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Role of Alumni in the Program *Mentorship* To Support International Achievements (Phenomenological Study at MTs Abadiyah Pati)

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ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji peran alumni pada program mentorship guna menunjang prestasi internasional siswa MTs Abadiyah Pati. Secara khusus, mengeksplorasi dinamika keterlibatan alumni dalam mendampingi siswa madrasah untuk berkompetisi di tingkat global, serta mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor kunci yang mempengaruhi efektivitas program mentorship dalam konteks pendidikan Islam. Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain fenomenologi. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumen program selama periode 2018-2023. Penelitian melibatkan 12 informan kunci yang terdiri dari alumni mentor, siswa berprestasi internasional, dan pengelola program mentorship. Data dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola-pola peran alumni dan dampaknya. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa alumni memainkan tiga peran utama dalam program mentorship: (1) role model inspiratif yang mematahkan stereotip tentang keterbatasan lulusan madrasah, (2) pembimbing akademik yang memfasilitasi transfer pengetahuan dan strategi kompetisi, (3) peran sentral sebagai fasilitator jaringan internasional yang membuka akses ke sumber daya global, pendukung psikologis-emosional yang memahami tekanan dan tantangan spesifik siswa madrasah. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa program mentorship alumni berperan signifikan dalam meningkatkan prestasi siswa pada kompetisi internasional di bidang sains, teknologi, dan seni budaya. Rekomendasi penelitian selanjutnya perlunya kajian dampak program mentorship terhadap perjalanan akademik dan profesional untuk memperluas jangkauan dan dampak positif alumni terhadap siswa madrasah di seluruh Indonesia.

Keywords:	ABSTRACTS
Alumni, Mentorship Program, International Achievements, Madrasah, Phenomenological Studies	<p>This study aims to examine the role of alumni in the mentorship program to support the international achievements of MTs Abadiyah Pati students. Specifically, exploring the dynamics of alumni involvement in assisting madrasah students to compete at the global level, as well as identifying key factors that influence the effectiveness of the mentorship program in the context of Islamic education. The method used is a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and analysis of program documents during the period 2018-2023. The study involved 12 key informants consisting of alumni mentors, international high-achieving students, and mentorship program managers. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques to identify patterns of alumni roles and their impacts. The results of the study revealed that alumni play three main roles in the mentorship program: (1) inspiring role models who break stereotypes about the limitations of madrasa graduates, (2) academic mentors who facilitate the transfer of knowledge and competition strategies, (3) a central role as international network facilitators who open access to global resources, psychological-emotional supporters who understand the specific pressures and challenges of madrasa students. These findings indicate that the alumni mentorship program plays a significant role in improving student achievement in international competitions in science, technology, and arts and culture. Further research recommendations require a study of the impact of the mentorship program on academic and professional journeys to expand the reach and positive impact of alumni on madrasa students throughout Indonesia.</p>

A. INTRODUCTION

Mentoring activities are carried out intensively, thematically and practically. Intensive means that participants and mentors can communicate and interact at any time in the WA group. Thematic means that on a certain schedule, mentors will share special themes related to scholarship preparation. Meanwhile, practical means that there will be follow-up from this program in the form of direct guidance in filling out scholarship applications until the final stage interview (Ariawan, 2021: 2165). Mentoring activities tend to be more effective in increasing student motivation and learning achievement in the context of learning and teaching. Through mentoring activities, participants' knowledge increases as research by Houghty & Siswadi shows that through mentoring activities more than 60% of participants understand more about what they are studying. Therefore, through this program, it is hoped that scholarship applicants will be more motivated to improve the quality of their applications and be better prepared to compete (Houghty & Siswadi, 2015: 11).

Education is one of the important aspects in improving human resources. The involvement of all components of education is a determining factor in the progress of an educational institution. One involvement that is often overlooked is alumni. In fact, alumni have more learning experience, both during school and learning and working experience. This potential should be collaborated together in schools so that students are able to imitate good examples from alumni. One of the roles of alumni that can be implemented is the alumni mentorship program (Effery, 2015: 237).

