

# Implementation of Religious Character Building at Ma'had Al-Jami'ah UIN Palangka Raya

Dandi Ardiansyah<sup>1\*</sup>, Zainap Hartati<sup>2</sup>, and Neela Afifah<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Universitas Islam Negeri Palangka Raya, Indonesia

\*[dandiardiansyah110318@gmail.com](mailto:dandiardiansyah110318@gmail.com)

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history

Received April 24, 2026

Revised May 19, 2026

Accepted June 8, 2026

**Keywords:** Religious character;  
Islamic boarding school; character  
development; Islamic education;  
internalization of values

## ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse the implementation of religious character development for student residents at Ma'had Al-Jami'ah UIN Palangka Raya through structured religious programs and boarding-based activities. This research employed a qualitative case study approach involving 12 informants consisting of Ma'had administrators, *musyrif/musyrifah*, *ustadz/ustadzah*, and students. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, then analysed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that religious character development is implemented through congregational prayers, Quran recitation, Islamic studies, worship habituation, discipline monitoring, and role modelling by mentors. These activities foster character values such as discipline, responsibility, honesty, politeness, social awareness, and devotion to worship. The internalization process is strengthened through continuous habituation, intensive social interaction, and a conducive religious environment within the *ma'had*. Supporting factors include structured mentoring programs and active mentor involvement, while inhibiting factors include students' low motivation and external environmental influences. This study contributes to the development of a boarding-system-based religious character education model by emphasizing the integration of habituation, supervision, and exemplary practices as a holistic character-building ecosystem in Islamic higher education institutions.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social changes in the digital era have significantly transformed the values, lifestyles, and behavioural patterns of university students, including those in Islamic higher education institutions. The rapid expansion of digital technology, globalization, and unrestricted access to information have created social environments that often weaken students' religious awareness and moral consistency (Muhammad et al., 2022). In this context, Islamic higher education institutions are increasingly challenged to develop educational systems capable of strengthening students' religious character not only cognitively, but also affectively and behaviourally. Religious character education in Islam emphasizes the internalization of values that shape moral awareness, discipline, social responsibility, and consistent religious behaviour in everyday life (Mujib & Mudzakkir, 2019). Recent studies highlight that residential or boarding-based education systems provide an effective environment for character development because students experience continuous supervision, habituation, and social interaction within a structured educational culture. Research by Abqoriy et al. (2023) demonstrated that boarding-based school systems strengthen students' religious character through collective religious practices, supervision, and environmental conditioning. Similarly, Aziz et al. (2023) found that integrated Islamic curricula within boarding systems significantly contribute to strengthening students' moral discipline, spiritual awareness, and social responsibility. In addition, Miftahuddin et al. (2024) emphasized that the success of religious character education in Islamic educational institutions depends on the integration between

institutional culture, role modeling, habituation, and sustainable mentoring systems. Furthermore, Noormila et al. (2025) found that muhadharah activities, as a form of habituation of noble morals within the school environment, consistently contribute to the development of students' religious character. Through these activities, students not only understand religious teachings theoretically but are also able to internalize religious values in their daily lives. These findings indicate that religious character formation is strongly influenced by environmental conditioning, habituation processes, institutional culture, and the consistency of religious mentoring programs. Theoretically, this study is grounded in three major perspectives. First, Bandura's social learning theory explains that individuals develop behaviour through observation and imitation of role models within their social environment (Bandura, 1986). In the context of Ma'had Al-Jami'ah, *musyrif/musyrifah* function as central agents of modelling religious behaviour. Second, habit formation theory argues that repeated practices performed in stable contexts gradually become internalized into permanent behavioural patterns (Wood & Neal, 2007; Lally et al., 2010). Therefore, activities such as congregational prayer, Quran recitation, and daily worship routines within the boarding system function as mechanisms for religious habituation. Third, the Islamic *tarbiyah* perspective views education as a holistic process integrating spiritual, moral, and social dimensions to shape Muslim personality and character development (Al-Attas, 1993).

