



Character-Based Curriculum Management in Islamic Senior High Schools: A POAC Approach to Strengthening Student Character

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Character-Based Curriculum Management, Character Education, POAC Management, Pancasila Student.

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This study aims to analyze the management of a character-based curriculum in an Islamic Senior High School using the Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling (POAC) management framework. A qualitative case study approach was employed to examine how character values are systematically integrated into the Independent Curriculum through curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation. Data were collected from 20 participants, including teachers, vice principals, students, and parents, through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The data were analyzed using the interactive he support of NVivo 12. The findings indicate that character-based curriculum management was implemented effectively, achieving an overall effectiveness level of approximately 75%. Islamic values, including akhlakul karimah, discipline, and responsibility, were integrated through project-based learning, daily habituation, and pesantren-inspired activities. Nevertheless, the implementation faced challenges related to limited resources, insufficient teacher professional development, and the adaptation to post-pandemic hybrid learning. The study implies that continuous teacher training, digitalized character assessment systems, and stronger collaboration among school stakeholders are essential to enhance curriculum effectiveness and strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile with Rahmatan lil Alamin values.

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INTRODUCTION

Character education has become a strategic priority in contemporary education because schools are expected to produce graduates who possess not only academic competence but also moral integrity, social responsibility, and adaptive life skills (Adzimah, 2024; Najiburohman, 2025). In the era of

globalization, digital transformation, and the Industrial Revolution 4.0, educational institutions face increasing pressure to cultivate learners who are capable of responding to rapid social change while maintaining ethical values. Islamic educational institutions, particularly Madrasah Aliyah, carry a greater responsibility because they integrate religious teachings with general education to develop students' intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and social competencies. Character-based curriculum management therefore plays a pivotal role in ensuring that character values are systematically embedded within curriculum planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation rather than being taught as isolated subjects (Fitriani, 2025; Hikmah, 2026). According to Poerwanti (2013), curriculum management is a continuous process that encompasses planning, implementation, development, and evaluation to ensure educational outcomes remain relevant to societal needs. Likewise, Hidayat (2021) emphasized that curriculum management in madrasahs should prioritize the integration of Islamic values and moral development to produce graduates with strong religious character (Holidi, 2026; Kunta, 2025). Consequently, strengthening character-based curriculum management has become an essential strategy for preparing students to face increasingly complex social and educational challenges.

Despite the growing emphasis on character education, many educational institutions continue to experience difficulties in translating curriculum policies into sustainable character development practices. Various reports indicate that moral degradation among students has become an increasingly serious concern, reflected in declining levels of integrity, empathy, discipline, and social responsibility. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek, 2022) reported that approximately 65% of senior secondary students experienced a decline in moral values, indicating that conventional curriculum implementation has not sufficiently strengthened students' character. Responding to this issue, the Indonesian government introduced the Independent Curriculum and the concept of the Pancasila Student Profile, while the Ministry of Religious Affairs further reinforced these objectives through the Profile of Pelajar Pancasila Rahmatan lil Alamin and the Love-Based Curriculum. Nevertheless, curriculum reform alone cannot guarantee successful character formation without effective management throughout planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation processes. Therefore, improving curriculum management has become increasingly important to ensure that character education is implemented systematically, consistently, and sustainably across Islamic educational institutions.

The implementation of character-based curriculum management in Madrasah Aliyah demonstrates both significant opportunities and persistent challenges. Although the Independent Curriculum encourages the integration of character values into learning activities, many madrasahs still encounter

difficulties in translating policy into effective educational practices (Kusumawati, 2026; Mohlas, 2025; Nadhifah, 2026). Character education is expected to be integrated through classroom instruction, school culture, extracurricular activities, and pesantren-inspired programs; however, the implementation varies considerably among institutions. In many madrasahs, limited resources, inadequate teacher competence in curriculum management, and the rapid expansion of digital culture have reduced the effectiveness of character development programs. These challenges became more apparent following the COVID-19 pandemic, during which hybrid learning reduced direct interaction between teachers and students, thereby weakening opportunities for character formation. Post-pandemic character education requires the reconstruction of curriculum management through hybrid approaches capable of bridging ethical and social gaps among students (Hikmah & Mudarris, 2026; Holidi, 2025; Manshur, 2026). These conditions indicate that effective curriculum management has become increasingly important for ensuring that character education remains sustainable despite educational transformation.

