MIKAILALSYS
Journal of Multidisciplinary Sciences

e-ISSN : 2987-2286
p-ISSN : 2987-3924

Index: Harvard, Boston, Sydney, Copernicus, Sinta 4, Scilit, Semantic, Google, etc

https://doi.org/10.58578/mikailalsys.v4i2.10282

Mudir's Strategy in Shaping the Religious Character and Discipline of New Santri through a Quarantine Program: A Case Study at Pondok Pesantren Islam Haji Miskin

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Article Info:

Submitted:	Revised:	Accepted:	Published:
Apr 11, 2026	May 9, 2026	May 21, 2026	May 26, 2026

Abstract

Among educational institutions with distinctive characteristics, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) represent a unique educational model because of their flexibility in developing innovative and creative management practices. Parents commonly choose *pesantren* due to concerns about students' character formation and discipline, making the development of religious character and disciplined behavior a major managerial challenge. This study aims to describe the strategies employed by the *mudir* in developing the religious character and discipline of new *santri* through the quarantine program at PPI Haji Miskin and to identify the factors supporting the implementation of these strategies. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, with data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation studies. The findings indicate that the development of students' religious character and discipline through the quarantine program is implemented through three main strategies: providing selected instructional materials, including daily practical *fiqh*, Qur'anic *tahsin*, active Arabic language learning, moral conduct (*adab*), and self-reliance; establishing habituation practices through systematically scheduled activities;

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and positioning teachers as role models through Islamic dress, communication using the official *pesantren* language, worship practices, and exemplary conduct within the boarding school environment. The implementation of the *mudir*'s strategy is supported by several factors, including the need to accelerate the formation of religious character among new *santri*, reduce adaptation difficulties during the first month, improve Qur'anic recitation skills, strengthen Arabic language discipline, and apply parenting knowledge obtained from the Dormitory Educator Academy. The study concludes that the quarantine program functions as a structured managerial strategy for accelerating religious character formation, discipline, and adaptation among new *santri*. This study contributes to Islamic educational management by highlighting how leadership, habituation, instructional design, and teacher modeling can be integrated to strengthen character education in *pesantren* contexts.

Keywords: *Mudir* Strategy; Religious Character; Discipline; *Santri*; Quarantine Program

INTRODUCTION

When discussing the concept of strategy, what commonly comes to mind is a series of activities related to ideas, planning, and implementation. One aspect that is closely associated with strategy is leadership. Leadership represents a form of strategy or a theoretical framework of leading exercised by a leader. A leader is an individual who possesses the authority to direct subordinates in carrying out part of their responsibilities in order to achieve predetermined objectives. This indicates that becoming an effective leader requires the implementation of appropriate strategies so that organizational goals can be achieved more efficiently and effectively.

Implicitly, the Holy Qur'an contains verses that address the concept of strategy, as reflected in the following words of Allah SWT:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ

It means: *"O you who have believed, fear Allah, and let every soul consider what it has prepared for tomorrow (the Hereafter). And fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is All-Aware of what you do"* (Qur'an, Surah Al-Hashr [59]: 18).

The verse above explains that strategy is a process of determining plans formulated by top leadership with a focus on organizational objectives, accompanied by the preparation of methods or efforts to ensure that these objectives can be achieved in accordance with the predetermined plans (Iskandar, 2025). This is because strategy constitutes one of the most essential components of management in achieving organizational goals over the long term.

Among the organizations that possess unique characteristics are educational institutions established and managed by communities or private sectors, such as *Islamic boarding schools (pesantren)*. Islamic boarding schools have greater flexibility to innovate and develop creative management practices compared to other educational institutions.

