

Religious Culture As A Strategy For Student Character Development In *Pesantren*

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Abstract

The decline in student character, such as low discipline, responsibility, and religious attitudes, is a significant issue in education. One way to foster character building is through the implementation of religious culture within Islamic boarding schools (Islamic boarding schools). This study aims to analyze the implementation of religious culture as a strategy for developing student character at the Al-Zahra Modern Islamic Boarding School in Bireuen. This study employed a qualitative method with a field study approach. The research informants consisted of the head of the Islamic boarding school, teachers, caretakers, and students. Data collection techniques included interviews, observation, and documentation, while data analysis utilized data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that religious culture is implemented through the practice of daily worship, scheduled religious activities, educators' role models, and enforcement of Islamic boarding school regulations. Supporting factors include educator commitment, a religious environment, worship facilities, and parental cooperation. Inhibiting factors include differences in parental understanding, the diversity of student characters, and the influence of the environment outside the Islamic boarding school. The study concludes that the consistent implementation of religious culture can foster religious character, discipline, responsibility, and morals in students. This research contributes to the development of character education based on religious culture in modern Islamic boarding schools.

Keywords: Religious culture, student character, modern Islamic boarding school

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of declining student character is a serious problem in today's education world. Various negative behaviors such as low discipline, lack of responsibility, weak religious attitudes, and a decline in social ethics are still widely found among students.¹ Research conducted at the secondary education level shows that some students are unable to apply religious values in their daily lives, both at school and

¹ Ilvi Nur Dini, Rama Marta, and Dwi Sanjaya, "The Meaning of Moral Education in the Formation of Civic Values and Behavior in the Young Generation," *Journal of Educational Management* 11, no. 1 (2026): 267–79.

Yanti, Eliza Yanti, and Agus Salim Salabi. "Religious Culture As A Strategy For Student Character Development In *Pesantren*." *Afkârûna: International Journal of Islamic Studies (AIJIS)* 4, no. 1 (2026): 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.38073/aijis.v4i1.4723>.

in the community. This condition results in deviant behavior such as a lack of social awareness, non-compliance with rules, and low morals in social interactions.²This indicates that character education has not yet been fully implemented optimally.³

Character formation itself is a long process that involves changing an individual's attitudes, values, and behavior towards the desired behavioral pattern.⁴Contemporary research emphasizes that character formation occurs not only through formal learning, but also through daily experiences, familiarization with religious activities, and social interactions within educational settings. According to a study by Mudkir, character is human behavior related to God, oneself, others, the environment, and nationality, manifested in thoughts, attitudes, words, and actions based on the religious and social values one adheres to.⁵

Character is a unique mental and moral quality in an individual that is built since childhood and continues to develop.⁶Character development and formation is the main goal of children's education in schools.⁷Students' character development is shaped and nurtured through social interaction. By continuously communicating with others, students have opportunities for self-discovery through problem-solving and exploring group and societal norms.⁸

Empirical data also reinforces the notion that poor student character stems from weak internalization of moral and religious values. Suriadi's research shows that students' religious character is significantly influenced by the school culture they implement.⁹A study by Najmudin revealed that school culture has a significant influence on the formation of students' religious character, with a contribution of 32.6%.¹⁰ These findings indicate that a weak religious culture in the educational environment can

² Irwan and Kamarudin, "Literature Review: The Increasing Blurring of Good and Bad Morals," *Jurnal Basicedu* 5, no. 5 (2021): 3(2), 524–32, <https://journal.uin.ac.id/ajie/article/view/971>.

³ Rika Aswidar and Siti Zahara Saragih, "Religious Character, Tolerance, and Discipline in Junior High School Students," *Scientific Journal of Education and Learning* 6, no. 1 (2022): 134, <https://doi.org/10.23887/jipp.v6i1.43373>.

⁴ Fitri Handayani, Kanaya Ledy Adinda, and Kurnia Febriyola, "The Effect of Instilling Character Values on Students' Personalities," *Scientific Journal and Student Work* 1, no. 6 (2023): 90–102, <https://doi.org/10.54066/jikma.v1i6.1224>.

⁵ Moh. Mudkir, "Instilling Religious Character Values Through Religious Activities," *Ambarisa: Journal of Islamic Education* 4, no. 1 (2023): 88–100, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.59106/abs.v3i1.106>.

⁶ Muhammad Irfan Suyahman, Sulastri, Shorihatul Inayah, Apriyanto, Suhartono, Titik Haryanti, Rini Fitriyani, Wahyuningsih, BMAS Anaconda Bangkara, Ahmad Jubaeli, Teja Insyaf Sukariyadi, Titus Gaito, *Character Education (West Sumatra: Minang Inspiration Library, 2024)*.

⁷ An Nisa Apriani et al., "Students' Character Based on Gender, Grade, and School: Religious, Nationalism, Integrity, Independent and Cooperative," *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education* 14, no. 3 (2025): 1916–29, <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v14i3.29347>.

⁸ Suparno Eko Widodo et al., "Student Character Development: The Implementation of the 2013 Indonesian School Curriculum Strategy," *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*. *Www.Ijicc.Net* 13, no. 10 (2020): 2020, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24903/pm.v5i1.457>.

⁹ Suriadi Suriadi, "School Culture in Instilling Religious Character of Madrasah Tsanawiyah," *Edukasia: Journal of Islamic Education Research* 15, no. 1 (2020): 163, <https://doi.org/10.21043/edukasia.v15i1.6442>.

