Islamic Management: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam, VOL: 09/No: 02 P-ISSN: 2252-8970
DOI: 10.30868/im.v9i02.10709 E-ISSN: 2581-1754

Date Received	**:**	**July 2026**
Date Revised	**:**	**July 2026**
Date Accepted	**:**	**July 2026**
Date Published	**:**	**July 2026**

THE ROLE OF THE MADRASAH PRINCIPAL IN THE CHARACTER BUILDING OF STUDENTS AT MTS DDI PASANGKAYU CITY

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Kata Kunci:

Kepala madrasah, pembentukan karakter, peserta didik, pendidikan karakter, pendidikan islam.

ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan peran kepala madrasah dalam pembentukan karakter peserta didik di MTs DDI Kota Pasangkayu. Pembentukan karakter merupakan salah satu aspek penting dalam pendidikan yang bertujuan menciptakan peserta didik yang berakhlak mulia, disiplin, bertanggung jawab, dan memiliki nilai-nilai keislaman. Kepala madrasah memiliki peran strategis sebagai pemimpin, pengelola, motivator, dan teladan dalam mengarahkan seluruh warga madrasah untuk mendukung tercapainya tujuan pendidikan karakter. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian deskriptif. Data diperoleh melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi dengan kepala madrasah, guru, serta peserta didik sebagai informan penelitian. Teknik analisis data dilakukan melalui tahap reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Keabsahan data diperoleh melalui triangulasi sumber dan teknik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepala madrasah berperan dalam pembentukan karakter peserta didik melalui perencanaan program pendidikan karakter, pembiasaan kegiatan religius, penegakan disiplin, pemberian keteladanan, serta pengawasan dan evaluasi terhadap pelaksanaan program karakter. Nilai-nilai karakter yang dikembangkan meliputi religius, disiplin, tanggung jawab, kejujuran, kerja sama, dan kepedulian sosial. Faktor pendukung pembentukan karakter antara lain kerja sama antara kepala madrasah, guru, dan orang tua, serta lingkungan madrasah yang kondusif. Adapun faktor penghambat meliputi pengaruh lingkungan luar sekolah dan kurangnya pengawasan orang tua di rumah. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian dapat disimpulkan bahwa kepala madrasah memiliki peran yang sangat penting dalam pembentukan karakter peserta didik di MTs DDI Kota Pasangkayu melalui berbagai program dan kebijakan yang terintegrasi dalam kegiatan pembelajaran maupun kegiatan non pembelajaran.

Keywords:

madrasah principal, character building, students, character education, Islamic education.

ABSTRACTS

This study aims to describe the role of the madrasah principal in shaping the character of students at MTs DDI Kota Pasangkayu. Character building is one of the important aspects of education that seeks to develop students who possess noble morals, discipline, responsibility, and Islamic values. The madrasah principal has a strategic role as leader, manager, motivator, and role model in guiding all members of the madrasah community to support the achievement of character-education goals. Through effective leadership, the principal is expected to create a conducive educational environment that fosters positive character development among students. The role of the madrasah principal is therefore crucial in implementing programs and activities that support the shaping of students' character in accordance with educational and Islamic values. This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation involving the principal, teachers, and students as research informants. Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The validity of the data was ensured through source and technique triangulation. The findings indicate that the principal plays a significant role in shaping students' character through the planning of character-education programs, the habituation of religious activities, the enforcement of discipline, the provision of role models, and the supervision and evaluation of character-building programs. The character values developed include religiosity, discipline, responsibility, honesty, cooperation, and social awareness. Supporting factors in character formation include collaboration among the principal, teachers, and parents, as well as a conducive madrasah environment, while inhibiting factors include the influence of the external environment and insufficient parental supervision at home. It can be concluded that the madrasah principal has a highly significant role in shaping students' character at MTs DDI Kota Pasangkayu through various integrated programs and policies implemented in both instructional and non-instructional activities.

A. INTRODUCTION

Education is an essential process in shaping and developing the full potential of students. Through education, students not only acquire knowledge but also develop the attitudes, values, and behaviors that form the foundation of social life. Educational institutions therefore bear a significant responsibility for producing a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also possesses good character (Bp et al., n.d.).

