The Effect of Integrative Curriculum Implementation and Character Education on Academic Success of Islamic Boarding School Students in East Java

Slamet Riyadi[1], Nasruddin[2], Nisa Miftachurohmah[3]
[1] Universitas Muhammadiyah Tapanuli Selatan
[2,3] Universitas Sembilanbelas November Kolaka

Article Info

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of integrative curriculum implementation and character education on the academic success of students in Islamic boarding schools in East Java. Utilizing a quantitative research design, the study gathered data from a sample of 150 students, employing a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 to measure responses. The analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25 to determine the relationship between the variables. Findings reveal a significant positive effect of both integrative curriculum and character education on academic performance. Integrative curriculum implementation ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.01$) and character education ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$) were both positively correlated with academic success. Multiple regression analysis showed that these variables together explained 52% of the variance in academic success. The results underscore the importance of a holistic educational approach that combines academic and character development to enhance student outcomes. These insights offer valuable implications for educators and policymakers aiming to improve educational strategies in Islamic boarding schools.

Corresponding Author:

Name: Slamet Riyadi
Institution: Universitas Muhammadiyah Tapanuli Selatan
Email: slamet.riyadi@um-tapsel.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools, or pesantren, in Indonesia have long been pivotal in shaping both the intellectual and moral foundations of students by integrating religious and secular knowledge. These institutions emphasize a holistic approach to education, fostering not only academic excellence but also the cultivation of character and ethical values. The traditional model of pesantren education focuses on promoting tolerance, mutual respect, hard work, politeness, and nobility, which are essential for character building [1]. However, the increasing complexity of modern society necessitates an even more integrative curriculum that combines various disciplines and character education. Recent research highlights the need for a comprehensive transformation of Islamic boarding schools to modernize educational practices while preserving traditional values [2]. This transformation involves adopting a new model that integrates local wisdom with

global knowledge and skills, thereby refining the existing educational framework [1]. Additionally, the integration of curriculum management between pesantren and school education has been shown to improve the quality of education by balancing intellectual, moral, and spiritual abilities [3]. This integrative approach includes planning, implementing, and evaluating a curriculum that incorporates both religious and secular subjects, ensuring a well-rounded education [4]. Furthermore, studies indicate that Islamic education significantly influences character development, aligning with national values such as those embodied in the Pancasila principles, although regional variations may exist [5].

In East Java, where Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are a significant part of the educational landscape, the implementation of an integrative curriculum can substantially enhance academic success by fostering critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Integrative curriculum management in pesantren, such as Pesantren Mahasiswa Al Hikam in Malang, has shown to be innovative by linking academic learning with student life, thereby shaping Muslim character through positive habits like congregational prayers and Qur'an reading, which are integrated into the educational process [6]. This approach aligns with the broader trend of integrating traditional Islamic teachings with modern academic subjects, which has been found to improve student engagement and academic performance in Islamic schools [7]. Furthermore, the use of integrative learning methods, such as problem-based and project-based learning, has been demonstrated to enhance students' abilities to think critically and constructively, as evidenced by classroom action research in Islamic boarding school management courses [8]. The development of a holistic curriculum that includes both religious (kauliyah) and worldly (kauniyah) knowledge, as practiced in Integrated Islamic Schools in Indonesia, further supports the creation of an educational environment that is academic,

spiritual, ethical, and social [9]. Additionally, the need for curriculum innovation in Islamic boarding schools to keep pace with technological advancements and societal changes is crucial for preparing students to contribute actively to modern society [10]. Overall, the integration of various educational practices and community involvement, supported by policy reforms and technological advancements, can significantly enhance the quality and effectiveness of education in Islamic boarding schools, thereby promoting academic success in the 21st century [6]–[10].