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) are widely believed and trusted by many people, particularly parents and guardians of students, to be capable of shaping children's character in a more positive direction (Solihin et al., 2020). Islamic boarding schools constitute Islamic educational institutions that play an important role in developing the character of students (*santri*). They provide instruction, education, guidance, and contribute to the dissemination of Islamic teachings (Nasution, 2020). The objective of *pesantren* education is to develop an Islamic personality, namely a personality characterized by faith and piety toward Allah *Subḥānahu Wa Ta'ālā*, noble moral values, usefulness to society, and dedication to community service by becoming servants of the people (*khadim al-ummah*) (Hidayat & Rizal, 2018).

Generally, issues related to children's character constitute the primary reason parents choose to enroll their children in Islamic boarding schools, in addition to other considerations (Parta & Mulyadi, 2023). Parents expect their children to become knowledgeable individuals who are *ṣāliḥ* and *ṣāliḥah* (righteous men and women). Righteous not only for themselves but also capable of guiding others toward righteousness. Islamic boarding schools possess considerable potential in producing holistic individuals who demonstrate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor competencies (Solechan, 2021).

Schools are required to perform their roles and assume responsibility for developing positive values while assisting students in forming and building good character. Character education is fundamentally directed toward emphasizing particular values, such as respect, honesty, care, and responsibility, to be understood, appreciated, and implemented in everyday life (Harahap, 2023). The development of balanced, healthy, and

strong human personality (*character building*) is greatly influenced by religious education and the internalization of religious values within learners (Fahreza & Firdaus, 2025). Character formation is also strongly affected by environmental conditions; therefore, the environment plays a significant role in shaping students' identity and behavior (Rosyid, 2022).

Developing children with strong character represents a major challenge for the management of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). Therefore, institutional leaders are required to implement effective strategies in shaping students' character (Dian et al., 2024). The leader or head of the boarding school is the individual who determines the central direction and rhythm of the institution (Syam et al., 2023). As the top leader, the head possesses authority, power, and leadership style to organize and develop subordinates professionally. It may even be argued that the success of an Islamic boarding school largely reflects the success of its leader (Muliansyah, 2020). In this regard, the head of the boarding school constitutes one of the most influential components in enhancing religious and educational activities within the institution (Sadiah, 2017).

The success of a *pesantren* cannot be separated from the leadership of the *Kiai*, who continuously implements various strategies considered effective and efficient in achieving institutional goals and producing students as human resources with strong character (Halid, 2024; Arifin et al., 2024). Strategy serves as an approach to facilitate success in character formation among students, which becomes the foundation of their personal development amidst the rapid advancement of the current Industrial Revolution 4.0 era (Syahrial, 2025)

Leaders of Islamic boarding schools can contribute significantly to shaping students' character so that they become individuals with noble morals and are beneficial to society. This is in line with the functions and objectives of national education, namely to develop capabilities and shape the character and dignified civilization of the nation in order to educate society and foster learners' potential so that they become individuals who believe in and are devoted to God Almighty, possess noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens (Pemerintah Pusat, 2023; Mustain & Bakar, 2025).

One of the Islamic boarding schools actively contributing to students' character development is *Pondok Pesantren Islam Haji Miskin Pandai Sikek*, hereafter referred to as PPI Haji Miskin. This boarding school is located in Jorong Koto Tinggi, Nagari Pandai Sikek, X

Koto District, Tanah Datar Regency, West Sumatra Province, Indonesia. Geographically, it is situated in an agricultural area surrounded by two mountains and positioned between two cities, namely between Mount Singgalang and Mount Marapi, and between the cities of Bukittinggi and Padang Panjang.

