THE CHARACTER EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF MAN INSAN CENDEKIA SERPONG

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Keywords:	ABSTRACTS
character education, curriculum, boarding school, MAN Insan Cendekia	This study analyzes the implementation of the character education curriculum at MAN Insan Cendekia Serpong, one of Indonesia's leading Islamic boarding schools. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through observations, interviews, and document analysis. The findings reveal that character education is integrated into both general and religious subjects and reinforced through dormitory programs, daily moral guidance, and student activities. Key values emphasized include honesty, responsibility, discipline, religiosity, and leadership. The systemic and synergistic model that combines formal and non-formal education has proven effective in shaping students' holistic character. The practical implication is that this integrative-holistic curriculum model can be replicated in other Islamic schools with contextual adjustments to meet local needs.

A. INTRODUCTION

Character education has become an urgent necessity within Indonesia's educational system in the face of globalization, technological disruption, and the moral crisis among the younger generation. The rapid flow of information often erodes noble values such as integrity, responsibility, empathy, and nationalism, replacing them with pragmatism and individualism (Lickona, 1991; Tilaar, 2012). Social phenomena such as the rise of student violence, misuse of technology, and the decline of public ethics underline that an education system focusing merely on intellectual intelligence (IQ) is no longer sufficient to develop holistic human beings (Zubaedi, 2011; Suyadi & Ulfatin, 2017).

As a response, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology launched the *Strengthening Character Education* (Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter/PPK) policy, which emphasizes a holistic approach grounded in Pancasila, culture, and religion (Kemendikbud, 2017). However, implementation has faced challenges at the school level: many institutions lack integrative, systematic, and contextual curriculum designs for character education (Wahab & Sapriya, 2011; Nurhadi, 2018). This has created a gap between normative policy and the actual practice of character education in educational institutions.

In this regard, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) emerge as strategic institutions to comprehensively shape students' character. The residential environment enables round-the-clock personality development through the internalization of Islamic values such as *ṣidq* (honesty), *amānah* (responsibility), and *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) (Abdullah, 2014; Mujib & Mudzakir, 2006). Previous studies highlight that character education within boarding environments is often more effective than in conventional schools because values are embedded into all daily activities (Maksum, 2019; Rahmat & Maulana, 2020).

MAN Insan Cendekia Serpong (MAN IC Serpong), an elite boarding-based Islamic senior high school under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, represents a significant case study. The school integrates the national curriculum with religious instruction and leadership development to cultivate intelligent, ethical, and globally competitive Muslim youth (Fauzan, 2021). Its achievements underscore the strength of this model: ranked first nationally in UTBK scores in 2022, attaining 153 national and international achievements by 2025 (including in Qur'anic memorization), and producing graduates accepted at top global universities. These outcomes reflect the effectiveness of a character education curriculum that integrates scientific literacy, digital competence, and Islamic spirituality.

The central strategy at MAN IC Serpong is embedding character values across all subjects and daily activities, not merely as an additional component. Thus, character becomes the core of the learning process (Mulyasa, 2013). Its consistent academic and non-academic reputation legitimizes this model as a national reference point (Kementerian Agama RI, 2022).

Nevertheless, previous research leaves critical gaps. Maksum (2019) and Rahmat & Maulana (2020) confirmed the effectiveness of character education in boarding environments but focused mainly on general religious development. Zamroni & Rokhman (2015) emphasized integrating Islamic values with 21st-

century skills, while Hasan (2021) highlighted the role of digital literacy in pesantren-based character education. However, these studies did not examine in detail the systematic, comprehensive, and applicable design of character education curricula within modern Islamic boarding schools. Moreover, research addressing the integration of character curricula with digital literacy and 21st-century competencies remains scarce, particularly in internationally recognized institutions such as MAN IC Serpong.