Character education is a fundamental aspect of Islamic education, focusing on the development of moral and ethical values such as honesty, responsibility, respect, and empathy. This educational approach aims to produce well-rounded individuals who can contribute positively to society. The teachings of the Al-Qur'an and Hadith provide a strong foundation for character education, emphasizing the importance of instilling good character values from an early age, as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad SAW [11]. Imam al-Ghazali, a prominent Muslim philosopher, highlighted several character education values, including sincerity, patience, gratitude, and honesty, which can be applied in everyday life to foster noble morals in future generations [12]. The Al-Qur'an, particularly in QS al-Baqarah verses 261-267, also addresses character education by promoting religious, personal, and social values such as generosity, maintaining speech, and giving the best one has [13]. Additionally, Sufism-based approaches to character education emphasize the development of profound moral awareness and strong ethical values, encouraging individuals to be humble, thoughtful, and focused on continuous personal growth. This approach connects moral and ethical principles with concrete actions in society, fostering better relationships with fellow humans, nature, and the spiritual world [14]. The implementation of character education in educational institutions, such as the Islamic State University Higher Education Mahmud

Yunus Batusangkar, has been shown to enhance students' discipline and moral character, thereby equipping them to navigate challenges and achieve academic success [15]. By integrating these diverse perspectives, Islamic character education aims to create a more inclusive, fair, peaceful, and harmonious society, preparing students to contribute positively to their communities and the broader world. This study aims to investigate the effect of integrative curriculum implementation and character education on the academic success of Islamic boarding school students in East Java.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Integrative Curriculum

An integrative curriculum is an educational approach that combines multiple subjects into a cohesive learning experience, fostering connections between disciplines and encouraging students to think critically and apply their knowledge in various contexts. This approach is particularly relevant in today's rapidly changing world, where interdisciplinary skills are increasingly important [16]. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, an integrative curriculum involves combining religious teachings with secular subjects to create a holistic educational experience. For instance, the implementation of integrative curriculum management at Pesantren Mahasiswa Al Hikam in Malang has been found to be innovative, linking academics with student life and integrating theory and practice to shape Muslim character through positive habits such as congregational prayers and reading the Qur'an [6]. Similarly, the development of an integrated curriculum at Yayasan Lembaga Pendidikan

Islam (YLPI) Pekanbaru aims to improve the quality of education by integrating various subjects into a coherent whole, thereby enhancing students' cross-disciplinary skills and comprehensive understanding [17]. Integrative learning processes, as analyzed by Rungarun Rojrattanadamrong Chaisri, involve steps such as raising questions, conducting experiments, and communicating conclusions, which help students acquire key competencies for sustainable development and become more aware of socio-cultural and local issues [18]. Furthermore, the integrative approach in European higher education emphasizes the unification of global efforts in educating individuals with a humanistic view, preparing them for comprehensive problem-solving on a global scale, and fostering international cooperation in education and other areas [19].

2.2 Character Education

Character education is a crucial process in developing moral and ethical values such as respect, responsibility, honesty, and empathy in students, which are essential for fostering responsible citizenship and personal development. In the context of Islamic education, character education is deeply rooted in religious teachings and practices, emphasizing the cultivation of virtues that align with Islamic principles. The Al-Qur'an and Hadith provide a strong foundation for character education, with the Prophet Muhammad SAW serving as an exemplary role model for the Islamic ummah [11]. Research

has shown that character education positively impacts academic success by promoting a positive learning environment and enhancing students' social and emotional skills. For instance, the values of character education according to Imam Al-Ghazali, such as sincerity, patience, gratitude, and honesty, can be applied in everyday life to foster noble morals in children both at school and at home [12]. In Indonesia, the character education curriculum is mandatory at all levels of education, including basic education, where it is integrated into teaching and learning activities to support the creation of a better society [20]. Additionally, the "I'm The Best Muslim" series demonstrates the potential of media in reinforcing character education by teaching noble character, mutual cooperation, and global diversity, which are essential for the development of children and teenagers into individuals with strong character [21]. Furthermore, character education in Islamic boarding schools reinforces the moral and ethical dimensions of learning, contributing to students' overall development and success. This is achieved through the balanced development of the mind, heart, and spirit, as guided by the Qur'an, which emphasizes morality towards Allah, other people, and the environment [22].