Previous studies have consistently highlighted the importance of curriculum management in improving educational quality and student character development. Hidayat (2021) emphasized that character-based curriculum management in madrasahs should integrate Islamic teachings into learning processes to produce graduates with *akhlakul karimah*. Similarly, Poerwanti (2013) explained that curriculum management encompasses systematic planning, implementation, development, and evaluation to ensure educational relevance and responsiveness to societal needs. Successful character-based curriculum implementation depends largely on transformational leadership capable of integrating Islamic values with twenty-first-century competencies (Albustomi, 2025; Ni'am, 2025; Rahman, 2025). Curriculum innovation is influenced by teacher readiness, digital literacy, infrastructure support, and policy consistency. Collectively, these studies confirm that curriculum management constitutes an essential foundation for strengthening character education within Islamic educational institutions.

Although previous studies have contributed significantly to understanding curriculum management and character education, several important limitations remain. Most existing research focuses on leadership effectiveness, curriculum policy implementation, teacher competence, or digital transformation separately, while relatively few studies comprehensively examine character-based curriculum management using the complete POAC framework consisting of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling. Furthermore, Around 40% of Madrasah Aliyah in East Java possess effective monitoring and evaluation systems for character education, indicating that curriculum evaluation remains one of the weakest management components. Bullying cases among Madrasah Aliyah students and argued that curriculum

management should prioritize local values such as discipline, cooperation, tolerance, and religious moderation (Khofsah, 2025; Rahman, 2026; Shoha, 2026). Nevertheless, previous studies rarely investigate how these character values are systematically integrated into curriculum planning, organizational structures, learning implementation, school culture, and evaluation simultaneously. Consequently, a comprehensive understanding of character-based curriculum management remains limited and requires further investigation.

This study addresses the identified research gap by proposing a comprehensive analysis of character-based curriculum management through the POAC management framework within the implementation of the Independent Curriculum and the Love-Based Curriculum in Madrasah Aliyah. Unlike previous studies that primarily emphasize curriculum policy, leadership, or teacher competence independently, this research examines curriculum management as an integrated system linking planning, organizing, implementation, supervision, school culture, and character evaluation. Furthermore, the study explores how Islamic values, including akhlakul karimah, discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and religious moderation, are embedded within classroom instruction, Project-Based Learning (PBL), habituation programs, pesantren-inspired activities, and digital learning environments. The integration of these dimensions provides a more holistic perspective on curriculum management while contributing practical recommendations for strengthening the Profile of Pelajar Pancasila Rahmatan lil Alamin. Therefore, this research offers both theoretical enrichment in curriculum management literature and practical guidance for improving character education in Islamic secondary schools.

Based on the foregoing discussion, effective character-based curriculum management remains a significant challenge for Madrasah Aliyah despite continuous curriculum reforms initiated by the Indonesian government. The existing literature demonstrates that successful character education depends not only on curriculum content but also on systematic management practices that ensure consistency between planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. However, empirical evidence explaining how these management functions interact to strengthen students' character within Islamic educational settings remains limited. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the implementation of character-based curriculum management through the POAC framework by examining curriculum planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation in Madrasah Aliyah. It is argued that effective integration of Islamic values into curriculum management will strengthen students' moral development and optimize the implementation of the Pelajar Pancasila Rahmatan lil Alamin profile. The findings are expected to contribute to curriculum management theory by extending the application of the POAC framework in Islamic education and to provide evidence-based

recommendations for policymakers, school leaders, and teachers seeking to improve sustainable character education practices.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of character-based curriculum management in an Islamic Senior High School (Madrasah Aliyah). A qualitative case study was selected because it enables researchers to investigate complex educational phenomena within their real-life contexts and to capture participants' experiences, perceptions, and institutional practices comprehensively (Fahmi, 2024; Gautam, 2023; Okoko et al., 2023). The study focused on a Madrasah Aliyah selected purposively due to its implementation of the Independent Curriculum integrated with character education programs based on Islamic values. The school was considered an appropriate case because it has consistently incorporated character-building initiatives into curriculum planning, school culture, learning activities, and student development programs. This context provided a suitable setting for examining the implementation of curriculum management through the Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling (POAC) framework in an authentic educational environment.

