

Strengthening leadership integrity in religious educational institutions; the phenomenon of muhammadiyah boarding schools in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Article History

Received 03-01-2025

Revised 10-02-2025

Accepted 07-03-2025

Keywords

Strengthening integrity
Leadership, Islamic
values

Boarding school
Muhammadiyah

Integrity is a key determinant of effective leadership. Indonesia's next generation faces various challenges related to integrity and leadership as the country moves toward Indonesia Emas 2045. Strengthening leadership integrity in Islamic boarding schools is unique, as it is rooted in Islamic values. This study describes a model for fostering leadership integrity among future national leaders at Mu'allimin Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta Islamic Boarding School. The research employs a qualitative phenomenological approach. The study involved 17 informants, including kiai, ustaz, community leaders, alumni, musyrif, and students. Researchers actively participated in data collection, which included steps of data reduction, display, and verification. The findings reveal that strengthening the integrity of prospective leaders encompasses several aspects: long-term cadre education policies (for leaders, community, nation), behavior, and open-mindedness (Islamic and national worldview), all developed through value internalization, social interaction, and self-reflection. The balanced development of competencies includes spiritual, intellectual, practical, and moral dimensions. Continuous learning and integration are key features of cadre training at all stages of adolescence. This research contributes to Islamic boarding schools by providing a model for designing and developing leadership integrity systems aligned with Islamic leadership principles. It also highlights the growing public trust in boarding schools as centers for cultivating future leaders' integrity based on Islamic education. Furthermore, the findings suggest that educational institutions outside the boarding school context can also enhance integrity when guided by a shared vision.

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1. Introduction

In 2045, Indonesia aspires to achieve its golden era with a generation that is dignified, resilient, forward-thinking, and adheres to the fundamental values of Pancasila (Irfani et al., 2021). This hope faces challenges such as the impacts of globalization, increasing concerns over issues like citizenship, intolerance, radicalism, liberalism, consumerism, and individualism among the millennial generation. Additionally, the transformation of national character and leadership values, the tendency of the younger generation to have a split personality, and the difficulty in appreciating future ideals remain unresolved issues. National

education is supposed to develop the abilities, character, and civilization of the nation. Empirical evidence shows that Indonesian youth are in a state of emergency regarding online gambling and an uncertain future. The Financial Transaction Reports and Analysis Center (PPATK) reported that children and adolescents in Indonesia contribute about 13% of online gamblers. The Ministry of Communication and Information (Kominfo) in 2024 also mentioned that many young people aged 17 to 20 are among the 2.7 million gamblers. In terms of education, a UNESCO survey placed Indonesia 10th out of 14 countries, particularly developing countries in Asia Pacific, due to various factors such as fundamental education problems, poor infrastructure quality, low teacher welfare, education inequality, high education costs, and low student achievement (Shaturaev, 2021). Moreover, Indonesia faces demographic bonuses, the phenomenon of the industrial revolution 4.0, and leadership challenges in preparing for the Indonesia Emas 2045.

From the above empirical facts, it is evident that the development of the younger generation has not been optimally achieved, making it difficult for Indonesia to reach its golden peak in 2045. The issues faced by Indonesia related to these noble aspirations are highly correlated with moral education, integrity, and future leadership. However, education has not fully addressed these issues. Concerns for the next ten to twenty years are that the younger generation might lose their national identity if education and integrity strengthening are not optimally managed. Character education is the solution to the moral crisis, and its implementation must be a shared responsibility (Malihah, 2015). Character education for millennials is a way to shape the Indonesia Emas 2045 (Jamrah, 2016; Listyaningsih et al., 2021). Integrity is a key determinant of leadership success in addressing various national problems and challenges. Studies show that the younger generation is less familiar with the term integrity, even though honesty is a characteristic of integrity (Sihombing, 2018). Integrity and national leadership must be prepared and developed because without good integrity and leadership, it is impossible for Indonesia to achieve greatness in 2045. Education for the Indonesian generation is the key to realizing reliable human resources, which requires quality education directed towards the nation's goals (Darman, 2017). To achieve this, a change in mindset, including an integrity-based leadership mindset, is needed. Various leadership theories, aside from transformational leadership, acknowledge the importance of integrity (alignment of words and actions) for effective change management (Simons, 1999).

