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Between the Formal and the Hidden: Teachers' and Students' Narratives of Curriculum Integration, Religious Values, and Character Development in Indonesian Madrasah

Nasyiatul Lailiyah¹ , Siti Aisah² , Ahmad Halid³ ,
Abu Aman Siddiq Al Ghafar⁴ , Nadhliyah Alfin
Rochmati⁵

¹Universitas Islam Jember, Indonesia

²Universitas Islam Jember, Indonesia

³Universitas Islam Jember, Indonesia

⁴Universitas Islam Jember, Indonesia

⁵Universite Yangzhou, Jiangsu, Tiongkok

ABSTRACT

Background. The integration of the curriculum of Islamic boarding schools and madrasahs is an important issue in Islamic education, especially in an effort to balance academic achievement and the formation of religious character. Hidden curriculum has been recognized as a potential mechanism for achieving these educational goals.

Purpose. This study aims to analyze the contribution of the integration of the pesantren curriculum through the hidden curriculum to students' academic achievement and religious character formation at MA Miftahul Ulum Lumajang.

Method. This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving purposively selected informants, including madrasah heads, teachers, students, and pesantren administrators. The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model.

Results. The findings reveal that MA Miftahul Ulum implements an Integrated Tricurriculum Model that combines formal, non-formal, and hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum plays a significant role in integrating educational practices and fostering both academic achievement and students' religious character through various implicit learning experiences embedded in daily school and boarding school activities.

Conclusion. This study confirms that *hidden curriculum* not only plays a role in character formation, but also becomes a key mechanism in curriculum integration that has an impact on academic achievement. These findings provide important implications for the development of a more holistic and contextual Islamic education curriculum.

KEYWORDS

Academic Achievements, Curriculum Integration, Hidden Curriculum, Islamic Boarding Schools–Madrasah, Religious Character

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Correspondence:

Ahmad Halid,
ahmadhalid@uij.ac.id

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INTRODUCTION

The integration of pesantren and madrasah curricula has become an increasingly important issue in contemporary Islamic education in Indonesia. On the one hand, madrasahs are required to implement nationally standardized curricula, learning outcomes, and assessment.

systems regulated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Fuadi et al., 2026; Zhang et al., 2020). On the other hand, pesantren maintain educational traditions that are rooted in religious values, communal practices, and cultural transmission through daily interactions (Amalia, 2024; Anwar et al., 2022; Aviah Asmaul Husna & Hamid, 2025; Hardiansyah et al., 2025). This dual orientation often creates tensions between formal accountability demands and the organic educational processes that characterize pesantren life. Scholars have argued that such tensions reflect broader debates regarding curriculum ideology, particularly the relationship between official curriculum structures and the hidden curriculum embedded within institutional culture (Apple & Apple, 2004; Demircioğlu & Sakar, 2026; Jackson, 1968).

From a critical curriculum perspective, curriculum is not merely a collection of subjects and learning objectives, but also a medium through which values, norms, and power relations are reproduced (Apple & Apple, 2004; DeLuca et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2023; Nayli, 2024). Consequently, the success of curriculum integration cannot be understood solely through formal curriculum documents, but must also consider the hidden curriculum that shapes students' dispositions, religious identities, and learning habits. Previous studies have demonstrated the role of hidden curriculum in fostering religious character and moral development (Aviah Asmaul Husna & Hamid, 2025; Hayati & Dahliana, 2022; Putri, 2023). However, limited attention has been given to how hidden curriculum functions as a mechanism that integrates formal and non-formal educational systems while simultaneously contributing to academic achievement.

This issue is particularly relevant in Islamic boarding schools that operate integrated educational systems. Miftahul Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Lumajang, one of the oldest Islamic educational institutions in East Java, provides a compelling context for examining this phenomenon. Its educational structure combines formal madrasah education with diniyah learning and various religious activities that shape students' daily experiences. Therefore, this study investigates how hidden curriculum mediates the integration of pesantren and madrasah curricula and how such integration contributes to students' academic achievement and religious character formation.

