

Shaping Future Leaders: Exploring Challenges and Strategies in Character Education at Madrasah Tsanawiyah

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Management;
Character Education;
Madrasah.

Article history:

Received 2024-04-06

Revised 2024-07-04

Accepted 2024-07-21

ABSTRACT

This research aims to gain a deep understanding of character education management and the supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of Character Education Management at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pesantren Mizanul Ulum. This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data collection is conducted through in-depth interviews with various stakeholders, including the school principal, teachers, and parents. Participatory observation is also carried out to understand the daily dynamics in the madrasah. Thematic analysis is applied to identify supporting and inhibiting factors in character education implementation. The results reveal that full involvement of the pesantren community, such as regular meetings with parents and open classes for parents, integrated curriculum such as material development and collaborative projects in class, and active character guidance are the main supporting factors. Conversely, challenges from external environments, resource limitations, and technological impacts emerge as inhibiting factors. Wise and creative management steps in overcoming resource limitations, coupled with a prudent technological approach, have proven effective in maintaining focus on shaping students' characters.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Character education is one of the most fundamental aspects of the educational process (Muslich, 2011). It serves as the foundation that determines whether education contributes positively to society or becomes detrimental to humanity's well-being (Efendi & Ningsih, 2022). While academic subjects such as science and mathematics are important, educators often express greater concern over the lack of basic character development in students. For instance, a student's inability to queue is more alarming than their struggles with complex academic subjects. The act of queuing reflects essential character traits such as patience, respect for others, and discipline, all of which are indicators of successful character education. Without these qualities, the academic achievements of students may be rendered meaningless, as true education encompasses both intellectual and moral development. As society

increasingly demands individuals with both strong character and academic competencies, the role of character education in schools has never been more vital.

When students are able to queue, it means that students have learned the consequences of inadequate preparation, namely the back of the queue number. On the other hand, if they arrive first, they will get an earlier queue number and get the advantage of a shorter queue time. Queuing provides lessons about implementing and respecting the system, the rights of others, self-discipline, and consequences for one's own actions. Queuing is the simplest and easiest thing to do, but not everyone is able and willing to do it. It requires patience, discipline and a great will to do it. Seeing the current phenomenon, an Indonesian student has a pessimistic opinion that the culture of queuing is difficult to implement in Indonesia (Meiliana, 2014). The attitude of being willing to queue is an attitude where each person has an awareness of mutual respect for each other according to their structure, the rules provided by the service so that a harmonious relationship can be created. The queuing culture is also a concrete manifestation of mutual respect in everyday life both morally, soul and conscience. So it will have a positive impact on yourself and other people will feel the impact (Hidayati & Pusari, 2019). Character is the foundation of soft skills which actually further support a person's level of success in life (Mayarizka & Christin, 2020; Masnur Muslich, 2011). Great technical abilities that are not accompanied by good character are useless because they are unable to cooperate and empathize with their colleagues (Zhahira & Dewi, 2021). Apart from that, the use of science carried out with bad character will have bad consequences.

In this way, character education is expected to provide a conscious and planned human effort to educate and empower students' potential in order to build their personal character so that they can become individuals who are beneficial to themselves and their environment. Character education has the aim of instilling certain character values in students, such as a component of awareness or will, knowledge, and actions to carry out these values (Salsabilah et al., 2021).

Character education is deeply intertwined with moral education, as its primary goal is to shape and cultivate individuals' abilities to continuously improve themselves and strive toward a better life. This ongoing process of self-improvement is essential in fostering qualities such as integrity, responsibility, and empathy, which are crucial for both personal development and the collective good of society. The importance of character education extends beyond the individual, serving as a vital effort to build the nation's character and contribute to social cohesion. The foundation for this form of education is rooted in religious teachings, as emphasized in **Q.S. an-Nisa' verse 9**, which advocates for the moral responsibility of individuals to safeguard the future well-being of the next generation. In conclusion, character education is a key component in nurturing not only individual success but also the moral and ethical framework of society as a whole.

This verse emphasizes that Allah requires every people not to leave behind them a generation that is weak, helpless, and has no competitiveness in the competition of life. This verse can also be interpreted in general as saying that there is a message from the Qur'an to every Muslim to try as hard as possible so that the next generation is a generation that is stronger than its predecessors. Character education is all efforts to direct, train, foster good values in order to develop a good, wise personality, so that it can make a positive contribution to the environment and wider society (Ajmain & Marzuki, 2019; Hanafi & Rappang, 2017).