Within the framework of formal education, the madrasah occupies a distinctive position because it emphasizes not only academic achievement but also the cultivation of Islamic values. The madrasah is expected to serve as an effective vehicle for shaping students of noble character while achieving a balance between intellectual and spiritual intelligence. Realizing this goal requires sound institutional management as well as leadership capable of directing every component of the madrasah toward its established objectives (Asmuri et al., 2025).

As an educational institution, the madrasah plays an important role in instilling moral and religious values in students. Education at the madrasah focuses not only on academic aspects but also emphasizes the cultivation of moral conduct, discipline, responsibility, and religiosity in daily life. The madrasah is thus expected to produce students who achieve a balance between intellectual intelligence and good character (Setiawan et al., 2024).

In pursuing this goal, the role of the madrasah principal becomes crucial. The principal is an educational leader responsible for managing all educational activities at the madrasah, including the learning process, teacher development, and student guidance. The principal also plays a role in creating a conducive educational environment so that the process of shaping students' character can proceed effectively. The success of an educational institution in building students' character is strongly influenced by the principal's leadership in directing, guiding, and mobilizing the entire madrasah community (Muflihah & Haqiqi, 2019). Character building is one of the important objectives of education. Good character traits such as discipline, responsibility, honesty, and respect for others need to be instilled from an early age through various educational activities at school and at the madrasah. Character building is achieved not only through classroom learning activities but also through habituation, teachers' role modeling, and a school culture that supports the development of positive attitudes and behavior among students. The principal therefore needs an appropriate strategy for directing all educational activities in order to support the character building of students (Fatmah, 2018).

In practice, however, the character building of students continues to face various challenges. Technological developments, the influence of the social environment, and insufficient supervision from various parties often contribute to a decline in students' discipline and sense of responsibility. This situation demands that the principal take a more active role in supervising student behavior within the madrasah environment (Salsa Nurhabibah et al., 2025).

This situation also requires the principal to be more proactive and innovative in designing character-building strategies. The principal is expected not only to formulate policies but also to implement them effectively. In addition, the principal must serve as a positive role model for students and the entire madrasah community, since students tend to imitate the behavior they observe in daily life (Hasan Luthfi et al., 2025).

The success of character building is also strongly influenced by cooperation among various parties, namely the principal, teachers, education staff, parents, and the community. Nevertheless, the principal remains the central driving force, responsible for formulating a vision and mission oriented toward character building and for ensuring that all programs implemented are aligned with that goal (Shobri, 2025).

B. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design (M.Si, 2021). The qualitative approach was used to obtain an in-depth understanding of the role of the madrasah principal in shaping the character of students at MTs DDI Kota Pasangkayu, located in Pasangkayu Regency.

The subjects of this study consisted of the principal of MTs DDI Kota Pasangkayu as the main informant, along with teachers and students as supporting informants. Research subjects were selected purposively, taking into account their involvement in the process of shaping students' character at the madrasah.

The data sources in this study consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from the principal, teachers, homeroom teachers, and students of MTs DDI Kota Pasangkayu through interviews and observation (Sriwahyuni, 2025). Secondary data were obtained from madrasah documents, such as the madrasah profile, vision and mission, character-education programs, student regulations, activity documentation, and relevant literature.

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation (Rahardjo, 2011). Observation was used to directly examine the implementation of character building among students at MTs DDI Kota Pasangkayu. Interviews were conducted with the principal, teachers, and students to obtain in-depth information regarding the principal's role in shaping students' character. Documentation was used to obtain supporting data in the form of documents, activity photographs, work programs, and records related to the implementation of character education at the madrasah.

Data analysis employed a qualitative data-analysis model consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification (Wau et al., 2022). Data reduction was carried out by selecting and grouping data relevant to the research focus. The data were then presented in descriptive form to facilitate understanding. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and verification in order to obtain a comprehensive picture of the principal's role in shaping students' character at MTs DDI Kota Pasangkayu.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted at MTs DDI Kota Pasangkayu from 18 to 30 May 2026. Data were obtained through observation, documentation, and interviews with the principal, teachers, and students. The focus of this study was the principal's role in shaping students' character at MTs DDI Kota Pasangkayu.