A number of studies show that the integration of Islamic boarding school-madrasah education is a growing phenomenon, especially in efforts to strengthen the religious character of students. Recent studies confirm that *the hidden curriculum* has an important role in shaping religious values, attitudes, and behaviors through institutional culture, teacher examples, and worship routines (Av et al., 2020; Farida, 2025; Imawan, 2025; Latif, 2025; Nayli, 2024). Meanwhile, Faizah (2025), Baharuddin (2025), and Sabri (2025) emphasized that the influence of *hidden curriculum* on students' religious character occurs indirectly through the social and cultural environment of institutions (Latif, 2025; Nayli, 2024; S, 2025). In the context of Islamic education, *the hidden curriculum* not only functions as a complement to the formal curriculum, but also as a means of internalizing values that take place implicitly in the daily lives of students (Amalia, 2024; Asbarin et al., 2018; Hardiansyah et al., 2025; Mufidah et al., 2022).

However, these studies tend not to comprehensively examine the relationship between the integration of the pesantren curriculum and the *hidden curriculum*, and its impact on academic achievement and religious character simultaneously, especially in a qualitative approach based on case studies. Based on this study, there is a *research gap* that shows that there are still limited studies that examine the integration of the pesantren curriculum through a *hidden curriculum* perspective by placing academic achievement and religious character as two outcomes that are studied simultaneously in a specific empirical context. Therefore, this research has *novelty* value by

presenting an in-depth analysis of how the practice of *hidden curriculum* in curriculum integration is able to form these two important aspects in one case study framework.

This study aims to analyze in depth how the integration of the pesantren–madrasah curriculum through the hidden curriculum contributes to the formation of students' academic achievement and religious character at MA Miftahul Ulum Lumajang. The study focuses on three main aspects: (1) the integration of the pesantren–madrasah curriculum as the primary educational context, (2) the hidden curriculum as a mechanism for value internalization and educational integration, and (3) students' academic achievement and religious character as the observed outcomes of the educational process.

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data was collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using interactive data analysis techniques that included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. In this study, several important terms need to be defined, namely: *hidden curriculum* as educational values and practices that are not written but internalized in daily activities; curriculum integration as a merger of the Islamic boarding school and madrasah education system; and religious character as attitudes and behaviors that reflect Islamic values in daily life.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of how the integration of pesantren and madrasah curricula through the hidden curriculum contributes to students' academic achievement and religious character at MA Miftahul Ulum Lumajang. A qualitative case study was considered the most appropriate approach because the phenomenon under investigation is context-dependent and involves complex interactions among educational practices, institutional culture, and students' lived experiences. This design enabled the researcher to explore the phenomenon holistically within its natural setting and to capture dimensions that might not be adequately revealed through quantitative methods (Yin, 2018).

The participants of this study were individuals directly involved in the implementation of curriculum integration at MA Miftahul Ulum Lumajang. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, based on their relevance to the research focus. The participants consisted of one head of madrasah, six teachers, thirteen students, and four pesantren administrators.

The selection criteria were determined as follows: (1) the head of madrasah was responsible for academic policy and curriculum implementation; (2) teachers had been actively involved in formal or diniyah education for at least three years and participated in curriculum-related activities; (3) students were enrolled in different grade levels, had resided in the pesantren for a minimum of two years, and actively participated in pesantren programs such as PQMU, syawir, and kitab learning; and (4) pesantren administrators were directly responsible for managing students' daily educational and religious activities. Data collection continued until data saturation was achieved, indicated by the absence of substantially new information from additional interviews.

In qualitative research, the researcher served as the primary instrument (*human instrument*). To support data collection, several complementary instruments were employed: (1) semi-structured interview guides to facilitate in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives; (2) observation sheets to systematically record educational activities, social interactions, and institutional culture; and (3) documentary analysis forms for reviewing institutional documents, activity schedules, regulations, and student achievement records.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the instruments, the interview protocol was reviewed by two experts in Islamic education and qualitative research prior to data collection. Observations were

conducted systematically using predefined observation indicators derived from the research focus, while documentary evidence was cross-checked with interview and observation data to ensure consistency and accuracy.