Based on the observation results, the alumni mentorship program at MTs Abadiyah Pati has become a model of success in increasing the competitiveness of madrasah students in the international arena. Over the past five years, this madrasah has succeeded in developing a structured alumni involvement system, where alumni who have been successful in various fields return to provide guidance, motivation, and knowledge transfer to junior students. The alumni not only share academic experiences, but also provide insight into global competency standards, foreign language skills, and soft skills needed to compete internationally, thus creating a more inspiring and future-oriented learning ecosystem.

The success of this program is proven through a significant increase in the achievements of MTs Abadiyah Pati students in various international competitions, ranging from science olympiads, religious competitions, to technological innovation events. This mentorship approach has built a bridge between Islamic values that are the foundation of madrasahs with global competencies needed in the modern era. Through intensive interaction with alumni who have crossed international boundaries, madrasah students not only gain technical knowledge but also confidence and a broader vision of their potential in the future, proving that Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia are able to produce high-quality graduates who are globally competitive without losing their Islamic identity.

The alumni mentorship program at MTs Abadiyah Pati has proven itself as a transformative educational innovation in the Indonesian madrasah ecosystem. Since its launch in 2018, this program has not only produced brilliant achievements in the international arena such as gold medals at the International Mathematics Olympiad (IMO) and awards at the World Robot Olympiad (WRO), but also created a unique learning model where alumni act as a bridge between the academic world of madrasahs and global competency standards. Alumni who have achieved achievements in various

fields return to share not only technical knowledge, but also mindsets, learning strategies, and valuable experiences in facing world-class competitions. They are living proof that breaks stereotypes about the limitations of madrasah graduates, as well as being a real inspiration for the next generation.

This alumni network utilization model is worth studying in depth as a blueprint for sustainable and impactful educational development. The success of MTs Abadiyah Pati in transforming what is generally a ceremonial relationship with alumni into a productive collaboration has created a positive cycle where success breeds further success. Students who receive guidance in this mentorship program not only achieve impressive academic achievements, but also develop higher aspirations, wider professional networks, and a better understanding of global standards. This phenomenon shows how madrasahs can utilize an often overlooked resource—their alumni—to create a dynamic and future-oriented learning ecosystem, and make Islamic identity a driving force, not a barrier, in achieving competitive advantage in the global era.

This study examines the phenomenological dimensions of the involvement of madrasah alumni in guiding the next generation to achieve international achievements. This study aims to: (1) explore the meaning of alumni experiences in carrying out their role as mentors, (2) identify patterns of interaction between alumni-mentors and students that result in international achievements, and (3) analyze the impact of alumni mentorship programs on developing the capacity of madrasah students in international competitions.

B. METHOD RESEARCH

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. The phenomenological approach was chosen because of its ability to reveal the essence of the participants' life experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018), in this case the experiences of alumni as mentors and students as mentees. Phenomenology allows researchers to explore the subjective meaning of mentorship experiences that contribute to international achievement.

The study was conducted at MTs Abadiyah Pati, Central Java, which was selected purposively because of its success in implementing alumni mentorship programs and students' international achievements in the last five years. The research participants consisted of 12 key informants selected using purposive sampling techniques based on their involvement in the mentorship program and international achievements. The respondents of this study are as follows:

Tabel 1. Research respondents

No	Element	Number of respondents
1.	Alumni acting as mentors	5
2.	Students who have achieved international achievements	5
3.	Mentorship program manager (Head of Madrasah and Program Coordinator)	2

Data was collected through in-depth interviews (*in-depth interview*) with a duration of 60-90 minutes for each participant. Participatory observation of mentorship sessions that took place during the research period. Analysis of documents related to the mentorship program and student achievement (program reports, achievement certificates, mentor and mentee reflection journals). Data analysis adopted the phenomenological model from Moustakas which includes the following stages (Moustakas, 1994: 9):



