



The Implementation of Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji's Thoughts on the Morals of Students at the Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Padang

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of moral values among Islamic boarding school students based on the thoughts of Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji as described in the book 'Ta'lim al-Muta'allim at the Darul 'Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Padang. The type of research used is field research with a descriptive qualitative approach. Data was obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation, which were then analyzed in depth to describe the application of moral values in the lives of santri. The results of the study show that the process of moral character building at the Darul 'Ulum Islamic Boarding School has been going well and reflects the main values in 'Ta'lim al-Muta'allim, such as respect for teachers, politeness, discipline, and manners towards knowledge and others. The main supporting factors for this success include the exemplary behavior of the teachers, the role of senior students, and a conducive and religious boarding school environment. However, the process of moral development still faces several obstacles, such as a lack of dormitory supervisors, limited facilities and infrastructure, and the influence of outside cultures that cannot be completely avoided. This study concludes that the character building of students at the Darul 'Ulum Islamic Boarding School has shown positive results, but needs to be strengthened in terms of guidance and supervision so that moral values are not only understood conceptually, but are truly internalized in the behavior and character of the students.

Keywords: The Morals of Santri, Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji, 'Ta'lim al-Muta'allim, and Darul 'Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Padang City

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education aims not only to develop intellectually intelligent individuals, but also those with noble character and high moral standards.(Edriagus Saputra dan Syamsurizal, 2021; Idhar, 2024; Kusmardiningsih, 2023) In Islamic scholarly tradition, morals are the main foundation for successful education and social life. The Prophet Muhammad emphasized in his saying, “Verily, I was sent to perfect noble morals.” Thus, moral education is not merely a supplement but the core of the entire Islamic educational process. Moral values reflect the quality of a person in their interactions with Allah, fellow human beings, and their surroundings. In this context, Islamic boarding schools play a strategic role in instilling moral and spiritual values in the younger generation so that they are able to face the challenges of the times without losing their Islamic identity.

Pesantren education is one of the oldest Islamic education systems in Indonesia, playing an important role in shaping the character, morals, and spirituality of the younger generation. (Sabiq, 2022; Wiranata, 2019) Amidst the rapid pace of modernization and globalization, Islamic boarding schools remain educational institutions that consistently instill Islamic values, noble character, and independence in their students.(Mediawati, 2023; Ramadhani et al., 2025) In addition, Islamic boarding schools are one of the important pillars in the Islamic education system in Indonesia, which play a major role in shaping the character, morals, and spirituality of the younger generation.(Silfiyasari & Zhafi, 2020; Yusuf et al., 2023) Amidst the rapid pace of modernization and globalization, which often erodes moral values, Islamic boarding schools serve as educational institutions that emphasize not only cognitive aspects but also the moral and ethical development of their students. (Cacang et al., 2025; Syafei, 2025) Pesantren are learning spaces that comprehensively instill Islamic values through an educational process based on exemplary behavior, discipline, and close relationships between teachers and students. (Husna & Hamid, 2025) In this context, morals occupy a central position as the main objective of Islamic education, as stated by the Prophet Muhammad SAW: “Verily, I was sent to perfect noble morals.”

One of the Islamic boarding schools that still maintains classical scholarly traditions and its unique learning system is Pondok Pesantren Darul Ulum Padang, located in Air Pacah Village, Koto Tangah District, Padang City. Pondok Pesantren Darul Ulum, founded on August 21, 1991, by Abuya Tengku Haji Darmis Muar, is one of the Islamic boarding schools that still upholds the classical education tradition based on manners and morals. Abuya, a cleric from Kampung Palarik who had long preached in various regions, founded this pesantren with the noble goal of shaping a generation of Muslims who are knowledgeable, have noble character, and have social and spiritual responsibility towards religion, nation, and homeland. With the support of the surrounding community, this boarding school has grown into an educational institution that instills Islamic values comprehensively through a traditional education system rich in moral values.