This research is carried out through several stages, namely: 1) The preparation stage, including literature study, preparation of research instruments, and management of research permits; 2) The data collection stage, which is carried out through observation of student activities, in-depth interviews with informants, and collection of supporting documents; 3) The data analysis stage, which is carried out simultaneously with the data collection process; 4) The stage of preparing the report, in the form of writing research results in a systematic manner.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (Miles et al., 2014), consisting of three interconnected processes: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The analysis was conducted inductively to identify patterns, themes, and meanings related to curriculum integration, hidden curriculum practices, academic achievement, and students' religious character.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was enhanced through triangulation of data sources (head of madrasah, teachers, students, and administrators), triangulation of methods (interviews, observations, and documentation), and member checking with selected participants. Transferability was supported through rich and detailed descriptions of the research context. Dependability was ensured by maintaining a clear audit trail of research procedures and analytical decisions, while confirmability was strengthened through peer debriefing and continuous reflection on potential researcher bias throughout the study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study found that MA Miftahul Ulum Lumajang implements an integrated educational system that combines formal madrasah education, diniyah learning, and pesantren-based cultural practices. The integration is reflected not only in the formal curriculum structure but also in various hidden curriculum practices embedded in students' daily activities. Based on observations, interviews, and document analysis, three major findings emerged: (1) the existence of an integrated curriculum model linking formal and non-formal education, (2) the operation of hidden curriculum through pesantren culture and routines, and (3) the contribution of this integration to students' academic achievement and religious character formation.

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Informants

No	Category Information	Quantity	Remarks
1	Head of Madrasah	1 person	Curriculum policymakers
2	Teacher	6 people	Formal and diniyah teachers
3	Students/Santri	13 people	Various levels and regional origins
4	Islamic Boarding School Management	4 people	Manager of daily activities of students
Total		24 people	Data saturated

The number of informants was determined based on *the principle of data saturation*, in which no significant new information was found from additional interviews.

Integrated Curriculum Structure

Based on the results of interviews and observations, it was found that MA Miftahul Ulum implements a curriculum structure that integrates three educational paths simultaneously: the formal curriculum (madrasah), the non-formal curriculum (diniyah), and the hidden curriculum (pesantren culture). The results of the interview with the Head of MU Supreme Court revealed:

"Our priority program is indeed diniyah or PAI. Children cannot only be academically smart, but must be strong in their religion. That's why the schedule is packed from morning to night." (Informant KMA, 2026).

These findings indicate that the hidden curriculum at MA Miftahul Ulum extends beyond the traditional understanding proposed by Jackson (1968), who conceptualized hidden curriculum as the implicit transmission of norms, values, and behavioral expectations through everyday school experiences. The eight identified aspects, discipline, independence, deliberation (*syawir*), intensive religiosity, healthy competition, international orientation, institutional integration, and physical resilience, demonstrate how values are systematically internalized through students' daily participation in pesantren life.

Several of these aspects correspond closely to established dimensions of hidden curriculum discussed in previous studies, particularly discipline, obedience to institutional norms, social interaction, and character formation (Jackson, 1968; Margolis, 2001). However, this study also identified dimensions that are less frequently emphasized in the literature, namely international orientation and institutional integration. International orientation is reflected in the aspiration and preparation of students to pursue further education abroad, particularly in Egypt, while institutional integration refers to the coordinated educational practices between formal madrasah education and pesantren-based learning. These findings suggest that hidden curriculum in pesantren settings operates not only as a mechanism for character formation but also as a means of fostering educational aspirations and organizational coherence.

Furthermore, the finding regarding students' independence, particularly among those originating from regions outside Java, supports Lickona's (Lickona, 1992) argument that character development is most effective when values are practiced repeatedly within a supportive social environment. The boarding school system provides continuous opportunities for students to internalize self-discipline, responsibility, and autonomy through daily routines rather than through explicit instruction alone.

Table 2. Integrated Daily Curriculum Structure

Time	Activities	Types of Curriculum	Duration
07.00-10.00	Early Childhood School	Non-Formal (Priority)	3 hours
10.00-14.00	Formal School (MA)	Formal	4 hours
15.00-16.30	Higher School (Religious)	Non-Formal	1.5 hours
After Maghrib	Reciting the Qur'an (PQMU Program)	Non-Formal	± 1 hour
20.00-22.00	<i>Syawir</i> (Deliberation) & Reciting the Book	Non-Formal + Hidden Curriculum	2 hours

Source: Field observations, January–March 2026

Identify Hidden Practices Curriculum

Based on participatory observation and in-depth interviews, eight aspects of the hidden curriculum were found that operate implicitly in the daily lives of students. One of the students from Kalimantan revealed:

"I came here from Kalimantan myself. At first, it was hard because he was far from his parents, but over time he got used to it. I learned to be independent, starting from washing clothes, managing pocket money, to waking up on my own without being woken up." (W/S/07/02/2026).