¹⁰ Najmudin et al., "School Culture and Its Effectiveness on Students' Religious Character," *Journal of Character Education* 9, no. 3 (2023): 128–40, <https://doi.org/https://jurnal.untirta.ac.id/index.php/JAWARA/index>.

contribute to the emergence of negative student behavior, such as low awareness of worship, lack of manners, and a minimal sense of responsibility.

To address these issues, a systematic and sustainable strategy is needed, one of which is through the implementation of religious culture. Religious culture is seen as an effective approach because it emphasizes instilling religious values in students' daily lives.¹¹ This strategy includes exemplary behavior from educators, habituating worship, strengthening moral values in learning, and creating a religious school environment.¹² Zanuri and Sugiono's research shows that religious cultural strategies are able to shape students' character significantly, especially in aspects of discipline, honesty, responsibility, and social concern.¹³

In this context, religious character becomes one of the focuses of character development because it involves students' awareness of thinking and acting in accordance with the teachings of their religion. A study by Zainuri and Sugiono states that religious culture is a way of thinking and acting of school members that is based on religious values as a habit, thus encouraging the development of students' character as a whole.¹⁴

According to character education experts, religious culture is defined in various ways, such as the opinion of Basri et al., religious character is an environment of religious values that forms the religious habits and behavior of students in everyday life.¹⁵ Meanwhile, according to 'Ulya and Ahmad, religious culture is the mindset and behavior of school residents that is based on religious values.¹⁶

Recent research has shown that religious culture serves as a strategic foundation for developing moral attitudes, respect for others, discipline, and social empathy in students. For example, a study by Wening and Hasanah found that strategies for developing a religious culture include fostering worship, teacher role models, and

¹¹ Nik Haryanti and Danar Nanda Rachmawati, "Optimizing the Cultivation of Religious Culture in Forming the Character of Students with Integrity at SDI Miftahul Huda Plosokandang Kedungwaru Tulungagung," *Journal of Aerospace Education* 2, no. 4 (2025): 53–63, <https://doi.org/10.61132/jupendir.v2i4.724>.

¹² Mustain Shodiq and Kuswanto, "Strategies for Building Students' Religious Character Through Role Model and Habituation-Based Education," *Az-Zakiy: Journal of Islamic Studies* 8, no. 2 (2024): 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.35706/azzakiy.v2i2.11308>.

¹³ Ach. Zainuri and Sugiono, "Strategies for Building Students' Religious Character Through Religious Development Programs," *Scientific Journal of Elementary Education* 10, no. September (2025), <https://doi.org/https://share.google/DSPzTm8p8yzvCAGw>.

¹⁴ Yenny Nurul Wulandari, Ahmad Suriansyah, and Ahmad Alim Bachri, "Character Development Through the Implementation of Religious Learning Models in Preschool Students to Create Indonesia's Golden Generation," *Journal of Innovation Research and Knowledge* 4, no. 9 (2025): 272–81, <https://doi.org/https://share.google/GjSlqLckhkfoQpQ46>.

¹⁵ Hasan Basri, Andewi Suhartini, and Siti Nurhikmah, "Formation of Students' Religious Character Through Habitual Religious Activities at MA Miftahul Ulum, Purwakarta Regency," *An-Nidzam: Journal of Educational Management and Islamic Studies* 10, no. 2 (2023): 171–80, <https://doi.org/10.33507/an-nidzam.v10i2.1792>.

¹⁶ Mohammad 'Ulyan and Syaefudin Achmad, "Religious Culture as a Hidden Curriculum in Forming Islamic Character in Madrasah," *Jurnal Progress: A Vehicle for Creativity and Intellectuality* 11, no. 2 (2023): 209, <https://doi.org/10.31942/pgrs.v11i2.9912>.

integrating religious values into all aspects of school activities, thereby fostering positive behavior in students as individuals of noble character.¹⁷

As Islamic-based educational institutions, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) play a strategic role in the implementation of religious culture. Modern Islamic boarding schools, including the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School in Bireuen, integrate religious values with a modern educational system through programmed worship activities, the instilling of noble morals, the strengthening of discipline, and the exemplary behavior of educators. The structured and religiously imbued environment of Islamic boarding schools makes religious culture not merely a symbolic activity but a daily lifestyle for students that shapes their character holistically.

Therefore, research on religious culture as a strategy for character formation in students at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School is crucial. This research is expected to provide an empirical overview of the effectiveness of implementing religious culture in shaping student character and serve as a reference for other educational institutions in developing religious-value-based character education. Furthermore, this research is also expected to enrich academic studies in the field of character education and modern Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia.¹⁸

Several previous studies have shown that religious culture plays a significant role in shaping students' character. Research by Wening and Hasanah explains that developing a religious culture through habitual worship and teacher role models can foster students' sense of discipline and responsibility.¹⁹ Aswidar and Saragih's research shows that the weak implementation of religious values in schools has an impact on students' low character in social life.²⁰ Furthermore, research by Najmudin et al. found that religious school culture has a significant influence on the formation of students' religious character.²¹

Research by Mu'tafiyah Bika Nafilah, Abdul Gofur, and Rizki Khoirunni shows that the habituation of religious activities such as reading the Qur'an, praying in congregation, and Rohis activities can shape students' character of discipline, responsibility, social solidarity, and empathy.²² Research by M. Hafiz, Asnil Aidah Ritonga, and Sakholid Nasution explains that religious culture through congregational Duha prayer, Qiro'ah Al-Qur'an, and the habituation of Islamic manners can shape

¹⁷ Muslimah Hikmah Wening and Enung Hasanah, "Strategies for Developing Religious Culture to Shape, the Character of Students," *International Journal of Educational Management and Innovation* 1, no. 3 (2020): 262, <https://doi.org/10.12928/ijemi.v1i3.2592>.