One of the distinctive features of Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding School is the implementation of the halaqah system, a learning method in which the teacher reads, translates, and explains the meaning of the book, while the students sit in a circle with great respect. In this process, the

The interaction between the teacher and students takes place with great respect for knowledge. Traditions such as kissing the teacher's hand, not walking ahead of the teacher, and maintaining proper etiquette when carrying books are an integral part of the students' daily lives. These customs are not only a form of respect for the teacher, but also a tangible manifestation of the moral education taught in the book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* by Sheikh Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji.

The book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* plays an important role in the education system at the Darul Ulum Islamic boarding school. This book provides ethical and spiritual guidance for students on how to set intentions, respect teachers, and maintain good manners in seeking knowledge. Amidst the moral crisis that has hit modern education, the application of the values in this book is relevant and significant to study. Therefore, this study seeks to explore how the implementation of moral teachings based on the thoughts of Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji is applied in the lives of students at the Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding School, as well as the factors that support and hinder the formation of these morals in the context of traditional Islamic boarding school education.

Based on previous research relevant to the topic of discussion, the author conducted a search using the Dimensions website with the keyword “Pemikiran Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji” (The Thoughts of Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji). The search results found that:

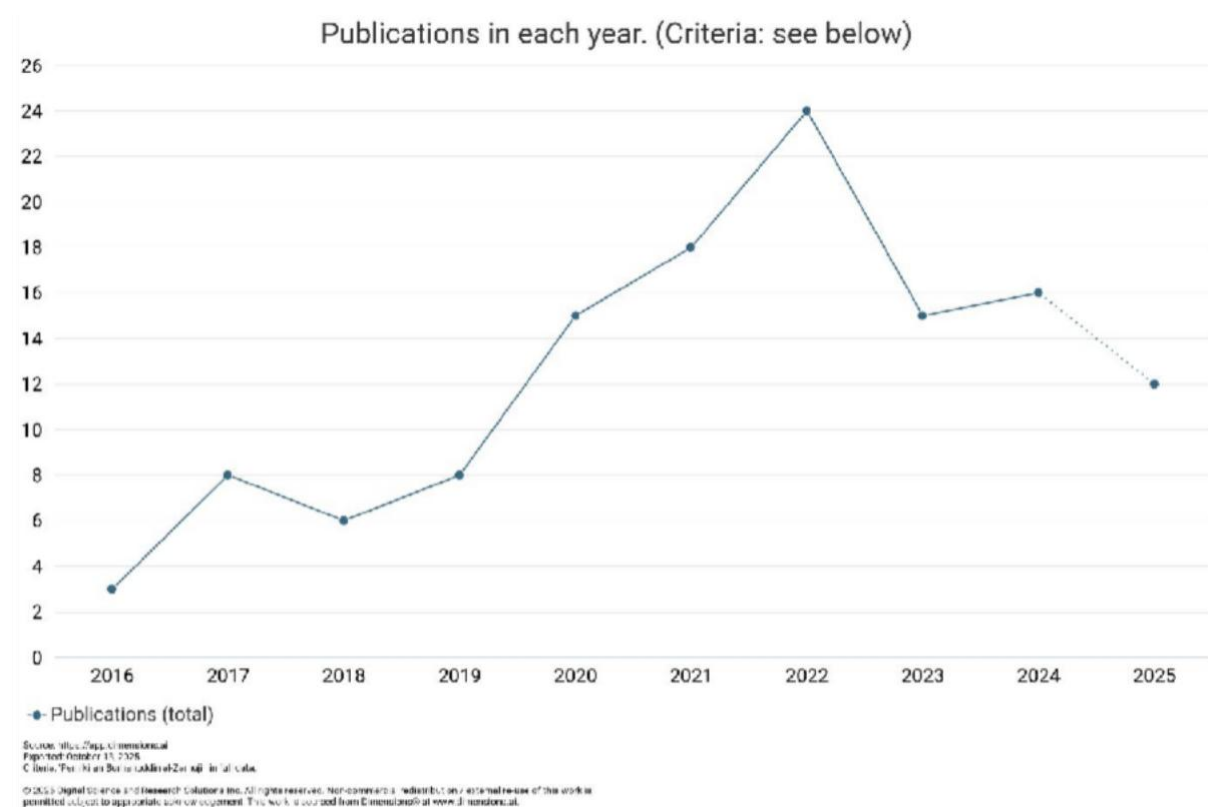


Figure 1. Article Search Results on the Dimensions Website

The graph above shows the development of the number of scientific publications containing the keyword “Pemikiran Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji” from 2016 to 2025. Based on data taken from Dimensions.ai on October 13, 2025, it can be seen that the publication trend fluctuated from year to year. At the beginning of the period, namely in 2016, the number of publications

was still relatively low, with only about three articles. Then there was a significant increase in 2017 with eight publications, although it declined slightly again in 2018 to six publications.

From 2019 to 2021, the graph shows a consistent upward trend. The year 2020 recorded 15 publications, followed by an increase in 2021 with 18 publications, and peaked in 2022 with 24 publications. This surge indicates the growing interest of researchers in Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji's thoughts, especially in the context of Islamic education and learning ethics, which are the main focus of his work, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*. However, after 2022, the number of publications declined again to 15 in 2023, and rose slightly to 16 in 2024. Meanwhile, in 2025 (up to October), the number of publications recorded a decrease to 12 articles, with a dotted line indicating provisional data or projections until the end of the year.

