



INTEGRATION OF SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE PROGRAM IN LEARNING TO DEVELOP THE CHARACTER OF MILLENNIAL STUDENTS

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Abstract:

This research aims to examine the integration of the Spiritual Guidance Program in learning at the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School, and its impact on the character formation of millennial students. The main focus of this research is to understand how spiritual guidance, which is based on Islamic spiritual values and ethics, can be applied in learning to foster stronger character among students. The research method used is a qualitative approach with a case study type, which involves observation, in-depth interviews with key informants such as Islamic boarding school mudirs, curriculum leaders, Sufism teachers, and Islamic boarding school students, and analysis of existing program documentation. The research results show that integrating spiritual guidance in learning helps develop students' character and increases their spiritual awareness, which is very important in facing the challenges of the millennial era. Apart from that, characteristics such as discipline, responsibility, and concern for others are increasingly formed through applying this guidance. The implications of this research show that spiritually based programs need to be strengthened in Islamic boarding school education as a basis for producing students who have strong, ethical characters and are ready to adapt to an increasingly modern world.

Keywords: Spiritual Guidance, Santri Character, Islamic Boarding School Education

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of the times, marked by advances in technology and information, has had a significant impact on the younger generation, including Islamic students. The millennial era, which is characterized by the values of individualism, hedonism and consumerism, is a challenge in forming the character of students with noble morals (Hossain, 2023; Uyuni & Adnan, 2020). The integration of spiritual guidance programs in learning is very crucial for instilling strong religious values in millennial students, so that they are able to face the challenges of the times and become the next generation with noble morals.

Previous research has studied the importance of character education in forming the younger generation. Several studies show that religious education and moral values play an important role in forming a good personality. However, there is still little research that specifically discusses the integration of spiritual guidance programs in learning at Islamic boarding schools and their impact on the character formation of millennial students. Existing research focuses more on the cognitive aspects of learning, while the spiritual and moral aspects are often neglected. In fact, the spiritual dimension is very important in forming a complete and balanced personality. (Alzeer & Benmerabet, 2023) Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap by examining more deeply how the

integration of spiritual guidance programs can contribute to growing the character of millennial students.

This research aims to answer the question: "How does the integration of spiritual guidance programs in learning influence the character formation of millennial students in Islamic boarding schools?" More specifically, this research will test the hypothesis that the integration of spiritual guidance programs can improve the religious, moral and social dimensions of millennial students. This research will also identify factors that influence the successful implementation of the spiritual guidance program.

It is hoped that by integrating spiritual guidance programs in learning, millennial students can develop better character. Intensive spiritual guidance can help students understand religious values more deeply, so that they can implement these values in their daily lives. (Exline et al., 2022; Mulang & Putra, 2023) Apart from that, spiritual guidance programs can also equip students with the social and emotional skills needed to interact with other people and face life's challenges. (Jenaabadi & Azarian, 2023) In this way, it is hoped that students can become the next generation who have noble morals, are knowledgeable, and are able to contribute to society.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research was conducted in the Al-Amiri area of the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School, which is known as one of the Islamic boarding schools based on the integration of traditional and modern values. This location was chosen because the Islamic boarding school environment has a spiritual guidance program that is structured and integrated with formal learning. The unit of analysis includes the interaction between the spiritual guidance program and the process of forming the character of millennial students which combines spiritual, emotional and social values. This Islamic boarding school has various facilities that support the implementation of the program, such as study rooms, a library of classical books, and group discussion facilities. (Yamin, 2023) By focusing research on one location, this study aims to obtain an in-depth and detailed understanding of the implementation of the guidance program spirituality in the context of Islamic boarding schools.

This research design uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. This approach was chosen because of its exploratory nature and ability to understand phenomena in depth. Case studies allow researchers to observe, analyze and explore how spiritual guidance programs are integrated into learning, especially in the character formation of millennial students. The focus on a qualitative approach also provides flexibility to explore various perspectives from informants regarding the phenomenon under study. With this design, researchers can reveal patterns, processes and relationships between elements in the spiritual guidance program and the character of students, thereby producing more contextual and comprehensive findings.

