



Strengthening religious values and student discipline through Ma'had Darunnajah programs

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Abstract

Ma'had Darunnajah is an Islamic educational institution that strives to instill religious values and discipline in both the learning environment and students' daily lives. This study aims to explore the strategies used by Ma'had Darunnajah to implement religious culture and discipline through its various activities. These activities include religious programs and efforts to cultivate disciplined character among students. Using a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method, the research collected data through in-depth interviews with four *Ma'had* mentors and student representatives, both male and female. The findings reveal that *Ma'had* activities play a significant role in shaping students' character, particularly in terms of religious commitment and discipline. Furthermore, students who were more actively involved in *Ma'had* responsibilities tended to achieve higher academic performance compared to their less active peers. These insights are expected to serve as a reference model for other educational institutions seeking to enhance character development and academic achievement through similar *Ma'had*-based programs.

Keywords: Ma'had Darunnajah; discipline; religious

Introduction

Ma'had Darunnajah represents an Islamic educational institution that strives to instill a consistent religious culture within the academic and daily lives of its students. The presence and growth of *Ma'had* are not only instrumental in reinforcing Islamic values but also provide practical benefits, especially for students who reside far from campus. Its boarding-based structure enables students to live in an environment that reinforces religious practices and disciplined living (Mulyadi, 2018). However, despite these structural advantages, some issues persist, particularly concerning punctuality and discipline. Observations reveal that many students fail to arrive at school within the expected timeframe, including those who live within the *Ma'had* itself. Ironically, students who live farther away sometimes arrive earlier, yet are still marked late due to institutional cut-off times. These inconsistencies prompt further inquiry into the strategies Ma'had Darunnajah

employs to embed religious discipline and culture among its students, especially through structured daily activities.

Discipline, as a construct, plays a vital role in both religious and educational contexts. It is not merely a behavioral expectation but is also deeply intertwined with moral development and responsibility (Febriyanto et al., 2020). A disciplined individual reflects a commitment to trust, consistency, and adherence to moral values, traits essential to strong character formation. Similarly, religiosity involves more than ritual observance; it encompasses personal devotion, ethical orientation, and a spiritual framework that guides behavior. In Islamic education, these two aspects, religiosity and discipline, are not treated separately but are cultivated simultaneously to support students' holistic development. The formation of religious character through lived experiences within a *Ma'had* setting has the potential to mold responsible individuals who uphold both moral and academic excellence.

Several prior studies have underscored the role of *Ma'had*-based environments in building student character (Amiroh & Ginting, 2019; Fauzul'Azhim, 2019; Huda et al., 2021; Irodadi, 2022; Mufid, 2013; Nugroho, 2019; Rianti & Mustika, 2023; Wahyuningtyas, 2018). These studies collectively support the argument that religious boarding education can serve as a powerful intervention for moral and disciplinary development. However, most of this research centers either on general character education or on specific religious rituals, often without deeply analyzing the lived strategies or institutional responses to contextual problems like those seen at *Ma'had Darunnajah*.

The current study distinguishes itself by focusing specifically on the *strategic implementation* of religious culture and discipline in *Ma'had Darunnajah*, taking into account real-life challenges, such as students' inconsistent adherence to institutional rules and the resulting impact on their academic routines. Unlike earlier studies that examine ideal character-building or rely on general frameworks, this research seeks to explore how strategies are deployed in actual practice by involving key informants, coaches and students, who are deeply familiar with *Ma'had Darunnajah's* context. This not only provides richer insight into the effectiveness of these strategies but also highlights specific obstacles and enabling factors on the ground. Thus, the study fills a critical gap by connecting institutional practices with individual behavior patterns, offering a more grounded and context-sensitive exploration of religious culture in action.

Ultimately, this research is guided by an inquiry into how *Ma'had Darunnajah* implements religious culture and discipline through its daily programs and how effective those efforts are in shaping student character and responsibility. Through this lens, the study aims to identify the strategies employed, the factors that support or hinder their success, and the outcomes in terms of students' academic and moral development. The novelty of this research lies in its contextual specificity and practical focus: while past studies offer conceptual models or general best practices, this research investigates actual institutional behavior within a real-world setting. The findings are expected to inform educators, administrators, and future researchers seeking effective ways to merge religious identity formation with structured discipline in Islamic boarding schools.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach. The research design was used because it led researchers to understand in depth the religious and disciplined culture, the behavior of the students in the practice of religious and disciplined culture and the social interaction between the students and the surrounding physical environment. And our group uses this qualitative method because it allows researchers to gain a better understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and motivations of individuals or groups.

This research was carried out in the Kepanjen Islamic High School, especially at Ma'had Darunnajah with a direct field trip, which is around May 7-8, 2024. The reason behind the selection of this research location is because the focus of this research is the activities of Ma'had Darunnajah students.

The research subjects in this investigation were selected using the purposive sampling method. Where the people who are the subjects of the research are selected based on certain criteria. In this study, there are 10 resource persons designated as research subjects, including: JS, M, MA, R as the first resource person, as well as the trustee/management of Ma'had Darunnajah, AA, SF, IM as resource persons for male students, and YB, ZF, ME as resource persons for students. The determination of the research subject was motivated because the resource person was a person who had a good understanding of information related to Ma'had Darunnajah.