Overall, this graph illustrates that interest in the study of Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji's thought has continued to grow over the past decade, despite variations in the number of publications each year. The peak of research occurred in 2022, which was likely influenced by increased academic attention to the values of classical Islamic education in facing the challenges of modernization and the moral crisis in contemporary education. Based on these findings, the author used three articles as literature reviews to determine the gaps in the discussion of this article, is:

First, a study by Shilviana (2020) entitled “Imam al-Zarnuji's Thoughts on Education and Their Relevance to Modern Education” examines Imam Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji's ideas on education in the book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* and their relevance to today's education. This research was motivated by the decline in student morality, which indicates a crisis in the application of spiritual and ethical values in Islamic education. The author used library research with a reflective thinking approach to examine al-Zarnuji's thoughts philosophically. The results of the study show that al-Zarnuji's educational concept remains relevant to the modern education system. According to al-Zarnuji, the objectives of education focus on seeking Allah's pleasure, eradicating ignorance, and preserving Islamic teachings—in line with the 2003 National Education System Law, which emphasizes the formation of people who are faithful and have noble character. In terms of educators, al-Zarnuji emphasizes the importance of teachers who are knowledgeable, moral, and exemplary. Ideal students are described as civilized, disciplined, humble, patient, and love knowledge. According to him, the curriculum must include religious, spiritual, and general knowledge, which is structured in stages according to the students' abilities. Meanwhile, the teaching methods include memorization, note-taking, and discussion through scientific interactions such as *mudzakarah* and *munazharah*, which reflect active learning as in the current concept of student-centered learning.

Second, the study by Septri Larasati et al. (2023) entitled “The Relevance of Burhanuddin Az-Zarnuji's Main Ideas to Education Today” is a scientific study that discusses the relationship between the classical educational concepts put forward by Sheikh Burhanuddin Az-Zarnuji in the book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* and the modern education system. The author starts from a concern about the decline in ethics and morals among students in the current era, which indicates the need to re-instill values of manners and spirituality in the world of education. Through this study, the author attempts to explore Az-Zarnuji's ideas on learning ethics and

The role of morals in the process of seeking knowledge is so that they can be applied in the context of today's education.