The sources of information in this research consisted of four main groups of informants, namely Islamic boarding school principals, deputy heads of curriculum, Sufism teachers, and Islamic boarding school students. The mudir of the Islamic boarding school was chosen as an informant to provide insight into general policies and the vision for the development of the spiritual guidance program. The deputy head of curriculum provided information about how this

program is integrated into formal learning. Sufism teachers, as primary implementers, are an important source for understanding teaching methodology and program evaluation. Meanwhile, students were selected to describe their direct experiences and perceptions of this program. These four groups were selected to ensure accuracy and diversity of data from various points of view.

Table 1 presents information regarding resource persons involved in the spiritual guidance program, including position, role, category, and information regarding the contribution of each resource person. Resource persons consisting of various groups, including ustaz, foster carers, regional heads, and Islamic boarding school students, have an important role in managing and providing perspectives on program implementation. Ustaz, such as Ustaz Ahmad and Ustazah Nurul, provided insights regarding the teaching of Sufism and the integration of spiritual values in the study of books. On the other hand, the guardians focus on nurturing and character building of the students, while the regional head is responsible for managing and integrating the program into academic activities. Santri, whether involved in group studies, collective dhikr, or book studies, also provided personal views and experiences regarding the impact of the program. Thus, this table illustrates the contribution of various parties who support the success of the spiritual guidance program.

Table 1. Informant Respondents

No	Category	Number of Respondents	Information
1	Ustaz	4	Providing insights and perspectives related to spiritual methodologies and programs.
2	Foster Guardian	3	Focus on student guidance and daily program evaluation.
3	Regional Head	2	Responsible for territory management and program integration.
4	Students	6	Providing personal views and experiences related to spiritual programs.

Data was collected through three main methods, namely observation, interviews and documentation. Observations were carried out to directly observe the implementation of the spiritual guidance program including routine activities such as collective dhikr, book reading and group discussions. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants to gather information regarding the aims, methods, challenges and impact of the program on the character of the students. Documentation involves collecting documents such as learning modules, activity records and program evaluations. This combination of methods is designed to provide a complete picture of program implementation from planning to the results achieved.

Data analysis was carried out through three main stages as in Miles and Huberman, namely data reduction, data display and data verification. Data reduction involves selecting relevant information from the raw data obtained during research. Data display is done by arranging information in the form of tables, diagrams or narratives to make it easier to identify patterns and relationships. Data verification aims to ensure the validity and reliability of the

findings. The analytical methods used include content analysis, discourse analysis, and interpretation analysis. Content analysis is used to evaluate the spiritual guidance program material, while discourse analysis explores the meaning of the interview results. Interpretive analysis helps understand the implications of the findings in the context of student character formation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Comparison of Teacher and Santri Responses to the Spiritual Guidance Program

Assessment of the spiritual guidance program is carried out by comparing the responses of teachers and students regarding various aspects of the program. Several indicator questions were used to explore the perceptions of both parties, including program integration, forms of benefits, and the types of challenges faced. Teachers tend to highlight the application of spiritual values in the classroom as a form of integration, while students feel more spiritually based additional activities. (Fernandes-Osterhold, 2022) In terms of benefits, teachers see this program as effective in forming discipline and religious attitudes, while students feel an increase in learning motivation. The main challenges revealed by teachers are busy study schedules, while students face difficulties adapting to new routines. These differences suggest complementary perspectives in evaluating program success.

Table 2 Comparison of Teacher and Santri Responses to the Spiritual Guidance Program

No	Question Indicator	Teacher Response	Student Response
1	Integration implemented	Through the integration of spiritual values in the classroom.	Additional activities based on spiritual guidance.
2	Form of Benefits	Forming a disciplined and religious attitude.	Increase learning motivation.
3	Types of challenges	Busy study schedule.	Adapting to new routines.

