



# The Role of Dormitory Supervisors as Agents of Islamic Character Development through Student Discipline Enforcement

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## Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of dormitory supervisors as agents of Islamic character transformation through the enforcement of student discipline in an Islamic boarding school environment. The study employed a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, and were analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing techniques. The findings reveal that dormitory supervisors play a significant role in fostering Islamic character through role modeling, habituation, supervision, and a dialogic-persuasive approach to discipline enforcement. Discipline was found to function not only as a mechanism for behavioral control but also as a means of internalizing Islamic values that promote responsibility, rule compliance, independence, and self-control among students. Furthermore, the integration of modern caregiving practices with local pesantren values strengthens the effectiveness of character development efforts. This study highlights that a dialogic-persuasive approach to discipline enforcement contributes to the transformation of students' Islamic character and may serve as a model for strengthening character education in Islamic boarding schools.

## INTRODUCTION

Islamic character education in the era of globalization faces increasingly complex challenges, as moral degradation and a crisis of role models have begun to penetrate educational institutions, including Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). Ideally, pesantren serve as strongholds of moral education capable of nurturing students with the character of *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of the soul). However, in practice, disciplinary violations, the negative influence of social media, and declining respect for authority frequently emerge as challenges within dormitory environments. These conditions indicate that the internalization of character values cannot be achieved solely through formal classroom instruction but is highly dependent on the caregiving and mentoring patterns implemented in dormitories. Therefore, dormitory supervisors play a crucial role as frontline agents in shaping students' character through continuous role modeling and round-the-clock supervision. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of dormitory supervisors in integrating classical Islamic values with

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contemporary educational approaches in modern pesantren requires further investigation to determine the extent of their contribution to the development of students' Islamic character.

Pesantren function not only as educational institutions but also as centers for the dissemination of Islamic teachings in Indonesia. Through a boarding-based educational system, modern pesantren seek to nurture resilient generations through a holistic educational process. In practice, dormitory supervisors carry out their responsibilities using humanistic and persuasive approaches. They strive to understand students' psychological conditions, diverse family backgrounds, and individual needs while employing personalized strategies to ensure that students feel comfortable throughout the mentoring process. These efforts are intended to foster the voluntary and conscious development of Islamic character traits, such as honesty, discipline, and courtesy (Ghafur, 2025).

Despite these efforts, empirical evidence reveals a gap between expectations and reality. Although dormitory supervisors continuously adapt their caregiving approaches to accommodate students' characteristics and backgrounds, noncompliance and resistance remain significant challenges. Some students exhibit disobedient behavior through violations of activity schedules, disregard for religious guidance, and verbal as well as behavioral opposition toward dormitory supervisors.

This phenomenon presents a paradox. On the one hand, dormitory supervisors demonstrate empathy and a deep understanding of students' needs; on the other hand, their authority often receives limited positive responses from some students. This situation reflects the existence of complex internal challenges in the process of Islamic character formation within modern pesantren. Student noncompliance not only hinders the achievement of institutional educational goals but also increases the psychological burden on supervisors and creates methodological challenges in enforcing discipline without damaging emotional relationships with students (Agus & Denis, 2025).

Previous studies have highlighted the role of dormitory supervisors in various educational contexts; however, this study specifically focuses on the multidimensional integration of character theories within the mentoring practices of modern pesantren. This focus is important for addressing the existing gap in the literature concerning the strategic role of dormitory supervisors in fostering students' Islamic character.

A wide range of Islamic sciences is taught in pesantren with the aim of achieving *tafaqquh fiddin*, namely developing individuals who possess a comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings (Husen & Husni, 2025). Kiai play a significant role not only in enhancing students' intellectual capacities but also in guiding their moral and spiritual development (Noor et al., 2023). Consequently, the contribution of pesantren to the Indonesian educational system is highly significant, as they help cultivate generations with strong religious understanding who are capable of contributing to the development of a morally grounded society (Collins et al., 2021).

The importance of examining the role of dormitory supervisors lies in their strategic function as central figures who bridge the gap between the formal curriculum and students' everyday lives. Theoretically, this aligns with Thomas Lickona's concept of Moral Action, which emphasizes that character can only be developed when moral values are consistently practiced through habituation. Furthermore, according to Imam Al-Ghazali's perspective, the role of dormitory supervisors represents the embodiment of *uswah hasanah* (exemplary conduct), which serves as a key method in the process of *tazkiyatun nafs*. Without the active involvement of dormitory supervisors in overseeing students' daily activities, the internalization of character values risks remaining at the cognitive level without

leading to substantive behavioral change.

