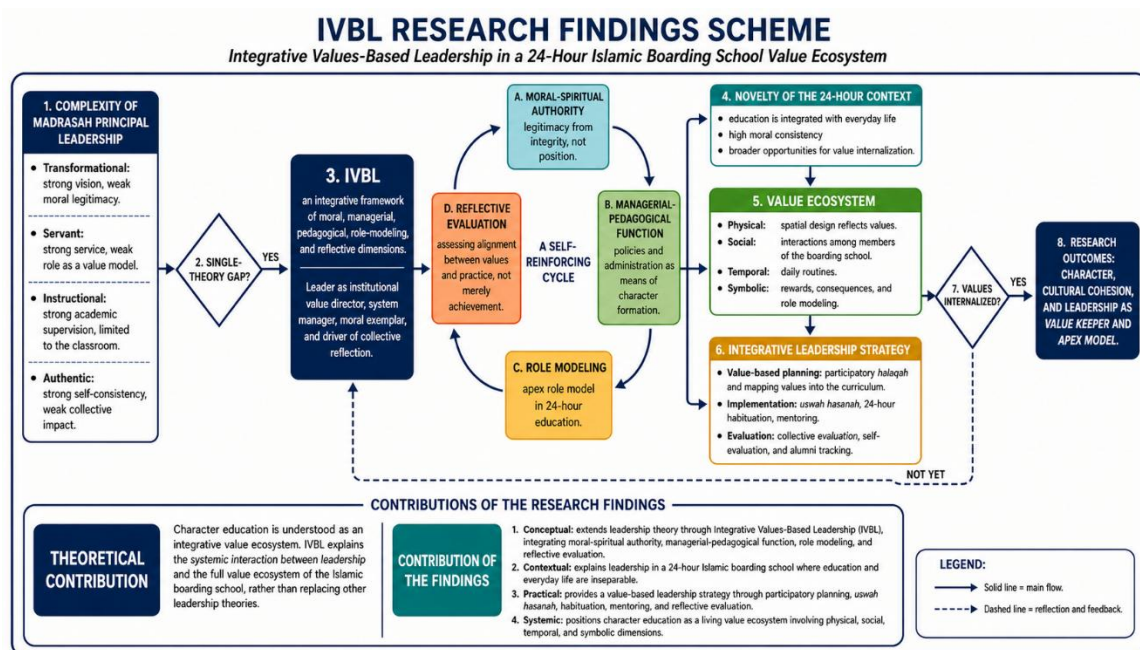


Figure 1. IVBL Schema

The study also develops the concept of a value ecosystem as an expansion of Lickona's Comprehensive Approach to Character Education (Rahmana et al., 2023). Character forms not only through curriculum and programs but also through a living ecosystem of physical, social, temporal, and symbolic environments that continuously reinforce values. Islamic values are internalized through daily routines, environmental management, social interactions, reward systems, and the examples of leaders and educators. This finding highlights that character education effectiveness depends not only on what is taught but also on the consistency between taught values and institutional practices.

Furthermore, character evaluation in Gontor is identified as a process of moral reflection rather than merely quality control. Evaluation examines whether values are truly practiced by students, educators, and institutional members, aligning educational goals, behavior, and culture. This finding supports previous studies emphasizing the importance of leadership, institutional culture, and exemplary behavior in character education (Komala & Sukandar, 2025; Permadi & Achadi, 2025; Khomairohtusshiyamah et al., 2025), while offering a more integrative perspective that these elements function as interconnected systems. Through the Islamic Value Ecosystem framework, IVBL drives the relationship among leadership, culture, curriculum, dormitory life, habituation, and reflective evaluation, ensuring that Islamic values are not only taught but also lived and sustained throughout the educational ecosystem.

Table 2. Value-Based Integrative Leadership Model

Strategy Dimension	Operational Mechanism	Foundations of Theory
Value-Based Planning	Participatory strategic halaqah; mapping of grades to the curriculum; Morality-Based Discipline	Terry (1977) – POAC; Value-Based Leadership
Value Ecosystem Implementation	Uswah hasanah; 24-hour habituation; student organizations; Cross-	Bandura (1977) – Observational Learning;

Strategy Dimension	Operational Mechanism	Foundations of Theoryitis
	generational mentoring	Lickona (2012) – Moral Action
Reflective-Moral Evaluation	Collective evaluation meetings; self-evaluation of students; humanist construction; Keeping Track of Alumni	Braun & Clarke (2006); Continuous Improvement; Moral Awareness
Integrative Leadership	Value Keeper; moral-spiritual authority; Exemplary Head as Apex Model	Berkowitz & Bier (2005); Transformational Leadership

The findings suggest that Integrative Values-Based Leadership (IVBL) is better understood as a leadership mechanism that explains how madrasah leaders mobilize and sustain character education within the Islamic Value Ecosystem, rather than as an entirely new leadership theory. IVBL shows that leadership effectiveness depends on integrating institutional components, including value-based planning, curriculum, dormitory life, habituation, student organizations, educator role models, and reflective evaluation. These components operate as a continuous cycle in which values are formulated, implemented, practiced, evaluated, and refined to strengthen character education. Therefore, this study contributes to educational leadership discourse by shifting the focus from leader-centered approaches toward a systemic perspective that examines the interaction between leadership and the broader institutional ecosystem.

The Islamic Value Ecosystem Perspective proposed in this study provides a conceptual contribution by explaining character education as an integrated process involving leadership, culture, structure, learning systems, daily practices, and reflective mechanisms. Within this ecosystem, IVBL functions as an integrative mechanism through four dimensions: moral-spiritual authority, managerial-pedagogical functions, exemplary leadership, and reflective evaluation. This finding implies that Islamic boarding schools seeking to strengthen character education should not rely solely on curriculum-based programs but should develop coherent ecosystems in which institutional values are consistently reflected in policies, environments, routines, and educator behaviors. This perspective offers a broader understanding of how sustainable character formation can be achieved by aligning leadership practices and institutional culture in value-based education settings.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that character education management at Kulliyatul al-Islamiyyah Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor is implemented through an integrated system of value-based planning, ecosystem-based implementation, and reflective-moral evaluation. The findings show that the sustainability of character education is not determined solely by the leadership capacity of the madrasah head, but by the ability to integrate institutional components, including curriculum, boarding life, habituation, student organizations, educator role models, and evaluation mechanisms, to ensure the continuous transmission and internalization of Islamic values. This research contributes the Islamic Value Ecosystem Perspective as a conceptual framework

for understanding pesantren-based character education, with Integrative Values-Based Leadership (IVBL) serving as a mechanism that connects moral-spiritual authority, managerial-pedagogical functions, exemplary leadership, and reflective evaluation. This perspective expands educational leadership studies by emphasizing the systemic interaction between leadership and institutional ecosystems rather than focusing solely on individual leader characteristics. However, the findings are limited by the single-case study design and internal informant perspectives; therefore, future research should employ comparative, longitudinal, or mixed-method approaches to further validate and develop the IVBL framework across diverse value-based educational contexts.

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