Teachers assess that this integration helps shape character while students feel more motivated. The main obstacles are a busy study schedule and initial adaptation to change. Interview data shows a pattern that program integration is carried out by combining spiritual values into learning. Teachers play a key role in directing students, while students try to adjust to new routines. The result is an increase in discipline and religious attitudes, despite technical obstacles, such as adjusting schedules and adapting to additional spiritual activities.

This pattern shows that the integration of spiritual guidance programs creates positive synergy between teachers and students. Adaptation challenges reflect the need for a phased approach to ensure broader acceptance. This integration was successful because it supported the spiritual needs and learning motivation of the students. Thus, this program has the potential to be a holistic approach in character formation.

Relationship between Activity Frequency and Teacher Involvement and Student Participation

Teacher involvement and student participation are two important factors that support the achievement of educational goals and character building in Islamic boarding schools. In this context, the frequency of activities carried out each week plays a major role in creating an atmosphere that supports the teaching and learning process, both formally and informally. Activities such as congregational prayer, book study, and morning and evening dhikr, with a certain frequency, are expected to strengthen the relationship between teachers and students and increase awareness and active participation of students in religious and educational activities in Islamic boarding schools. This study aims to identify the pattern of the relationship between the frequency of activities and these two factors, which can ultimately provide insight to improve activity management in Islamic boarding schools.

Teacher involvement in organizing activities is very important in creating a supportive learning atmosphere in Islamic boarding schools. Based on the results of an interview with the Head of Putra Region, he explained that teachers have a primary role in planning and leading various religious activities such as congregational prayers, book studies, and morning and evening dhikr. Teachers are expected to be able to create a schedule that allows students to participate in these activities routinely without disrupting the formal learning process.

"We always try to adjust the activity schedule to the students' study hours so that they do not feel burdened, but instead feel empowered by these spiritual activities," he said.

Well-organized activities help increase closeness between teachers and students and strengthen religious ties in Islamic boarding schools. In addition to organizing activities, teachers also have a significant role in fostering the character of students. The results of an interview with Ustaz 4, the Coordinator of Joint Dhikr, showed that spiritual activities such as joint dhikr and book studies play a major role in shaping the morals of students. According to him, through teaching that involves spiritual values, teachers not only teach academic material, but also provide examples in shaping the character of students.

"This routine activity is not only to deepen religious knowledge, but more than that, they learn about patience, discipline, and cooperation in worship," he explained.

This character building is an important element in forming students who are not only academically smart, but also have noble morals. The frequency of activities carried out every week also has a direct impact on teacher motivation in teaching. According to an interview with Guardian 1, a male student mentor, the more often religious activities are carried out, the higher the teacher's enthusiasm in guiding students.

"Through routine activities, I feel closer to the students and more motivated to give my best in teaching. They are also more enthusiastic about following lessons because they are used to deep religious activities," he said.

This experience shows that a high frequency of activities can create a positive learning environment, increase teacher motivation, and motivate students to be more active in every activity held.