Several previous studies have examined religious character education in Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities. Miftahuddin et al. (2024) identified that character education in *pesantren* is effectively implemented through religious habituation and disciplinary culture. Desfita et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of religiosity and mentoring in strengthening students' moral values. Meanwhile, Hidayat and Hidayat (2023) found that boarding school management contributes significantly to strengthening students' discipline through continuous supervision and consistent enforcement of rules. However, previous studies still show several limitations. First, most studies focus only on specific aspects such as religious activities, discipline, or mentoring, without comprehensively analysing how planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation interact as an integrated character education management system. Second, limited research specifically examines the role of *Ma'had* within Islamic higher education institutions as a residential ecosystem that combines institutional culture, role modelling, habituation, and behavioural evaluation simultaneously. Third, prior studies rarely explore how structured mentoring systems contribute to sustainable religious character formation among university students in contemporary digital contexts. Based on these gaps, this study offers a more comprehensive analysis of religious character development at Ma'had Al-Jami'ah UIN Palangka Raya by examining the integration between religious habituation programs, mentor role modelling, supervision mechanisms, and behavioural evaluation within a boarding-based educational ecosystem. Unlike previous studies that primarily discuss religious activities descriptively, this study positions character development as a systematic institutional process involving educational management, social interaction, and environmental conditioning. Therefore, the novelty of this research lies in the development of an integrated framework of boarding-system-based religious character education in Islamic higher education institutions. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) How is religious character development implemented at Ma'had Al-Jami'ah UIN Palangka Raya? (2) What character values are developed through the boarding system? and (3) What supporting and inhibiting factors influence the implementation of religious character development within the *ma'had* environment? This study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of religious character education discourse in Islamic higher education and practically to the improvement of boarding-based character development management.

## 2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of religious character development at Ma'had Al-Jami'ah UIN Palangka Raya within its natural social context. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to explore meanings, social processes, experiences, and interactions holistically in real-life settings (Creswell, 2014). The case study design was considered appropriate because the research focused on a single institution with unique characteristics in implementing boarding-based religious character education (Yin, 2018). The study was conducted at Ma'had Al-Jami'ah UIN Palangka Raya, a boarding-based institution under the State Islamic University of Palangka Raya. The research was carried out over four months, from February to May 2026. Data collection was conducted intensively during this period through direct interaction with participants and observations of students' daily activities within the *ma'had* environment. The informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement, experience, and relevance to the implementation of religious character development programs (Patton, 2015). A total of 12 informants participated in this study, consisting of *Ma'had* administrators, *musyrif/musyrifah*, *ustadz/ustadzah*, and resident students.

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Informants

No	Informant Category	Number	Main Characteristics
1	Ma'had Administrators	2	Responsible for policy-making and program management
2	Musyrif/Musyrifah	4	Direct mentors supervising students' daily activities
3	Ustadz/Ustadzah	2	Religious instructors involved in spiritual guidance
4	Students	4	Resident students participating in all character-building activities
Total		12	

Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participant observation was conducted to observe students' religious activities, discipline practices, social interactions, and mentoring processes within the dormitory environment (Spradley, 1980). In-depth interviews aimed to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and understanding regarding the internalization of religious character values (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Documentation techniques were used to collect supporting data such as activity schedules, institutional regulations, attendance records, and archives related to character development programs. Data analysis employed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. After data collection, the researcher conducted a coding process in several stages. First, open coding was applied to identify important statements and categorize initial findings from interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation. Second, axial coding was conducted to connect categories and identify relationships among themes related to habituation, role modelling, supervision, discipline, and religious activities. Third, selective coding was used to formulate major themes and construct an integrated understanding of religious character development within the *ma'had* environment. Thematic analysis was then carried out by interpreting patterns, similarities, and differences among participants' experiences. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied source triangulation and methodological triangulation (Denzin, 2017). Triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from administrators, mentors, instructors, and students, as well as cross-checking data gathered through observation, interviews, and documentation. In addition, member checking was conducted with several participants to confirm the accuracy of the interpreted findings.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### RESULTS