¹⁸ Muhamad Arif, Suraiya Chapakiya, and Angela Yunda Dewi, "Character Education in Indonesian Islamic Elementary Schools: A Systematic Literature Review (2014-2024)," *J-PAI: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 11, no. 1 (2024): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.18860/jpai.v11i1.29301>.

¹⁹ Wening and Hasanah, "Strategies for Developing Religious Culture to Shape, the Character of Students."

²⁰ Aswidar and Saragih, "Religious Character, Tolerance, and Discipline in Junior High School Students."

²¹ Najmudin et al., "School Culture and Its Effectiveness on Students' Religious Character."

²² Mu'tafiyah Bika Nafilah, Abdul Ghofur, and Rizki Khoirunnisa, "Implementation of Religious Culture in the Formation of Student Character at MAN 3 Jombang," *Millatuna* 02, no. 01 (2025): 35–54, <https://doi.org/10.33752/mjsi.v2i01.7756>.

students' attitudes of discipline, responsibility, and respect.²³ Furthermore, research by Rose Fitria Lutfiana, Aflahul Awwalina Mey, and Trisakti Handayani states that a religious school culture through the habituation of worship and teacher role models is able to shape the religious character of students effectively.²⁴

Fella Silkyanti's research also shows that religious culture such as the implementation of 5S, Dhuha prayer, group prayer, and memorizing the Qur'an play an important role in forming students' religious character, discipline, tolerance, and responsibility.²⁵ In addition, research by Muhammad Taufiqillah Syafi'ie, Yoyok Amirudin, and Moh Muslim found that the implementation of religious culture through routine worship activities, habituation of Islamic behavior, and teacher role models are able to shape students' positive morals and behavior.²⁶

The novelty of this research lies in its study of religious culture as a strategy for character formation in students within the context of modern Islamic boarding schools. Unlike previous studies, which generally focused solely on the influence of religious culture in public schools, this study specifically analyzes the implementation of religious culture in educational life at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School in Bireuen. This research not only examines the results of character formation but also examines the process of habituating religious values through programmed worship activities, teacher role models, and the Islamic boarding school environment that shape students' character as a whole. Thus, this research provides a new contribution to the development of a religious culture-based character education model in modern Islamic boarding schools.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative research method with a field study approach.²⁷ The research informants sourced from primary data were the head of the Islamic boarding school (because the leader provides policies and rules in developing character and discipline in students), Islamic boarding school teachers/ustad (because the second party is always with students to educate, guide and teach students to have a religious character) and students (because they are the recipients of policies and experience changes in character) all of whom are in the Al-Zharah Bireuen Islamic

²³ M. Hafiz, Asnil Aidah Ritonga, and Sakholid Nasution, "Implementation of Religious Culture in Cultivating Character Values in Junior High School Students," *Jurnal EDUCATIO: Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia* 11, no. 1 (2025): 298–305, <https://doi.org/10.29210/1202525969>.

²⁴ Aflahul Awwalina Mey, Trisakti Handayani, and Rose Fitria Lutfiana, "Analysis of the Implementation of School Culture in the Formation of Students' Religious Character," *Journal of Character Education* 1, no. 2020 (2021): 167–86.

²⁵ Fella Silkyanti, "Analysis of the Role of Religious School Culture in the Formation of Student Character," *Indonesian Values and Character Education Journal* 2, no. 1 (2019): 36, <https://doi.org/10.23887/ivcej.v2i1.17941>.

²⁶ Risma Ayudya Putrisari et al., "Application of Religious Culture in Forming the Character of Students of Ma'arif 02 Islamic Middle School, Malang," *VICRATINA: Journal of Islamic Education* 10 (2025): 10–18.

²⁷ Sugiyono, *Quantitative, Qualitative and R&D Research Methods*, Alfabeta (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 2020).

boarding school. The data collection techniques in this study used interview, observation and documentation techniques.²⁸, while for data analysis the researcher uses data reduction, then presents it and carries out data analysis which was put forward by Miles and Huberman in Riduwan, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.²⁹To ensure data validity, this study employed technical triangulation, combining interviews, observation, and documentation, followed by member checking with informants and discussions with colleagues. This effort ensured the data obtained had a high level of credibility.³⁰

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Forms of Implementation of Religious Culture

Results of the interview with the Head of Madrasah shows that the implementation of religious culture at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School is carried out through the habituation of scheduled worship activities and integrated into the daily lives of students. These activities include the implementation of the five daily congregational prayers, the habit of reading the Qur'an, collective dhikr, and various other religious activities that are carried out routinely. In addition, after the Maghrib prayer, students are given a special time to read the Qur'an together as a form of religious habituation that aims to foster closeness between students and the Qur'an and strengthen religious values in their lives. As quoted from the results of an interview with the Principal of the Madrasah who explained that "after the Maghrib prayer, there is a time of about 10-15 minutes for students to read the Qur'an together."³¹This activity not only functions as spiritual strengthening, but also as a means of fostering discipline and positive habits that support the formation of the religious character of students.