The source data used in the primary and secondary data were drunk from this study. The initial data sources in this study include observations and direct interviews with the sources who have been selected as research subjects around the data on May 7-8, 2024. Evidence of the interview process is attached in the form of photo and video recordings. As well as secondary data used in this study in the form of *Ma'had* rules, *Ma'had* management structure, and various documentation of Ma'had Darunnajah activities. The main data collection techniques of this study were collected through observation and interviews. in several sources of information obtained around May 7-8, 2024. The interview is conducted in a structured manner by asking questions, which have been made beforehand.

After obtaining data from observations and interviews with the sources, then the researcher analyzed the data obtained. This research uses technical data analysis through 4 stages, including: (1) data collection, (2) data simplification, (3) data presentation, and (4) conclusion. Data collection was collected through observation and interviews with the manager of Ma'had Darunnajah. Then the data that has been obtained will be simplified into more complex data. The simplified data is then presented through non-numerical data, such as interview results. Next, the conclusion stage, which will contain the results and discussion of the research that we have done.

Results and Discussion

Strategic Implementation of Religious Culture and Discipline

Ma'had Darunnajah employs a systematic and structured approach to instill religious values and discipline in students, beginning from the point of enrollment. Upon admission, a formal agreement is signed between the institution and parents, affirming their commitment to comply with all *Ma'had* rules and participate in designated activities. This early engagement lays the groundwork for building a disciplined lifestyle rooted in Islamic teachings. Students' daily

routines are organized in a manner that integrates spiritual development, academic preparation, and personal responsibility, from pre-dawn prayers to nighttime rest. According to Cockerham's sociological perspective, this system aligns with the notion that discipline is not only socially constructed but also central to the formation of individual character (Asadullina et al., 2020; Lenner et al., 2021; Peterson, 2020). These foundational strategies are further reinforced through daily communal practices that shape students' behavior and social responsibility.

The institution's efforts go beyond mere routines. They are embedded within a value system that emphasizes communal living, shared responsibilities, and structured time management. Each aspect of the students' day, from laundry schedules, bathroom duties, and cooking rosters, to Quran recitation and *ta'lim* sessions, is designed to promote self-regulation and collective accountability. These routines encourage internal discipline by fostering consistent habits and social expectations. The goal is to create a spiritually nurturing environment where students can thrive morally, emotionally, and intellectually.

Rules, Sanctions, and the Role of Ma'had Administrators

The institutional rules at Ma'had Darunnajah are designed not only to manage student behavior but also to reflect core Islamic principles such as cleanliness, order, and respect for others. Students are expected to adhere to specific regulations concerning personal belongings, use of communal facilities, and participation in religious and academic activities. These guidelines are enforced with a clear structure of consequences. Minor infractions typically result in verbal warnings or spiritual tasks, such as reciting specific surahs. Repeated or more serious violations, such as absence from mandatory prayers or unauthorized outings, are met with stricter sanctions, including the confiscation of personal items and, in severe cases, expulsion.

Administrators and student leaders play a crucial role in enforcing these rules and guiding student behavior. Interviews reveal a consistent approach between male and female dormitories: both apply incremental *takziran* measures to reinforce compliance. These range from reading *Surah Yasin* for minor violations to more significant punishments for repeated offenses. Importantly, the disciplinary process is viewed not as punitive but formative, meant to instill responsibility and support the development of character. The system thus reflects a practical application of Cockerham's theory, where discipline is internalized through a combination of structure, social reinforcement, and personal accountability.

Outcomes, Challenges, and Future Directions

The implementation of religious culture and discipline has yielded significant outcomes among *Ma'had* students. Many have developed regular habits of prayer, punctuality, and active participation in *ta'lim* and Qur'an memorization activities. Weekly programs such as *muhadharah*, *tahlil*, and *diba'* further enrich students' spiritual engagement and public speaking confidence. However, some differences remain in how discipline is internalized. Female student interviews suggest variation in adherence to rules, with some students not fully embodying the expected values. In contrast, male students generally reported higher consistency in practicing religious and disciplinary habits. These variations highlight that while institutional frameworks are strong, the individual student's disposition also influences the success of value internalization.

Looking ahead, Ma'had Darunnajah envisions producing graduates who are not only academically proficient but also spiritually mature and socially responsible. There is a continued emphasis on strengthening Qur'anic literacy, improving students' mental resilience, and ensuring the sustainability of the Ma'had's religious culture. These efforts underscore the institution's holistic vision of education, one that prepares students for leadership rooted in religious values. The findings of this study thus provide valuable insights into how structured religious environments can effectively promote discipline and moral development, while also pointing to areas where individual guidance and mentorship may still be necessary.

Conclusions

As previously explained, the *Ma'had* program serves as an innovative initiative adopted by several schools to enhance students' quality, particularly in terms of character and behavior. Aiming to strengthen students' moral values through structured religious activities, *Ma'had* also fosters a religious environment within the school community. When implemented effectively, the process of cultivating a religious culture becomes more manageable and purposeful. At Ma'had Darunnajah, this is achieved by requiring students to consistently take part in *taklim* sessions and congregational prayers. Students who fail to participate are subject to warnings and disciplinary action. These rules are intended to instill a sense of responsibility and discipline among the students, encouraging them to adhere to the standards and expectations set by the institution. Overall, the findings of this study suggest that the integration of religious culture and discipline at Ma'had Darunnajah has been successful in developing students who excel not only academically but also demonstrate spiritual maturity and strong moral character.

Data Availability

The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

All authors in this publication declare no conflict of interest regarding the title, data, location, and results of the research.

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Supplementary Materials

This study does not include any supplementary materials.

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