#### Implementation of Religious Character Development at Ma'had Al-Jami'ah UIN Palangka Raya

Research findings indicate that the implementation of religious character development at Ma'had Al-Jami'ah UIN Palangka Raya is carried out systematically through various scheduled religious activities integrated into students' daily lives. The programs include five daily congregational prayers, Quran recitation, Islamic studies, worship habituation, the use of formal language, discipline monitoring, and the exemplary conduct of *musyrif/musyrifah* and *ustadz/ustadzah*. These activities form part of the dormitory education system that continuously reinforces students' religious behaviour and discipline. Based on an interview with the Musyrif of Ma'had Al-Jami'ah on May 12, 2026, all mentoring activities were intentionally structured to cultivate religious habits among students. He stated: *"Every activity at the ma'had has a clear schedule, from waking up in the morning until nightfall. The students are trained to participate in activities with discipline so that a sense of responsibility and religious habits are formed."* This finding demonstrates that structured daily activities serve not merely as routines but as mechanisms for shaping discipline and religious awareness among students. Similarly, one student interviewed on May 14, 2026, explained the behavioural changes experienced after participating in the ma'had programs: *"Before living at the ma'had, I rarely participated in congregational prayers. Since living here, I've gotten into the habit of praying on time, joining the Quran recitation sessions, and being more active in religious activities."* The statement indicates that continuous exposure to religious activities within the boarding-school environment contributes significantly to the formation of sustainable worship habits and religious discipline. Another musyrif interviewed on May 15, 2026, emphasized the importance of role modelling in the implementation of character education: *"It is not enough to simply provide students with material or advice. What is most important is habit formation and real-life examples from the mentors because students are more likely to imitate the behaviour they see every day."* This finding confirms that character development in the ma'had environment relies heavily on direct interaction and behavioural examples demonstrated by mentors.

Figure 1. The Process of Fostering Religious Character Among Senior Students at Ma'had Al-Jami'ah, UIN Palangka Raya

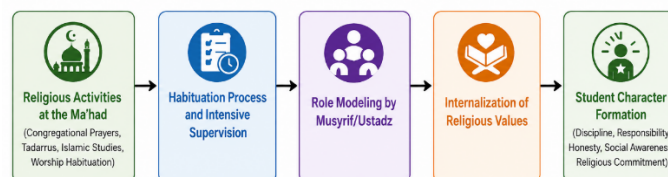


Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual process of religious character development at Ma'had Al-Jami'ah. The model explains that character formation begins with structured religious activities such as congregational prayers, Islamic studies, and worship habituation. These activities are strengthened through intensive supervision and habituation processes that ensure students consistently participate in religious practices. The next stage involves the exemplary conduct of *musyrif/musyrifah* and *ustadz/ustadzah*, whose behaviour serves as a social model for students. Through continuous interaction, supervision, and repeated religious practices, students gradually internalize religious values such as discipline, honesty, responsibility, social awareness, and devotion to worship. Thus, Figure 1 demonstrates that religious character formation at the *ma'had* operates as an integrated ecosystem combining habituation, supervision, role modelling, and environmental conditioning within the boarding-school system.

### **Character Values Fostered**

Based on observations and interview findings, religious character development at Ma'had Al-Jami'ah fosters several important character values, including discipline, responsibility, honesty, politeness, social awareness, devotion to worship, and communication skills through the use of formal language. These values are gradually developed through continuous habituation embedded within students' daily dormitory life. The findings indicate that discipline and responsibility are among the most dominant values developed through the boarding-school system. Daily schedules, collective worship, dormitory regulations, and routine supervision encourage students to manage their time responsibly and participate actively in every activity. One student interviewed on May 16, 2026, explained: *"At the ma'had, we are accustomed to waking up early, participating in activities on time, keeping our rooms clean, and following the rules. Over time, these become habits."* This statement demonstrates that repeated daily activities contribute significantly to the formation of disciplined behaviour and personal responsibility. Habituation processes carried out consistently within the *ma'had* environment gradually transform externally enforced rules into students' internal awareness and personal habits. In addition to discipline, the *ma'had* environment also strengthens students' social awareness and sense of togetherness.

Collective activities and shared dormitory life encourage students to care for and remind one another regarding religious obligations and dormitory responsibilities. Another student explained: *"If a friend doesn't participate in an activity, we usually remind each other. So, that sense of care and togetherness is more pronounced in the ma'had environment."* This finding indicates that the boarding-school environment not only develops individual religiosity but also strengthens collective social responsibility and solidarity among students. Intensive social interaction within the dormitory creates a communal culture where students mutually support each other in maintaining discipline and religious commitment. Furthermore, interviews with one of the *musyrifah* on May 17, 2026, revealed that character formation is achieved through continuous practice and repetition rather than instant instruction. She stated: *"Character cannot be formed instantly. Students must be trained to do good things every day until they eventually become a part of who they are."* This statement emphasizes that character development within the *ma'had* relies heavily on the process of habituation. Repeated exposure to religious practices, discipline, and positive social interaction gradually internalizes moral values into students' daily behaviour and personality. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the boarding-based educational environment at Ma'had Al-Jami'ah functions as a social and spiritual ecosystem that systematically cultivates students' religious character through discipline, collective responsibility, social interaction, and continuous habituation.