Recently, many studies have focused on strengthening integrity and leadership from various experts, including the impact of integrity on the effectiveness of leadership, which is predominantly human-driven (Vakilbashi et al., 2017). Integrity positively correlates with leader and organizational effectiveness (Parry & Proctor-Thomson, 2002). In line with this, integrity and ethical leadership correlate with organizational success (Storr, 2004). Other studies discuss strengthening ethics and integrity in corruption prevention (Tasi & Syamsir, 2021), and integrity development (Schuyler, 2010) using somatic learning methods and experiential training to enhance leadership awareness and integrity. Additionally, culture can shape leadership attitudes through honesty, discipline, and cooperation (Siradz, 2019). For Islamic education teachers, implementing integrity results in high work performance (Baharom et al., 2014), and value learning can improve dimensions of moral integrity (empathy, honesty, respect, and courage in early childhood) (Betawi, 2018). One of the challenges in shaping the golden generation in Indonesia is developing the strengthening of integrity and leadership, given that government structures and officials often struggle to set good examples in various life aspects. How can integrity character strengthening form leadership with integrity? The potential for strengthening character values can contribute to realizing a great Indonesia, having a golden generation in 2045.

The Indonesian government believes that preparing the nation's generation through education is the most prioritized way to a great nation in 2045. Hence, educational institutions are not only places to transfer knowledge but also to shape leadership character (Rokhman et al., 2014). Specifically, Islamic educational institutions are expected to play a role and prove

their contribution to achieving the golden generation in the future, countering the negative stigma that Islamic educational institutions such as madrasah develop radical political paradigms (Arif et al., 2017). Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia have a unique potential. Empirically, strengthening the character of leadership integrity in boarding school-based Islamic educational institutions is based on strong Islamic values and the distinctive cultural traits of the Indonesian nation, which differ from general educational institutions. The full-day learning process aims to fulfill good moral character alongside cognitive and skill aspects, with varied pedagogical arts, methods, and strategies that integrate science, maintained as a unique education system model (Ma'arif, 2018). In this context, the Mu'allimin Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta Islamic Boarding School (PP-M2Y), managed directly by the Muhammadiyah Central Leadership, has a long history and significant role in enriching Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. Founded by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan in 1918, it has entered its second century. Until now, it continues to strive for the formation of leadership integrity in future leaders by implementing leadership, nationalism, and community-oriented cadre training. The phenomenon of integrity and leadership strengthening based on boarding school is suspected to be a model for strengthening character values in Islamic education specifically and supporting the Indonesia Emas 2045 program. Therefore, the scope of this study includes leadership integrity strengthening policies, individual experiences in integrity strengthening, and the model of leadership integrity strengthening based on the Mu'allimin Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta Islamic Boarding School.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach with phenomenology to obtain data on the location and understanding of participants' experiences regarding the phenomenon of strengthening integrity values in shaping future leaders at the Mu'allimin Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta Islamic Boarding School (PP-M2Y). The characteristics of the research location show the phenomenon naturally and as it is. The number of participants is 17, who truly experienced and understood the events, considering Creswell, (Creswell, 2015) recommendation for this type of research to use 5 to 25 participants, paying attention to data saturation. The researcher identified elders (kiai or retired directors), leaders of boarding school, teachers (*ustaz*), student supervisors (*musyrif*), national figures, alumni, and students as participant criteria (Tabel 1). The researcher was directly involved in collecting data using in-depth interview techniques, observing phenomena at the Islamic boarding school, and collecting documentation data. The researcher used source triangulation techniques, methods, and extended research time, while data analysis techniques followed the recommended analysis flow (Miles et al., 2014), namely data condensation, presentation, and conclusion.