Figure 1. Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological model

To ensure the validity of the data, the researcher conducted triangulation of sources and methods, member checking, and peer debriefing with other researchers who had expertise in phenomenological methodology.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Context of Alumni Mentorship Program at MTs Abadiyah Pati

The MTs Abadiyah Pati alumni mentorship program launched in 2018 represents an innovative approach to developing the potential of madrasah students to compete globally. Initiated as a strategic response to the need for intensive mentoring for potential students, the program has created a bridge between a generation of alumni who have achieved success at the national and international level and students who share similar interests and talents. Involving 27 alumni mentors who have proven achievements and more than 100 mentee students, the program creates a dynamic learning community that goes beyond the boundaries of the formal curriculum. The comprehensive program structure—including weekly regular meetings to build consistency, intensive coaching leading up to competitions to maximize performance, ongoing online mentoring that overcomes geographic limitations, and an international competition preparation boot camp that trains students' mental and skills—reflects a systematic approach to developing the madrasah's superior talents.

The uniqueness that distinguishes the MTs Abadiyah Pati mentorship program lies in the integration of deep Islamic values in every aspect of developing students' academic capacity and global skills. The alumni mentors not only share technical knowledge and competition strategies, but also model how to become high-achieving Muslims who uphold scientific ethics and noble morals in international relations. Through intensive discussions, case studies, and sharing personal experiences, the mentors help their mentees understand that academic excellence and adherence to Islamic principles are not two separate things, but two sides of the same coin. This

holistic approach allows madrasah students to develop not only cognitive skills to compete in international olympiads, but also emotional and spiritual resilience to face challenges in a diverse global environment. This program has succeeded in transforming the paradigm of madrasah education from merely focusing on mastering religious material to developing complete human resources, who are able to bring Islamic values as a positive contribution to global scientific discourse.

The Role of Alumni in Mentorship Programs

Based on the phenomenological analysis, it was found that alumni have a central role in supporting students' international achievements through mentorship programs. First, alumni act as inspiring role models who are able to motivate students to achieve at the world level. The alumni's experience in facing similar challenges creates a strong psychological bond and fosters the belief that a madrasah background is not a barrier to achieving globally. One of the mentees said that seeing an alumnus named F. who had won a gold medal at the International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO), made him believe that students from madrasah backgrounds also have a great opportunity to achieve at the international level.

Second, alumni also play a role as academic mentors and skill development, especially in preparing students for international competitions. They not only deliver academic materials, but also equip students with strategies for dealing with international standard questions and presentation skills in English. One mentor said that he not only teaches Olympiad material, but also emphasizes the importance of strategies for answering questions and communication skills with international judges—two important aspects that are not always available in the regular curriculum.

Third, alumni act as international network facilitators. Through their connections from various international experiences, alumni help students access overseas mentors, international training, and global competition information that was previously difficult for the madrasah to access. A mentee said that an alumnus with the initials A. had introduced him to a robotics mentor from Japan who then provided valuable input for his project.

Fourth, alumni also provide psychological and emotional support that students really need in facing the pressures of international competitions. The similarity of educational backgrounds allows alumni to understand the complex challenges faced by students, such as balancing academic obligations with the demands of family and worship.

Impact of Alumni Mentorship Program on International Achievement

The alumni mentorship program has proven to have a significant impact on improving the international achievements of MTs Abadiyah Pati students. First, there is a significant increase in the number and quality of international participation. If in the 2015-2017 period there was only an average of two students per year who participated in international competitions, then from 2018 to 2023 this number increased to 7-10 students per year. Not only the quantity, the quality of participation has also increased with more students qualifying for the final round of prestigious competitions.

Second, this program encourages diversification of international achievement fields. Previously, student achievements were only concentrated in mathematics, but

after the mentorship program, students began to win awards in robotics, environmental science, and Islamic arts and culture.