Character education is a conscious effort to educate children so that they can make wise decisions and practice them in everyday life, so that they can make a positive contribution to their environment. Therefore, it is hoped that the school, community, and family will collaborate in providing this character education to children in order to familiarize them with character values (Fatmah, 2018; Lalo, 2018). Character can be formed through education because education is the most effective tool for awakening individuals to their human identity (Suhilmiati, 2017). With education, human qualities will be produced who have the refinement of mind and soul, have the brilliance of mind, physical agility, and have awareness of their own creation. Compared to other factors, education has two or three times stronger impact on the formation of human qualities.

Therefore, cultivating character education cannot simply transfer knowledge or train certain skills. The cultivation of character education requires a process, role models, and habituation or acculturation among students in the school, family, and community environment (Lalo, 2018; Nashihin, 2019). The globalization process that we are currently facing will have an impact on changes in the character of Indonesian society. Lack of character education will give rise to a moral crisis which of course will result in negative behavior for students in society, especially children, for example, promiscuity, theft, violence against children, drug abuse, and others.

Several previous studies have been carried out, including research by Syawaliah (2023), Gunawan (2023), Maulana (2023), Usnur (2023), and Yasin (2023). In contrast to previous research, this research focuses on character-building strategies and efforts to overcome obstacles in their implementation. Therefore, this research aims to gain a deep understanding of character education management and the supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of Character Education Management at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pesantren Mizanul Ulum. The research objectives include identifying effective strategies for shaping students' characters, overcoming emerging obstacles, and contributing to the development of character education in the madrasah environment.

2. METHODS

This research applies a field research approach with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of the influence of character education on increasing character values in students at the Pesantren Mizanul Ulum. This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. The data collection process involved various methods, including direct observation of the policies and rules implemented in madrasahs. The observation technique used is participatory observation. Through this observation, researchers can identify in detail how character values are implemented in daily life in the madrasah environment. The interview technique used is a structured interview. Apart from that, interviews with related parties such as Madrasah Principals, teachers, and students were conducted to obtain further information regarding Student Character Education. The interview approach provides an opportunity to hear a variety of perspectives and experiences that can help in detailing the influence of character education. The selection of samples for interviews used a purposive sampling technique.

The data collection method uses documentation, where researchers look for information from notes, books, transcripts, newspapers, ledgers, and other documents that are relevant to the research focus. With this approach, research can utilize secondary data, which can provide historical context and support an in-depth understanding of the role of character education in Madrasah Tsanawiyah. The data analysis process uses descriptive methods to compile a comprehensive picture of the research subject. The research location was chosen carefully, taking into account the distance traveled and the availability of adequate data, so that the Tsanawiyah Madrasah Pesantren Mizanul Ulum in Takalar Regency became a relevant and meaningful research site.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. *Implementation Strategies of Character Education at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pesantren Mizanul Ulum*

The Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pesantren Mizanul Ulum has an important role in forming students' character holistically. Character education at this institution is not only about transferring knowledge, but also discussing the moral and spiritual values that underlie everyday life (Iskandar & Narimo, 2019; Melasi, 2019). Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pesantren Mizanul Ulum is committed to involving students in learning that not only includes academic aspects, but also integrates Islamic values and morals. Thus, the aim of education at this madrasah is more than just academic achievement; it involves developing strong character and is rooted in Islamic values.

In managing character education, this madrasah applies a holistic management approach. This includes planning, implementing and evaluating character education activities. Understanding student

needs and the Islamic boarding school environment is the basis for designing relevant and effective character education programs. The Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pesantren Mizanul Ulum combines religious teachings, religious activities, and soft skills development as an integral part of the curriculum. Through character development, students are invited to internalize values such as honesty, discipline, a sense of responsibility, and tolerance.

Character education at this madrasah has a significant impact in shaping students into individuals who are qualified, have high morals, and are able to face life's challenges. Understanding Islamic values is integrated into daily activities, creating an educational environment that supports positive character development.

Character education is a conscious effort to teach children to make wise choices and apply them in everyday life so that they can have a positive impact on their environment (Maryadi 2019). Therefore, character education is very important for everyone, so parents, teachers, and other educational personnel must always teach children moral values from childhood (Iskandar and Narimo 2019b). All efforts to direct, train, and foster good values to grow wise and create good personalities who can make positive contributions to the environment and society at large are known as character education.

