

THE PEDAGOGY OF HIDDEN CURRICULUM IN PESANTREN: INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE AND CHARACTER INTERNALIZATION IN BASIC ADVANCED COURSE (KMD) PROGRAMS

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji pedagogi kurikulum tersembunyi dalam program Kursus Mahir Dasar (KMD) dan perannya dalam internalisasi karakter di Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana budaya kelembagaan, interaksi sosial, dan pembentukan nilai berfungsi sebagai mekanisme pedagogis dalam membentuk karakter santri dalam pendidikan pesantren. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan dokumentasi yang melibatkan peserta KMD, ustadz pembimbing, serta mentor organisasi. Analisis data dilakukan secara sistematis melalui tahapan pengumpulan data, interpretasi data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kurikulum tersembunyi beroperasi secara intensif melalui budaya kelembagaan pesantren yang berlangsung selama 24 jam, keteladanan para pembimbing, praktik kepemimpinan, serta kegiatan pembelajaran berbasis pengalaman. Nilai-nilai karakter seperti disiplin, tanggung jawab, kemandirian, kerja sama, kepemimpinan, dan kepercayaan diri diinternalisasikan melalui pembiasaan yang berulang dan keterlibatan sosial secara langsung, bukan semata-mata melalui pengajaran formal. Studi ini juga menunjukkan bahwa kegiatan KMD berfungsi sebagai strategi pedagogis yang efektif dalam membentuk karakter santri. Melalui aktivitas yang terstruktur, interaksi sosial, serta pengalaman kepemimpinan, peserta KMD memperoleh ruang untuk menghayati, mempraktikkan, dan menginternalisasikan nilai-nilai karakter dalam kehidupan sehari-hari di lingkungan pesantren.

Kata Kunci: Kurikulum Tersembunyi, Pesantren, Pendidikan Karakter, Pembelajaran Berbasis Pengalaman, KMD, Budaya Kelembagaan

ABSTRACT

This study explores the pedagogy of the hidden curriculum in Basic Advanced Course (Kursus Mahir Dasar/KMD) programs and its role in character internalization at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor. The research aims to analyze how institutional culture, social interaction, and

value habituation function as pedagogical mechanisms in shaping students' character within pesantren education. This study employed a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation involving KMD participants, supervising ustadz, and organizational mentors. Data analysis was conducted thematically through data condensation, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that the hidden curriculum operates intensively through the pesantren's twenty-four-hour institutional culture, exemplary role modeling, leadership practices, and experiential learning activities. Character values such as discipline, responsibility, independence, cooperation, leadership, and self-confidence were internalized through repetitive habituation and direct social engagement rather than through formal instruction alone. The study further demonstrates that KMD activities function as a strategic experiential learning arena where organizational responsibilities and communal interactions strengthen students' moral and social development. The novelty of this study lies in positioning the hidden curriculum as an intentional pedagogical ecosystem embedded within leadership-based experiential education in pesantren. This research contributes theoretically to hidden curriculum discourse and practically to the development of holistic character education models in Islamic educational institutions.

Keyword: *Hidden curriculum, pesantren, character education, experiential learning, KMD, institutional culture.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Character education has become a central concern in contemporary educational discourse due to the increasing complexity of moral, social, and behavioral challenges faced by younger generations in the era of globalization and digital transformation. Educational institutions are no longer expected merely to transmit academic knowledge, but also to cultivate ethical awareness, leadership, discipline, responsibility, and social sensitivity among students. However, many formal educational systems remain predominantly cognitive-oriented and often fail to internalize values at the behavioral and affective levels. Consequently, scholars have increasingly emphasized the importance of the hidden curriculum as an implicit pedagogical mechanism operating through institutional culture, social interaction, role modeling, and everyday educational experiences (Rossouw & Frick, 2023; Berkowitz, 2022). In the context of Islamic boarding school education, communal

culture and value habituation are considered important foundations for sustainable character formation (Anwar et al., 2024).

The hidden curriculum refers to unwritten educational processes that indirectly shape students' attitudes, values, identities, and behavioral orientations through routine practices and social environments. Unlike the formal curriculum, which explicitly focuses on instructional content and measurable competencies, the hidden curriculum functions through habituation, symbolic interaction, institutional norms, and experiential engagement. In recent years, studies have increasingly recognized that the hidden curriculum plays a crucial role in character formation because values become deeply internalized through repetitive lived experiences rather than through theoretical instruction alone (Salim et al., 2024; Rossouw & Frick, 2023). Furthermore, experiential learning theory argues that authentic learning emerges when individuals actively engage in concrete experiences followed by reflection and social adaptation, enabling sustainable behavioral transformation (Andresen et al., 2020). Similar findings are reflected in Saiful Anwar's research concerning pesantren education, which emphasizes that integrated boarding-school systems facilitate moral and social character development through continuous interaction and experiential learning processes (Anwar et al., 2023).

Within the context of Islamic education, particularly in pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), the hidden curriculum operates more intensively because educational processes are embedded within a twenty-four-hour communal environment. Pesantren education integrates formal instruction, religious traditions, social interaction, discipline systems, and spiritual habituation into a unified educational ecosystem. This environment allows values to be transmitted continuously through direct experience, role modeling (*uswah hasanah*), and collective cultural practices. Several recent studies indicate that the hidden curriculum in pesantren significantly contributes to the formation of students' religious character, discipline, leadership, empathy, and social responsibility (Salim et al., 2024; Muttaqin et al., 2026). The success of pesantren-based character education lies not merely in classroom instruction but in the integration of institutional culture and daily life practices that shape students holistically. This perspective is reinforced by Anwar et al. (2024), who explain that pesantren educational philosophy integrates curricular and extracurricular systems to support holistic character internalization.