This research uses content analysis by examining and analyzing the texts in the book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* in depth. Every sentence and chapter in the work is traced to find the educational values contained therein. The results of the analysis show that 13 main points of thought form the education system according to Az-Zarnuji, including the essence of knowledge, intention to learn, selection of knowledge and teachers, respect for knowledge, enthusiasm for learning, learning methods, trust, learning time, the importance of compassion and advice, manners in acquiring knowledge, piety, factors that facilitate memorization and cause forgetfulness, and things that affect sustenance and lifespan. All concepts are. The results of the study show that Az-Zarnuji's ideas are highly relevant to the modern education system, especially in terms of shaping the character and morality of students. The values promoted by Az-Zarnuji—such as sincere intentions, respect for teachers, discipline, and responsibility—are in line with the national education objectives in the 2003 National Education System Law, which emphasizes the development of people who are faithful, noble, and responsible. Furthermore, Az-Zarnuji's thoughts on the importance of knowledgeable and pious teachers are relevant to the concept of educator personality competence in modern education. In the context of students, teachings on manners, sincerity, and enthusiasm for learning reflect the importance of character education, which is now a national priority.

Third, the study by Choiriyah & Anam (2023) entitled “The Islamic Educational Thought of Imam Al-Zarnuji and Its Relevance to Modern Education” was published in the journal *Risalah: Journal of Education and Islamic Studies*, discussing Islamic educational thought developed by Imam Burhanuddin Al-Zarnuji in the book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* and its relevance to the modern education system. This paper is motivated by the fact that the development of science and technology often shifts moral and spiritual values in the world of education, thus requiring references from classical scholars' thoughts to strengthen the ethical foundations and religious values in today's education.

This research uses the library research method, which relies on literature as the material for study. The primary source of this research is the book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* by Imam Al-Zarnuji, while the secondary sources are books, journals, and other relevant scientific literature. Through this method, the author examines Al-Zarnuji's educational ideas using a content analysis approach to explore the philosophical, spiritual, and moral values in the Islamic learning process and compare them with modern educational concepts.

The results of the study show that Al-Zarnuji's thinking is still very relevant to the modern education system, especially in terms of shaping the character and morals of students. In terms of educational goals, Al-Zarnuji emphasized that the pursuit of knowledge must be based on the intention to seek Allah's pleasure, fight ignorance, and uphold religion. His concept of education emphasizes the importance of teachers who are knowledgeable, pious, and moral role models for students. Meanwhile, ideal students are described as humble, patient, diligent, and loving of knowledge. In terms of curriculum, Al-Zarnuji views religious and general knowledge as a complementary whole; both must be structured gradually according to the

Students' abilities. The recommended learning methods include memorization, note-taking, comprehension, and discussion, an approach that is in line with the principles of active learning in modern education.

The research problem in this study arises from the suboptimal internalization of moral values as taught by al-Zarnuji in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, particularly those related to manners, learning ethics, and student discipline within the pesantren environment. Therefore, this research aims to identify the extent to which al-Zarnuji's ideas have been implemented in the moral development of students, describe the forms of implementation carried out by the Islamic boarding school, and analyze their effectiveness in shaping the character and behavior of students at Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Padang.

RESEARCH METHODS

This type of research is field research, which is research conducted directly in the field to obtain factual data from the object being studied. This study aims to explore in depth the implementation of moral values among students based on the thoughts of Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji as applied at the Darul 'Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Padang. Through this approach, the researcher seeks to understand the phenomenon of moral education from the perspective of teachers and students in a contextual and natural manner in accordance with the actual conditions in the field.

The approach used is a descriptive qualitative approach, which is an approach that seeks to describe systematically, factually, and accurately the implementation of moral values in the lives of students. This method was chosen because it is suitable for exploring the values, meanings, and experiences of the research subjects in depth, as observed, heard, and analyzed by the researcher in the pesantren environment.

This research was conducted at the Darul 'Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Padang, located on Jalan Bandes, Air Pacah Village, Koto Tengah District, Padang City, West Sumatra. This location was chosen purposefully because the boarding school is the only one in Padang City that still maintains the tradition of teaching the classical book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* by Sheikh Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji as a compulsory subject in its educational curriculum. Both of these play an important role in shaping the character and morals of students, making them relevant as the focus of this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding School Padang is one of the private Islamic educational institutions committed to developing a scholarly tradition based on classical Islamic values. Currently, the boarding school is located at Jalan Pintu Angin RT 03/RW III, Lori, Padang City. Before occupying this location, the boarding school had moved several times. Initially, the boarding school was established in Palarik, but due to a land dispute that occurred about five years ago, the boarding school management decided to move the location to Jalan Bandes Tabek Batu, before finally settling at its current location in Lori.