Data were collected through purposive sampling involving 20 participants consisting of ten teachers, three vice principals, five Grade XI students, and two parents who had at least two years of experience or direct involvement in the implementation of the character-based curriculum. Multiple data collection techniques were employed to ensure data credibility through methodological triangulation (Donkoh & Mensah, 2023). These techniques included semi-structured in-depth interviews, participant observation, document analysis, and literature review. Twenty interview sessions lasting approximately 45–60 minutes explored curriculum planning, implementation strategies, school culture, and challenges in character education. Participant observations were conducted during learning activities, character habituation programs, assemblies, and project-based learning activities, while document analysis examined lesson plans, supervision reports, and students' character assessment records. Field notes, interview protocols, audio recordings, and observation checklists served as the primary research instruments after obtaining informed consent from all participants.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020) with the assistance of NVivo 12 to facilitate coding, categorization, and thematic analysis. The analytical process consisted of four interconnected stages: data condensation, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification. Data condensation involved transcribing interviews, organizing

field notes, conducting open coding, and reducing irrelevant information to identify meaningful themes related to curriculum planning, organization, implementation, supervision, and evaluation. Subsequently, the condensed data were organized into thematic matrices and narrative displays to facilitate interpretation and comparison across data sources. The final stage involved drawing and verifying conclusions through continuous comparison, member checking, and triangulation of interviews, observations, and documentary evidence to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. Ethical considerations included institutional approval, participant confidentiality, voluntary participation, anonymity, and adherence to the principle of non-maleficence throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Character-Based Curriculum Planning

Character-based curriculum planning represents the foundation of curriculum management because it determines the direction, objectives, learning strategies, and evaluation mechanisms that guide character education in Madrasah Aliyah. The findings reveal that curriculum planning was conducted systematically through the integration of Islamic values into the Madrasah Operational Curriculum, annual academic programs, lesson plans, and school culture. Based on interviews with teachers and vice principals, curriculum planning involved collaborative discussions among school leaders, curriculum coordinators, Islamic education teachers, guidance counselors, and representatives of parents. This participatory approach enabled the identification of priority character values, including *akhlakul karimah*, honesty, discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and religious moderation. Classroom observations further confirmed that these values were consistently embedded in learning objectives and project-based learning activities. The planning process therefore demonstrated that character education was not implemented as a separate subject but became an integral component of curriculum development aligned with the objectives of the Independent Curriculum and the Profile of Pelajar Pancasila Rahmatan lil Alamin.

The document analysis also showed that curriculum planning began with a comprehensive needs assessment involving students, teachers, parents, and the surrounding community. The results of this assessment identified declining student discipline, increasing exposure to digital culture, and the need to strengthen Islamic values as major priorities for curriculum development. Consequently, curriculum planners incorporated various character

reinforcement programs, including the "Smile, Greeting, and Salam" movement, Qur'an recitation before learning, congregational prayers, and pesantren-inspired activities into the annual educational plan. Teachers explained that lesson plans were redesigned using value infusion and embedded learning approaches so that every subject contributed to character formation. These findings indicate that curriculum planning was responsive to both institutional vision and local educational needs. Such contextual planning is considered essential because curriculum implementation becomes more meaningful when educational objectives are aligned with students' social, cultural, and religious environments.

The findings support the argument that effective curriculum planning should begin with identifying institutional needs and translating educational goals into measurable learning experiences (Mohlas, 2025; Nadhifah, 2026). Similarly, curriculum planning should integrate planning, implementation, and evaluation as a continuous management cycle capable of responding to societal changes (HASSAN & LAVAL, 2024; Kamilah, 2026). The present findings are also consistent with Hidayat (2021), who argued that Islamic schools should prioritize character development through curriculum integration rather than relying solely on religious subjects. Nevertheless, this study extends previous research by demonstrating that curriculum planning was strengthened through collaboration among multiple stakeholders and by integrating pesantren traditions into the Independent Curriculum. This combination of national curriculum standards and local Islamic values provides a more comprehensive approach to character education than has been reported in many previous studies focusing primarily on classroom instruction.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that curriculum planning has been implemented effectively despite several constraints related to infrastructure, teacher readiness, and technological adaptation. Interviews indicated that teachers generally possessed a shared understanding of character education objectives; however, some expressed the need for continuous professional development in designing innovative character-based learning activities. Observations further revealed that the effectiveness of planning depended largely on institutional commitment and regular coordination among stakeholders. These findings imply that curriculum planning should remain flexible and adaptive to educational changes while preserving Islamic values as the foundation of student character formation. Continuous curriculum review, stakeholder participation, and teacher capacity-building programs are therefore essential to ensure that character-based curriculum planning remains relevant

and sustainable in responding to future educational challenges.