Third, alumni mentorship encourages comprehensive student capacity development. Not only academic aspects are improved, but also presentation skills in international forums, self-confidence, and cross-cultural adaptability. This is reflected in the appreciation of the international jury who recognized the ability of MTs Abadiyah Pati students to present their projects professionally.

Fourth, this mentorship program creates sustainable achievement through a mentoring cycle. Students who succeed in international competitions are then motivated to become mentors for the next generation. This cycle strengthens the culture of sharing knowledge and the spirit of achievement in the madrasah environment.

Conceptual Model of Alumni Mentorship for International Achievement

Based on these findings, a conceptual model of alumni mentorship was formulated to support the international achievements of madrasah students. This model consists of four main components. First, a foundation of values that emphasizes the integration of Islamic values with a global orientation. This ensures that students continue to uphold their Islamic identity in every international achievement they achieve. Second, a program structure that combines formal and informal mentorship in the long term, allowing for continuous and flexible coaching according to students' needs.

Third, a support mechanism consisting of a continuous mentoring system by madrasahs, alumni, and international networks. The involvement of various parties strengthens the foundation of the program and expands access to external resources. Fourth, capacity development that emphasizes strengthening academic, psychological-spiritual aspects, and global skills such as cross-cultural communication and adaptability. This model emphasizes the importance of alignment between increasing academic capacity, strengthening Islamic identity, and global skills as key factors for the success of madrasah students in international competition. The following is a schematic diagram of the conceptual model of Alumni Mentorship for International Achievement:

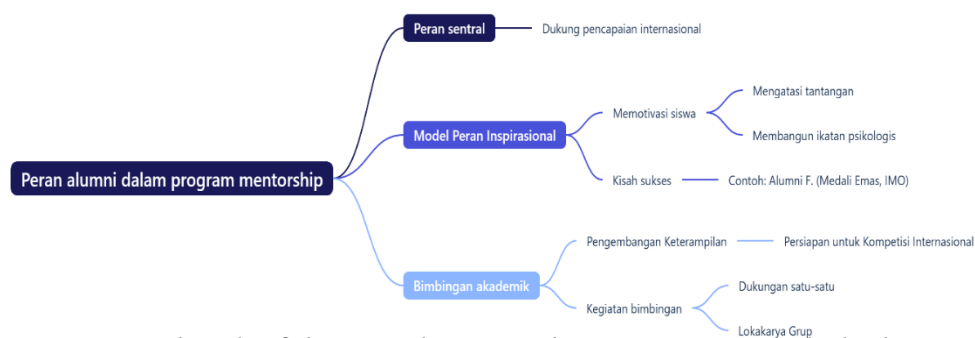


Figure 2. The role of alumni in the mentorship program at MTs Abadiyah

The figure illustrates the role of alumni in the mentorship program that contributes significantly to students' international achievement. Alumni play a central role in supporting students to achieve global achievement, especially through motivational and academic support. As inspirational role models, alumni are able to motivate students to overcome challenges and build strong psychological bonds because they have similar educational backgrounds. Success stories such as Alumni F.

who won a gold medal at the International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO) are a source of inspiration that madrasah students also have the opportunity to excel at the world level. In addition, alumni also play a role as academic mentors through the development of skills relevant to international competitions, such as mastery of Olympiad materials and presentation skills in English. This guidance is carried out both individually through one-on-one support and in groups in the form of workshops. The combination of motivation, academic guidance, and a personal approach makes the alumni mentorship program an effective strategy in improving the quality and competitiveness of madrasah students at the international level.

D. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the role of alumni in the mentorship program contributes significantly to the international achievements of MTs Abadiyah Pati students. Alumni act as inspiring role models, academic and skills development mentors, international networking facilitators, and psychological-emotional supporters. The uniqueness of the mentorship program lies in its ability to integrate academic capacity development with strengthening Islamic identity and global skills. The phenomenological experiences of participants show that the success of the alumni mentorship program is not only determined by the transfer of knowledge and skills, but also by the psychological bond and similarity of background between mentor and mentee. This condition creates a meaningful and transformative learning space for both parties.

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