Results of interviews with the Caregivers shows that religious culture in Islamic boarding schools is not only implemented through the implementation of obligatory worship, but also through various habits of voluntary worship and other religious activities. All students are required to participate in congregational worship activities as well as routine Quran reading and dhikr activities. Even for students who are unable to perform prayers are still directed to participate in collective dhikr activities in the dormitory to remain involved in religious activities carried out at the Islamic boarding school. This shows that the implementation of religious culture is carried out consistently and comprehensively in the lives of students. As obtained from the results of an interview with one of the caretakers who stated that "the implementation of student worship here is routine and scheduled, such as congregational prayer, Quran reading, and dhikr. Even when unable to pray, the children are still required to do dhikr

²⁸ M. Junaidi Ghony, *Qualitative Research Methodology* (Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media, 2020).

²⁹ Riduwan, *Easy Learning of Research for Teachers, Employees and Beginner Researchers* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2024).

³⁰ Rasyid, *Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methodology (Theory, Method and Practice)* (Jakarta: IAIN Kediri Press, 2022).

³¹ Results of an Interview with the Principal of Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School, on February 10, 2026.

together."³²This statement shows that religious culture is not only implemented formally, but is also internalized through comprehensive and continuous habituation.

Results of interviews with studentsThis demonstrates that the implementation of religious culture is directly felt through various daily worship activities at the Islamic boarding school. Students explain that activities such as praying five times a day in congregation, reading the Quran, and participating in other religious activities have become part of their daily routine while at the Islamic boarding school. This condition shows that religious culture is not only an institutional program, but has become an ingrained habit in the students' daily lives. As one student stated, "The worship they do every day is praying five times a day and reading the Quran."³³ This statement shows that religious activities have become part of the students' daily lives and not merely additional activities. Thus, the application of religious culture in the modern Al-Zahrah Islamic boarding school is not merely instructional, but has formed a religious lifestyle that is inherent in the students through direct experience and repeated practice.

Based on the results of field research through interviews with the head of the madrasah, the female teacher, and the students, it can be seen that the religious culture in the modern Islamic boarding school al-zahra is applied systematically through the habit of daily worship, routine religious activities, the example of educators, and the enforcement of religious discipline. This form of application is seen in the implementation of the five daily congregational prayers, scheduled reading of the Qur'an, collective dhikr for students who are unable to pray, the habit of sunnah prayers, and sunnah fasting. This finding shows that religious culture is not only symbolic, but has become part of the daily routine of the students' lives.

Furthermore, researchers also found similar results from observations conducted by researchers at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School, showing that religious activities are truly carried out regularly and are part of the students' daily activities. Researchers observed that every prayer time, the students orderly go to the mosque to perform congregational prayers with the educators and guardians of the boarding school. These activities take place in a solemn and disciplined atmosphere, indicating that habits have been ingrained in the students' lives. There are Qur'an reading activities carried out after Maghrib prayers. The students were seen sitting together in the mosque and in a room that has been designated for reading the Qur'an together. This activity is carried out under the supervision of educators or guardians so that the students remain focused on carrying out these activities. They not only provide direction, but also participate in the worship service with the students. This shows that the educators have set an example in building a religious culture in the boarding school environment.³⁴

³²Results of Interviews with Student Caregivers at Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School, on February 10, 2026.

³³Results of Interviews with Students at Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School, on February 10, 2026.

³⁴Results of Research Observations at Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School, on February 6-20, 2026.

The documentation obtained by the researcher also strengthens the research findings related to the implementation of religious culture at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School. The documentation is in the form of a daily schedule of students' activities that includes various religious activities such as the five daily congregational prayers, reading the Qur'an, collective dhikr, and other religious activities that have been determined by the boarding school. The documentation also includes photos of activities showing the implementation of congregational prayers, reading the Qur'an after Maghrib prayers, and other religious activities participated in by all students. The documentation shows that religious activities are not only planned in the boarding school program, but are also implemented in a real and sustainable manner in the daily lives of students.

The research findings align with those of Arif et al., who stated that modern Islamic boarding schools play a strategic role in shaping religious character through the integration of religious education and the habituation of religious life among students. The study showed that routine religious activities such as congregational prayer, Quran recitation, and scheduled spiritual guidance can shape students' discipline and religious character.³⁵ These findings align with research at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School, which implements a religious culture through consistent daily worship and religious activities.

Furthermore, research by Zainuri and Sugiono explains that religious culture strategies in educational institutions can improve students' discipline, responsibility, and positive habits through the implementation of repeated and structured religious activities. This research shows that consistent religious habits can shape students' religious behavior in their daily lives.³⁶ This is relevant to the research findings at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School which shows that religious culture has become part of the students' routine through the implementation of congregational prayers, collective dhikr, and regular reading of the Qur'an.

Furthermore, research by Wulandari et al. explains that religious culture in educational settings is not only implemented through formal regulations, but also through the example of educators and the habituation of religious activities in students' daily lives. The results of this study indicate that the involvement of all members of an educational institution in religious activities can create an environment that supports the development of students' religious character.³⁷ This finding is in line with the results of research at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School which shows that religious culture is implemented comprehensively through the involvement of the madrasah principal, caretakers, and students in various daily worship and religious activities.

³⁵ Arif, Chapakiya, and Dewi, "Character Education in Indonesian Islamic Elementary Schools: A Systematic Literature Review (2014-2024)."

³⁶ Zainuri and Sugiono, "Strategies for Forming Students' Religious Character Through Religious Development Programs."

³⁷ Wulandari, Suriansyah, and Bachri, "Character Development Through the Implementation of Religious Learning Models for Early Childhood Education Students to Create Indonesia's Golden Generation."