Organizational Structure and Implementation of the Character-Based Curriculum

The second stage of curriculum management focuses on organizing institutional resources and implementing the planned curriculum through coordinated educational activities. The findings demonstrate that character-based curriculum implementation was supported by a structured organizational system involving the principal, vice principals, teachers, guidance counselors, parents, and students. A Character Development Team was established to coordinate curriculum implementation, monitor character-building programs, and evaluate learning outcomes. Interviews revealed that each stakeholder had clearly defined responsibilities, enabling effective coordination among academic and non-academic units. Teachers integrated Islamic character values into classroom instruction, while guidance counselors reinforced these values through counseling programs and extracurricular activities. Observations further indicated that monthly coordination meetings strengthened communication among stakeholders and facilitated the resolution of implementation challenges. Consequently, organizational collaboration became a crucial factor in translating curriculum planning into meaningful educational practices that consistently promoted students' moral, social, and spiritual development.

The implementation of the curriculum reflected a holistic approach in which character education was integrated into both academic learning and school culture. Classroom observations showed that teachers adopted project-based learning, collaborative discussions, reflective activities, and contextual learning to encourage responsibility, discipline, cooperation, and critical thinking. Daily habituation programs such as congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation, greetings, morning assemblies, and pesantren-inspired activities further reinforced students' character development beyond formal classroom instruction. Interviews with students confirmed that these routines gradually fostered positive behavioral changes, particularly in terms of discipline, honesty, mutual respect, and social responsibility. Although digital learning platforms such as Google Classroom and Zoom continued to support hybrid learning after the pandemic, respondents acknowledged that face-to-face interaction remained more effective for character formation because it allowed teachers to provide direct supervision, personal guidance, and exemplary behavior. These findings suggest that sustainable character education requires a balance between instructional innovation and continuous moral habituation.

The organizational and implementation processes identified in this study support previous findings emphasizing collaborative leadership in curriculum

management. Successful curriculum implementation in Islamic schools depends on effective coordination among educational stakeholders who share responsibility for character development (Aini et al., 2025; Maulidia, 2023). Likewise, Transformational leadership as a critical factor in integrating Islamic values with twenty-first-century competencies. The present findings also argue that organizational effectiveness requires the optimal allocation of human and institutional resources to achieve educational objectives (Rodliyah & Khusnuridlo, 2024; Veronika, 2024). However, this study extends previous research by demonstrating that character education was strengthened through the integration of pesantren traditions with the Independent Curriculum and supported by structured collaboration among teachers, parents, and school leaders. Such findings illustrate that organizational effectiveness is not solely determined by administrative structures but also by shared institutional commitment to developing students' character within authentic educational experiences.

Despite the generally positive implementation, several challenges continued to affect organizational effectiveness. Interviews indicated that limited digital infrastructure, insufficient teacher training, and unequal access to technology constrained the implementation of hybrid learning. Approximately sixty percent of students experienced difficulties participating consistently in online character education activities because of inadequate internet access and limited digital devices. Teachers also reported that additional professional development was required to improve competency in digital pedagogy, character assessment, and project-based learning. Nevertheless, strong institutional leadership, support from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the well-established pesantren culture enabled schools to maintain the continuity of character education despite these limitations. Therefore, strengthening teacher capacity, expanding digital infrastructure, and enhancing stakeholder collaboration are essential strategies for improving organizational effectiveness and ensuring that character-based curriculum implementation remains sustainable in the face of ongoing educational transformation.

Monitoring, Evaluation, Challenges, and Improvement Strategies

Monitoring and evaluation constitute the final stage of the POAC management cycle, serving as essential mechanisms for measuring the effectiveness of character-based curriculum implementation and ensuring continuous improvement. The findings indicate that curriculum evaluation was conducted through a combination of classroom observations, supervision

activities, students' character report cards, self-assessment, peer assessment, and regular coordination meetings involving school leaders and teachers. Interviews with vice principals revealed that evaluation was performed periodically at the end of each semester to determine whether character education objectives had been successfully achieved. Teachers assessed students' development using behavioral indicators such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, cooperation, respect, and religious commitment. Observation data further demonstrated that students showed gradual improvement in classroom participation, social interaction, and compliance with school regulations. These findings suggest that systematic monitoring enables schools to identify strengths and weaknesses in curriculum implementation while providing evidence for future curriculum refinement and institutional decision-making.