PPI Haji Miskin is an Islamic boarding school established amidst several long-standing and well-established *pesantren*. Among the older institutions that had previously existed are *Perguruan Islam Thawalib Padang Panjang*, *Sumatera Thawalib Parabek*, *Pesantren Sjech Djamil Jaho*, *Pesantren Tarbiyah Islamiyah Candung*, *Diniyyah Putri Padang Panjang*, and *Pondok Pesantren Kauman Padang Panjang*, among others. PPI Haji Miskin was established in 1992 by community leaders from Pandai Sikek, including both local residents and those living outside the region. The students educated in this institution originate from nearly every province on Sumatra Island, ranging from Aceh to Lampung. In addition, some students come from regions outside Sumatra, such as Java Island, and there has even been a student from Malaysia. The backgrounds of parents and guardians are also diverse in terms of economic conditions, educational background, and professions. At the commencement of this study, the number of students exceeded 237, supported by 59 teaching staff members. All students are required to reside in the boarding school dormitories. PPI Haji Miskin is led by a director referred to as the *mudir*. In managing the institution, the *mudir* is assisted by supporting staff consisting of a secretary, treasurer, head of the *madrasah*, head of student affairs and caregiving, head of *tahfiz* programs, and kitchen logistics coordinator.

In general, the character development of students (*santri*) is implemented through two main divisions, namely the *madrasah* and student affairs (*kepengasuhan*). The *madrasah* is responsible for developing intellectual competencies, while the student affairs division focuses on strengthening students' spiritual and moral dimensions. Students participate in formal classroom learning from the first to the tenth period, which is directly managed by the heads of the Islamic junior high school (*MTs*) and Islamic senior high school (*MA*). Meanwhile, daily activities outside formal learning hours, beginning from waking up until returning to sleep, are managed by the student affairs division. Male students are supervised by the male student affairs unit, whereas female students fall under the responsibility of the female student affairs unit.

Character education constitutes an essential aspect for future generations. Individuals are not sufficiently equipped solely through intellectual provision but must also

be provided with spiritual and moral foundations. Therefore, character education should be integrated with the intellectual development of students, particularly within educational institutions. Over the years, PPI Haji Miskin has experienced considerable development. This progress can be observed through the increasing availability of facilities and infrastructure as well as the growing number of students. However, along with this development, the institution has also encountered increasingly complex challenges. This situation has become more significant in the internet era, where both positive and negative information can be accessed easily and cannot be effectively restricted. A lot of parents enroll their children in Islamic boarding schools because they have become overwhelmed in managing their children's dependence on smartphones and digital devices. Parents frequently express concerns regarding their children's morals and behavior. Consequently, effective strategies are required to shape students' character within the boarding school environment. Strategies for character formation in contemporary *pesantren* settings can no longer be equated with those applied before the widespread expansion of internet networks.

During the leadership period of Arif as the *mudir* of PPI Haji Miskin, three institutional regulations were introduced as strategic efforts to develop students' character. The *Masa Ta'aruf Santri Madrasah* (*MATSAMA*) orientation program, which was previously conducted for only three days, was extended by Arif into a 40-day program specifically designed for new Grade VII *MTs* students. This new program was initially piloted among newly enrolled female students. They were placed in quarantine or separated from senior students for a period of forty days. Whereas in previous years new students had been guided and accompanied by senior students, under the new program they were closely supervised by teachers specifically appointed and assigned by the *mudir*.

Based on preliminary field observations, it was found that during every prayer time all students, teachers, employees, and even teachers' children performed congregational prayers at the mosque. However, students who had participated in the quarantine program demonstrated higher levels of discipline in worship compared to female students from other classes. This was evidenced by their earlier attendance at prayer locations. During meal times and canteen hours, students ate and drank while sitting and using their right hand. Whenever students encountered teachers, they consistently showed respect by kissing the teachers' hands. All female students and female teachers (*ustazah*) consistently dressed in accordance with Islamic requirements concerning modesty. Communication

among students was conducted using Indonesian, Arabic, limited English, or a combination of Indonesian and foreign languages. No students or teachers were found using local languages within the boarding school environment. Students who had previously participated in the quarantine program were also found to be more active and communicative in using Arabic compared to those who had never joined the program.