The findings indicate that the hidden curriculum at MA Miftahul Ulum operates through the internalization of values embedded in students' daily routines and social interactions. The eight identified aspects, discipline, independence, deliberation (*syawir*), intensive religiosity, healthy competition, international orientation, institutional integration, and physical resilience, reflect the implicit learning processes that occur beyond the formal curriculum. This finding is consistent with Jackson's (1968) conception of the hidden curriculum as the transmission of values, norms, and behavioral expectations through everyday educational experiences rather than through explicit instruction.

Several aspects identified in this study, particularly discipline, independence, and religiosity, align with findings from previous studies that emphasize the role of hidden curriculum in shaping students' character and moral development (Hayati & Dahliana, 2022; Putri, 2023). The experience narrated by the student from Kalimantan illustrates how independence is not taught as a formal subject but is developed through continuous participation in boarding school life. This process reflects Lickona's (1991) argument that character formation occurs most effectively through habituation and repeated practice within a supportive environment.

Furthermore, this study identified two dimensions that are less frequently discussed in the hidden curriculum literature, namely international orientation and institutional integration. International orientation is reflected in the aspiration of students to pursue higher education abroad, particularly in Egypt, which is reinforced through the presence of successful alumni. Institutional integration refers to the coordinated relationship between formal madrasah education and pesantren-based learning activities that collectively shape students' educational experiences. These findings suggest that, within the pesantren context, the hidden curriculum functions not only as a mechanism for character formation but also as a means of cultivating educational aspirations and strengthening organizational coherence.

Table 3. Identify Hidden Practices Curriculum

Yes	The Hidden Curriculum	Manifestation Empiris	Remarks
1	Time discipline	All students were present on time at each change of activity	Daily
2	Independence	Students from outside Java manage their personal needs without parents	Daily
3	Deliberation	Syawir <i>activities</i> every night at 20.00–22.00	Daily
4	Intensive religiosity	PQMU program after Maghrib and book reciting	Daily
5	Healthy competition	Preparation for the book reading competition and fahmil Qur'an	Weekly

6	Internationalization	Discourse on sending students to Egypt and comparative study	Monthly
7	Institutional integration	Routine coordination between formal teachers and pesantren administrators	Weekly
8	Physical endurance	Intense activity without long breaks	Weekly

Academic and Non-Academic Achievement

Documentation data shows that MA Miftahul Ulum students have consistent achievements at various levels (local to international), including sending students to Al-Azhar University Egypt. These findings are an empirical indicator that the applied education system not only produces a religious character, but also a competitive academic competence.

In addition, several outstanding students were sent to continue their studies at Al-Azhar University, Egypt. This was expressed by the pesantren administrator:

"Every year we select outstanding students to be sent to Egypt. Several batches have departed. This is a motivation for his classmates." (W/PP/02/02/2026).

The achievements attained by MA Miftahul Ulum students cannot be understood solely as the result of formal classroom instruction. The findings indicate that the hidden curriculum plays a significant role in shaping dispositions, habits, and motivations that support both academic and non-academic success. Through daily routines, religious practices, and communal learning activities, students internalize values such as discipline, perseverance, responsibility, and self-regulation, which are widely recognized as important predictors of academic achievement.

From the perspective of character education, Lickona (1991) argues that sustained exposure to value-based practices enables students to develop habits that support personal and academic excellence. Similarly, the intensive educational environment of the pesantren provides continuous opportunities for students to cultivate self-discipline and learning commitment through activities such as PQMU, kitab studies, and *syawir*. These practices indirectly strengthen students' cognitive engagement, communication skills, and learning persistence, which contribute to their success in academic competitions and further educational opportunities.

The finding also aligns with the Self-Determination Theory proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000), which emphasizes that achievement is influenced by the fulfillment of three psychological needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. The boarding school environment encourages students to manage their own daily responsibilities (autonomy), continuously improve their religious and academic capacities (competence), and participate in a supportive learning community (relatedness). These conditions create a strong motivational foundation that supports achievement beyond formal academic instruction.