### **The Process of Character Value Internalization**

Research findings indicate that the process of internalizing religious character values at Ma'had Al-Jami'ah UIN Palangka Raya is carried out through several interconnected mechanisms, including the habituation of religious activities, mentor role modelling, persuasive guidance, behavioural supervision, and the consistent enforcement of rules and sanctions. These mechanisms operate simultaneously within the boarding-school environment and contribute to strengthening students' religious awareness and moral discipline. The findings reveal that habituation plays a central role in the internalization process. Daily religious activities such as congregational prayers, Quran recitation, Islamic studies, and dormitory discipline are continuously repeated so that students gradually internalize religious values into their daily behaviour. The religious atmosphere of the *ma'had* also creates an environment that supports the consistent practice of positive behaviour. Based on interviews with the administration of Ma'had Al-Jami'ah on May 18, 2026, the internalization process is implemented through a persuasive and continuous mentoring approach. One administrator explained: *"We do not merely impose rules, but also guide the*

*students so that they understand the purpose of every activity undertaken.*” This statement demonstrates that the process of character formation within the *ma’had* is not solely based on formal regulations or punishment, but also emphasizes students’ understanding and awareness of the moral values behind every activity. Guidance and mentoring are conducted continuously to ensure that students develop intrinsic motivation in practicing religious behaviour. In addition, the exemplary conduct of *musyrif/musyrifah* and *ustadz/ustadzah* was found to significantly influence students’ behaviour. One student stated: *“The supervisors and teachers often set a direct example in daily life. That makes us feel ashamed if we break the rules.”* This finding confirms that role modelling functions as an important mechanism in the transmission of religious values.

Students tend to imitate the attitudes, discipline, and religious behaviour demonstrated by mentors because they interact directly with them in everyday dormitory life. Thus, mentors function not only as supervisors but also as moral role models within the character-building process. Furthermore, interviews with *ma’had* mentors revealed that the enforcement of rules and sanctions is implemented consistently to strengthen students’ discipline and responsibility. One mentor explained: *“If someone breaks the rules, they are usually given a warning or a light punishment so they learn their lesson and do not repeat the same mistake.”* The consistent implementation of rules contributes to the creation of behavioural control and reinforces students’ awareness of discipline. However, sanctions are applied educatively rather than punitively, aiming to guide students toward behavioural improvement and self-awareness. Overall, the findings indicate that the process of internalizing religious character values at *Ma’had Al-Jami’ah* operates through an integrated system combining habituation, supervision, persuasive mentoring, role modelling, and environmental conditioning. This integrated process enables religious values to become embedded not only at the cognitive level but also within students’ daily behaviour and social interactions.

### **Supporting and Hindering Factors**

The research findings indicate that the implementation of religious character development at *Ma’had Al-Jami’ah UIN Palangka Raya* is influenced by several supporting and inhibiting factors. Supporting factors include a religious and conducive dormitory environment, structured development programs, active involvement of mentors, and the existence of continuous monitoring and evaluation systems. These factors create an educational atmosphere that supports the internalization of religious values and the development of students’ discipline and moral awareness. Based on an interview with one of the *ma’had* mentors on May 19, 2026, the dormitory environment was considered highly supportive of the character development process. The mentor explained: *“Since students live together in one environment, the mentoring process is easier to carry out and supervision is also maximized.”* This finding demonstrates that the boarding-school system facilitates intensive interaction between mentors and students, enabling continuous supervision and more effective character guidance. The dormitory environment allows religious values to be reinforced consistently through daily interaction and collective activities. In addition, students acknowledged that the religious atmosphere within the *ma’had* positively influences their motivation to participate in religious activities. One student stated: *“When we see our friends diligently going to the mosque and actively participating in activities, we also get inspired to join in.”* This statement indicates that peer influence and collective religious culture play an important role in strengthening students’ motivation and participation in religious practices. The social environment within the *ma’had* encourages students to maintain positive behaviour collectively. However, several inhibiting factors were also identified. Interviews with students revealed that many new students initially experienced difficulties adapting to the strict rules and intensive schedules implemented within the *ma’had* environment. One student explained: *“It was quite difficult at first because the schedule was so packed and the rules at the ma’had were quite strict,*

*but eventually we got used to it.*” This finding shows that the transition from external environments to a highly disciplined boarding-school system requires an adjustment process for students. Adaptation challenges may affect students’ motivation and participation during the early stages of the program.