As a private Islamic educational institution, Darul Ulum Padang Islamic Boarding School developed its own education system in accordance with the vision and mission formulated by its founder. About seven years ago, the main focus of this boarding school was entirely on the study

of classical Islamic texts, as a form of preserving the scientific traditions of classical Islamic boarding schools. At that time, the pesantren did not yet implement general subjects such as Natural Sciences (IPA), Social Sciences (IPS), or Mathematics. This situation posed a challenge for the santri, as they encountered difficulties when they wanted to continue their education at national universities that required mastery of general subjects.

However, in line with the times and the needs of society, Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Padang has begun to innovate its curriculum. Currently, general subjects have been integrated into the boarding school's learning system, although the main focus remains on the study of classical Islamic texts, which is its hallmark. This teaching pattern is evident in the division of the students' study time, where classical Islamic texts are studied from Monday to Thursday, while general subjects are scheduled for Saturday and Sunday. This combination of religious education and general knowledge is expected to produce a generation of students who are not only strong in religious understanding but also have academic abilities relevant to the demands of the modern world.

Getting to Know Sheikh Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji

The name Sheikh Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji is widely known in the world of Islamic boarding schools. Through his monumental work, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Thariqah al-Ta'allum*, he occupies an important position in the tradition of classical Islamic education. (Idris, 2024; Mahbubi, 2015) This book is even considered the main gateway to seeking knowledge, on par with *al-Jurumiyah* and *al-Amtsal al-Tashrifyyah* in the field of Arabic language, as well as *Taqrib* in the study of fiqh. This great scholar's full name is Sheikh Tajuddin Nu'man bin Ibrahim bin al-Khalil al-Zarnuji. (Fadlin & Siregar, 2024; Irawati & Musthafa, 2021) The title "Sheikh" indicates respect as a scholar, while "al-Zarnuji" refers to the name of his birthplace, Zarnuj. (Wahidin, 2021) Meanwhile, the name "Burhanuddin," which means proof of religious truth, describes his personality as a scientist committed to defending and strengthening Islamic teachings.

Information regarding the year of birth of Sheikh Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji is not widely known with certainty. Some sources state that he died in 591 AH/1195 AD, while others claim that he died in 640 AH/1242 AD or 840 AH/1243 AD. (Mahbubi, 2015; Wahidin, 2021) However, historians generally agree that al-Zarnuji lived during the late Abbasid dynasty, coinciding with the reign of Caliph al-Mu'tasim, who died in 1258 AD/656 AH. (Munawir, 2021) In a number of literature, including the book *Kajian dan Analisis Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* published by Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo, it is mentioned that al-Zarnuji was well acquainted with Persian literature and poetry and described many events from the Abbasid era in his work. This reinforces the assumption that he settled in the Iraq-Iran region, an area that was the center of Islamic civilization and scientific activity at that time.

Sheikh Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji's intellectual journey began in Bukhara and Samarkand, two major cities that were known as centers of Islamic scholarship at that time. (Imron, 2008; Mawardi et al., 2021) It was here that he studied at mosques that also functioned as educational institutions. (Syarif, 2015) One of his most influential teachers was Burhanuddin al-Marghinani, a great scholar of the Hanafi school of thought and author of the book *al-Hidayah fi Furu' al-Fiqh*, which became an important reference in Islamic law. In addition to al-Marghinani, al-Zarnuji also studied under Nizamuddin bin Burhanuddin al-Marghinani, a student of Syamsuddin Abdul

Wadji Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Abdussatar al-Amidi. (Rifa'i, 2022) In his biography, several other prominent figures were his teachers, including Burhanuddin Ali bin Abu Bakar al-Marghinani (d. 593 AH/1197 AD), Ruknul Islam Muhammad bin Abu Bakar (d. 573 AH/1177 AD), Sheikh Hammad bin Ibrahim (d. 576 AH/1180 AD), Sheikh Fakhruddin al-Kasyani (d. 587 AH/1191 AD), and Sheikh Fakhruddin Qadhi Khan al-Auzjandi. The diversity of the teachers' academic backgrounds shaped al-Zarnuji's broad knowledge and intellectual depth, which was later reflected in his great work.