This study seeks to fill these gaps by making three key contributions: (1) providing an in-depth analysis of the concept and structure of the character education curriculum at MAN IC Serpong; (2) examining strategies for integrating character education with digital literacy and 21st-century competencies in a modern boarding school context; and (3) offering practical recommendations for other Islamic educational institutions to replicate this model with appropriate contextual adaptations.

Accordingly, this research not only enriches the academic literature on Islamic character education but also contributes practically to curriculum development in Indonesian madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools.

Beyond Indonesia, international studies also affirm the importance of character education in boarding schools. The Jubilee Centre framework in the United Kingdom, for example, demonstrates that effective character education rests on the *caught–taught–sought* approach—role modeling, explicit instruction, and opportunities for practice—which is highly relevant to residential schools given the intensity of 24-hour interaction (Arthur, Harrison, & Kristjánsson, 2022; Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2015–2024). Recent comparative studies in Europe further highlight that teachers and parents often prioritize character development as equal to or even more important than academic achievement (Harrison, Arthur, & Kristjánsson, 2025).

In Malaysia, the boarding school model emphasizes mentorship (*ustaz/musyrif*), discipline, and the integration of Qur'an memorization with value formation, serving as an effective "laboratory of character" (Hamzah, 2024). Other international research identifies the core components of boarding-based character education, including personal and spiritual growth, co/extracurricular engagement, healthy lifestyle, role models, and academic achievement (Sobon, 2025). This study therefore addresses the research gap by providing empirical documentation of how a modern Islamic boarding school such as MAN Insan Cendekia Serpong systematically integrates values, academics, and residential life in a synergistic curriculum model.

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative-descriptive approach using a case study method, which is considered appropriate for gaining an in-depth and contextual understanding of character education at MAN Insan Cendekia Serpong. This approach enabled the researcher to portray actual conditions, interaction patterns, and the implementation process of the character education curriculum in detail without manipulating variables (Moleong, 2017). The case study method was chosen because the focus lies on a single unit of analysis—namely MAN Insan

Cendekia Serpong—thereby allowing a holistic understanding of the design and implementation of its character education curriculum (Yin, 2018).

The research was conducted at MAN Insan Cendekia Serpong, an elite Islamic boarding-based senior high school under the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia. The site was selected purposively because the characteristics of this institution align with the study's objective: the systematic integration of the national curriculum with Islamic character education.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, based on their direct involvement in character education implementation. The participants consisted of:

1. The principal, who oversees policies, vision-mission, and curriculum development direction;
2. Teachers, with a minimum of five years' experience at MAN IC Serpong and direct involvement in character development;
3. Students, selected using maximum variation sampling from grades X, XI, and XII to reflect diversity in academic achievements, organizational roles, and religious engagement.

In total, the study involved one principal, ten teachers, and fifteen students. This sample size was considered adequate as the data reached saturation, meaning no new information emerged in subsequent interviews (Creswell, 2014).

Data were collected using three primary techniques:

1. Participant observation – to record classroom practices, dormitory life, and extracurricular activities as integral components of character education (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).
2. In-depth semi-structured interviews – conducted with the principal, teachers, and students to explore their perceptions, experiences, and strategies in implementing the character curriculum (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).
3. Document analysis – covering curriculum documents, character development guidelines, activity reports, and character evaluation records (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which consists of:

1. Data reduction – selecting, categorizing, and filtering relevant data from observations, interviews, and documents;
2. Data display – organizing findings into thematic narratives, matrices, and tables for clarity;
3. Conclusion drawing/verification – identifying patterns, themes, and relationships across variables, and validating them against cross-source data.

To deepen the findings, thematic analysis was also employed through the following stages: (a) repeated reading of the data; (b) open coding to identify key concepts; (c) grouping codes into categories; (d) constructing major themes, such as *integration of character in learning*, *dormitory-based development*, and *character evaluation*; and (e) interpreting the findings in light of the study's objectives.