Furthermore, the aspiration of students to pursue higher education at institutions such as Al-Azhar University appears to be reinforced through the hidden curriculum of role modeling and institutional culture. The presence of alumni who have successfully continued their studies abroad creates a culture of high expectations and achievement. This finding supports Bandura's (1986) Social Learning Theory, which suggests that individuals develop aspirations and behaviors through observing successful models within their social environment. In this sense, the hidden curriculum not only contributes to character formation but also functions as a mechanism for cultivating educational aspirations and academic excellence.

Table 4. Integrated Daily Curriculum Structure

Year	Types of Competitions	Level	Achievements
2023	Kaligrafi	Lumajang Regency	2nd Place
2023	Musabaqah Fahmil Qur'an	East Java Province	2nd Place
2023	Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an	East Java Province	Hope 1
2023	Musabaqah Hifzil Qur'an 10 juz	East Java Province	Hope 1
2023	Sending Students to Egypt	International	3 people
2024	Musabaqah Fahmil Qur'an	East Java Province	1st Place
2024	Musabaqah Fahmil Qur'an	East Java Province	1st Place
2025	Musabaqah Fahmil Qur'an	East Java Province	3rd Place
2025	Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an	Lumajang Regency	3rd Place
2025	Musabaqah Syahril Qur'an	Holiday rentals in Bali	3rd Place

Diversity of Origin of MA Miftahul Ulum Lumajang Students

Documentation data shows that MA Miftahul Ulum students not only come from Lumajang and its surroundings, but also from various provinces outside Java. These findings show that the attractiveness of these Islamic boarding schools is not limited to the local scale, but has reached the national scale.

Table 5. Distribution of the Origin of MA Miftahul Ulum Students

No	Province of Origin	Number of Students	Remarks
1	East Java	127	Including Lumajang
2	Central Java	23	-
3	West Java	15	-
4	Kalimantan Selatan	8	Farthest
5	Nusa Tenggara Barat	5	-
6	Sumatra Selatan	4	-
Total		182	

The diversity of students' geographical backgrounds represents an important dimension of the educational environment at MA Miftahul Ulum. The presence of students from different provinces, including regions outside Java, creates a multicultural social setting that enriches daily interactions within the pesantren. Beyond indicating the institution's national reach, this diversity contributes significantly to the operation of the hidden curriculum.

From the perspective of hidden curriculum theory, values are often transmitted through informal interactions, social norms, and shared experiences rather than through formal instruction (Jackson, 1968). In the context of MA Miftahul Ulum, students from diverse cultural and regional backgrounds are required to adapt to common rules, routines, and religious practices. This adaptation process encourages the development of independence, tolerance, social responsibility, and mutual respect among students. These values are not explicitly taught in formal lessons but emerge through daily participation in the boarding school community.

Furthermore, the diversity of student origins strengthens the integration of formal and non-formal education by creating opportunities for collaborative learning and intercultural communication. Activities such as *syawir*, communal worship, and dormitory life facilitate interactions among students with different cultural experiences, thereby supporting the formation of social and religious character. This finding is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist perspective, which emphasizes that learning and character development occur through social interaction and participation in a community of practice.

The findings also suggest that the attractiveness of MA Miftahul Ulum extends beyond academic reputation alone. Interviews with students and parents indicate that the institution is perceived as capable of fostering independence, discipline, and religious commitment through its integrated educational environment. Therefore, the diversity of student origins can be interpreted not only as an indicator of institutional reputation but also as evidence of the broader influence of the hidden curriculum in shaping students' character and educational aspirations.

Curriculum Integration: Tricurricular Models in Curriculum Theory Perspectives

The findings of the study show that MA Miftahul Ulum Lumajang implements curriculum integration in three main dimensions, namely formal, non-formal, and *hidden curriculum*. In the perspective of contemporary curriculum theory, this model does not simply reflect structural integration, but further leads to an *integrated form of curriculum* that holistically integrates content, processes, and *learning experiences* (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017).

In contrast to the traditional curriculum model which tends to be fragmentary and separate between the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, the model found in this study actually shows the existence of systemic cross-dimensional integration. The formal curriculum in madrasahs functions as a structured academic framework, while the non-formal curriculum of pesantren provides reinforcement to the religious aspect through direct practice. On the other hand, *the hidden curriculum* acts as a space for internalizing unwritten values, but it actually has the strongest influence in shaping students' characters.