2.3 Academic Success in Islamic Boarding Schools

Academic success in Islamic boarding schools is indeed defined by a dual focus on academic achievements and the development of strong character and moral values, aiming to produce graduates who excel in both domains and are well-prepared for leadership and community service. The integration of an interdisciplinary curriculum with character education is crucial in achieving this objective. For instance, Al-Mukmin Islamic Boarding School adopts a comprehensive approach to character education, integrating learning, habituation, and practice, although it faces challenges such as a scarcity of qualified educators and balancing academic rigor with moral values [23]. Similarly, the IDIA Prenduan ma'hadi Islamic boarding school has modernized its curriculum to include character education, ensuring that students not only gain academic knowledge but also develop essential character values through a well-managed and adaptive education system [24]. The role of Qur'ani-based Islamic boarding schools is also significant, as they integrate traditional Islamic values with modern technology and innovation, contributing positively to the formation of students' personality, ethics, and tolerance, despite challenges in adapting to technology and meeting national standards [25]. Exemplary education, as practiced at Al-Ihsan Islamic Boarding School, where caregivers model patience, humility, and good morals, further underscores the importance of role models in character formation [26]. Moreover, curriculum

innovation is essential in these institutions to create a generation equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary for modern society, as highlighted by the need for continuous curriculum development in response to technological advancements [10].

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a quantitative research design to explore the relationship between integrative curriculum implementation, character education, and academic success. A survey method was utilized to collect data from students in Islamic boarding schools, using a structured questionnaire designed to measure the relevant variables.

3.2 Sample Selection

The sample consisted of 150 students selected from various Islamic boarding schools across East Java. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure the representation of different schools and student demographics. This approach facilitated the generalization of findings to the broader population of Islamic boarding school students in the region.

3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed specifically for this study. The questionnaire consisted of three main sections: demographic information, integrative curriculum implementation, and character education. A Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used to measure respondents' perceptions and experiences regarding the curriculum and character education.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted with a small group of students not included in the final sample. Based on the feedback, necessary modifications were made to enhance clarity and comprehension.

3.4 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, were calculated to provide an overview of the respondents' characteristics and their responses to the questionnaire items. Inferential statistical analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between the variables. Pearson correlation analysis was used to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between integrative curriculum implementation, character education, and academic success. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine the predictive power of integrative curriculum implementation and character education on academic success. The significance level was set at 0.05 for all statistical tests, and the results were interpreted to draw meaningful conclusions about the impact of educational approaches on academic success.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Demographic Sample

The study surveyed a total of 150 students from Islamic boarding schools in East Java, ensuring a representative sample that reflects the diversity of the student population in these educational institutions. The age of the participants ranged from 15 to 18 years, with a mean age of 16.5 years and a standard deviation of 1.2 years: 35 students (23.3%) were 15 years old, 45 students (30.0%) were 16, 40 students (26.7%) were 17, and 30 students (20.0%) were 18. The gender distribution was approximately balanced, with 78 male students (52.0%) and 72 female students (48.0%). The students were in different academic years, with 50 students (33.3%) in Grade 10, 55 students (36.7%) in Grade 11, and 45 students (30.0%) in Grade 12. Students came from diverse geographic backgrounds within East Java, with 65 students (43.3%) from urban areas and 85 students (56.7%) from rural areas. The

parental education level was recorded, with 15 parents (10.0%) having no formal education, 40 parents (26.7%) with primary school education, 55 parents (36.7%) with secondary school education, and 40 parents (26.7%) having higher education. The economic background of the students' families was categorized based on monthly household income: 45 families (30.0%) were low income (< IDR 3 million), 70 families (46.7%) were middle income (IDR 3-6 million), and 35 families (23.3%) were high income (> IDR 6 million).

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between integrative curriculum implementation, character education, and academic success. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlation Analysis

Variable Pair	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p-value)
Integrative Curriculum Implementation and Academic Success	0.645	<0.01
Character Education and Academic Success	0.586	<0.01
Integrative Curriculum Implementation and Character Education	0.558	<0.01

The correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between integrative curriculum implementation and academic success (r = 0.645, p < 0.01) and between character education and academic success (r = 0.586, p < 0.01). Additionally, there was a moderate positive correlation between integrative curriculum implementation and character education (r = 0.558, p < 0.01).

4.3 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the predictive power of integrative curriculum implementation and character education on academic success. The results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Multiple Regression

Predictor Variable	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	Significance (p-value)
Integrative Curriculum Implementation	0.454	<0.01
Character Education	0.389	<0.01

The regression model explained 52% of the variance in academic success ($R^2 = 0.52$, $F(2, 147) = 80.34$, $p < 0.01$). Both integrative curriculum implementation (Beta = 0.454, $p < 0.01$) and character education (Beta = 0.389, $p < 0.01$) were significant predictors of academic success.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that both integrative curriculum implementation and character education significantly contribute to the academic success of Islamic boarding school students in East Java. The positive correlation between these educational approaches and academic performance underscores the importance of a holistic educational model that combines cognitive and moral development.