Table 1. Criteria/profile of Participants

Participant Criteria	Number	description
Kiai/retired PP-M2Y Leaders	2	Reached by researcher
Boarding School Leaders	2	
Boarding School Teachers	5	
Student Supervisors (Musyrif) in Dormitory	2	
Alumni/National Figures	3	
Students	3	
Total	(17)	

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Integrity and Policy Strengthening Character Integrity Leadership in PP-M2Y

This exposition implies that the term "integrity" has yielded many perspectives. According to Webster's Dictionary, it means wholeness, entirety, and an unbroken state. In psychology, it means intact or unbroken, indicating the quality of self (Horowitz, 2001). A person acts morally if they possess moral knowledge and character, making integrity the unification of a person's

values, morals, and behaviors (Mitchell, 2015). Honesty is a dimension of integrity and the core of character (Huberts, 2018). Dunn, (2009) describes integrity as more than just consistency. The concept of integrity can be seen in cases of moral academic honesty and plagiarism (Piascik & Brazeau, 2010). Huberts, (2018) places moral integrity in government and organizations, as well as in leadership and decision-making (Gea, 2014) (Karthikeyan, 2017). Therefore, integrity serves as a crucial foundation for actions, decision-making, and performance in leadership. Referring to the crystallization of five cultural and national character education values in Indonesia, such as religiousness, nationalism, independence, mutual cooperation, and integrity, the strengthening of these moral values plays an essential role in reinforcing moral integrity and developing affective potential (Umami et al., 2019). This concept is challenging to actualize, necessitating synergy with other theories and facts, such as in religious educational institutions (Islamic boarding schools). The five character indicators above are implemented in the learning process, ultimately forming integrity character and creating an effective and conducive learning climate centered on the child, thus building the nation's identity (Widianto et al., 2023).

Based on empirical research findings, the strengthening of leadership integrity at the Mu'allimin Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta Islamic Boarding School (PP-M2Y) involves several aspects: character education policies for future leaders, internalization of values, engagement in social interactions and self-reflection, and the conditioning and integration of continuous learning and cadre development at all middle age levels. This is comprehensively realized in the Islamic education activities at PP-M2Y. The main policy of character education for students/cadres is the six-year boarding school education, prioritizing systematic, structured, and continuous cadre principles to produce leaders, scholars, educators with the slogan "Future Leaders Cadre, National Cadre, Humanitarian Cadre, Ummah Cadre, and Muhammadiyah Cadre" with the motto "*Candradimuka Kader Masa Depan*," fundamentally aiming to form the students' moral integrity comprehensively. As depicted in Fig. 1, the foundation and policy of character integrity education at PP-M2Y.

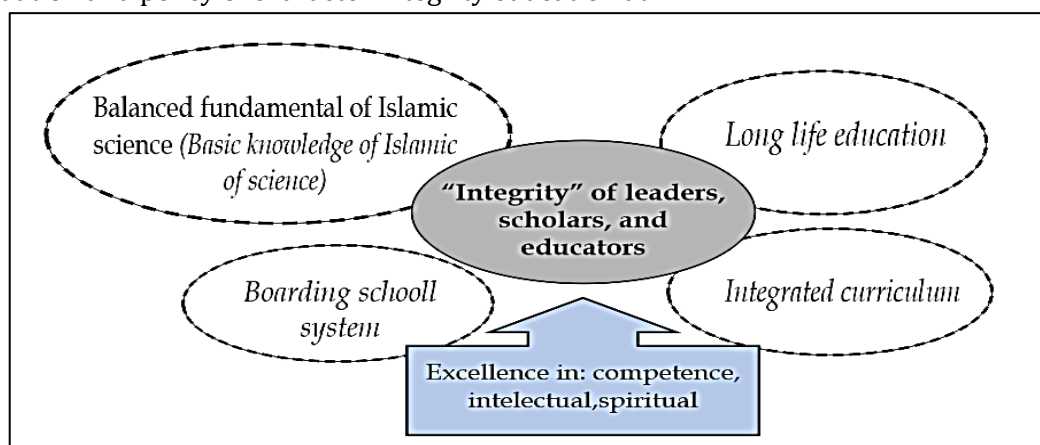


Fig. 1. The Foundation and Policies of Character Integrity and Leadership Education at PP-M2Y