The book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* is one of Sheikh Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji's monumental works, which to this day remains an important reference in the world of Islamic education, especially in Islamic boarding schools. (Misbachudin, 2021) This book contains guidelines for students on how they should behave and interact in the process of seeking knowledge in order to obtain blessings and benefits from the knowledge they learn. Sheikh al-Zarnuji wrote this book out of concern for students who, at that time, sought knowledge without paying attention to proper manners and the right goals, so that their knowledge did not benefit themselves or others. Systematically, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* outlines various important aspects of the educational process, such as the importance of knowledge, sincere intentions, choosing a teacher, etiquette towards teachers and peers, perseverance in learning, and the importance of applying knowledge. (Abdurrahman et al., 2024) Although it does not discuss morals theoretically, the entire contents of this book contain noble moral values and are oriented towards the formation of good character. Therefore, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* is not only a technical guide for learning, but also a spiritual and ethical guide in shaping the personality of a knowledgeable, civilized, and responsible seeker of knowledge.

Through the book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, al-Zarnuji successfully formulated the principles of learning ethics and teacher-student relationships that form the foundation of traditional Islamic education. His thinking focuses not only on intellectual aspects, but also on spiritual and moral aspects, making the learning process a form of devotion to Allah SWT and respect for knowledge. It is no wonder that to this day, this book is still taught in almost all Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia and has become the main reference in shaping the character of students. Al-Zarnuji's thoughts are clear evidence that the success of education is not only measured by the mastery of knowledge, but also by the formation of noble manners and morals. (Sabaruddin, personal communication, 2024)

Educational Strategies for Students at Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Padang City

Based on the author's observations at the Darul 'Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Padang, it appears that the students exhibit behavior and attitudes that reflect the moral values taught in the book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*. (Bustari, personal communication, 2024) This shows that moral guidance at the boarding school is going well and has been internalized in the daily lives of the students. In their daily activities, the students show great respect for their teachers as a form of etiquette for a student (*muta'allim*) towards his teacher (*mu'allim*). (Molgi Suhera, personal communication, 2024) Among the visible behaviors are the customs of shaking hands and kissing the teacher's hand at the beginning and end of each lesson, bowing when passing the teacher, and carrying books with the right hand as a form of respect for knowledge.

In addition, the author also observed that the students never placed their books on the floor, even in their dormitories, where they always placed their books on a higher surface and did not stack other items on top of them. These actions reflect a deep respect for knowledge, as emphasized in the book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*. (Asyraf Awaluddin, personal communication, 2024) When interacting with teachers, students always give priority to teachers when walking or entering a room, and prefer to walk behind teachers as a sign of respect. It is also common to see students giving prayer mats to teachers who do not have them when at the mosque, showing their high level of respect and concern. (Tgk. H. Darmis Muar, personal communication, 2024)

Furthermore, the students also demonstrate good character in maintaining their dignity, such as feeling shy when seen by the opposite sex, being reluctant to enter their teacher's house without permission, and being happy to help their teachers with their work as a form of service and devotion to their teachers. All of these behaviors illustrate that the values of manners and morals taught in classical texts are truly alive in the environment of the Darul 'Ulum Islamic Boarding School. This also demonstrates the success of the boarding school in instilling character education based on Islamic scholarly traditions, where the relationship between teachers and students is not only based on the transfer of knowledge, but also on the formation of strong moral and spiritual values.