MTs DDI Pasangkayu is a Madrasah Tsanawiyah Darud Da'wah wal Irsyad established in 1994. It has undergone several changes in leadership and is currently headed by Nurhaeni, S.Pd.I. The madrasah is located on Jalan Camar, Pasangkayu Regency, Pasangkayu City, West Sulawesi.

The madrasah's vision is “to nurture religious, progressive, dignified individuals of noble character.”

The madrasah's mission is to apply religious values in all daily activities in accordance with the teachings of Ahlussunnah wal-Jama'ah; to produce students of high civility and intelligence in every respect; to uphold humanitarian values that are child- and environment-friendly; and to instill character values in order to produce students of noble character.

Table 1. Indicators of Success in Shaping Students' Character

No	Character Indicator	Observed Behavioral Data
1	Religiosity	Performing congregational prayers; praying before and after lessons.
2	Literacy	Reading books for 15 minutes before lessons begin; reading corners in classrooms; poetry-reading and speech competitions.

Supporting Factors

The research findings obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation at MTs DDI Pasangkayu indicate several supporting factors that play an important role in the success of the principal in shaping students' character. These factors reinforce one another, enabling the principal to carry out this role optimally.
The principal's leadership plays an important role in directing the entire madrasah community toward the realization of character education. The principal is responsible not only for designing programs but also for demonstrating good behavior, such as discipline, honesty, responsibility, and respect for others. The role model set by the principal motivates teachers and students to apply character values in daily life. In addition, the principal regularly provides guidance to teachers and evaluates the implementation of character-education programs to ensure they proceed in line with the established objectives.

Support from teachers and education staff is a key factor determining the success of the principal's strategy. Observation revealed the active involvement of teachers in implementing innovative, student-centered learning in accordance with the principal's direction. The learning process was not dominated solely by lecturing but was also developed through discussion, question-and-answer sessions, and interactive learning activities that increased student engagement. In interviews, the principal stated that teachers at the madrasah were quite responsive to directives and made efforts to deliver more active forms of learning. Teachers likewise reported that changes in teaching methods made students more enthusiastic, active, and less prone to boredom in class. This finding is consistent with the study of Rahmiati and Azis (2023), which showed that teacher involvement and professionalism in active learning contribute significantly to increased student motivation through a more interactive and meaningful learning process.

Support from parents is a further factor contributing to the shaping of students' character. Observation showed that teachers serve as the principal's main partners in implementing character education. Character building is carried out not only through the delivery of subject matter but also through role modeling, habituation, guidance,

and daily interaction between teachers and students. At MTs DDI Kota Pasangkayu, all teachers strive to instill character values such as religiosity, discipline, honesty, responsibility, hard work, courtesy, and respect toward teachers and peers. Teachers also provide guidance to students who commit violations through an educational approach so that students understand their mistakes and are encouraged to improve their behavior. In addition to teachers, education staff help create an orderly, safe, clean, and comfortable madrasah environment that accustoms students to living in a disciplined and responsible manner.

Continuously Implemented Religious Programs. As an Islamic educational institution, MTs DDI Kota Pasangkayu runs various religious programs that serve as the primary means of shaping students' character. These programs are carried out routinely, becoming positive habits for the entire madrasah community. They include reading the Qur'an before lessons begin, praying before and after lessons, performing the congregational Zuhur prayer, delivering short religious talks (kultum), commemorating major Islamic holidays, cultivating the habit of greeting teachers and peers with salam, and providing moral guidance through advice and counseling.

These three factors show that the success of the principal in shaping students' character cannot be separated from the synergy among teachers, parents, and the school environment. These factors complement one another, enabling character-building programs to be implemented effectively and continuously, and producing students who are religious, disciplined, honest, responsible, caring, and of noble character in line with the objectives of Islamic education.

Inhibiting Factors

The research findings obtained through observation and interviews at MTs DDI Pasangkayu indicate several factors that hinder the principal's role in shaping students' character. These factors mainly involve insufficient cooperation from parents, the influence of the social environment, and inconsistency among some teachers in providing role models.