The concept of *hidden curriculum* introduced by Jackson (1968) was originally understood as an indirect consequence of the formal education process (Jackson, 1968). However, in the context of Islamic boarding schools, this concept has expanded its meaning. The dormitory system that lasts for 24 hours allows the internalization process of values to occur intensively and continuously, so that *the hidden curriculum* is no longer merely implicit, but becomes an integral part of the education system itself.

In line with that, Afifah, Fitriani and Mubin (Afifah, 2021; Fitriani, 2024; Mubin et al., 2020) emphasized that in Islamic educational institutions, the integration between the formal curriculum and *the hidden curriculum* is the main determinant in the formation of religious character. The findings of this study go even beyond that framework by showing that *hidden curriculum* functions not only as a *by-product*, but as an integrative mechanism that bridges formal and non-formal curricula.

Thus, the model found in this study can be categorized as the Holistic-Integrative Tricurriculum Model, which is a curriculum model that places the *hidden curriculum* as the main axis of integration. This model makes a new theoretical contribution to the study of Islamic curriculum, particularly in explaining how integration occurs not only at the level of content, but also at the level of experience and educational culture.

Hidden Curriculum as a Value Internalization Process

In the perspective of character education, the internalization of values is a gradual process that involves the cognitive dimensions (*knowing*), affective (*feeling*), and behavior (*acting*) (Lickona, 1992). The results of this study show that the *hidden curriculum* at MA Miftahul Ulum works predominantly on the dimension of *feeling* and *acting*, namely through habituation, example, and direct experience in the daily lives of students.

In contrast to formal learning which tends to emphasize the *knowing aspect*, the *hidden curriculum* actually operates at the level of students' existential experience. Religious values are not only taught, but are revived through daily practices, such as discipline in worship, polite social interaction, and active involvement in pesantren collective activities.

Syawir activities are a concrete example of this process. In the perspective of *social constructivism* (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978), knowledge and values are not built individually, but through social interaction. In the *syawir* forum, students not only understand the concept of deliberation theoretically, but also internalize the values of democracy, tolerance, and responsibility through direct practice.

This finding is in line with Latif (Latif, 2025) who stated that *hidden curriculum* has high effectiveness in shaping character through routine and institutional culture. In addition, Farida (Farida, 2025) shows that religious habituation in the pesantren environment contributes significantly to the formation of students' spiritual attitudes.

However, this study provides a deeper emphasis that *hidden curriculum* is not just a medium for internalizing values, but is a sustainable *value transformation process*.

The Relationship between Hidden Curriculum and Academic Achievement: A Motivational Theory Perspective

The findings of the study show that *hidden curriculum* has an influence on academic achievement through indirect mechanisms. This relationship can be explained through *Self-Determination Theory* (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which emphasizes that intrinsic motivation develops through the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: competence, autonomy, and *relatedness*.

In the context of MA Miftahul Ulum: a) Discipline formed through pesantren routines increases students' sense of competence in learning. b) Independence trained through dormitory life strengthens the autonomy aspect. c) Social interaction in the pesantren community builds a strong sense of connection. These three aspects simultaneously form the intrinsic motivation that is the main driver of academic success. Thus, the *hidden curriculum* functions as a psychopedagogical factor that strengthens students' learning readiness.

In addition, character education theory asserts that values such as discipline, responsibility, and hard work are strong predictors of academic achievement (Lickona, 1992). These findings are consistent with Mufidah et al. (Mufidah et al., 2022) who show that the integration of character values in the pesantren system has a significant impact on students' academic performance. This research shows that *hidden curriculum* functions as a mediating variable that connects the educational environment with academic achievement. In other words, the influence of the pesantren environment on achievement does not occur directly, but is mediated by the formation of character and intrinsic motivation of students.

Student Diversity: Social Capital Perspectives and Institutional Reputation

The diversity of the backgrounds of students from various regions, including outside Java, can be analyzed through the concept of *social capital* (Bourdieu, 2008). In this perspective, the success

of an educational institution is determined not only by its internal qualities, but also by its social networks, public trust, and symbols of success.

The findings of the study show that the increasing number of students from various regions indicates a strong *accumulation of reputational capital*. This is inseparable from the role of alumni, academic success, and the positive image of the institution in shaping the religious character of students.