The policy for strengthening character is based on the vision, mission, and objectives of shaping students into future leaders, scholars, and educators with a strong and consistent Muhammadiyah ideology aligned with Islamic teachings. The implementation of this policy is through a boarding school education system that balances spiritual, intellectual, skill, and moral competencies, ensuring that students possess an open-minded perspective in both Islamic worldview and national identity, as well as steadfast faith and leadership ethics. The integration of the pesantren curriculum with the national education curriculum is packaged in a learning format that accommodates both theoretical and practical balance, mentoring, modeling, leadership, and dormitory life of the students. This integration considers four

concepts: humanity (insaniyah), science, culture, and learning, derived from the teachings of the Quran and Hadith as upheld by Muhammadiyah. Furthermore, the learning system is oriented towards long-term education with self-management and guidance programs, and the balanced application of Islamic knowledge. Therefore, PP-M2Y strives to formulate policies that can be consistently and sustainably implemented and adhered to within the community.

The strengthening of character integrity and leadership is developed for each student as a prospective leader. National figures and developers of PP-M2Y explain; "As a cadre school in Mu'allimin, students are expected to become the spearhead of Muhammadiyah, thus the most prominent aspect built is to become leaders of the community, not only as Muhammadiyah leaders but also as teachers and preachers. The goal here is to develop self-confidence and integrity as prospective leaders. Therefore, Mu'allimin students present themselves authentically, and these values, namely integrity, are reflected through aspects of cadre development, which includes leadership, humanity, nationalism, as well as moral, intellectual, and ethical standards. These are absolute requirements; without them, the foundation of leadership will be fragile. The target is to cultivate a broad perspective so that when they graduate from Mu'allimin, they have a commitment to serve Indonesia, the nation, and humanity in their respective fields. The good culture of Mu'allimin is self-confidence as a prospective leader" (W.ASM.016). Further, a similar statement by an alumnus says, "The outcome is that they can become the spearhead, with a very high sense of belonging to Muhammadiyah" (W.ZN.018). This statement signifies that the goal for students of PP-M2Y is to possess an authentic, integral attitude, holding onto principles of consistency between words and actions, which is an absolute requirement for serving and becoming a prospective leader ready to stand in the forefront. Students are expected not only to serve within their own environment but also in a broader scope of nationalism and humanity.

3.2. Internalization of values, social interaction and self-reflection

Character integrity is strengthened through the internalization of values, social interactions, and self-reflection. Educators at PP-M2Y play a significant role in reinforcing and internalizing integrity through 24-hour student mentoring, both in-class and extracurricular (student organizations), integrated with a strict daily schedule in the boarding school system. Additionally, interactive outdoor learning such as science camps, student outbound activities, leadership training, and Hizbul Wathan resilience drills are conducted through practical experience and community engagement. PP-M2Y has a guidebook for cadre development that presents materials and competencies related to character values. The principles of development include exemplary behavior, habituation, advice and motivation, supervision, and the provision of rewards and punishments. The development aspects include piety, intellectuality, independence, pioneering spirit, and the enthusiasm for nahi ma'ruf amar munkar. To ensure optimal integrity strengthening, involvement of national figures, retired teachers, and alumni through public lectures and cadre guidance is essential. An ustaz reflects on his experience, stating: "providing exemplary behavior, introducing leadership models both within Mu'allimin and beyond. For example, the leadership model of alumni and founder K.H. Ahmad Dahlan due to his significant contributions and the benefits felt by society in terms of humanity and Indonesianism. The authoritative leadership of Mr. AR Fahrudin, the chairpersons of PP Muhammadiyah, Mr. Mansur, the renowned Kahar Muzakki, the Mu'allimin directors, the former rector of UMY, and members of DPR and state institutions. On a national level, there is Buya Ahmad Syafii Maarif as a national figure. We provide concrete examples and then they see the characteristics of each leadership model, sometimes I challenge students about what they want to be like and invite them to think and engage in dialogue" (W.ETS.05).