Furthermore, the influence of the external environment was identified as another major obstacle in the character development process. One *ma’had* supervisor stated: *“When students are outside the ma’had environment, supervision is reduced, so sometimes there is behaviour that is inconsistent with the guidance that has been provided.”* This finding suggests that maintaining behavioural consistency outside the supervised dormitory environment remains a challenge in religious character development. External social influences and limited supervision beyond the *ma’had* environment may weaken the sustainability of values that have been internalized within the boarding-school system. Overall, the findings indicate that the success of religious character development at Ma’had Al-Jami’ah is strongly supported by environmental conditioning, structured mentoring, and collective religious culture. Nevertheless, adaptation difficulties and external influences remain important challenges that require continuous evaluation and strengthening of mentoring strategies within the boarding-school education system. To enhance analytical clarity and facilitate the interpretation of the findings, the results of this study are categorized into four major themes derived from the coding and thematic analysis process. These themes include: (1) the implementation of religious character development programs, (2) the character values fostered, (3) the process of internalizing religious values, and (4) the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing the implementation of character development at Ma’had Al-Jami’ah UIN Palangka Raya. The summary of the main research findings is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Summary of Main Research Findings

Theme	Main Findings	Evidence from Interviews
Implementation of Religious Character Development	Religious character development is implemented through structured religious activities integrated into dormitory life.	Congregational prayers, Quran recitation, Islamic studies, discipline monitoring, and mentor supervision.
Character Values Fostered	Students develop discipline, responsibility, honesty, politeness, social awareness, and devotion to worship.	Students become more disciplined, responsible, and socially concerned through habituation.
Internalization of Religious Values	Religious values are internalized through habituation, role modelling, supervision, and persuasive guidance.	Students imitate mentors’ behaviour and gradually internalize religious discipline.
Supporting and Hindering Factors	Religious environment and structured mentoring support character development, while adaptation difficulties and external influences become obstacles.	Students initially struggle with strict schedules, adaptation to dormitory regulations, and external social influences.

Overall, the findings of this study can be categorized into four major themes: the implementation of religious character development programs, the character values fostered, the process of internalizing religious values, and the supporting as well as inhibiting factors. Religious character development at Ma’had Al-Jami’ah UIN Palangka Raya is implemented systematically through structured religious activities integrated into students’ dormitory life, including congregational prayers, Quran recitation, Islamic studies, discipline monitoring, and mentor supervision. These activities contribute to the formation of discipline, responsibility, honesty, politeness, social awareness, and devotion to worship among students. The findings further indicate that the internalization of religious values occurs through continuous habituation, role modelling, supervision, and persuasive guidance provided by *musyrif/musyrifah* and *ustadz/ustadzah*. Students gradually internalize religious discipline by imitating mentors’ behaviour and participating consistently in religious activities within the *ma’had* environment. In addition, a conducive religious atmosphere and structured mentoring programs were found to support the effectiveness of

character development, while adaptation difficulties, low motivation, academic workload, and external environmental influences emerged as the main inhibiting factors in the implementation process.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that religious character development at Ma'had Al-Jami'ah UIN Palangka Raya is implemented through the regular practice of religious activities, disciplinary supervision, the exemplary conduct of mentors, and intensive social interaction within the dormitory environment. These findings demonstrate that the formation of religious character is not merely achieved through the transfer of religious knowledge, but through a continuous process of habituation and value internalization integrated into students' daily lives (Lickona, 2018; Wibowo & Hakim, 2023). The findings further confirm that boarding-based educational environments provide an effective ecosystem for strengthening students' religious awareness, discipline, and moral behavior through continuous interaction and supervision (Abqoriy et al., 2023; Shiddiq et al., 2024).