In detail, the forms of implementation of religious culture at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School include:

a. Habituation of Daily Worship

The implementation of religious culture at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School is carried out through the practice of daily worship, which is part of the students' routine activities. Activities such as the five daily congregational prayers are carried out in a disciplined and regular manner, forming positive habits in the students' lives. Through this practice, students not only understand the importance of worship but also develop the habit of consistently performing it in their daily lives.

b. Implementation of Scheduled Religious Activities

Religious culture in Islamic boarding schools is also implemented through various systematically scheduled religious activities. These activities include communal Quran reading, dhikr (remembrance of God), and other routine religious activities. A regular schedule helps foster discipline in students and reinforces the habit of consistently engaging in religious activities.

c. Strengthening Religious Values in Everyday Life

In addition to formal worship activities, the implementation of religious culture is also evident in the strengthening of religious values in the students' daily lives. Values such as discipline, responsibility, togetherness, and mutual respect are instilled in every activity within the Islamic boarding school environment. Thus, religious culture is not only a routine activity but also an integral part of the students' character and behavior in their daily lives.

Conclusion of research results This study demonstrates that the implementation of religious culture at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School is carried out through the practice of daily worship, scheduled religious activities, and the reinforcement of religious values in the students' daily lives. This practice is carried out consistently through congregational prayer, reading the Quran, collective remembrance of God (zikir), and various other religious activities that are part of the students' routine life at the Islamic boarding school.

Strategy for Implementing Religious Culture

Results of the interview with the Head of Madrasah shows that the strategy for implementing religious culture at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School is carried out through enforcing Islamic boarding school regulations, preparing a structured activity schedule, and supervising the implementation of student worship activities. The regulations implemented regulate various aspects of student life, from worship, learning discipline, to daily behavior. The implementation of these regulations aims to instill a sense of discipline and responsibility in students in carrying out their religious obligations through sanctions for students who violate the rules. As quoted from the interview with the Principal of the Madrasah who explained that "through the established rules and regulations, there are sanctions for violators so that children are

accustomed to discipline."³⁸Enforcing these rules aims to instill awareness that discipline and compliance with the rules are part of religious values that must be practiced in everyday life.

Furthermore, similar answers were also expressed by parenting, which shows that the main strategy in implementing religious culture is carried out through the example of teachers and ustazah. Educators in Islamic boarding schools strive to provide direct examples to students in the implementation of worship, discipline, and daily behavior. This example is an important factor in the formation of religious character because students tend to imitate the attitudes and behaviors shown by teachers and ustazah in everyday life. As obtained from the results of an interview with one of the caretakers who stated that "the role of teachers here greatly influences the formation of the character of students because students definitely emulate their ustazah."³⁹This role model strengthens the process of internalizing religious values because students not only receive verbal advice, but also directly see the practice of these values in the daily lives of educators.

Likewise with the statements given by the students, studies have shown that having a structured schedule at Islamic boarding schools helps them be more disciplined in carrying out their daily activities. Students explained that the established schedule makes them accustomed to performing worship, studying, and participating in various religious activities regularly and on time. As one student put it, "Here, there's a schedule, it's organized, so it makes me more disciplined."⁴⁰This shows that the scheduled activity system plays an important role in forming students' discipline and responsibility towards their religious obligations.

Researchers also found similar conditions from the results of observations. Research conducted by researchers in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) showed that teachers and caretakers consistently participated in worship activities with students. Researchers also observed that educators were present at congregational prayers and Quran reading activities, which were routinely held. The presence of educators in these activities demonstrates that exemplary behavior is truly implemented in daily life at the Islamic boarding school.

Likewise with the documentation results, also reinforces these findings. Photographic documentation of congregational worship, religious study, and other religious activities demonstrates the active involvement of teachers and their collaborative care of students. This documentation demonstrates that educators' exemplary behavior is a crucial component of implementing religious culture at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School.

Another study that is relevant to the results of this study is Nuryanti's research which explains that the implementation of religious culture in Islamic boarding schools

³⁸Results of an Interview with the Principal of Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School, on February 10, 2026.

³⁹Results of Interviews with Student Caregivers at Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School, on February 10, 2026.

⁴⁰Results of Interviews with Students at Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School, on February 10, 2026.

is carried out through the habituation of structured religious activities, enforcement of discipline, and the provision of educational sanctions for students who violate the rules.⁴¹The results of this study indicate that consistent implementation of rules and regulations can foster discipline and responsibility in students in carrying out daily religious activities. This finding aligns with research at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School, which implemented rules and sanctions as part of its strategy for developing a religious culture.

Furthermore, Aziz and Sumarsih's research suggests that the successful implementation of religious culture in Islamic boarding schools is greatly influenced by the exemplary behavior of teachers and caregivers. Teachers who actively participate in worship activities with students are considered to have a positive influence on the development of their students' religious character.⁴²This research is relevant to the research results at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School which shows that teachers and female teachers directly provide examples through involvement in congregational prayers, reading the Qur'an, and other religious activities.

Untung and Khairunnisah's research also demonstrated that a regularly scheduled activity system can improve student discipline in carrying out religious obligations and educational activities. The study also demonstrated that a regular activity schedule helps students develop positive habits and reduces rule-breaking behavior.⁴³The results of this study are in line with the findings at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School which showed that a well-organized daily activity schedule makes students more disciplined in carrying out worship and learning activities.