The ustaz at PP-M2Y have endeavored to form leadership integrity by exemplifying good and relevant leadership models both within the internal environment and on a national and societal level. This concrete effort inspires students, leading them to feel confident and capable in undergoing the learning process of leadership and integrity values. For students, knowledge about character integrity and leadership models can build their self-confidence to achieve

proficiency. Each element at PP-M2Y, including leaders, ustaz, security personnel, Musyrif, and alumni, demonstrates self-integrity by setting examples and modeling behavior, fostering emotional relationships, openness, friendliness, and closeness with all students. The experience of internalizing character integrity is also carried out through kind greetings, invitations, stories and dialogues, democratic attitudes, introducing models, and organizational training, with the process being conducted democratically.

3.3. Conditioning and integration of continuous learning

The learning environment for students is conditioned through habitual practices of obligatory and voluntary worship, ultimately forming a self-awareness of worship, and enhancing the emotional and self-confidence of students. This aspect also integrates ongoing cadre development learning for all age levels, from childhood to adolescence, starting from the 1st year to the 6th year. Every student is required to undergo cadre development from entry to graduation as alumni. Another stage includes the Darul Arqam Purna program and Muhammadiyah student exams as a finishing touch, providing students with specific materials for community involvement, held before graduation to assess the students' commitment and seriousness. The creation of a conducive learning climate through classes, dormitories, extracurricular activities, leadership cadre training, and outdoor camps is an effort to support the realization of values and character within students. An active learning system will support students' awareness of dishonesty, cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of deception. Ultimately, the integrity held by students is reflected in the words of the PP-M2Y leader, who expresses: "Values are maintained and upheld, or fought for, wherever they are and in any situation. These values are held and honored as taught at Mu'allimin, and that is the integrity of Mu'allimin students" (W.MLA.01).

The facts about Islamic education at PP-M2Y over the past century have emphasized efforts to cultivate disciplined, caring, independent, responsible, honest, committed, consistent, patient, tolerant, critical behavior, and the integrity of leadership character in students and alumni. Through an integrated learning system, students are equipped with comprehensive Islamic knowledge and competencies, demonstrating good skills, consistent attitudes and spirituality, and authentic character aligned with Islamic teachings. This further reinforces findings about the pesantren education culture that successfully shapes positive student character through holistic education, such as teaching and character formation (Setiawan & Velasufah, 2020), thus being recognized as a character education institution (Fitri & Ondeng, 2022). Specifically, it strengthens the younger generation in developing their integrity character based on the Quran and Hadith (Ardiansyah & Iswahyudi, 2023). Religious values such as brotherhood, mutual help, unity, pursuit of knowledge, sincerity, struggle, obedience to God, the Prophet, scholars, and leaders further solidify the unique position of Islamic boarding schools (Raharjo, 1983). This boarding school tradition is known as one of the great traditions in Indonesia (Van Bruinessen, 1995), and has a long history in the nation's educational efforts (Nata, 2001).

Based on these theories, the findings indicate that the experience of those involved in instilling character values at PP-M2Y plays a significant and powerful role in the process of strengthening integrity and leadership in students. This strengthening process is always linked to the strong attention of PP-M2Y leaders, teachers/ustaz, and alumni in upholding the noble ideals of KH. Ahmad Dahlan and the Muhammadiyah movement in advancing the welfare of the community and the nation, particularly through the role of PP-M2Y alumni in life and leadership contexts. Similar phenomena are observed at PP-M2Y where policies regarding students are trained and developed through various designed cadre programs such as Taruna Melati, Hizbul Wathan, Tapak Suci, entrusting students with leadership roles in committees and organizations like the Muhammadiyah Student Association, reflecting a gradual and staged involvement of students. These findings are consistent with the research by Roni et al., (2020) on the strengthening of character integrity education in pesantren-based schools integrated into learning activities, extracurricular activities, and school culture habituation.