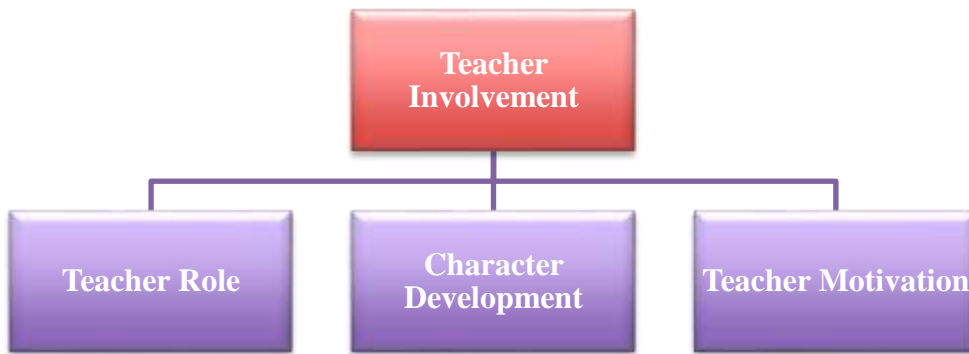
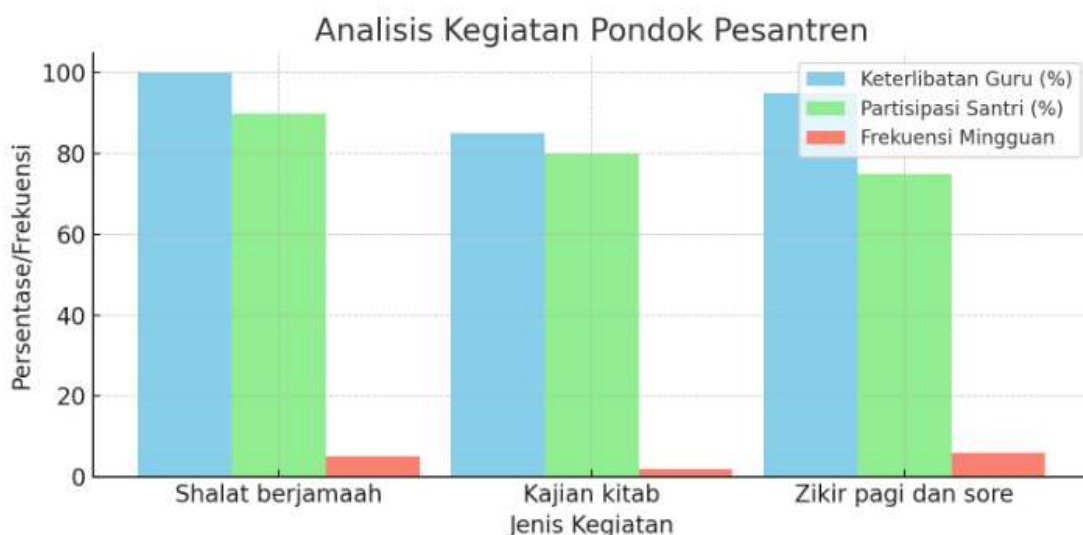


Figure 1. Tescher Involvement Concept

This table shows the relationship between the frequency of activities with teacher involvement and student participation in the spiritual guidance program. Activities that are carried out routinely every week, such as congregational prayer, book study, and morning and evening dhikr, have different frequencies, which in turn affect the level of teacher involvement and student participation. Congregational prayer, which is held five times a week, recorded high teacher involvement and student participation, reaching 100% and 90%, respectively. Meanwhile, book study with a frequency of twice a week showed teacher involvement of 85% and student participation of 80%, and morning and evening dhikr held six times a week had teacher involvement of 95%, with student participation slightly lower, at 75%. These data reflect that the more frequently an activity is carried out, the higher the involvement and participation that is realized, although there are variations in the level of student participation that may be influenced by the type of activity.

Chart 1. Relationship between Activity Frequency and Teacher Involvement and Student Participation



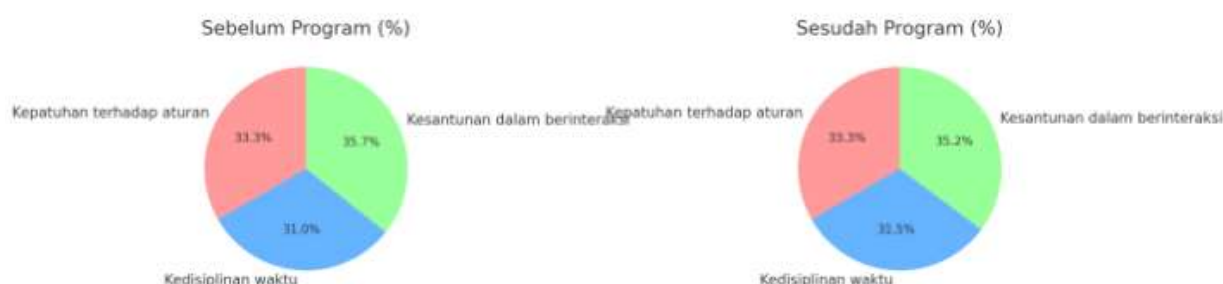
The chart shows that mandatory activities such as congregational prayer have a higher participation rate than additional activities such as book study and dhikr. Observational data illustrates a pattern that mandatory and scheduled activities such as congregational prayer tend to receive high participation from