The model demonstrates that character formation occurs through the interaction of four major components: religious habituation, mentor role modelling, disciplinary supervision, and environmental conditioning. Religious activities such as congregational prayers, Quran recitation, Islamic studies, and worship habituation function as mechanisms for reinforcing religious behaviour through continuous repetition. Simultaneously, *musyrif/musyrifah* and *ustadz/ustadzah* act as social role models whose behaviour is directly observed and imitated by students. The boarding-school environment further strengthens this process through intensive supervision, collective discipline, and social interaction, which gradually internalize religious values into students' daily behaviour and personality. Therefore, the conceptual model presented in this study positions the *ma'had* not merely as a dormitory, but as an integrated ecosystem of religious character formation. The findings of this study are consistent with Miftahuddin et al. (2024), who explain that Islamic boarding schools effectively strengthen character through the integration of religious activities, discipline, and role modeling within dormitory life. Similarly, Rozikin and Astutik (2021) found that Islamic boarding schools function as environments that shape students' moral and religious behavior through collective religious culture. In addition, Khasanah et al. (2025) emphasized the importance of developing Islamic Education (PAI) teachers' social competencies in creating a conducive educational environment and supporting the formation of positive character among students. These findings reinforce the argument that character education is strongly influenced not only by religious habituation and institutional culture, but also by the quality of social interaction and educators' interpersonal competencies within the educational environment.

In addition, this study identifies a distinctive characteristic of religious character development at Ma'had Al-Jami'ah UIN Palangka Raya. Unlike traditional *pesantren*, the *ma'had* operates within an Islamic higher education institution where students simultaneously face academic responsibilities, social adaptation, and religious mentoring. This condition creates a unique character-building process in which religious habituation must coexist with academic demands and modern university life. Aziz et al. (2023) explain that integrated Islamic curricula within boarding systems can strengthen students' religious character when supported by consistent mentoring and institutional culture. The present study reinforces this argument by demonstrating that the integration between university academic life and boarding-based mentoring creates a more dynamic and adaptive character education model for university students. The implementation of congregational prayer, Quran recitation, Islamic studies, and worship habituation in this study reflects the process of character formation through repeated religious behaviour. According to habit

formation theory, behaviours consistently practiced within stable environments gradually become automatic behavioural patterns and eventually form part of an individual's character (Wood & Neal, 2007; Lally et al., 2010). This process is reflected in students' behavioural transformation, where students who were previously less active in worship became more disciplined and religiously committed after living within the *ma'had* environment. These findings support Komalasari & Yakubu (2023) and Muhammad et al. (2022), who found that religious habituation significantly contributes to strengthening students' religious discipline and moral awareness.

The findings also support Desfita et al. (2023), who found that religiosity functions as the primary foundation for character education in Islamic boarding schools through habituation, role modelling, and spiritual guidance. However, the present study extends previous findings by demonstrating that religious character development within higher education-based *ma'had* systems involves not only spiritual guidance but also adaptation to academic pressures and external social influences. Thus, religious character development at Ma'had Al-Jami'ah reflects a more complex and multidimensional process compared to traditional boarding-school contexts. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the role modelling of *musyriif/musyriifah* and *ustadz/ustadzah* significantly influences the internalization of religious character values. Students tend to imitate the behaviour directly observed from their mentors. This finding strongly aligns with Bandura's (1986) social learning theory, which explains that individuals learn behaviours through observation, imitation, and modelling within social environments. In the context of the *ma'had*, mentors function not only as supervisors but also as moral agents who shape students' religious awareness through direct interaction and exemplary conduct. This finding is also supported by Abdullah and Rahman (2023), who emphasize that religious environments and exemplary figures significantly influence students' moral and behavioral development. This study also demonstrates that a conducive religious environment is one of the key factors supporting successful character development. Boarding-school life facilitates social control, intensive supervision, collective discipline, and continuous religious interaction that strengthen value internalization. These findings support Hasanah et al. (2024), who explain that character education in boarding schools becomes effective when supported by synergy between curriculum, dormitory culture, and daily mentoring. Likewise, Hidayat and Hidayat (2023) found that continuous supervision and consistent rule enforcement contribute significantly to strengthening students' discipline. However, this study further demonstrates that the effectiveness of religious character formation at Ma'had Al-Jami'ah emerges from the integration between formal academic systems and non-formal religious conditioning, thereby creating a holistic educational environment that continuously reinforces moral behaviour.