The trustworthiness of data was ensured through several strategies. First, source triangulation was applied by comparing data from principals, teachers, and students to minimize subjective bias (Patton, 2015). Second, methodological triangulation combined observation, interview, and documentation results to enrich the dataset (Denzin, 2012). Third, member checking was conducted by presenting preliminary findings to participants for validation to ensure interpretations matched their experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, an audit trail was maintained, consisting of detailed records of all research stages—from data collection to analysis—to ensure transparency and accountability.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Results
1. The Character Education Curriculum at MAN Insan Cendekia Serpong

The implementation of the character education curriculum at MAN Insan Cendekia Serpong is carried out comprehensively through the integration of character values into all subjects and dormitory activities. This approach is based on the concept of holistic character education, which emphasizes the formation of students' attitudes and behaviors comprehensively across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains (Lickona, 1991). In practice, character values are not only explicitly taught in Islamic Religious Education subjects (Aqidah-Akhlaq, Qur'an-Hadith, Fiqh, and Islamic Cultural History) but are also integrated into general subjects such as Indonesian Language, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences. This aligns with the Ministry of Education and Culture's perspective (Kemendikbud, 2017) that character education must permeate all fields of study so that moral values become embedded in students' daily lives.

For example, in Indonesian Language and Social Studies, values such as nationalism and integrity are embedded through thematic discussions, drama performances, essays on national identity, and group projects that cultivate solidarity and social responsibility. Beyond the classroom, dormitory activities—such as congregational prayers, regular dhikr, Qur'an memorization circles, and weekly religious gatherings—serve as effective platforms for nurturing religious commitment and discipline. Character development is also strengthened through extracurricular programs in leadership, community service, and sports, which instill independence, cooperation, and leadership skills (Jackson, 1968; Kemendikbud, 2017).

Furthermore, the model of character education in this Islamic boarding school also applies the principle of the *hidden curriculum*, referring to values transmitted implicitly through institutional culture and traditions, which powerfully influence students' daily behavior (Jackson, 1968). The disciplined boarding environment, interactions among students and teachers, and the role of religious mentors as role models are key factors in the effective internalization of character values.

In everyday practice, MAN Insan Cendekia Serpong instills several core values as pillars of student character development:

1. Religiosity – According to Al-Ghazali (2012), religious character is the foundation of Islamic education, focusing on piety and noble morals. At

MAN Insan Cendekia, this is manifested in consistent worship practices, obedience to religious teachings, and honest, trustworthy conduct.

2. Responsibility – Responsibility is cultivated through academic and social discipline, such as managing study time, maintaining dormitory cleanliness, and fulfilling assigned tasks. Kohlberg (1981) emphasizes that responsibility is a key aspect of moral development, necessary for forming morally mature individuals.

3. Nationalism – Character education also nurtures love of the homeland and civic awareness. This value is developed through lessons in national history, discussions on Indonesia's diversity, singing patriotic songs, and activities fostering unity. These align with the national character education framework (Kemendikbud, 2017) and the broader concept of national identity (Suryana, 2018).

4. Integrity – As a moral value grounded in honesty, consistency, and strong ethical principles, integrity is instilled through practices of transparency, accountability, and fairness in all aspects of student life (Covey, 2004). Teacher role modeling is crucial in reinforcing this value.

5. Other Social Values – Independence, cooperation, and mutual assistance are integral to character education, equipping students with the social competence to navigate complex societal challenges (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). This approach supports the sustainable development of both *soft skills* and spiritual intelligence (Lickona & Davidson, 2005).

Thus, the character education curriculum at MAN Insan Cendekia Serpong is not solely aimed at academic excellence but rather at shaping students into individuals of noble character, civic awareness, and active social contribution in line with Islamic values and Indonesian national identity.

2. Strategies for Implementing the Character Curriculum

The implementation of character education at MAN Insan Cendekia Serpong follows an integrated strategy involving collaboration among multiple stakeholders and flagship programs addressing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. The strategy is designed to create a conducive learning environment for developing character grounded in Islamic values while remaining relevant to contemporary challenges.