The Madrasah Head gave an in-depth description of the application of character values at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pesantren Mizanul Ulum. With a clear vision and mission, integrated policies, and active involvement of teachers and parents, madrasahs are able to create an educational environment that fosters Islamic character in their students. Despite the challenges faced, proactive handling efforts demonstrate the madrasah's commitment to overcoming obstacles and continuing to strengthen its character education program. The results of the interview with the Head of the Madrasah, Mr. Baso Udin, showed that the vision and mission of the madrasah emphasizes the formation of Islamic character. This vision serves as a guide in setting goals for character education, while the mission provides a framework for its implementation. This reflects the madrasah's commitment to making Islamic character the main foundation of education.

Mr Baso Udin explained that the madrasah had developed an internal policy that integrated character values into various aspects, including the curriculum, extracurricular activities and daily interactions. Involving teaching staff in special training is also an effective strategy to ensure understanding and consistent application of character values. The consistent application of character values in madrasahs has had a positive impact on student behavior. Mr. Baso Udin mentioned increased discipline, cooperation and an attitude of responsibility as the real results of implementing these values. The school atmosphere also becomes more positive, creating a conducive learning environment.

The identification of a lack of support from a small number of parents as the main obstacle was highlighted in the interview results. However, madrasahs responded by increasing communication and interaction with parents through regular meetings and joint character development programs. This reflects the madrasah's proactive efforts to overcome emerging challenges. The involvement of teachers and parents in designing and evaluating programs for implementing character values is an important point. Mr. Baso Udin emphasized that madrasahs actively involve both parties through group discussions, regular meetings and joint activities. This step ensures that the program implemented is relevant to the needs and values desired by the madrasah community.

Mrs. Nurhayati, Religious Education Teacher, explained that character values related to religion have been thoroughly integrated into the religious learning curriculum. Each lesson is designed to place special emphasis on Islamic moral and ethical values.

The integration of character values in religious subjects creates a close connection between religious teachings and student character formation. It not only teaches religious concepts but also provides a solid moral foundation. This approach is very relevant to the madrasah's goal of forming an Islamic character. By integrating character values in the religious curriculum, teachers create a holistic and in-depth learning environment.

Mr. Alauddin, General Subjects Teacher, explained that the application of character values in general subjects is carried out through various strategies, such as case studies, role plays, and group

discussions. This strategy is designed to help students understand these values in the context of everyday life.

The use of diverse teaching strategies shows teacher creativity in conveying character values. This method not only makes learning more interesting but also allows students to relate character values to real life situations. Diverse teaching strategies are effective in bringing character values into a more real and relevant context for students. This initiative links character concepts to students' everyday experiences, strengthening their understanding.

There are three key purposes for character education. The first is the role of potential formation and development. Students' potential to think clearly, have good hearts, and behave in line with Pancasila's philosophy is shaped and developed through character education. The second is the strengthening and repair role. Character education enhances and fortifies the roles of the family, community, educational institution, and government in helping citizens reach their full potential and advancing the country's development into a developed, independent, and prosperous one. The filter function comes in third. Character education separates the culture of one's own country from that of other countries that do not align with the nation's cultural values and honorable national character (Zubaedi, 2011).

Kesuma (2011) states that character education comes in three flavors. First, a design for character education based on classes. The relationship that exists in the classroom between educators and learners—teachers and students—is the foundation of this design. The process of building classroom community relationships within the learning context is the context of character education. The teacher-student relationship is a multifaceted dialogue rather than a monologue. Second, character education should be tailored to the culture of the school. With the aid of school social institutions, this design creates a school culture that has the power to mold students' personalities and help them internalize particular values. Third, character education design based in the community. Public and private school communities are not the only ones that face challenges in education. An effective implementation by the three will result in the formation of a strong national character.

In the process of implementing character education, it is carried out in two ways, namely intracurricular and extracurricular. The process of implementing character education contains three components, namely moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Lickona, 1991). While moral feeling and moral action are instilled both within and outside of the classroom, the moral component of knowing is imparted through classroom instruction. Out of the three, the moral action component needs to be consistently practiced through daily habituation (Maunah, 2015).

The research results are in line with previous research findings such as research of Dalimunthe (2015), Rasmuin (2021), Maryati(2020), and Susanti (2020) that the strategy for implementing character education can be carried out through integration in subjects, extracurricular activities, example by school members, especially teachers, and support from parents and the community.