Furthermore, research by Azulhaq et al. revealed that continuous supervision by educators is an effective strategy in maintaining the consistency of religious culture in Islamic boarding schools.⁴⁴This supervision is carried out through mentoring of religious activities, monitoring student discipline, and evaluating daily behavior. This research is relevant to the findings of research at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School, which demonstrated the existence of supervision of religious practices and student activities to ensure consistent application of religious culture in daily life.

In more detail, it can be concluded that the strategy for implementing religious culture carried out by the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School in character formation is:

⁴¹ Nuryanti Nuryanti, "The Urgency of Exemplary Islamic Education Teachers in Shaping Students' Religious Character in the Era of Disruption," *Journal of Education Research* 4, no. 4 (2023): 2243–49, <https://doi.org/10.37985/jer.v4i4.614>.

⁴² Andi Aziz, Cobie, and Sumarsih, "Implementation of Religious Cultural Values in Developing the Character of Students at the Annakhil Darunnajah 6 Islamic Boarding School, Muko-Muko Regency," *Journal of Educational Managers* 15, no. 03 (2020): 1–9.

⁴³ Khairunnisa and Slamet Untung, "Student Management System in Improving Student Discipline at MTs Ma'arif Nu Buaran," *Tambusai Education Journal* 8, no. 3 (2024): 50755–60, <https://jptam.org/index.php/jptam/article/view/23908>.

⁴⁴ Muslikha Fadhia Azulhaq, Rina Priarni, and Isnaini, "Strategies for Disciplining Students Through the Educational Patterns of the Caretakers of the Baiturrahmat Islamic Boarding School in West Ungaran, Semarang Regency" 21, no. 1 (2026): 1105–16, <https://doi.org/10.31603/paedagogie.v21i1.16465>.

a. Exemplary Educators

The role model of educators is one of the main strategies in implementing religious culture at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School. Teachers and caregivers not only provide verbal guidance or advice to students, but also demonstrate concrete examples in their daily lives that reflect religious values. This exemplary behavior is evident in the teachers' involvement in various worship activities with the students, such as congregational prayer, reading the Quran, and participating in other religious activities. With the direct involvement of educators, students can see how religious values are applied in everyday life.

Furthermore, exemplary behavior is also evident in the attitudes and behavior of educators, who demonstrate good morals, such as politeness, discipline, responsibility, and mutual respect. These attitudes indirectly serve as examples for students in shaping their character and behavior. Students tend to imitate the behavior they observe from their teachers and their upbringing, so exemplary behavior has a significant influence on the process of developing religious character.

Through consistent role modeling, religious values can be more effectively instilled in students. Students not only understand these values theoretically but also see and practice them in their daily lives. Therefore, the role model of educators is a crucial factor in supporting the successful implementation of religious culture at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School.

b. Habituation of Scheduled Religious Activities

The implementation of religious culture at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School is also carried out through the habituation of religious activities, which are carried out consistently and regularly. These activities include the five daily congregational prayers, reading the Quran after the Maghrib prayer, collective dhikr (remembrance of God), and various other religious activities that are part of the students' daily routine. These activities are regulated in the Islamic boarding school's schedule so that students become accustomed to carrying out religious activities regularly and with discipline.

Habituation through routine activities plays a crucial role in shaping the religious character of students. When an activity is performed repeatedly and consistently, it becomes a habit in daily life. Through this habit, students perform their religious duties not only out of obligation but also because it has become an ingrained part of their lives.

Furthermore, accustoming students to religious activities also helps foster religious awareness and improve discipline in carrying out their religious obligations. With a clear activity schedule and supervision from educators, students are encouraged to carry out religious activities in a timely and responsible manner. This can gradually foster discipline, responsibility, and spiritual awareness in students.

c. Enforcement of Islamic Boarding School Regulations

Enforcing Islamic boarding school regulations is also a crucial strategy in supporting the implementation of religious culture at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School. The regulations govern various aspects of students' lives, from worship and learning activities to daily behavior within the school. These regulations aim to create an orderly and disciplined environment and support the development of students' religious character.

With clear rules, students have a guideline for carrying out daily activities at the Islamic boarding school. Each student is required to participate in congregational worship, adhere to the established schedule, and maintain attitudes and behavior consistent with the religious values professed at the boarding school. These rules are consistently enforced by the boarding school through supervision from teachers and guidance.

Furthermore, enforcement of the rules is accompanied by the imposition of educational sanctions on students who violate the rules. These sanctions are not intended solely as punishment, but rather as a form of guidance so that students understand the importance of discipline and responsibility in carrying out their obligations. Through consistent implementation of the rules, students are expected to become accustomed to carrying out various religious activities with full awareness and responsibility.

Thus, the enforcement of Islamic boarding school regulations not only functions as rules that bind students, but also as a means of development that can help shape religious character, discipline, and responsibility in daily life.