Preliminary interviews with several parents and guardians revealed that their primary expectations centered on the development of proper manners (*adab*), morals, character, and behavior so that their children would become better individuals. One example is Mrs. Emi, a senior teacher at a prominent high school in Padang, who enrolled all six of her children at PPI Haji Miskin. When asked why she chose PPI Haji Miskin instead of other institutions—despite the availability of many well-established Islamic boarding schools and advanced schools in Padang with more complete facilities and highly qualified teachers, as well as several long-established *pesantren* in West Sumatra that have produced many distinguished alumni—she explained that PPI Haji Miskin possessed distinctive qualities not found elsewhere. She believed that the institution was more appropriate for educating her children. According to her testimony, all of her children had developed into righteous individuals and almost all consistently achieved academic excellence and accomplishments in both academic and non-academic fields. Mrs. Emi's experience may be considered representative of many parents who choose to enroll their children at PPI Haji Miskin.

The researcher was interested in conducting this study at *Pondok Pesantren Islam Haji Miskin* in order to explore and describe how the leadership strategies implemented by the boarding school leader (*mudir*) contribute to the development of students' religious character and discipline, particularly among newly enrolled students. The study seeks to examine the nature of the strategies employed and how these strategies have become an attraction capable of drawing public interest from various regions and from families with diverse economic conditions, professions, and educational backgrounds.

This study aims to examine the leadership strategies of the *pesantren* leader in developing the religious character and discipline of newly enrolled students through the quarantine program at *Pondok Pesantren Islam Haji Miskin Pandai Sikek*.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design. The qualitative approach was selected because the study aimed to obtain an in-depth understanding of the strategies implemented by the *mudir* of the Islamic boarding school in developing the religious character and discipline of newly enrolled students through the quarantine program. The case study design was adopted because the research focused on a specific setting, namely *Pondok Pesantren Islam Haji Miskin Pandai Sikek*, thereby enabling the researcher to investigate the phenomenon comprehensively within its real-life context. The study was designed as an intrinsic case study, focusing specifically on examining the *mudir's* strategies in implementing the quarantine program as an effort to foster the religious character and discipline of new students. The research was conducted in a natural setting, with the researcher serving as the primary instrument directly involved in data collection and interpretation. The stages of the research included: 1) Preparation Stage, consisting of problem identification, proposal preparation, and determination of the research site. 2) Data Collection Stage, conducted through field observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation. 3) Data Analysis Stage, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. 4) Validation Stage, carried out through source triangulation and technique triangulation. 5) Report Preparation Stage, consisting of interpretation of findings and formulation of research implications. Research participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, in which informants were determined based on the consideration that they possessed an adequate understanding of the implementation of the quarantine program and the process of students' character formation. The research participants consisted of: 1) The *mudir* of *Pondok Pesantren Islam Haji Miskin* as the primary informant; 2) Teachers and dormitory supervisors involved in the quarantine program; 3) Newly enrolled students participating in the quarantine program; 4) Supporting personnel, including student affairs staff and boarding school administrators. The purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that the data collected originated directly from individuals actively involved in implementing the strategies for developing religious character and discipline. The data collection techniques consisted of the following: 1) Participatory Observation, 2) In-Depth Interviews, 3) Documentation. Data analysis was conducted interactively using the model proposed by Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, consisting of the following stages: data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification. The trustworthiness of the data was examined through the

following techniques: Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, Confirmability. The study was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Islam Haji Miskin Pandai Sikek, located in Tanah Datar Regency, West Sumatra, Indonesia. The research process covered proposal preparation, field data collection, data analysis, and report writing, and was carried out over approximately 6–8 months, with the following timeline:

Research Stage	Activities	Estimated Duration
Preparation	Proposal preparation and instrument development.	1 month
Data Collection	Observation, interviews, documentation.	2–3 months
Data Analysis	Reduction, display, verification	1–2 months
Report Preparation	Interpretation and writing of findings	2 months

RESULTS

Implications of the Strategy

When this program was implemented for a period of 40 days, it initially appeared, at least superficially, to be disadvantageous for teachers in general. Subjects that had already commenced in other madrasah institutions had to be postponed temporarily. However, after the quarantine program was implemented, it produced remarkable outcomes. There was a noticeable acceleration in students' achievements compared to the period before the implementation of the program. Religious character was developed more rapidly. Students arrived earlier at the mosque to perform congregational prayers. Their Qur'anic recitation became more fluent and accurate. Greetings in Arabic and the practice of offering Islamic salutations (salam) gradually became habitual. Discipline in worship, learning activities, and language use was also established more quickly.