Successful implementation depends on coordination between academic teachers, religious mentors (*ustaz*), dormitory supervisors (*musyrif*), and the curriculum design. Academic teachers not only deliver subject content but also integrate character values into lessons using reflective, discussion-based, and application-oriented methods. Religious mentors play a central role in spiritual and moral guidance through intensive religious study, prayers, and worship routines, fostering deep faith and moral awareness. Dormitory supervisors oversee daily behavior, reinforcing discipline, social responsibility, and communal living.

This synergy highlights that character education cannot be separated from the holistic ecosystem of an Islamic boarding school, where values are taught both in classrooms and in everyday life. As Purwanto (2017) noted, the integration of educators' and mentors' roles is key to successful character education.

To achieve its character education objectives, MAN Insan Cendekia Serpong implements flagship programs, including:

- Qur'an memorization (*tahfidz*), which not only develops memorization skills but also builds perseverance, patience, and sincerity as personal and spiritual foundations (Al-Ghazali, 2012). This activity also fosters time discipline and personal responsibility.
- Regular Islamic studies, which broaden religious insight and moral awareness while enhancing critical thinking and ethical decision-making skills. Contemporary issues are often discussed, preparing students to be both devout Muslims and socially adaptive citizens.
- Leadership camps, which provide practical platforms for cultivating responsibility, solidarity, and initiative. Through simulations, communication training, and team-building exercises, students develop leadership with integrity and interpersonal competence, in line with Kohlberg's (1981) moral development theory.

Daily dormitory routines—such as cleanliness duties, activity schedules, and conflict resolution—also reinforce cooperation, tolerance, and discipline. These practices are effective in embedding positive character values not only within the school but also as transferable skills for broader social life.

A vital element of the implementation strategy is the hidden curriculum, consisting of implicit values, norms, and habits transmitted through social interactions, Islamic culture, and role modeling by teachers and mentors (Jackson, 1968). At MAN Insan Cendekia, the hidden curriculum manifests through teachers' and mentors' examples, dormitory rules, reward-and-punishment systems, and consistent Islamic boarding traditions.

Habituation through the hidden curriculum allows character values to naturally shape student identity. With repeated reinforcement of values such as discipline, responsibility, honesty, and empathy, noble character becomes ingrained and sustainable. This aligns with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which highlights the importance of observation and imitation in behavior formation.

Through this mechanism, students do not merely understand values intellectually but also experience and embody them in daily life, resulting in authentic and stable character formation. This approach ensures that character education extends beyond cognitive targets to actual behavioral and personality transformation.

Another innovative strategy is the homestay program, where students live temporarily within local communities or institutions to gain experiential learning from real-life contexts. This program internalizes values such as empathy, cooperation, independence, and social responsibility (Lickona, 2004; Zubaedi, 2011). By stepping outside their comfort zones, students are challenged to develop character in authentic and complex situations (Muslich, 2011).

During homestay, students actively participate in community life, assisting with household tasks, joining religious activities, and appreciating local cultural values (Sumaatmadja, 2001). At the program's conclusion, reflection and evaluation are conducted through personal journals, group discussions, and

presentations to assess changes in students' attitudes and character (Hidayatullah, 2010).

3. Challenges in Character Education and Proposed Solutions

In practice, the implementation of the character education curriculum at MAN Insan Cendekia Serpong encounters several complex internal challenges. One of the most significant is the diversity of understanding and commitment among educators—including academic teachers, *ustaz*, and dormitory supervisors (*musyrif*)—toward the concept and methods of character education. Not all educators possess adequate competence in integrating character values into daily teaching, which often reduces the potential impact of character education (Lickona, 1991). Furthermore, the heavy academic curriculum sometimes makes it difficult for both teachers and students to allocate sufficient time for in-depth character development activities.

Another obstacle lies in the limited supporting facilities, such as adequate discussion spaces for moral reflection or extracurricular infrastructure to foster students' character development. The lack of professional training in character education for educators also poses a significant barrier that must be addressed.