On the other hand, this study identified several inhibiting factors in implementing religious character development, including adaptation difficulties among new students, low motivation among some students, heavy academic workloads, and external environmental influences. These findings support Mardiah et al. (2024), who explain that religious character education in Islamic boarding schools often faces challenges related to adaptation processes, social environmental influences, and consistency in program implementation. Nevertheless, this study adds a new perspective by showing that university-based boarding systems face additional challenges due to students' dual responsibilities as university students and dormitory residents. Furthermore, close peer relationships within the *ma'had* environment contribute positively to students' emotional and moral development. Through supportive friendships, students feel more comfortable and confident in expressing their feelings, anxieties, and personal challenges. Such interpersonal interactions create a supportive social environment in which students can openly discuss moral dilemmas, religious understanding, and challenges in practicing Islamic values in everyday life (Husniah et al., 2025). This finding indicates that peer interaction within the boarding-school environment also plays a significant role in strengthening the internalization of religious values and students'

psychological adaptation processes. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of religious character education theory by reinforcing the concept that religious character formation is a multidimensional process integrating habituation, role modelling, supervision, environmental conditioning, and social interaction. This study confirms that effective religious character education cannot rely solely on cognitive learning approaches, but requires a holistic educational ecosystem where values are continuously practiced, supervised, and socially reinforced in students' daily lives (Mujib & Mudzakir, 2019; Zubaedi, 2020). In this regard, the *ma'had* model represents an integrated character education system combining spiritual, disciplinary, moral, and social dimensions simultaneously. Practically, the findings suggest that dormitory-based mentoring systems can serve as strategic alternatives for strengthening character education within Islamic universities. Structured mentoring, intensive supervision, religious habituation, and exemplary conduct have proven effective in shaping students to become more religious, disciplined, and socially responsible. Therefore, administrators of Ma'had Al-Jami'ah should continue strengthening adaptive mentoring programs capable of responding to students' developmental needs and contemporary social challenges in the digital era (Komalasari & Yakubu, 2023; Muhammad et al., 2022).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the implementation of religious character development at Ma'had Al-Jami'ah UIN Palangka Raya is systematically carried out through structured religious programs and the habituation of religious practices in students' daily lives. The development process is implemented through congregational prayer, Quran recitation, Islamic studies, worship habituation, discipline monitoring, and the exemplary behaviour demonstrated by *musyrif/musyrifah* and *ustadz/ustadzah* within the dormitory environment. These activities contribute to the formation of religious character values such as discipline, responsibility, honesty, politeness, social awareness, devotion to worship, and communication skills. The findings indicate that the internalization of religious values is strengthened through continuous habituation, intensive supervision, persuasive mentoring, and the creation of a conducive religious environment. The boarding-based educational system enables students to experience continuous social interaction and direct guidance, thereby supporting the development of sustainable religious behaviour and moral discipline. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of boarding-system-based religious character education by emphasizing the integration of habituation, role modelling, supervision, and behavioural evaluation as a holistic character-building ecosystem within Islamic higher education institutions.

This study also reinforces social learning theory and habit formation theory in the context of religious character development in *ma'had* or *pesantren*-based university environments. However, this study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted only at one *ma'had* within a single Islamic university, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other institutional contexts. Second, the study focused primarily on qualitative exploration without measuring the long-term effectiveness of character development quantitatively. Third, the duration of the research was relatively limited, so changes in students' character over a longer period could not be comprehensively observed. Therefore, future studies are recommended to conduct comparative research involving multiple *ma'had* or *pesantren*-based universities in different regions. Further research may also integrate qualitative and quantitative approaches to measure the effectiveness of religious character programs more comprehensively. In addition, longitudinal studies are needed to examine the sustainability of character formation and the influence of digital-era challenges on students' religious behavior within boarding-based Islamic higher education environments.