3.2. Factors That Influence The Implementation of Character Education Management at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pesantren Mizanul Ulum

3.2.1 Supporting factors

1) Full Involvement of Pesantren Community

The Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pesantren Mizanul Ulum receives full support from the Islamic boarding school's educational community, including teachers, parents and administrative staff. This synergy between all parties helps create a learning environment that supports the formation of student character.

The Principal, when interviewed said: *"When we talk about full involvement of the community, we invite and actively involve parents, teachers and administrative staff in the process of character formation. We believe that character education is not only the responsibility of the madrasah, but also a collective responsibility."* The concrete steps taken include holding periodic meetings with parents: "We regularly hold meetings with parents to share information about character education programs and listen to their input and

hopes regarding their children's education. Parents are not only spectators in school activities, but also involved in various activities, such as extracurricular supervision and religious activities."

Meanwhile, in an interview with one of the teachers, Mrs. Nurhayati said: *"We, as teachers, feel very supported by the active participation of parents and the community. They are partners in ensuring that character values are not only taught at school, but also implemented at home and in students' daily lives."* One of the concrete steps taken by teachers is, occasionally holding open classes for parents: "We often invite parents to attend open classes, where they can see firsthand how character learning is integrated into the curriculum. Then we also carry out joint character development activities, where teachers and parents can discuss their respective roles in shaping children's character."

As a result, Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pesantren Mizanul Ulum achieved positive impacts, such as increasing communication between the school and parents, developing more relevant programs, and creating a learning environment that supports student character development. This experience shows that the active involvement of the entire educational community can be an important asset in producing a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also has a noble character in accordance with Islamic values.

In addition to imparting knowledge to students, educators also serve as supportive role models for the younger generation. It is the duty of educators to offer thorough religious education, whether through scheduled religious instruction or extracurricular activities. Students will look up to a teacher who regularly practices their religion and behaves in a way that is consistent with their beliefs. In addition, educators can collaborate with parents of students to help them develop their religious character. A consistent, supportive environment between teachers and parents can be established by fostering open and honest communication and including parents in religious education (Khoiriah et al., 2023).

Furthermore, since character education is not limited to the classroom, the family—especially the parents—has a responsibility to instill religious character in children at home. Schools are typical educational establishments that play a significant role in forming children's moral character. Children's behavior and character are greatly influenced by their parents. According to Pashmah (2020), a family's environment plays a role in how a child develops their religious character.

2) Integrated Curriculum

The existence of an integrated curriculum between academic and character aspects provides a strong foundation for students to develop moral and spiritual values. This madrasah is committed to not only teaching subjects, but also educating the hearts and minds of students.

When asked about the existing curriculum at the Islamic boarding school, the principal said, *"The integrated curriculum is the foundation of learning at our madrasah. We believe that character education cannot be separated from academic learning. Our curriculum is designed to teach knowledge and shape character simultaneously."* One of the concrete steps taken is the development of integrated materials: "Our teachers work together to develop materials that not only pursue academic achievement but also include the character values that we want to instill in students. Then the evaluation process does not only focus on academic achievement, but also involves assessing the student's character development. This is reflected in grade reports and evaluations of class projects."

In an interview with one of the teachers, Mr. Yunus said: *"The integrated curriculum allows us to consistently integrate character values into daily learning activities. This gives students a learning experience that is holistic and relevant to their lives."* Concrete steps taken are Collaborative Projects, he continued: *"We often hold collaborative projects in class that involve academic and character aspects. For example, students can work together on science research projects while learning about cooperation and responsibility. Then by combining them with Active methods, such as group discussions and simulations, are used to help students internalize character values directly in the learning context."*

As a result, Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pesantren Mizanul Ulum achieved a positive impact, such as students who not only have good academic understanding but are also able to apply character values in their daily lives.

Character education can also be implemented in an intracurricular setting by incorporating it into every subject that students study. In this approach, teachers play a crucial role, particularly when it comes to connecting the subjects they teach with the characters they hope to develop and build in students. In this scenario, the teacher's role can act as a character conservator, character transmitter to students, and innovator in developing student character (Hamidah, 2020). One of the challenges teachers face when integrating character education into their subjects is the requirement that they possess comprehensive understanding of the concepts covered in the subject and the character that will be developed in their students. In this way, it is hoped that there will be a match between the material studied and the character developments in the students (Prayoga et al., 2024).