Supporting and Hindering Factors in Implementing Moral Values to Islamic Boarding School Students

The implementation of character building at the Darul 'Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Padang has been ongoing since the establishment of this boarding school. Although it is not yet perfect as envisioned in the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* book, in general, the character of the students has reflected the noble values contained in both books. This condition is certainly inseparable from several supporting factors that strengthen the process of internalizing moral values in the pesantren environment, such as (M. Yusuf. Aj, personal communication, 2024; Molgi Suhera, personal communication, 2024)

First, the good habits of the pesantren environment are a major factor in shaping the character of the students. The culture of mutual respect between students and teachers, as well as the exemplary behavior of senior students towards their juniors, makes the pesantren a conducive environment for shaping noble character. The exemplary behavior of teachers and seniors, who always display polite, humble, and respectful attitudes towards knowledge, serves as a real example for students to emulate and practice similar behavior in their daily lives.

Second, the background of the students and the boarding school system also support the process of character building. The proximity of the students' residences to those of the teachers allows

For intensive supervision and guidance. Respect for teachers who live in the same boarding school complex encourages students to maintain their attitude and behavior, both in class and in the dormitory environment. In addition, positive seniority among students also helps to create a culture of emulation and strengthens good moral character.

However, in addition to supporting factors, several inhibiting factors prevent the formation of students' character from running optimally, such as (Alvajri, personal communication, 2024; Jasniwan, personal communication, 2024)

First, the lack of boarding school supervisors is a major obstacle in supervising and guiding students outside of school hours. The shortage of supervisors means that control over student activities in the boarding school is not optimal, so the boarding school needs to rely on young teachers and alumni to assist with guidance. In addition, limited facilities and human resources also complicate supervision, especially in dealing with the negative influences of technological developments such as the use of mobile phones and digital media.

Second, the limited facilities and infrastructure of Islamic boarding schools also hinder the formation of good character. The inadequate condition of dormitories and learning facilities prevents the learning and guidance process from running optimally. The absence of fences, security guards, and comfortable study rooms causes some students to lose focus and be easily influenced by the outside environment.

Third, the negative influence of some problematic students poses a challenge in itself. When senior students exhibit deviant behavior or violate rules, this can set a bad example for other students. The lack of firm and educational sanctions also has the potential to spread this negative influence among students.

Fourth, the influx of outside culture into the pesantren environment is a significant obstacle. Some students bring habits and lifestyles from home that are not in line with pesantren values. If not corrected immediately, these habits can spread to friends in the dormitory or classroom, thereby hindering the process of internalizing the desired moral values.

Overall, it can be concluded that the formation of students' morals at the Darul 'Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Padang is going quite well thanks to the culture of role models, a conducive boarding school environment, and a supportive dormitory system. However, this process still requires serious attention to existing obstacles, particularly in terms of increasing the number of mentors, providing adequate facilities, and instilling discipline and moral values in a sustainable manner so that the ideal of forming noble morals as taught in Ta'lim al-Muta'allim can be fully realized.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the research conducted at the Darul 'Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Padang, it can be concluded that the process of character formation among students has generally been implemented effectively and reflects the moral principles taught in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*. Core values such as respect for teachers, polite conduct, discipline, and proper manners toward knowledge have been successfully integrated into students' daily behavior, both in academic settings and in their dormitory life. This indicates that the pesantren continues to uphold its strong tradition of moral education as a fundamental identity of Islamic educational institutions. However, despite these positive achievements, the study also reveals several gaps that hinder the optimal realization of character development. These gaps include the insufficient number of dormitory supervisors, limited educational facilities, the influence of students with less favorable behavior, and exposure to external cultural elements that are inconsistent with pesantren values. Such challenges reduce the effectiveness of supervision and moral guidance, particularly outside formal learning hours, thus creating disparities between the expected moral standards outlined in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* and the actual conditions in the field. In conclusion, while character building at Darul 'Ulum Islamic Boarding School has shown encouraging progress, it has not yet fully reached the ideal standards prescribed in al-Zarnuji's teachings. To bridge these gaps, the pesantren needs to strengthen its boarding system, increase the number and competence of supervisors, enhance facilities and learning support, and enforce stricter discipline. With these improvements, the internalization of moral values can be more comprehensive, ensuring that students not only understand moral teachings but also embody them in their character and daily lives.

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