As the oldest Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, pesantren are fundamentally oriented toward the cultivation of *akhlāq al-karīmah* (noble character) as the primary objective of education (Firmansyah, 2021). Within the pesantren ecosystem, dormitories function not merely as residential facilities but also as living laboratories where students undergo continuous learning and character development. In this context, dormitory supervisors play a vital role in connecting the formal curriculum taught in classrooms with the practical implementation of Islamic values in students' daily lives (Aslan, 2025).

Based on the background and rationale outlined above, this study aims to examine and analyze the strategic role of dormitory supervisors in the formation and development of students' Islamic character within modern pesantren. Specifically, the study seeks to describe how role modeling, supervision, and dialogic approaches employed by dormitory supervisors facilitate the continuous internalization of moral values in students' daily lives. More specifically, the study explores the relationship between mentoring practices and the theoretical perspectives of *tazkiyatun nafs* proposed by Imam Al-Ghazali, Ibn Miskawayh's theory of psychological balance, the values of *Panca Jiwa Pondok*, and Thomas Lickona's dimensions of moral development. Through this investigation, the study aims to formulate an effective and comprehensive character development model that contributes to the advancement of pesantren education in the future.

## METHODS

This study employed a qualitative method with a case study approach (Daharis et al., 2025; Fuqoha et al., 2025; Setiawan et al., 2022). This approach was selected to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of dormitory supervisors as agents of Islamic character transformation through the enforcement of student discipline within the context of pesantren life. The study was conducted during the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year at Darussalam Modern Islamic Boarding School, West Sumatra, Indonesia. The research site was selected because the institution implements a boarding-based educational system that integrates religious education, character development, and continuous disciplinary supervision.

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Research participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement in the character development process within the dormitory environment. The participants consisted of dormitory supervisors and students. Primary data were obtained through participant observation of mentoring activities and in-depth interviews with dormitory supervisors and students. Secondary data were gathered from official institutional documents, disciplinary records, dormitory activity schedules, and other supporting documents relevant to the research focus.

To ensure data trustworthiness, source triangulation and technique triangulation were employed by comparing data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis was conducted continuously throughout the data collection process to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### The Role of Dormitory Supervisors in Students' Character Development

Based on data collected through observations, interviews, and documentation, the findings reveal that dormitory supervisors play a significant role in students'

character development through intensive mentoring, role modelling, and structured habituation practices integrated into daily life.

Instrument	Participants	Main Findings
Observation	8	Dormitory supervisors accompanied students throughout the day and were directly involved in activities such as congregational prayers, dormitory cleanliness, and learning sessions. Through this involvement, supervisors demonstrated exemplary behaviour, particularly in discipline and punctuality, which were observed and imitated by students.
Interviews	8	Supervisors perceived their role as substitute parents and moral role models rather than merely disciplinary officers. Consequently, they prioritised heart-to-heart dialogue before implementing educational sanctions.
Documentation	8	Documentary evidence included student violation records, structured dormitory schedules, and routine counselling sessions between supervisors and students.

The findings indicate that dormitory supervisors perform three interconnected roles in students' character development: as supervisors, substitute parents, and moral role models. These roles are implemented simultaneously through continuous supervision, emotional support, and exemplary conduct embedded within students' daily lives.

Observational data demonstrate that dormitory supervisors play an intensive and continuous role in the character-building process (Muthalib et al., 2025; Solehah et al., 2026). Their twenty-four-hour engagement with students suggests that character education extends beyond formal instructional settings and is integrated into all aspects of daily life. Direct participation in congregational prayers, dormitory maintenance, and learning activities reinforces role modelling as an effective educational approach (Arasy & Kustati, 2025; Lukman et al., 2025; Siregar et al., 2025).

As one supervisor explained:

*"We guide students through the process of tazkiyatun nafs by establishing consistent daily worship routines, particularly through muhasabah (self-reflection) activities before bedtime. We continuously emphasise that activities in the dormitory are not merely about complying with regulations; rather, they serve as a means of purifying intentions, removing arrogance from the heart, and cultivating gratitude and sincerity in everyday actions."* (Informant 04)

This statement illustrates that supervisors not only promote discipline but also facilitate students' spiritual development through tazkiyatun nafs. Daily worship practices and reflective activities function as mechanisms for cultivating sincerity, gratitude, humility, and self-awareness.