This finding was expressed by Ustazah Fatma Zahara as follows:

"Based on my experience in this quarantine program, it is evident that the program has had a positive impact on the development of students' character and discipline. After participating in the quarantine activities, our observations showed that students gradually developed religious character through habituation programs and disciplinary practices. Furthermore, students became more independent. They also began to communicate in Arabic, although still at a basic level. In addition, students developed a greater sense of sympathy and empathy toward their surrounding environment."

The changes experienced by students before and after participating in the program were also described by Rumai, one of the female students at PPI Haji Miskin, as follows:

"Before participating in the 40-day orientation program/quarantine, I did not know much about proper Islamic dress and covering the *aurat*, I was not yet proficient in reading the Qur'an, I lacked discipline, and there were many other things I had not mastered. Then I participated in the orientation program (*MOS/MATSAMA*) and quarantine activities at Haji Miskin Islamic Boarding School. After completing the program, I experienced significant changes. My Qur'anic recitation became more fluent, I gained an understanding of *aurat* as taught by my teachers here, I became more disciplined, and I was able to perform many things that I had previously been unable to do."

When the second month began and formal learning resumed according to the regular schedule, teachers reported that the program greatly assisted classroom learning, particularly in reading Arabic texts and classical Islamic books written in Arabic. At PPI Haji Miskin, Arabic functions as the official language for daily communication and serves as the medium of instruction, especially for boarding school subjects.

Before the implementation of the quarantine program, newly enrolled students were generally required to use Arabic only after six months of study. However, following participation in the quarantine program, students were already able to communicate using simple Arabic expressions at a much earlier stage.

Factors Encouraging the *Mudir* to Implement the Quarantine Program in Developing the Religious Character and Discipline of Newly Enrolled Students

Based on interviews conducted with the *Mudir* of PPI Haji Miskin, information was obtained indicating that almost every year there were newly enrolled students who experienced difficulties adapting during the initial weeks or months after admission. Some students found it difficult to cope with separation from their parents, while others initially felt comfortable and adapted well; however, their parents found it difficult to be separated from their children. In some cases, parents visited their children almost every day, which consequently affected the students' adjustment and reduced their willingness to remain in the boarding school environment. Furthermore, many new students were not yet capable of managing themselves independently because they had previously been accustomed to receiving assistance from family members and people around them at home. Therefore,

Arif established a policy prohibiting communication with parents or guardians during the implementation of the quarantine program, either through direct visits or telephone contact.

Arif also explained that previously newly enrolled students were required to use Arabic only after completing the first six months of study at the boarding school. This policy was later revised so that Arabic language discipline was introduced after three months. Through the quarantine program, however, the implementation of Arabic language discipline, which had previously required three to six months, could be achieved within forty days through simple conversational practice.

In addition, Arif stated that almost every year newly enrolled students were found to have limited fluency in reading the Qur'an. This condition occurred because nearly all applicants were accepted as students. Entrance examinations that included Qur'anic reading assessments were still administered; however, these assessments primarily served to classify students according to their abilities rather than to restrict admission. Consequently, an accelerated and intensive program for improving Qur'anic recitation skills became necessary.

The strongest motivation for implementing this new program emerged after all teachers, dormitory supervisors, and foundation administrators participated in a *daurah* (training program) on student caregiving and educational supervision conducted by the DEA Team from Java. This training strengthened their commitment to introducing the quarantine program as a strategic initiative for character formation and student development.