## 5. REFERENCES

- Abdullah, M., & Rahman, F. (2023). Religious environment and exemplary leadership in strengthening students' moral development at Islamic educational institutions. *Journal of Islamic Educational Studies*, 11(2), 145–160. <https://doi.org/10.1234/jies.v11i2.2023>
- Abqoriy, M., Hasanah, U., & Fathurrahman, M. (2023). Boarding-based school program: Innovative approaches to nourishing religious character values. *Edureligia: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 7(2), 145–158. <https://ejournal.unuja.ac.id/index.php/edureligia/article/view/6674>
- Al-Attas, S. M. N. (1993). *Islam and secularism*. International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC).
- Aziz, A., Fauzi, M., & Ridwan, A. (2023). Islamic integrated curriculum model to strengthen santri's religious character. *Cendekia: Jurnal Kependidikan dan Kemasyarakatan*, 21(1), 65–80. <https://jurnal.iainponorogo.ac.id/index.php/cendekia/article/view/6082>
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice-Hall.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Denzin, N. K. (2017). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. Routledge.
- Desfita, V., Lubis, R., & Rusman. (2023). Religiosity as the main pillar of character education in Islamic boarding school. *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 12(3), 411–425. <https://jurnal.staialhidayahbogor.ac.id/index.php/ei/article/view/8329>
- Hasanah, U., Karim, A., & Ridwan, M. (2024). Boarding school culture and character education management in Islamic higher education institutions. *Journal of Islamic Education Management*, 9(1), 55–72. <https://doi.org/10.5678/jiem.v9i1.2024>
- Hidayat, W., & Hidayat, N. (2023). Islamic boarding school management in strengthening students' discipline character. *Heutagogia: Journal of Islamic Education*, 3(1), 55–70. <https://ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id/tarbiyah/HJIE/article/view/8111>
- Husniah, L., Hamdanah, H., & Surawan, S. (2025). Development of students' religious character through intimate friendship. *Cetta: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 8(2), 112–125. <https://doi.org/10.37329/cetta.v8i2.4052>
- Khasanah, K. N., Surawan, S., & Hasanah3, M. (2025). Developing Teachers' Social Skills in Improving Student Character Building: A Case Study of SMA Pembangunan in Barito Utara. *Proceeding International Conference on Religion, Science and Education*, 4, 507–513. Retrieved from <https://sunankalijaga.org/prosiding/index.php/icrse/article/view/1485>
- Komalasari, M., & Yakubu, A. B. (2023). Implementation of student character formation through Islamic religious education. *At-Tadzkir: Islamic Education Journal*, 2(1), 52–64. <https://doi.org/10.59373/attadzkir.v2i1.16>
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2015). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Lally, P., van Jaarsveld, C. H. M., Potts, H. W. W., & Wardle, J. (2010). How are habits formed: Modelling habit formation in the real world. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 40(6), 998–1009. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.674>
- Lickona, T. (2018). *Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility*. Bantam Books.
- Mardiah, S., Achadi, M. W., & Al Awwaby, M. (2024). Religious character education using a compassion approach in Islamic boarding schools. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 9(1), 23–37. <https://journal.stitmadani.ac.id/index.php/JPI/article/view/747>
- Miftahuddin, M., Aman, A., & Yuliantri, R. D. A. (2024). Islamic character education model: An in-depth analysis for Islamic boarding school. *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendidikan*, 43(1), 101–115. <https://jurnal.uny.ac.id/index.php/cp/article/view/66516>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

- Muhammad, G., Rahman, A., & Syukur, M. (2022). Implementasi pendidikan karakter religius dalam menghadapi era globalisasi. *Ulumuddin: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman*, 12(2), 177–189. [https://jurnal.ucy.ac.id/index.php/agama\\_islam/article/view/1003](https://jurnal.ucy.ac.id/index.php/agama_islam/article/view/1003)
- Mujib, A., & Mudzakkir, J. (2019). *Ilmu pendidikan Islam*. Kencana.
- Noormila, C., Muslimah, M., & Surawan, S. (2025). Exploring building religious character through religious activities for students at MTs Muslimat NU Palangka Raya. *Intiqad: Jurnal Agama dan Pendidikan Islam*, 17(2), 528-550. <https://doi.org/10.30596/26597>
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Rozikin, M., & Astutik, S. (2021). Implementation of character education in Islamic boarding schools. *Academia Open*, 5, 1–10. <https://acopen.umsida.ac.id/index.php/acopen/article/view/2544>
- Shiddiq, A., Ulfatin, N., Imron, A., & Imron, A. (2024). Developing student character education through Islamic boarding school culture in Islamic elementary schools. *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 16(2), 2276-2288. doi:<https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v16i2.5260>
- Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Wood, W., & Neal, D. T. (2007). A new look at habits and the habit–goal interface. *Psychological Review*, 114(4), 843–863. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.114.4.843>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Zubaedi. (2020). *Desain pendidikan karakter: Konsepsi dan aplikasinya dalam lembaga pendidikan*. Kencana.