Furthermore, supervisors' disciplinary behaviour, particularly regarding punctuality, serves as a concrete example that students observe and emulate (Ajria et al., 2025; Rahayu & Bahri, 2025). This finding reflects the educational principle of *uswatun hasanah* (exemplary conduct), which emphasises that values are most effectively transmitted through practice rather than verbal instruction alone.

Another supervisor stated:

*"For us, role modelling is the most effective educational method. We strive to become mirrors for our students by demonstrating discipline, composure, and courtesy in our daily actions. We believe that students learn more through direct observation than through verbal instruction."*

*Therefore, we consistently maintain Islamic conduct so that students have tangible examples that they can naturally emulate in their daily lives." (Informant 01)*

The interview findings suggest that supervisors regard exemplary behaviour as the primary strategy for character education. Discipline, politeness, and Islamic values demonstrated by supervisors become internalised by students through observation and habitual practice.

In addition, supervisors perceive themselves as substitute parents and moral exemplars for students (Khamid & Hadi, 2025; Nuraeni et al., 2022). The relationships established between supervisors and students are characterised by emotional support, care, and guidance, enabling character formation to occur through close interpersonal interactions (Muhajir & Dawwas, 2022; Wahid & Prasetya, 2024; Zahro & Shobirin, 2025).

As explained by one participant:

*"We adopt a compassionate approach by positioning ourselves as parental figures for the students. In every mentoring process, we prioritise open communication and listen to their concerns without judgment. We always use gentle and caring language because we believe that by addressing students' emotional needs and providing a sense of security, they will be more receptive to advice and develop into positive individuals who feel valued and cared for." (Informant 06)*

The interview findings demonstrate that supervisors employ a compassionate approach characterised by empathy, attentiveness, and dialogical communication, enabling students to feel secure, respected, and more receptive to guidance.

Despite these positive practices, supervisors also face challenges, particularly regarding unauthorised gadget use and students' lateness in attending scheduled activities (M. Amin & Riza, 2025). To address these issues, supervisors prioritise persuasive approaches through heart-to-heart discussions before imposing sanctions. When sanctions are necessary, they are educational rather than punitive, reflecting a humanistic approach to character development aimed at fostering long-term behavioural change (F. Amin & Darajat, 2025; Amir & Amir, 2025; Nasyaa et al., 2025).



**Fig 1. Dormitory Supervisors' Role Modeling in Congregational Prayer and Quran Recitation**

Figure 1 illustrates the role modeling practices demonstrated by dormitory supervisors during congregational prayers and Quran recitation sessions with students. The active involvement of supervisors in these religious activities reflects their function as role models in fostering discipline, responsibility, and the habituation of religious values within the dormitory environment (Multazami & Diana, 2025).

### **Dormitory Supervisors as Monitors**

Based on observational findings, dormitory supervisors' function as monitors who ensure that all student activities are conducted in accordance with institutional regulations. Supervisors consistently demonstrate positive behavior before directing

students to participate in various activities (R. Hidayat & Riyannor, 2023; Mahira et al., 2024). During teaching and learning activities, supervisors guide students to attend classes while exemplifying discipline and responsibility. Prior to the Zuhr prayer, supervisors arrive at the mosque earlier and encourage students to perform congregational prayers punctually. Furthermore, supervisors actively accompany students in Quranic memorization (*taḥfidz*), *mubadasab* (Arabic conversation practice), Quran recitation, and communal service activities (*gotong royong*) (Chasanah, 2023).

These findings indicate that the supervisory function extends beyond behavioral control and is directed toward cultivating positive habits through habituation and role modeling. Consequently, supervisory practices contribute significantly to the development of disciplined, religious, and responsible character traits among students (Kalsum & Mesiono, 2025).

From Thomas Lickona's perspective, these findings reflect the implementation of *moral action* through the consistent habituation of disciplined behavior (Arlini & Hanif, 2025; Zuhri et al., 2022). Continuous supervision facilitates the transformation of *moral knowing* into internalized moral behavior that becomes embedded in students' daily lives (Auliya et al., 2025; Mahendika et al., 2023).

### **Dormitory Supervisors as Surrogate Parents**

Interview findings revealed that dormitory supervisors serve not only as monitors but also as surrogate parents for students during their residence in the boarding school environment (Zahra & Khoiruddin, 2023). This role is reflected in supervisors' willingness to listen to students' concerns, provide solutions to various personal challenges, and conduct regular evaluations through heart-to-heart communication (Abrar et al., 2025; Agus & Denis, 2025).