According to this research, strengthening integrity to shape future leaders can indeed contribute to advancing character development in Islamic educational institutions (boarding school) specifically and general educational institutions with similar goals. The leadership role of PP-M2Y alumni has demonstrated their involvement as leaders and pioneers in various Islamic educational institutions, regional leadership, and national leadership, as they are accepted and needed by society for the benefit of the community and the nation. Based on the described conditions, the prospects for strengthening the integrity of future leaders in Islamic educational institutions such as boarding school can serve as a model in shaping the integrity character of Indonesia's golden generation. This is because the boarding school environment is ideal for forming integrity character and emphasizes long-term education. Studies show that appropriate environmental conditions and the use of local wisdom can shape character (Jamrah, 2016). Thus, creating conditions to build integrity and commendable behavior in character education requires a collaborative tri-center of education (Marzuki & Sholihah, 2023). Character integrity and leadership education based on boarding schools in Indonesia is indeed effective as it not only has an independent and traditional leadership culture and pattern but also adopts and integrates modern leadership systems.

This allows for transformation to every student through experiential learning methods, where leaders provide exemplary behavior and appropriate examples as seen in PP-M2Y. This proves that boarding schools in Indonesia indeed has a strong educational spirit (Nilan, 2009), and continues to grow through different historical paths due to its adaptability to various changes (Falikul Isbah, 2020). This also challenges the notion that Islamic boarding schools education is weak in national education (Kosim et al., 2023). Islamic educational institutions such as boarding schools actually receive support from many parties as they have made serious efforts and attention in shaping a generation of Indonesians with integrity and becoming superior future leaders. Boarding school has concretely played a role in strengthening national character, especially leadership integrity, with the spirit and values of Islam. If the integrity of leadership is developed and supported by many parties, then students and the nation's future generations will possess complete character, strong spirituality, and noble leadership insights as preparation to become agents of change in the future.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion, this study concludes that strengthening leadership integrity at PP-M2Y involves several key aspects. (a) There is a character-building policy that is collectively and consistently understood and implemented, aimed at reinforcing students' integrity as future leaders. This policy shapes cadres with a forward-looking orientation toward Indonesian identity, leadership qualities, and awareness of community and national issues, promoting moderate behavior and open-mindedness (Islamic worldview) while maintaining a balance of spiritual, intellectual, practical, and moral competencies. Implementation is realized through a six-year boarding school education system, curriculum integration, and a long-term, lifelong learning approach. (b) Integrity and leadership are strengthened through the internalization of values in all aspects of learning, social interaction, and self-reflection. (c) Continuous learning is supported by a systematic and structured cadre development process at both the basic and secondary education levels. Strengthening leadership integrity at PP-M2Y requires ongoing support, maintenance, and development, as it can serve as a model for character education programs with similar aims—especially in reinforcing integrity and leadership. This study highlights the importance of developing and sustaining systems to foster leadership integrity in Islamic boarding schools. Additionally, the findings contribute to public trust in choosing Islamic boarding schools that implement such integrity-strengthening programs for future leaders. Other educational institutions can also build visions and movements to strengthen integrity, contributing to the development of national character.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the Islamic Religious Education Study Program, Universitas Islam Ahmad Dahlan Sinjai, Indonesia; the Department of Instructional Technology, Faculty of Education, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia; and the Department of Mechanical Engineering Education, Faculty of Engineering, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia, for their support and contributions to this research.

Declarations

- Author contribution** : All authors contributed to the research including drafting, data collection, transcription, analysis, and revising the manuscript. Each has approved the final manuscript for publication
- Funding statement** : The authors received research funding support from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia during the conduct of this research
- Conflict of interest** : All authors declare that they have no conflicting interests that could affect the integrity and objectivity of this research.
- Ethics Approval** : Not applicable
- Additional information** : No additional information is available for this paper.

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