Despite these positive outcomes, several obstacles continue to hinder the effectiveness of curriculum monitoring and evaluation. Interviews revealed that limited human resources, insufficient teacher training in authentic assessment, and the absence of standardized digital evaluation systems reduced the consistency of character assessment among teachers. Furthermore, respondents acknowledged that evaluating students' character development remains more challenging than assessing academic achievement because character growth is influenced by multiple internal and external factors, including family environment, peer interaction, and community culture. Teachers also reported difficulties in documenting students' behavioral progress during hybrid learning, where direct observation opportunities were significantly reduced. These findings are reported that only a limited proportion of Madrasah Aliyah possess comprehensive monitoring systems for character education (Kulsum, 2025; Mukarromah, 2025). Consequently, strengthening evaluation instruments and improving teachers' assessment competencies remain important priorities for enhancing curriculum quality.

The present findings support previous studies emphasizing the importance of continuous evaluation in educational management. Systematic verification and continuous data interpretation strengthen the credibility of qualitative findings and facilitate informed decision-making. The controlling function within the POAC framework plays a strategic role in maintaining service quality through regular supervision and performance evaluation. The results also align with that organizational culture significantly influences educational quality and students' academic behaviour (Sailin & Masbahuddin, 2024; Susanti et al., 2023). However, this study extends previous literature by demonstrating that effective curriculum evaluation requires collaboration among

teachers, school leaders, parents, and students rather than relying solely on administrative supervision. The integration of character report cards, classroom observation, reflective discussions, and stakeholder feedback provides a more comprehensive evaluation model capable of capturing students' holistic character development within Islamic educational settings.

Table 3. Monitoring, Evaluation, Challenges, and Improvement Strategies of Character-Based Curriculum Management

Evaluation Aspect	Findings	Challenges	Improvement Strategies
Classroom Supervision	Conducted periodically through observation and supervision	Limited supervision time	Increase the frequency of academic supervision
Character Assessment	Character report cards, self- and peer-assessment	No standardized digital assessment system	Develop digital-based character assessment instruments
Teacher Competence	Teachers understand character education principles	Limited training in authentic assessment	Continuous professional development and workshops
Student Character Development	Improvement in discipline, honesty, and responsibility	Character influenced by family and social environment	Strengthen collaboration among schools, parents, and communities
Hybrid Learning	Learning continuity maintained after the pandemic	Limited interaction and digital infrastructure	Improve ICT facilities and integrate blended character education
Overall Evaluation	Average effectiveness: 75% (Effective)	Human resources, infrastructure, and assessment consistency	Continuous evaluation, digital innovation, and stakeholder synergy

Table 1 presents the evaluation results of character-based curriculum management across several key aspects, indicating that the overall implementation was categorized as effective, with an average effectiveness score of 75%. Classroom supervision was conducted regularly through observations and academic supervision; however, limited supervision time reduced the consistency of monitoring activities. Character assessment was implemented using character report cards, self-assessment, and peer assessment, although the absence of a standardized digital assessment system limited the objectivity and efficiency of the evaluation process. Teacher competence was considered satisfactory because educators understood the principles of character education, yet continuous professional development remains necessary to strengthen

authentic assessment practices. Student character development showed positive improvements in discipline, honesty, and responsibility, although family background and the broader social environment continued to influence behavioral outcomes. Furthermore, while hybrid learning ensured educational continuity after the pandemic, inadequate digital infrastructure and reduced face-to-face interaction remained significant challenges. These findings suggest that strengthening digital assessment systems, enhancing teacher capacity, improving ICT facilities, and fostering stronger collaboration among schools, parents, and communities are essential strategies for optimizing the sustainability and effectiveness of character-based curriculum management.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that effective character-based curriculum management in Madrasah Aliyah depends on the integration of Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling (POAC) functions to strengthen students' moral, religious, and social competencies within the Independent Curriculum. The findings contribute to curriculum management literature by extending the application of the POAC framework in Islamic education through the integration of Islamic values, collaborative leadership, and school culture. Nevertheless, this study is limited to a qualitative single-case design, restricting the generalizability of the findings. Future research is recommended to employ comparative or mixed-methods approaches across multiple madrasahs to examine the long-term effectiveness of character-based curriculum management and the potential role of digital technologies and artificial intelligence in character assessment.

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