Conclusion of research resultsshow that the strategy for implementing religious culture at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School is carried out through the example of educators, the habituation of scheduled religious activities, and the enforcement of Islamic boarding school regulations that support the formation of religious character of students. The strategy for implementing religious culture at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School is also seen in the role of educators' role models. Teachers and female teachers not only function as instructors, but also as role models in attitudes, speech, discipline, and the implementation of worship. This is in accordance with Sofannah's opinion that teacher role models are the main strategy in strengthening religious character education through school culture. Exemplary behavior that is consistently displayed will be more easily imitated and internalized by students compared to merely delivering material theoretically.⁴⁵

Furthermore, the research findings indicate that religious activities such as regular religious study after Maghrib prayer, Quranic literacy, memorization, and commemoration of Islamic holidays contribute significantly to shaping the religious character of students. This finding aligns with research by Harfi et al., which concluded

⁴⁵ Iin Arifatus Sofannah et al., "Strengthening Religious Character Education Through the Habituation of School Culture," *JPK: Journal of Pancasila and Citizenship* 8, no. 2 (2023): 115–25, <http://journal.umpo.ac.id/index.php/JPK/index>.

that a culture of Quranic literacy plays a significant role in shaping religious character, particularly in aspects of discipline, calm attitude, and behavioral control.⁴⁶ At the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School, the activity of reading the Qur'an is not only seen as an obligation of worship, but also as a means of developing the morals of students.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Religious Culture

The successful implementation of religious culture at the Al-Zahra Modern Islamic Boarding School is supported by several supporting factors, including the commitment of teachers and administrators who consistently guide and supervise students, student motivation developed through habituation, and collaboration between the boarding school and parents. The administrators emphasize that "if it's just teachers without parental support, it's less effective. There must be collaboration between teachers, parents, and students."⁴⁷ This collaboration is an important factor in maintaining the continuity of the development of the religious character of students, both in the Islamic boarding school environment and at home.

Supporting factors for the implementation of religious culture at the Al-Zahra Modern Islamic Boarding School include the availability of worship facilities, educator commitment, student motivation, and collaboration between the boarding school, the madrasah, and parents. The madrasah principal stated that regular communication with students' guardians is key to successful character development. This is reinforced by research by Mustika Amrullah, which found that synergy between the school and parents is crucial for successfully strengthening students' religious character.⁴⁸

However, the implementation of religious culture also faces several obstacles, particularly a lack of understanding between Islamic boarding schools and some parents regarding the application of rules and sanctions. Parenting officials revealed that "clashes sometimes occur between teachers and parents when parents do not accept the sanctions imposed."⁴⁹ Furthermore, students' behavior of distorting information when communicating problems to their parents, as well as the diverse character of students, especially among adolescents, also pose challenges in fostering. To overcome these obstacles, the Islamic boarding school employs a persuasive approach with students, seeks clarification from parents, and builds intensive communication to foster mutual understanding. As stated by the caretaker, "the way to overcome this is to first approach

⁴⁶ Ni'mah Fikriyah Harfi, Romelah Romelah, and Dina Mardiana, "Discipline Culture Shapes Students' Religious Character in Islamic Schools," *Halaqa: Islamic Education Journal* 9, no. 1 (2025): 19–38, <https://doi.org/10.21070/halaqa.v9i1.1707>.

⁴⁷ Results of Interviews with Student Caregivers at Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School, on February 10, 2026.

⁴⁸ Laila Mustika and Muhlasin Amrullah, "Strengthening Religious Character Education Through the Habituation of School Culture at MI Nahdlatul Ulama KH. Mukmin Sidoarjo," *Constructivism: Journal of Education and Learning* 16, no. 2 (2024): 241–56, <https://doi.org/10.35457/konstruk.v16i2.3613>.

⁴⁹ Results of Interviews with Student Caregivers at Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School, on February 10, 2026.

the child, clarify the situation, then explain it properly to the parents and ask for support."⁵⁰

The inhibiting factors identified in this study include differences in understanding between Islamic boarding schools and some parents regarding the application of sanctions, limited teacher training due to the private sector's status, and the influence of the environment outside the Islamic boarding school. These findings align with Harfi's statement that a culture of religious discipline often faces external obstacles, particularly from family and social environments that are not aligned with school values. However, persuasive approaches, clarification with parents, and ongoing guidance have been shown to minimize these obstacles.⁵¹

Based on the interview results, it can be concluded that there are several supporting factors, namely:

a. Commitment of Educators and Caregivers

One of the key factors supporting the successful implementation of religious culture at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School is the strong commitment of educators and caregivers to guiding and supervising students. Teachers and caregivers serve not only as instructors in the formal learning process but also as mentors who actively instill religious values in the students' daily lives.

This commitment is reflected in their involvement in guiding students to perform worship in congregation, fostering the habit of reading the Quran, and reminding them to maintain morals and behavior in accordance with religious teachings. Furthermore, educators play a role in providing direct supervision and guidance to ensure that all religious activities are carried out in a disciplined and consistent manner. With a strong commitment from educators and caregivers, the process of internalizing religious values can be more effective and sustainable in the lives of students.

b. Religious Islamic Boarding School Environment

The religious environment of Islamic boarding schools is also a crucial factor in supporting the implementation of religious culture. The atmosphere, filled with various religious activities, indirectly shapes religious habits in students. Activities such as congregational prayer, Quran reading, communal remembrance (zikir), and regular religious study create an environment conducive to the development of religious character.

In such an environment, students become accustomed to observing and participating in various religious activities conducted by their peers and educators. This fosters positive habits that gradually become part of their daily

⁵⁰Results of Interviews with Student Caregivers at Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School, on February 10, 2026.

⁵¹ Harfi, Romelah, and Mardiana, "Discipline Culture Shapes Students' Religious Character in Islamic Schools."

lives. A religious environment also helps students more easily adapt to the religious values implemented at the Islamic boarding school.

c. Availability of Adequate Worship Facilities

Adequate worship facilities are also a factor in successfully implementing religious culture in Islamic boarding schools. Facilities such as mosques or prayer rooms, Qurans, and other prayer equipment facilitate students' various religious activities. These facilities allow for regular congregational worship services according to a predetermined schedule.