3) Active Character Development

The Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pesantren Mizanul Ulum shows a strong commitment to active character development. This approach is one of the main supporting factors in shaping student character through extracurricular activities, lectures and religious activities.

Interview with the Principal, said: *"Active character development is an integral part of the educational identity at our madrasah. We understand that character formation requires continuous and varied efforts, therefore we involve students in various activities that strengthen positive values."* One of the concrete steps taken is Character-Based Extracurricular Activities: *"We provide various extracurricular activities that not only develop special skills, but also teach values such as cooperation, honesty and discipline."* Apart from that, there are Motivational and Religious Lectures in the activities: *"We regularly invite speakers from outside, including ulama and motivators, to give lectures that inspire and guide students in understanding religious and moral values."*

In an interview with one of the teachers, Mrs. Munawwarah said: *"Active character development is not only the teacher's responsibility, but also involves direct student participation. Students are invited to play an active role in extracurricular and religious activities as a form of implementing character values."* Concrete steps taken by developing Special Programs: *"Teachers and students work together in developing special programs, such as mentoring between students or social activities, to create an environment that supports character formation. He continued, by monitoring individual development, through these activities these activities, we can actively monitor students' individual character development and provide special support if necessary."*

As a result, Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pesantren Mizanul Ulum achieved positive impacts, including increased student involvement in school activities, visible character development, and balanced personality development. Therefore, active character development is not just a program, but an in-depth and sustainable educational lifestyle. This proves that actively involving students in character-building activities can produce a significant impact on shaping their character.

Management of students' character education through extracurricular activities is an effective approach to strengthen character formation and help students develop various aspects of their personalities outside the academic curriculum. Extracurriculars provide opportunities to learn character values, increase engagement and motivation to learn, and develop social skills that are important for students in their lives. Extracurriculars have an important role in developing students' character outside of classroom learning activities. Through various extracurricular activities, students have the opportunity to develop social skills, leadership, cooperation, discipline and other positive values. Through extracurricular activities, students can explore their potential and interests in various fields, such as sports, arts, science or community service. This helps in the formation of a holistic personality, where students can develop various aspects of themselves and broaden their horizons and knowledge outside the academic environment (Shafira et al., 2023).

3.2.2 Obstacle factor

1) External Environment

The Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pesantren Mizanul Ulum faces several challenges from the external environment which can become obstacles in efforts to shape student character. One of them is the influence of popular culture and relationships outside the madrasah which are factors that need to be considered.

Interview with the Principal, the Principal said: *"The challenges of the external environment are a reality that must be faced. We are aware of the influence of popular culture and relationships outside the madrasa which can influence the values we instill at school."* Therefore, some of the management steps are Strengthening Internal Values and Collaboration with Parents: *"We are taking further steps in strengthening the internal values taught in madrasas, so that students have a solid value base to face negative influences from the outside."* Continue, *"Building close collaboration with parents is key to helping students manage pressure from the external environment."*

Apart from that, in an interview with one of the teachers, Mrs. Sittiara said: *"As teachers, we play a role not only as educators but also as companions. We must understand the dynamics of the external environment and help students develop character resilience so that they are not negatively affected."* Some of the management steps taken by teachers are Open Discussions in Class: *"We often hold open discussions in class to discuss issues that may affect students outside the madrasa. This opens up space for them to share and find solutions together."* Then building awareness of the importance of education, Mrs. Sittiara said: *"Providing students with an understanding of the potential negative influences in the external environment and how they can remain firm in the values taught at the madrasah."*

Despite facing challenges in the external environment, Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pesantren Mizanul Ulum has achieved a positive impact by building student character resilience. Proactive management efforts involving all stakeholders, including parents, are key in overcoming this challenge.

2) Limited Resources

The Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pesantren Mizanul Ulum has limited resources, both financial and facilities, of course this can be an obstacle in implementing optimal character education programs.

Interview with the Principal The Principal said: *"Limited resources are a reality that we have to face. Even though we have a strong determination to shape student character, in reality, there are limited funds and facilities which can affect the effectiveness of program implementation."* One of the management steps taken by the school principal is to optimize existing resources: *"We continue to try to optimize existing resources by setting priorities for the most effective and relevant character education programs."*

In an interview with one of the teachers, Mrs. Nurhayati said: *"As teachers, we also feel the impact of limited resources. However, we try to remain creative in designing activities and learning that require a few additional resources."* One solution to overcome this is by taking steps to manage existing human resources by creating innovations in learning: Mrs. Nurhayati said *"Integrating character values into learning methods that do not require a lot of additional resources, such as group discussions or projects creative."*

Despite facing limited resources, Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pesantren Mizanul Ulum continues to try to find creative solutions and involve the community in supporting the implementation of character education programs.