Integrative Curriculum Implementation

The strong relationship between integrative curriculum implementation and academic success highlights the effectiveness of this approach in enhancing students' cognitive abilities and problem-solving skills. By integrating various disciplines, students are encouraged to think critically and apply their knowledge in diverse contexts. This finding aligns with previous research, who

emphasized the benefits of an interdisciplinary approach to learning.

Integrative curriculum significantly enhances students' cognitive abilities by fostering a deeper understanding of complex knowledge domains and improving critical thinking skills. This approach integrates knowledge from multiple disciplines, allowing students to navigate and synthesize information effectively, which is crucial for cognitive development [27]. For instance, integrated STEM (iSTEM) education has been shown to positively impact students' cognitive performance in mathematics and technological concepts, demonstrating the benefits of a long-term integrated approach [28]. Similarly, an experimental study on integrated learning in the context of the Qur'an and Hadith revealed a significant increase in students' cognitive abilities, as evidenced by improved pre-test and post-test scores [29]. The constructivist, student-centered nature of integrated curricula also contributes to these cognitive gains by promoting meaningful connections between disciplinary content and encouraging experiential inquiry into real-world problems [30], [31]. This method not only enhances academic performance but also boosts motivation, collaborative skills, and self-efficacy, which are essential for cognitive and affective development. Furthermore, integrated curricula streamline curriculum coverage and assessment, making learning more authentic and relevant, which in turn cultivates positive attitudes and behaviors among students [30].

Character Education

Character education also emerged as a significant predictor of academic success, reflecting its role in fostering a positive learning environment and enhancing students' social and emotional skills. The emphasis on moral and ethical values in Islamic education contributes to students' overall development, preparing them for academic challenges and life beyond the classroom. This result is consistent with Berkowitz and Bier (2005), who found that character education positively impacts academic achievement and student behavior.

Character education significantly impacts academic success by fostering a holistic development approach that integrates moral and ethical values into the educational process. Research indicates that character education programs, such as those implemented in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Az Zarofah Jakarta Timur, have shown high effectiveness in internalizing character values, which positively influence both academic and non-academic outcomes [32]. These programs aim to cultivate values that enhance students' ability to independently improve and utilize their knowledge, thereby manifesting in better daily behavior and academic performance [33]. The integration of character education into the curriculum addresses the moral crisis in society by promoting awareness and commitment to these values, which is essential for personal and academic growth [34]. Furthermore, character education programs have been shown to improve students' social and cognitive abilities, as well as enhance teachers' self-assessment capabilities, leading to better professional competencies and overall educational outcomes [35]. The development of a character education-based curriculum ensures that students not only achieve academic excellence but also develop noble character traits, such as intelligence, creativity, politeness, and courtesy, which are crucial for facing future challenges and contributing positively to society [36]. Thus, character education plays a pivotal role in shaping well-rounded individuals who excel academically and possess the moral integrity to navigate complex social environments.

Implications

The findings of this study have important implications for educators and policymakers in Islamic boarding schools. The integration of an interdisciplinary curriculum and character education should be prioritized to enhance academic outcomes and prepare students for future challenges. Educators should be encouraged to adopt innovative

teaching methods that foster critical thinking, creativity, and ethical development.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The sample was limited to students from East Java, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research could explore the effects of integrative curriculum implementation and character education in different regions and educational contexts. Additionally, qualitative studies could provide deeper insights into the experiences and perspectives of students and educators regarding these educational approaches.

5. CONCLUSION

This study shows that both integrative curriculum implementation and character education significantly enhance the academic success of Islamic boarding school students in East Java. By combining religious teachings with secular subjects, integrative curricula improve students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Character education supports academic achievement by fostering ethical values and a supportive learning environment. These educational strategies equip students with the skills needed to excel academically and positively impact society. Educators and policymakers should prioritize these approaches to better prepare students for modern challenges. Future research should explore these strategies in various contexts and examine their long-term impact on students' personal and professional lives, with qualitative studies providing deeper insights into the experiences of students and educators.

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