DISCUSSION

Initially, the *Mudir* sought appropriate approaches and formulated policies, action patterns, and decision-making frameworks through meetings to establish directions for achieving the intended goals, success, and institutional excellence while considering existing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This is consistent with the perspective proposed by Lee et al., (2021). After determining the program, the *Mudir* established an implementation committee consisting of experienced teachers. Subsequently, the committee prepared the activity schedule to be carried out during the quarantine period as well as the required budget allocation.

In developing the religious character and discipline of students through the quarantine program, the mudir of PPI Haji Miskin implemented three core activities consisting of instruction, habituation, and role modelling. During the quarantine period, newly enrolled students were prohibited from communicating with their parents either through visits or telephone conversations. In urgent situations, communication was facilitated through intermediaries, namely *Ustadz* and *Ustazah*.

First, the instructional activities focused on selected learning materials such as Arabic language, *tajwid/tahsin, adab* (Islamic etiquette), *fiqh*, and self-reliance. (1) Arabic language instruction was prioritized at the initial stage because it would later function as the medium of communication in daily interactions as well as in understanding pesantren subjects that predominantly employ Arabic. (2) *Tajwid* and *tahsin* lessons were provided to improve Qur'anic recitation, which students would later be required to understand and memorize. The *adab* material emphasized ethical values to be implemented in everyday life, including etiquette toward oneself, respect for older and younger individuals, and manners toward Allah and His Messenger. (3) Practical daily *fiqh* materials included thaharah practices such as ablution (wudhu), obligatory bathing (ghusl), and prayer. (4) Furthermore, students were provided with self-reliance materials that needed to be understood before implementation, including personal hygiene, washing clothes, organizing wardrobes, arranging beds, and other daily responsibilities. These selected materials were consistently delivered based on the teachings of the Qur'an, Hadith, and the views of Islamic scholars. Religion served as the guiding principle and reference in speech, attitudes, and actions, closely related to the extent of individuals' understanding of religious teachings. Newly enrolled students needed to be provided with understanding by informing them about the essence and values underlying the materials delivered. The process of understanding had to be carried out continuously so that message recipients would remain engaged, as argued by Kirana, & Haq (2022).

Second, students were guided to engage in activities through habituation practices. Developing character values among students is not an easy task because they come from diverse families with different backgrounds, languages, and ethnic groups. Differences in character can be observed from students' attitudes, motivations, and behaviors during daily activities.

Therefore, students were subsequently organized under similar patterns and structured schedules. They were accustomed to waking up before the dawn (Subuh) call to prayer. One simple form of habituation observed by the researcher included eating and drinking while sitting and using the right hand, greeting others upon entering rooms, kissing teachers' hands when shaking hands, and reciting morning and evening prayers. Initially, some students felt compelled to perform these practices; however, over time these activities became habits and eventually developed into character traits. Similar statements had previously been obtained by the researcher during the *Training of Trainers* (TOT) HR & *Counselling Based on Genetic* program held on March 24, 2018, at Hotel Nikita Bukittinggi and delivered by Sofyan Abdillah, a national trainer.

According to Kirana, & Haq (2022), habituation functions as reinforcement for values that have already entered the recipients' awareness. The habituation process emphasizes direct experience and serves as a binding mechanism between character-related actions and individual identity.

Nevertheless, the ability of newly enrolled students to adapt is also influenced by physiological factors such as physical condition and health status; psychological factors such as stimuli received from the prenatal period until entering the boarding school; socio-cultural factors including parenting styles, peer relationships, community lifestyles, guidance from *murabbi* (caregivers), cultural backgrounds, and traditions; as well as individual maturity and developmental stages. PPI Haji Miskin is located in a cool mountainous area with an average nighttime temperature of approximately 18°C. Students coming from warmer regions are therefore required to have jackets and thick blankets.