From the students' perspective, diverse social, cultural, and personality backgrounds influence their readiness to internalize noble character values. Some students resist changing long-standing habits or struggle to adapt to strict rules and norms requiring high discipline. In addition, adolescents' psychological dynamics—particularly their search for identity—often create challenges in maintaining consistent positive behavior (Bandura, 1977).

Beyond internal issues, external factors also present major challenges. The rapid growth of information and communication technology, especially social media, frequently introduces negative influences such as exposure to inappropriate content, distractions that undermine focus, and lifestyles that may conflict with Islamic values (Purwanto, 2017). Moreover, popular culture and modern lifestyles sometimes erode students' integrity and weaken the impact of character education.

External social pressures also complicate the process. Interactions with the wider community, formal schools, or even family environments often fail to align with the values nurtured within the boarding school. These conditions demand extra effort from the institution to safeguard and reinforce students' character formation against negative external influences.

In addition, shifting national education policies and regulatory requirements create further dilemmas. Administrative demands, accreditation standards, and the national curriculum may not always align with the unique character-oriented mission of Islamic boarding schools, creating tension in curriculum design and implementation.

To address these challenges, MAN Insan Cendekia Serpong has adopted innovative, adaptive, and proactive strategies. One central initiative is strengthening educators' capacity through intensive training and workshops focused on character education. These training programs cover methods of integrating character values into learning, spiritual and psychological approaches to student development, and classroom as well as dormitory management techniques that support character formation (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

The institution also develops innovative teaching methods, such as utilizing digital platforms for Islamic studies and character-based activities, making learning more engaging and accessible anytime. Character-building programs are designed through contextual activities such as leadership camps, communication workshops, *soft skills* training, and community service projects, which give students practical experiences in living out character values.

Curriculum evaluation is conducted regularly using multiple instruments and data collection techniques, including direct observation, in-depth interviews, surveys, and focus group discussions. Findings from these evaluations form the basis for curriculum revision and program development, ensuring that the initiatives remain effective and relevant to evolving student needs and contemporary demands.

Additionally, MAN Insan Cendekia Serpong fosters partnerships with parents, community leaders, and other educational institutions to create a supportive environment for character development. Involving parents through training and socialization ensures consistency between values taught at home and those instilled at the boarding school.

Through holistic, innovative, and evaluative approaches, MAN Insan Cendekia Serpong systematically addresses both internal and external challenges, ensuring that character education becomes not only theoretical but also deeply embedded in students' behaviors and personalities. This equips them to become high-quality Muslims with integrity, capable of navigating global challenges while upholding Islamic and national values.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the integration of character-based curricula and Islamic values at MAN Insan Cendekia Serpong has been successfully implemented through a systematic and structured set of value-oriented programs. These results not only confirm previous studies but also extend the existing body of knowledge by providing detailed documentation of the implementation process, including strategies in classrooms, dormitories, and extracurricular activities.

First, this study strengthens the findings of Sari (2022), who argued that character-based curricula in Islamic educational institutions significantly impact the quality of graduates. However, the present study adds a new contribution by showing that affective and spiritual development is more dominantly shaped through boarding activities rather than through formal classroom instruction alone.

Second, the results also confirm Rohman's (2021) emphasis on the importance of *learning by doing* in boarding education. Through observation and interviews, this study reveals that social activities, congregational worship, and student leadership roles serve as highly effective instruments for the internalization of values.

Third, from a philosophical perspective, the findings reinforce Zubaedi's (2015) argument regarding the importance of *value-based education*, which unites cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. This study demonstrates that at

MAN IC Serpong, such integration is not merely conceptual but operationalized through integrative modules and measurable character evaluation mechanisms.