students. Teachers consistently lead and supervise activities, which has a significant impact on student engagement. However, participation in additional activities such as book study and dhikr is slightly lower, which is likely due to the optional nature of the activities. High participation in mandatory activities suggests that students find it easier to participate in activities that have strict rules and supervision. In contrast, optional activities require additional encouragement to increase participation. This suggests the importance of creative approaches and incentives so that optional spiritual activities can have the same appeal as mandatory activities.

Development of students' attitudes and behavior

The spiritual guidance program is designed to improve the quality of students' attitudes and behavior in various aspects of daily life. (Fernandes-Osterhold, 2022) Assessment of this development is carried out to measure the effectiveness of the program in forming a better Islamic character. In the evaluation, several main aspects such as compliance with rules, time discipline, and politeness in interactions are the focus of observation. The assessment results showed significant changes after the implementation of the program, reflecting the expected positive impact in fostering students to become more disciplined, obedient, and polite individuals according to the values of the Islamic boarding school.

Diagram 1. Development of attitudes and behavior of students



Documentation shows a significant increase in aspects of obedience, time discipline, and politeness of students after the implementation of the program. From the documentation, it can be seen that the spiritual guidance program has a positive impact on the behavior of students. Consistent increases in compliance with rules, time discipline, and politeness indicate the success of the program in internalizing spiritual values. This is evidence that the integration of this program is able to bridge character formation and academic needs simultaneously. A significant increase in aspects of discipline and politeness shows that the spiritual guidance program not only builds students' relationships with spiritual values but also helps them adjust to good social norms. This reflects that the integration of spiritual values in learning has an important role in

building the character of millennial students who are balanced between intellectual intelligence and emotional intelligence.

Discussion

The results of the interview show that the spiritual guidance program has a significant role in shaping the religious character of millennial students, but its implementation faces the challenge of adapting to the needs of the digital generation. This success lies in efforts to bring spiritual values closer through contextual learning methods, such as thematic studies and individual mentoring, which are considered relevant to the emotional and spiritual needs of students. However, several respondents mentioned the lack of consistency in implementation as a dysfunctional factor. The importance of integrating religious values in formal education to build students' moral character. (Iksal et al., 2024) Another article states that teaching based on spiritual values must be responsive to the culture of the millennial generation. (Nuary et al., 2024)

The limitations of the implementation of spiritual guidance programs often stem from the lack of special training for teachers and the minimal adaptation of methods to the learning styles of millennial students. Teachers tend to use traditional approaches that are not always relevant to the mindset of students in the digital era. The lack of provision in understanding the unique needs of this generation has an impact on uneven spiritual learning outcomes. Intensive training for educators can increase the effectiveness of character-based teaching. This is reinforced by research (Alshuraiaan, 2023) which highlights the need for a culturally sensitive pedagogical approach in shaping student character. Then the study (Yu et al., 2023) showed that the combination of a modern approach with traditional values has a positive impact on character formation. This correlation emphasizes the need for investment in teacher training and method innovation to ensure that spiritual guidance programs are able to optimally meet the needs of millennial students.