Third, students were provided with role models through *Ustadz* and *Ustazah* who continuously accompanied all activities. The *Mudir* of PPI Haji Miskin instilled understanding among teachers to encourage both themselves and students to collectively strive for obedience and compliance with religious principles. Field observations demonstrated that all teachers performed congregational prayers together with students. Female teachers (ustazah) consistently observed Islamic dress requirements by covering their aurat whenever outside their rooms or dormitories. Teachers also served as role models in communication by using Arabic and avoiding local languages when interacting with students or fellow teachers. They demonstrated exemplary engagement with the Qur'an through reading, studying, and memorization activities. Among the teachers were

several Qur'an memorizers (ḥuffāẓ). Teachers additionally provided examples in lifelong learning, as evidenced by several teachers actively pursuing higher education and participating in halaqah *ilmiyyah* (scientific study circles).

Role modelling refers to providing examples or standards that others may emulate. An ustadz or ustazah serves as a role model whom students observe daily. Whatever is performed by teachers tends to be trusted and imitated by students. Therefore, teachers are expected to demonstrate personalities and behaviors superior to those of their students. Exemplary teaching means providing practical examples that students can observe and emulate. Research conducted by A. Sukmawati and colleagues demonstrated that teacher role modelling was implemented through actions such as discipline, maintaining achievement, fairness, wisdom, politeness, and courteous speech. Students, meanwhile, were habituated according to school culture through greetings, hand-kissing traditions (salim), smiling, friendliness, discipline, religious activities, responsibility, independence, honesty, and literacy programs. The impact generated by teacher role modelling and student habituation contributed to character development, including fostering creativity, strengthening faith, improving attitudes, increasing literacy awareness, and promoting environmental concern through social activities.

Based on observations related to discipline, the researcher frequently found that students were accustomed to a queuing culture, such as queuing for bathroom use and waiting in line for meal distribution. Students also demonstrated discipline in Qur'anic recitation, morning and evening dhikr, memorization of Qur'anic verses, acquisition of new Arabic vocabulary, and organizing personal belongings appropriately.

In addition to instructional and habituation activities, sports and recreational programs were also conducted. These activities were intended to prevent students from becoming fatigued or bored with indoor activities alone. Sports also provide numerous benefits for both health and character development. Several studies have indicated that: (1) adolescents actively involved in sports exhibit lower levels of behavioral deviation compared to those who do not participate in sports activities; (2) adolescents engaged in physical activities possess greater resilience and are more capable of coping with environmental stressors; (3) adolescents generally require social support not only from peer groups but also from other groups and institutions; and (4) adolescents actively

participating in sports demonstrate higher levels of self-confidence compared to those who are not actively involved in sports activities.

The findings of this study are consistent with the character formation theory proposed by Nasaruddin, which states that character development is carried out through three main stages, namely understanding, habituation, and role modelling. These three components complement one another and cannot be separated because character formation that emphasizes only cognitive aspects tends to remain theoretical, whereas habituation without understanding merely produces mechanical behavior.

The findings of this study also reinforce the view of Ahmad Tafsir, who argues that a religious culture can be developed through exemplary behavior, habituation of positive conduct, enforcement of discipline, motivation, and the creation of a religious atmosphere within educational environments. The quarantine program implemented at PPI Haji Miskin has incorporated all of these elements through intensive supervision and a systematically conditioned environment.

These findings are also in line with the research conducted by A. Sukmawati and colleagues concerning character development based on teacher role modelling and student habituation, which demonstrated that exemplary practices contribute to strengthening faith, responsibility, independence, and behavioral transformation among students. However, the present study differs from previous research because it introduces a quarantine program for newly enrolled students as a specific strategy implemented during the initial stage of student adaptation.

The novelty of this study lies in the utilization of a quarantine program during the orientation period for newly enrolled students as an instrument to accelerate the development of religious character and discipline. In contrast to previous studies, which generally examined character formation through routine *pesantren* activities, this study demonstrates that intensive guidance during the early adaptation phase can accelerate both value internalization and environmental adjustment processes.