This phenomenon also shows the *word-of-mouth effect*, where the positive experience of alumni becomes an effective means of promotion for the institution. In addition, the value of independence and discipline produced through *the hidden curriculum* is the main attraction for the community. This finding is strengthened by Inayah who states that the success of the *hidden curriculum* in shaping the character of students contributes significantly to improving the image of the institution in society (Inayah, 2025).

Institutional Integration in the Perspective of the Educational Ecosystem

The success of the implementation of the integrative curriculum cannot be separated from institutional factors. In the perspective *of educational change*, Fullan & Quinn (2015) emphasized the importance of *system coherence*, which is the alignment of vision, values, and practices across all elements of educational organizations (Fullan & Quinn, 2015).

The findings of the study show that there are two main forms of integration, namely: 1) Vertical integration, which includes the alignment between foundations, Islamic boarding schools, and madrasas. 2) Horizontal integration, which involves collaboration between teachers, pesantren administrators, and all elements of education. This synergy creates an *educational ecosystem* that supports the sustainability of the educational process. In this ecosystem, *the hidden curriculum* can run effectively because the values transmitted are consistent across all lines of education.

Anwar & Maghfiroh (2018) emphasized that the success of the *hidden curriculum* is highly dependent on the consistency of values applied by all elements of the institution. Without this consistency, the process of internalizing values will experience dissonance and lose its effectiveness (Anwar et al., 2022).

Based on the overall findings and discussions, it can be concluded that the integration of the pesantren-madrasah curriculum at MA Miftahul Ulum Lumajang forms a holistic-integrative tricurriculum model that combines formal, non-formal, and *hidden curriculum* in a coherent education system. *The hidden curriculum* has proven to function not only as an implicit element, but also as a key mechanism in the process of internalizing values through habituation, example, and continuous social experience, thus being able to deepen the religious character of students.

Furthermore, this study shows that *hidden curriculum* also contributes to improving academic achievement through its role in building intrinsic motivation, discipline, and student learning independence. The success of this model is also supported by strong *social capital* and institutional reputation, as well as vertical and horizontal integration that creates a consistent and sustainable educational ecosystem. Thus, these findings confirm that the success of Islamic education is not only determined by the design of the formal curriculum, but is highly dependent on the systemic synergy between values, culture, and educational practices that are internalized in the lives of students as a whole.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms the pivotal role of the hidden curriculum as a key mechanism in integrating formal and non-formal educational systems within the Integrated Tricurriculum Model

implemented at MA Miftahul Ulum Lumajang. Through daily practices such as discipline, deliberation, religiosity, and independence, the hidden curriculum significantly contributes to both students' character formation and academic achievement.

The findings contribute to the hidden curriculum literature by demonstrating that, in the pesantren context, hidden curriculum serves not only as a medium of value transmission but also as an integrative mechanism that bridges formal and non-formal educational processes. This expands existing theoretical perspectives on hidden curriculum and offers a contextualized understanding of curriculum integration in Islamic education. Practically, the study provides insights for curriculum policymakers, pesantren administrators, and teachers to strengthen institutional culture, religious routines, and collaborative learning practices as part of holistic educational development.

Nevertheless, the study is limited to a single-case setting and does not examine long-term student outcomes. Future studies are recommended to investigate similar models across different pesantren contexts and to employ comparative, mixed-method, or longitudinal designs to further validate and extend these findings.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the process of preparing this manuscript, the author made limited use of *Artificial Intelligence/AI-based* tools to support the improvement of linguistic aspects, including clarity, coherence, and readability of the text. The use of these tools is entirely directed at the linguistic editing stage and is not involved in the process of data collection, data analysis, interpretation of results, or scientific decision-making. All ideas, analytical frameworks, and conclusions presented in this article are the result of the author's full thinking and responsibility. The author has also conducted a thorough review of the final manuscript to ensure accuracy, consistency, and academic integrity in accordance with scientific publication standards.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: plays a role in the formulation of research concepts, the preparation of research designs, the collection of field data, and the writing of initial draft of the manuscript.

Author 2: contributes to the development of theoretical frameworks, data analysis, and refinement of the substance of the discussion.

Author 3: involved in the process of data validation, critical review of the content of the manuscript, and improvement of methodological aspects.

Author 4: plays a role in the final editing of the manuscript, checking the suitability with the journal template, and coordinating the article submission process.

Author 5: Data curation; Investigation

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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