Fourth, compared to traditional pesantren, character education at MAN IC Serpong employs a more systematic and measurable approach. While traditional pesantren emphasize spirituality and morality through *halaqah kitab kuning*, habitual worship, and the personal example of the *kiai*, they rarely employ formal evaluation instruments for character development (Azra, 2019). By contrast, MAN IC Serpong integrates character evaluation directly into the academic curriculum, making the process of value internalization more structured and accountable.

Fifth, when compared to non-boarding schools that also implement the *Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter* (PPK) program, MAN IC Serpong demonstrates stronger consistency in value formation. This is due to the boarding environment, which allows students to experience 24-hour supervision and internalization of values, unlike day schools where continuity between school and family environments is often weak (Kemendikbud, 2017).

Sixth, at the international level, the MAN IC Serpong model resembles value-based boarding schools in Western contexts, such as character education in the United Kingdom or values-based schools in the United States (Arthur, 2003). The distinction, however, lies in the emphasis on Islamic values (*ṣidq*, *amanah*, *ukhuwah*, congregational worship), which are rarely found in Western models. This indicates that MAN IC Serpong combines globally competitive academic competencies with uniquely Islamic spiritual foundations.

Taken together, this study provides two key contributions:
1. Theoretical Contribution – It enriches the literature on Islamic education by presenting a systemic model of curriculum integration in the context of modern Islamic boarding schools, while also positioning it within national and international comparisons.
2. Practical Contribution – It documents concrete strategies for replication, such as character-building mechanisms in dormitories, strengthening the role of teachers as value facilitators, and the integration of cognitive-affective-spiritual evaluation systems, which are rarely found in either public schools or traditional pesantren.

Based on these findings, future research could be directed toward:
1. Comparative studies among Indonesian madrasahs (e.g., MAN IC Gorontalo or Pesantren Modern Gontor) to examine variations in curriculum implementation.
2. International comparisons with Islamic boarding schools in Malaysia or faith-based schools in the United Kingdom to explore how cultural contexts shape character education models.
3. Longitudinal studies to assess the sustainability of character internalization after students graduate.

Through such comparative and longitudinal approaches, the present study underscores that the MAN IC Serpong model can serve as a reference for other schools, while also contributing to global discourses on character education within Islamic and international frameworks.

Table 1. Comparison of Character Education Models

Aspect	MAN IC Serpong (Modern Islamic Boarding School)	Traditional Pesantren	Public Non-Boarding School	Western Boarding School (Character Education)
Curriculum Integration	National curriculum + Islamic studies + measurable character modules	Focus on *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts) & worship, limited formal curriculum	National curriculum + PPK program (often partial)	National curriculum + values education
Learning Environment	Boarding, 24-hour discipline, teacher & dormitory supervision	Boarding, based on *kyai* leadership & pesantren culture	Non-boarding, limited supervision at school	Boarding, humanistic values-based environment
Core Values	*Ṣidq* (honesty), *amanah* (responsibility), *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), Islamic leadership	Worship, morality, respect for *kyai*	General religiosity, nationalism, integrity	Respect, responsibility, tolerance
Character Development Methods	Formal classes, mentoring, habituation, character evaluation	*Halaqah*, *sorogan*, *kyai*'s role model	PPK through extracurriculars, flag ceremonies	Experiential learning, project-based values
Character Evaluation	Integrated into report cards and dormitory supervision	Informal, based on *kyai*'s observation	Not yet systematic, more administrative	Measured using surveys & observation tools
Output	High academic achievement + globally oriented Islamic character	Religious scholars, pious santri with strong morals	Academically capable students, character less optimal	Academically capable graduates + humanistic character

The findings of this study also resonate with the Jubilee Centre framework in the United Kingdom, particularly in the practices of teacher and *musyrif* role modelling, explicit value instruction, and program activities that provide space for student agency (Arthur et al., 2022). This aligns with international reports

showing that schools with strong character education typically cultivate a value ecosystem through school ethos and residential life (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2015–2024).