Observations show that the spiritual guidance program functions as a catalyst for the formation of the students' disciplined and responsible character, although the sustainability of its impact depends on a consistent supervision system. Activities such as dhikr together, reading classical books, and group discussions help instill positive values, but their success requires the support of a system that is integrated with formal learning. Research by (Achadah et al., 2022) shows that the integration of spiritual activities in formal education has a positive impact on students' character. Another study by (Chen et al., 2022) noted that group-based learning strengthens the values of responsibility and cooperation. However, research by (Vitousek et al., 2023) highlighted that without a good supervision system, the impact tends not to last long. These findings confirm that the function of the spiritual guidance program can be optimized by implementing a continuous evaluation system to ensure a consistent impact on the students' character.

A weak monitoring system is often the root of the problem of the sustainability of the impact of spiritual guidance programs. Lack of monitoring causes a decrease in student enthusiasm and reduces the effectiveness of the program. This is exacerbated by the mismatch between the program

implementation time and the busy academic schedule. Research (Nunes et al., 2022) shows that programs that do not have a good evaluation system tend to fail to achieve their long-term goals. Similar findings were reported by (Mittal & Panchal, 2023), who noted that an inflexible schedule structure is an obstacle to program integration. Therefore, the preparation of a better monitoring structure and adjustment of the program implementation time are important steps to ensure the sustainability of the program's impact on the formation of student character.

Evidence from this study shows that the integration of spiritual guidance not only shapes individual character but also creates a harmonious social environment in Islamic boarding schools. The values instilled through this program, such as tolerance and empathy, help reduce social conflict and increase the sense of brotherhood among students. According to a study by (Köktürk Dalcali & Erden Melikoğlu, 2022), spiritual value-based teaching has a positive effect on students' interpersonal relationships. Research by (Killen & Rutland, 2022) also notes that programs that promote moral values are able to create a more inclusive learning environment. Conversely, a study by (Zhang et al., 2022) warns that without the support of competent facilitators, this social impact can be reduced. Thus, the implication of this evidence is the importance of strengthening the social aspect in spiritual guidance programs to create a *pesantren* environment that is conducive to the growth of students' character.

The positive social effects of spiritual guidance programs are rooted in a holistic approach that integrates emotional, spiritual, and social dimensions in learning. This approach allows students to not only understand moral values conceptually, but also apply them in everyday interactions, creating a harmonious environment. A study by (Enholtm et al., 2022) showed that a holistic learning approach improves the understanding and application of moral values. Another study by (Kilag et al., 2023) revealed that a learning environment that emphasizes social interaction strengthens the internalization of spiritual values. Meanwhile, a study by (Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2023) showed that the integration of spiritual and social dimensions can encourage the formation of a balanced character. Thus, the success of the integration of spiritual guidance is greatly influenced by a holistic approach that emphasizes the balance of spiritual and social dimensions in learning.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights that the integration of spiritual guidance programs in learning has great potential in developing the character of millennial students who are religious, responsible, and tolerant. The main lesson learned is the importance of a holistic approach that combines spiritual, emotional, and social dimensions in the educational process. This method not only helps students understand moral values conceptually but also encourages their application in everyday life. In addition, this study shows that the consistency of implementation and relevance of the program to the needs of the digital generation are important factors in the success of character formation of students, which ultimately creates a harmonious Islamic boarding school environment.

The strength of this study lies in its contribution to the development of new perspectives in character education based on spiritual values, especially for the millennial generation. This study enriches science by integrating the

traditional pesantren approach with the contextual needs of the digital generation, making learning methods more relevant and effective. The findings of the study also provide a new framework for the implementation of spiritual guidance programs that prioritize synergy between spiritual and social aspects. In theory, this study supports the view that holistic character education can improve emotional and social balance, while strengthening religious values as the foundation of individual life.

However, this study has limitations in terms of case coverage and subject variation. The focus on millennial students in a particular Islamic boarding school environment may not fully describe the diversity of needs of this generation in various other educational contexts. In addition, the methods used are still limited to interviews and observations, so the results of this study cannot be generalized widely. Further research is recommended to explore the variables of age, social background, and education level, as well as develop quantitative methods to measure the effectiveness of spiritual guidance programs more comprehensively.

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