3) Technological Challenges

Technological developments can also be an obstacle, especially if not managed wisely. Madrasahs need to ensure that technology does not replace traditional and Islamic values which are the main focus of character formation.

Interview with the Principal, the Principal said that: *"We live in an era of rapidly developing technology, but we must be wise in managing it. Technological challenges are mainly related to how we maintain traditional and Islamic values remain the main focus amidst the influence of technology."* Some strategic steps in managing technology are: *"Involving students in educational programs that teach the use of technology*

wisely and ethically. Then using technology as a tool to support the learning of character values, not replace or change these values."

In an interview with one of the teachers, Mrs. Sittiara said: *"Students today are very exposed to technology, and the challenge for us as educators is how to direct the use of technology so that it remains in line with the character values taught in madrasas. One of them is involving students in discussions "open about the impact of technology on character values and how they can use technology positively. Then utilize digital platforms or social media to spread character values and religious activities that can be accessed by students."*

Results Despite facing technological challenges, Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pesantren Mizanul Ulum achieved a positive impact by managing technology wisely. Targeted education and the integration of technology that supports character values has helped maintain the focus on building student character.

Without the cooperation of the entire educational ecosystem, the program to strengthen character education will not be successful. Teachers, parents/community, educational staff, and principals of schools are some of the members of the educational ecosystem. The principal's role in bolstering character education in schools is put into practice through the following: educating students about character education policies that place teachers at the center of school culture; creating policies that instill character values in students; supervising the application of character values in schools; conducting classroom action research (PTK) for professional development; offering special services to students in need; and acting as role models for students in applying character values (Perdana, 2018).

In addition, teachers play a crucial role in implementing programs that reinforce character education in schools by socializing policies related to character education, serving as role models for students in implementing character values, giving equal opportunities for students to express their opinions, assessing and reporting learning outcomes in a fair and transparent manner, particularly when it comes to instilling character values, and offering special services to students who require them. The ways that staff members and educational personnel can strengthen character education in schools include suggesting facilities and activities that support character education, as well as encouraging students to dress neatly, speak politely, and other behaviors (Perdana, 2018).

The community's and parents' role in bolstering character education for students is the last one in the educational ecosystem. This includes supporting character education programs in schools, helping schools implement education, establishing routine family habits, and acting as a mediator (creating networks). Collaborating with other organizations or communities to carry out activities such as bringing experts into schools to conduct training, fostering character values in the classroom, and so forth (Perdana, 2018).

A positive atmosphere in the school environment and students' improved character will result from a concerted effort to strengthen character education in schools. The entire education ecosystem – that is, the curriculum content, learning and assessment procedures, handling or management of subjects, school administration, infrastructure empowerment, funding, and work ethic – must be included in the ongoing efforts to strengthen character education in schools. Understanding good character through the educational ecosystem, loving it, and adopting or modeling that character as a habit are the first steps toward the success of efforts to strengthen character education. In order to achieve the objectives of character education, it is crucial that character education is strengthened through practice and example by every component of the educational ecosystem (Perdana, 2018).

4. CONCLUSION

The Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pesantren Mizanul Ulum has a strategic role in managing character education. With a holistic management approach, integrated program implementation, and a deep understanding of Islamic values, this madrasah has become an educational institution that not only produces academics but also forms the next generation with noble morals in accordance with Islamic teachings. The Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pesantren Mizanul Ulum has various supporting factors, such as full involvement of the educational community in the Islamic boarding school, an integrated curriculum, and active character development, which are a strong foundation for forming students'

character holistically. However, there are challenges from the external environment, namely, limited resources and the impact of technology, which this madrasah also faces. Nevertheless, the Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pesantren Mizanul Ulum was able to overcome these obstacles with wise management steps, creativity in optimizing resources, and a proactive approach to external environmental influences. The results of this madrasah illustrate that the formation of student character is not just a school assignment, but a joint effort involving all parties to produce a generation that is intelligent, has morals, and is based on Islamic values. The limitation of this research is that it only examines character education implementation strategies. Suggestions for further research are to examine character education implementation strategies through intracurricular, extracurricular, and school culture.

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