In the regional context, the pattern found at MAN IC Serpong also parallels boarding education in Malaysia, which emphasizes intensive mentorship, daily discipline, and the integration of religious and general learning (Hamzah, 2024). International mapping of boarding education further confirms that the synergy between formal education (classroom) and non-formal education (boarding environment) is a key factor in the success of character development (Sobon, 2025).

When compared to other faith-based schools, such as Catholic boarding schools in Australia and the United States, it is evident that strong character formation is also built through community ethos, liturgy, and values-based leadership (Gleeson, 2018). This broadens the contextual scope of this study's findings, underscoring that the integration of values—both through the explicit curriculum and the hidden curriculum—is a universal feature of successful boarding schools in instilling character among students.

By situating MAN IC Serpong within the global landscape (United Kingdom, Europe, Malaysia, and international Catholic schools), this research not only reinforces previous studies but also provides contextual and empirical contributions in developing a model of character education within Islamic Boarding Schools that is adaptive, modern, and relevant to 21st-century challenges.

D. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conclusion

This study reveals that the character education curriculum at MAN Insan Cendekia Serpong is implemented in an integrated and holistic manner, combining the values of religiosity, responsibility, nationalism, and integrity across academic subjects and institutional activities. The synergy between teachers, *ustaz*, dormitory supervisors, and comprehensive curriculum management emerges as a key factor of success. Flagship programs such as *tahfidz*, intensive Islamic studies, leadership camps, and the habituation of values through the *hidden curriculum* further strengthen students' internalization of character.

Nevertheless, the program faces several challenges: internal constraints such as limited teacher competence and a dense academic load, as well as external pressures from social media influence and social environments. These are continuously addressed through innovation, regular evaluation, and collaboration with various stakeholders.

The findings enrich the theoretical discourse on character education by emphasizing the significance of value integration in all aspects of the curriculum and learning environment in Islamic boarding schools. The study supports Bandura's social constructivism and Lickona's theory of character education, highlighting the critical role of social environment, teacher role modelling, and consistent habituation in character formation. The holistic and integrative approach of MAN Insan Cendekia provides empirical evidence for developing a

more adaptive model of character education curriculum suited to contemporary needs and the specific context of Islamic boarding schools.

Practically, these results offer valuable guidance for curriculum developers and practitioners in boarding schools and other educational institutions to strengthen synergy among teachers, dormitory mentors, and curriculum management. The role of value habituation and soft skills development should be further optimized to ensure that positive character becomes naturally embedded in students. Moreover, continuous training and professional development for educators is essential to equip them with the skills to integrate values into every aspect of teaching.

Active involvement of parents and the surrounding community also needs to be enhanced in order to create a more conducive and sustainable environment for character development. Periodic evaluation and innovation must be integral to educational management so that the curriculum remains relevant and effective amid social and technological change.

2. Recommendations

a) For Similar Schools: Adopt an integrative and holistic approach to curriculum development that reflects the pesantren context and learners' needs. Strengthen teacher capacity through regular training, and reinforce synergy among educational elements, including dormitory supervisors and community leaders.

b) For Other Educational Institutions: (1). Integrate character values into all subjects, not only religious education. (2). Develop *hidden curriculum* through habituation, teacher role modelling, and consistent non-formal activities. (3). Implement supportive boarding systems where possible. (4). Strengthen educator capacity in character education. (5). Foster collaboration with parents and local communities. (6). Utilize digital technology for learning and character formation. (7). Establish continuous systems of character evaluation.

c) For Policymakers: Support the development of boarding-based character education curricula with policies that facilitate teacher training, provision of adequate facilities, and promotion of collaboration across institutions. Policies should also allow space for innovation and ongoing evaluation.

d) For Curriculum Developers: Design curricula that go beyond cognitive aspects by systematically integrating character values. Leverage digital advancements as both learning tools and character development media to make education more adaptive and accessible for students in a rapidly changing era.

By implementing these recommendations, character education in Islamic boarding schools can be optimized to produce a young generation of integrity, competence, and global competitiveness in the era of globalization.

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