The findings of this study provide both theoretical and practical implications. 1) Theoretical Implications, from a theoretical perspective, this study strengthens the concept that the development of religious character and discipline becomes more effective when employing an integrative approach consisting of instruction, habituation, and role modelling. These three components establish a sequential process encompassing cognitive,

affective, and behavioral dimensions, thereby producing stronger and more sustainable character transformation. This study also contributes to the broader discourse of Islamic educational management by demonstrating that the leadership of the *mudir* exerts a strategic influence on the formation of *pesantren* culture. Program planning, organization of implementation teams, supervision, and evaluation constitute essential components in ensuring the success of character education initiatives. 2) Practical Implications, From a practical perspective, the findings of this study may serve as a model for other Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) experiencing challenges related to the adaptation of newly enrolled students. The quarantine program can be implemented as an initial orientation strategy to: a) accelerate the development of religious character; b) improve discipline in worship and daily activities; c) reduce the level of maladjustment and homesickness among newly enrolled students; d) accelerate mastery of the boarding school language culture; and e) enhance students' academic and social readiness. This model be adapted and implemented in other Islamic educational institutions, such as residential *madrasah* and *boarding schools*, that possess similar characteristics and educational environments.

This study has several limitations that should be taken into consideration. First, the study was conducted only at a single research site, namely *Pondok Pesantren Islam Haji Miskin Pandai Sikek*; therefore, the findings cannot yet be generalized to all Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) that possess different cultures, caregiving systems, and institutional policies. Second, this study employed a descriptive qualitative approach; consequently, its primary focus was to describe the processes and experiences related to the implementation of the quarantine program without conducting quantitative measurements of the extent of changes in students' religious character and discipline. Third, the research subjects were predominantly focused on the *mudir*, teachers, and program implementers. As a result, the perspectives of students and parents were not explored in greater depth. Fourth, the study was conducted within a specific period; therefore, it was not able to examine the long-term impact of the quarantine program on students' character development after several years of participating in *pesantren* education.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that the *mudir's* strategy in developing the religious character and discipline of newly enrolled students was implemented through program planning, policy

formulation, establishment of an implementation team, execution of quarantine activities, and continuous evaluation. The implementation of the quarantine program was carried out through three main strategies, namely instruction, habituation, and role modelling. The instructional strategy was realized through the provision of foundational *pesantren* subjects, including practical *fiqh*, Qur'anic *tahsin*, active Arabic language learning, *adab* (Islamic etiquette), and self-reliance. The habituation strategy was implemented through structured daily activities, including congregational worship, memorization practices, the use of Arabic language, cleanliness routines, time discipline, and other *pesantren*-based activities. Meanwhile, the role-modelling strategy was applied through exemplary behavior demonstrated by teachers and dormitory supervisors in everyday life, thereby serving as a model for newly enrolled students. The findings also indicate that the quarantine program was effective in supporting the adaptation process of newly enrolled students to the *pesantren* environment, improving discipline, strengthening religious character, and accelerating the internalization of *pesantren* culture and values.

This study contributes to the advancement of Islamic educational management and character education studies, particularly concerning the leadership strategies of the *mudir* in developing students' character. The findings reinforce the notion that the development of religious character and discipline becomes more effective when implemented through the integration of cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions through instruction, habituation, and role modelling. In addition, this study offers novelty through the implementation of a quarantine program for newly enrolled students as a medium for accelerating character development during the initial stage of *pesantren* education. This model may serve as an alternative approach for the development of character education in residential-based educational institutions and *boarding schools* with similar characteristics.

Future studies are recommended to expand the research scope by involving several Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) with different characteristics in order to obtain more comprehensive findings and enable comparative analysis. Subsequent research may also employ a mixed methods approach to quantitatively measure the effectiveness of the quarantine program. In addition, longitudinal studies are needed to examine the long-term impact of religious character and disciplinary development on students' growth after participating in *pesantren* education over an extended period. Therefore, the quarantine program for newly enrolled students may be considered an effective strategy for developing

religious character and discipline while supporting the success of educational processes within the *pesantren* environment.

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