Furthermore, adequate facilities also support various other religious activities, such as religious study groups, Quran memorization, and Quran literacy. With these facilities, religious activities can run smoothly, helping students develop disciplined worship habits.

d. Scheduled and Structured Religious Activities

Another supporting factor is the existence of a structured schedule of religious activities within the Islamic boarding school. The established daily schedule includes prayer times, study sessions, and various other religious activities. This organized schedule helps students develop the habit of carrying out activities in a disciplined and responsible manner.

Activities such as the five daily congregational prayers, reading the Quran after Maghrib prayer, regular religious studies, and other religious activities are carried out consistently according to a predetermined schedule. Habituation through these scheduled activities indirectly shapes the religious character of the students, as they become accustomed to performing worship and religious activities routinely in their daily lives.

e. Cooperation between Islamic Boarding Schools and Parents of Students

Good cooperation between the Islamic boarding school and the students' parents is also a crucial factor in supporting the successful implementation of religious culture. Established communication between the two parties allows for harmony in the character development process of the students. Parents who understand and support the educational program at the Islamic boarding school can help reinforce the religious values taught within the school environment.

This support can take the form of motivating children, reminding them to maintain religious values at home, and supporting the rules implemented by the Islamic boarding school. With good cooperation between the Islamic boarding school and parents, the process of developing the students' religious character can be more effective and sustainable.

Apart from supporting factors, there are several inhibiting factors, namely:

a. Differences in Understanding between Islamic Boarding Schools and Parents

One of the factors hindering the implementation of religious culture at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School is the differing understanding between the boarding school and some students' parents regarding the application of rules and sanctions. In the process of developing religious

character, the boarding school implements various regulations and rules aimed at fostering discipline and responsibility in students in carrying out religious obligations. However, in some cases, parents lack a clear understanding of the purpose of these regulations, leading to disagreements when students receive reprimands or sanctions from the boarding school.

These differing views sometimes lead to ineffective communication between the Islamic boarding school and parents. Therefore, more intensive communication and clear explanations of the goals of character development are needed so that parents can understand and support the policies implemented by the Islamic boarding school.

b. Diversity of Characters and Backgrounds of Students

The diversity of students' characters and backgrounds is also a factor hindering the implementation of religious culture in Islamic boarding schools. Each student has a distinct personality, habits, and family and environmental background. Some students are accustomed to religious activities from the start, while others lack strong religious habits before entering the boarding school.

These differences also lead to varying levels of understanding and readiness among students to accept the rules and religious activities implemented in Islamic boarding schools. This situation requires educators and caretakers to implement a more varied development approach tailored to each student's individual characteristics to ensure effective internalization of religious values.

c. Santri's Adjustment to Islamic Boarding School Rules

The process of students adjusting to the rules and culture of life at the Islamic boarding school is also a challenge in implementing religious culture. Some students, especially those living in a boarding school for the first time, need time to adapt to the various regulations and established schedules. Pesantren life, with its busy schedule, ranging from worship and study to other religious activities, often presents challenges for students in the early stages.

Some students may find it difficult to adjust to a more disciplined lifestyle compared to their previous lifestyle. However, over time and through a process of familiarization and guidance from educators, most students are able to adapt to the rules of the Islamic boarding school.

d. Influence of the Environment Outside the Islamic Boarding School

Another factor that can hinder the implementation of religious culture is the influence of the environment outside the Islamic boarding school. The social environment outside the Islamic boarding school does not always have values and customs that align with the religious culture practiced in the Islamic boarding school. When students interact with the outside environment, whether through family, peers, or social media, they can be exposed to various influences that do not always support the development of religious character. These influences can influence students' mindsets and behaviors, which in some cases

can pose a challenge for the Islamic boarding school in maintaining the consistency of religious values. Therefore, ongoing guidance and reinforcement of religious values are necessary so that students can maintain behavior and attitudes in accordance with religious teachings even outside the Islamic boarding school environment.

Based on this description, it can be concluded that the implementation of religious culture at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School is inseparable from various challenges stemming from both internal and external factors. Therefore, ongoing development efforts, good communication with parents, and an appropriate approach to students are required to ensure that religious values continue to be embedded and developed in their lives.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that the implementation of religious culture at the Al-Zahrah Modern Islamic Boarding School is realized through the habituation of daily worship, scheduled religious activities, and the reinforcement of religious values in the students' daily lives. Activities such as congregational prayer, reading the Quran, dhikr (remembrance of God), religious study groups, and commemorating Islamic holidays are part of the routine that shapes the students' religious lifestyle. The strategy for implementing religious culture is carried out through exemplary educators, fostering structured religious activities, and enforcing Islamic boarding school regulations. These strategies play a role in shaping the religious character, discipline, responsibility, and morals of students.

Supporting factors for the implementation of religious culture include educator commitment, adequate worship facilities, a scheduled activity system, and collaboration between Islamic boarding schools and parents. Meanwhile, inhibiting factors include differences in understanding between Islamic boarding schools and parents, the diversity of student characters, and the influence of the environment outside the Islamic boarding school. However, these obstacles can be overcome through good communication and ongoing guidance.

This study has limitations: it was conducted only at one Islamic boarding school, meaning the results cannot describe the application of religious culture in all modern Islamic boarding schools in general. Furthermore, this study focused more on the process of implementing religious culture and did not fully examine its influence on the long-term character development of students. Therefore, future researchers are expected to conduct research at more Islamic educational institutions with a broader scope, and to examine the effectiveness of religious culture on character formation of students using more diverse approaches and research methods..

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