As expressed by one of the supervisors:

*"We apply a compassionate approach by positioning ourselves as parents to the students..."*  
(Informant 06)

This statement indicates that the relationship between supervisors and students is built upon emotional support, trust, and empathy. Such conditions enable character development to occur more effectively because students feel cared for, valued, and continuously guided throughout their personal growth process.

From Al-Ghazali's perspective, character development is achieved through the process of *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of the soul), which emphasizes habituation, role modeling, and spiritual guidance (Ardiningrum et al., 2025; Muzedi & Zaironi, 2026). Supervisors function as *murabbi* (educators) who not only provide direction but also serve as living examples of patience, sincerity, honesty, and humility (Pohan et al., 2025; Zainuri, 2025; Mujiburrahman & Kamaruzzaman, 2026).

Furthermore, KH. Imam Zarkasyi's perspective suggests that successful character formation lies in the integration of values, institutional systems, and daily practices implemented consistently within the boarding school environment (Wahyudi et al., 2026).

### **Dormitory Supervisors as Moral Role Models**

Based on observations and interviews, dormitory supervisors also function as moral role models for students. This role is reflected in their efforts to establish courteous communication, provide guidance with wisdom, and demonstrate Islamic values in everyday life (Tanjung & Sampurna, 2024). Such an approach contributes to the development of close relationships between supervisors and students, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of character-building processes (Sutrisna et al., 2026; Yusuf, 2025).

As stated by one of the supervisors:

*"For us, role modeling is the most effective educational method..."* (Informant 01)

This statement demonstrates that role modeling serves as the primary medium for value internalization. Students do not merely receive verbal advice; they also

observe and emulate the behaviors demonstrated by supervisors in their daily interactions.

Nevertheless, several challenges remain, particularly regarding students' perceptions of unequal treatment and inconsistencies among some supervisors in exemplifying Islamic dress codes (Baihaqi, 2025; Anwar & Supriyono, 2025).

From Ibn Miskawayh's perspective, character formation aims to achieve *tawazun* (psychological balance) through self-control and the habituation of moderate behavior (Toni et al., 2025). A supportive dormitory environment, structured routines, exemplary conduct from supervisors, and peer support among students constitute important factors in the internalization of moral values (Nurwahidah, Pebrianti, et al., 2025).

### **Synthesis of Research Findings**

Based on the overall findings, the role of dormitory supervisors in students' character formation is manifested through three primary functions: as monitors, surrogate parents, and moral role models. These functions complement one another in creating an educational environment that facilitates the continuous internalization of character values.

As monitors, supervisors ensure the consistent implementation of institutional regulations and daily activities. As surrogate parents, they establish emotional relationships that support students' character and spiritual development. Meanwhile, as moral role models, they serve as behavioral exemplars whose actions are observed and imitated by students in their daily lives.

The findings indicate that successful character formation is supported by the integration of habituation systems, exemplary behavior, and personalized mentoring approaches. However, several challenges remain, including violations related to gadget use, lateness in attending activities, perceptions of unfair treatment, and the absence of a more systematic and measurable character evaluation framework. Therefore, strengthening comprehensive character assessment mechanisms is necessary to ensure that students' character development can be monitored objectively and sustainably.

Overall, the study demonstrates that character formation within the boarding school is achieved through an integrated process involving supervision, emotional mentoring, and moral role modeling. These three dimensions constitute the foundation for developing students who are disciplined, religious, responsible, independent, and possess noble character in accordance with the objectives of Islamic boarding school education.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings, dormitory supervisors play a crucial role in fostering students' Islamic character through three primary functions: as supervisors, surrogate parents, and moral role models. Character development is strengthened through the integration of disciplined supervision, religious habituation, emotional support, spiritual guidance, and exemplary conduct in daily life. These findings confirm that character formation in Islamic boarding schools is most effective when supervision, mentoring, and role modeling are implemented simultaneously.

The study also demonstrates the relevance of the educational perspectives of Al-Ghazali, KH. Imam Zarkasyi, Ibn Miskawayh, and Thomas Lickona, particularly regarding the importance of habituation, moral exemplification, self-control, and direct experience in character education. However, challenges remain, including inconsistencies in role-modeling practices, perceptions of unequal treatment, and the absence of systematic character assessment mechanisms. Therefore, more integrative and measurable character evaluation strategies are needed to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of character development programs in Islamic

boarding schools.

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