Insufficient Parental Cooperation. One of the main obstacles is the limited involvement of parents in supporting character education at home. Some parents still leave the responsibility for character education entirely to the madrasah, so that the habituation of character values does not proceed consistently between the school and family environments.

Influence of the Social Environment. The social environment outside the madrasah has a considerable influence on students' behavior. Peers who fail to provide positive role models can affect students' attitudes and habits in ways that conflict with the character values instilled at the madrasah.

These two factors indicate that the main obstacles to shaping students' character do not originate solely from the school environment, but also from insufficient parental involvement and supervision of students' character development, together with the negative influence of the social environment.

Discussion

The findings show that the principal plays an important role in shaping the religious character of students at MTs DDI Kota Pasangkayu. This role is realized through various policies and programs that support the habituation of religious

activities, such as congregational prayer, the recitation of prayers before and after lessons, and the cultivation of students' moral conduct in daily life. The principal functions not only as a policymaker but also as a role model who demonstrates the practical application of religious values within the madrasah.

This finding also supports previous research indicating that the habituation of religious activities at school can enhance students' religious character, discipline, and responsibility. The success of character building is thus evident: the principal plays an important role in shaping the religious character of students at MTs DDI Kota Pasangkayu through policies and programs supporting congregational prayer, prayers before and after lessons, and the cultivation of moral conduct, functioning both as policymaker and as a role model for the practical application of religious values within the madrasah.

Based on the findings, the literacy program is one of the strategies employed by the principal to shape students' character. This program is implemented through 15 minutes of reading before lessons begin, the provision of reading corners in every classroom, and various literacy activities such as poetry-reading and speech competitions. These activities aim not only to improve students' reading ability but also to instill character values such as discipline, responsibility, self-confidence, hard work, and a love of learning.

This finding is consistent with the view of the Ministry of Education and Culture (2018), as cited in Priasti and Suyatno (2021), which states that the School Literacy Movement is an effort to make students lifelong learners through the development of a reading and writing culture. Literacy relates not only to academic ability but also serves as a means of character building, since students derive various positive values from the reading materials they study.

Moreover, character-education theory explains that good character is formed through the processes of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Susanti, 2022). Through literacy activities, students gain knowledge of positive values, understand their importance, and subsequently apply them in daily life. The literacy program implemented at MTs DDI Kota Pasangkayu therefore not only improves reading ability but also contributes to the character building of students.

This finding also reinforces previous studies showing that a school literacy culture can enhance students' discipline, responsibility, creativity, and self-confidence. The principal's role in developing the literacy program thus represents an effective form of leadership in supporting students' character building.

The findings show that the character building of students at MTs DDI Kota Pasangkayu is carried out through the integration of religious and literacy activities designed and supervised by the principal. This finding reinforces the theory that the success of character education is strongly influenced by the principal's leadership in creating a school culture that supports the development of students' character.

Based on these findings, it can be understood that character building is achieved not only through classroom learning but also through habituation, role modeling, and a sustainable madrasah culture. This finding enriches character-education theory by showing that combining religious and literacy programs can be an effective strategy for shaping students who are religious, disciplined, responsible, and of noble character.

The implication of these findings is that the principal needs to continue developing integrated programs that support character education. In addition, cooperation among the principal, teachers, students, and parents is essential so that character building can proceed optimally both within the madrasah and within the family and community environments. In this way, the educational goal of producing students of good character and noble conduct can be achieved to the fullest extent.

D. CONCLUSION

The principal plays a highly significant role in shaping the character of students at MTs DDI Kota Pasangkayu. This role is realized through the planning and implementation of various programs that support character development, particularly through religious activities and the literacy program. Regularly conducted religious activities help build students' religiosity, discipline, and responsibility, while the literacy program fosters learning habits, self-confidence, hard work, and a love of reading.

The character building of students is achieved not only through classroom learning but also through habituation, role modeling, supervision, and the cultivation of a madrasah culture that supports the development of positive values. The success of this character building is supported by cooperation among the principal, teachers, students, and parents in creating a conducive educational environment.

In conclusion, effective leadership by the principal, through the strengthening of religious and literacy programs, makes a tangible contribution to shaping students who are religious, disciplined, responsible, and of noble character, in accordance with the vision of MTs DDI Kota Pasangkayu.

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