Among Indonesian pesantren institutions, Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor is widely recognized for its comprehensive boarding-based educational system emphasizing leadership, discipline, independence, and character formation. The educational philosophy of Gontor integrates formal, non-formal, and informal learning into an interconnected pedagogical structure. In this system, the hidden curriculum becomes a central educational force operating through organizational culture, structured discipline, communal responsibility, and the exemplary conduct of teachers and senior students. Previous research demonstrates that Gontor's hidden curriculum effectively internalizes moral and social values through habituation and institutional culture rather than solely through formal

instructional content (Muqorobin & Abdurrahman, 2021). This educational orientation is also supported by research conducted by Anwar et al. (2023), which highlights that institutional culture and integrated educational management play important roles in shaping students' leadership capacity and moral discipline.

One strategic educational program within Gontor is the Basic Advanced Course (Kursus Mahir Dasar/KMD), which functions not only as technical leadership training but also as an experiential pedagogical arena for value internalization. Through organizational tasks, teamwork, responsibility distribution, communication practices, and direct leadership experiences, KMD activities create an educational environment where students learn values implicitly through participation and social engagement. In this context, character formation does not emerge primarily from formal teaching materials, but from the pedagogical dynamics embedded within institutional culture and lived experience. The KMD program therefore represents a significant example of how the hidden curriculum functions as an informal pedagogical system in pesantren education. Similar observations are found in Anwar et al. (2023), who argue that leadership-based educational programs in Islamic institutions create practical spaces for developing responsibility, communication skills, and organizational ethics.

Although previous studies have discussed hidden curriculum implementation in Islamic boarding schools, most have focused on religious habituation, obedience culture, or general institutional environments (Homsiyah et al., 2026; Rohmad & Kolis, 2021). Few studies specifically examine how leadership-oriented programs such as KMD operationalize the hidden curriculum through institutional culture, social interaction, and experiential learning processes. In addition, limited research has theoretically positioned hidden curriculum as a pedagogical mechanism for character internalization within leadership-training contexts in pesantren. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring how the hidden curriculum operates pedagogically within KMD activities and how it contributes to students' character internalization at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the pedagogy of the hidden curriculum in KMD programs by focusing on three interconnected dimensions: institutional culture, social interaction, and value habituation. This study contributes theoretically to the discourse on hidden curriculum and experiential character education in Islamic educational institutions, while also providing practical insights into how pesantren-based education can serve as an alternative model for holistic character formation in contemporary education.

2. Metode

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design to explore the pedagogy of the hidden curriculum in Basic Advanced Course (Kursus Mahir Dasar/KMD) programs and its role in character internalization among students at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because this study sought to understand social meanings, institutional culture, lived experiences, and value internalization processes occurring naturally within the educational environment of

pesantren. Qualitative inquiry enables researchers to investigate educational phenomena holistically and contextually while emphasizing participants' perspectives and social interactions in their natural settings (Aspers & Corte, 2021; Flick, 2022). Furthermore, the case study design was selected because the research focused on a bounded educational system, namely KMD activities within a specific pesantren institution, allowing an in-depth exploration of cultural practices, social dynamics, and pedagogical processes embedded within the hidden curriculum (Merriam & Tisdell, 2021).

The research was conducted at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, Indonesia, which is widely recognized as a modern Islamic boarding school implementing an integrated twenty-four-hour educational system emphasizing discipline, leadership, independence, and character formation. The participants consisted of KMD student participants, supervising ustadz, organizational mentors, and several senior students directly involved in the implementation of KMD programs. Participants were selected purposively based on their active involvement, experiences, and relevance to the research focus. Purposive sampling is considered effective in qualitative research because it allows researchers to identify information-rich participants capable of providing in-depth insights into the studied phenomenon (Campbell et al., 2020).

Data collection was conducted through participatory observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis. Participatory observation enabled the researcher to directly observe institutional culture, interaction patterns, leadership practices, disciplinary systems, and daily habituation processes occurring during KMD activities. Observation is essential in hidden curriculum studies because many educational values operate implicitly through routines, behaviors, and social environments rather than through formal instructional content (Jeronen et al., 2022). In-depth interviews were conducted with participants to explore their experiences, perceptions, and reflections regarding value internalization and character formation within KMD programs. Semi-structured interviews provided flexibility for probing participants' perspectives while maintaining alignment with the research objectives (Kallio et al., 2021). In addition, documentation analysis was used to examine institutional regulations, KMD manuals, activity schedules, organizational documents, and archival materials supporting the interpretation of field data.

Data analysis in this study followed an interactive thematic analysis model involving data condensation, data display, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. The analysis process was conducted continuously throughout the research in order to identify recurring patterns, implicit meanings, pedagogical processes, and forms of hidden curriculum implementation within KMD activities. Thematic analysis was employed because it allows researchers to systematically interpret patterns of meaning across qualitative data while maintaining contextual sensitivity (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The analysis specifically focused on three analytical dimensions: institutional culture, social interaction, and value habituation, which served as the primary framework for examining character internalization processes within the pesantren environment.

To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, this study applied triangulation techniques involving multiple data sources, methods, and time frames. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from students, supervisors, and ustadz, while methodological triangulation involved comparing observational findings, interview data, and documentation. Additionally, member checking was conducted to confirm the consistency between participants' experiences and the researcher's interpretations. The study also maintained reflexivity throughout the research process to minimize researcher bias and strengthen interpretative validity. These strategies are widely recognized as essential procedures for enhancing rigor, credibility, and dependability in qualitative educational research (Nowell et al., 2021). Overall, this methodological framework enabled the researcher to comprehensively examine how the hidden curriculum operates pedagogically within KMD activities and how institutional culture, experiential learning, and social interaction collectively contribute to students' character internalization in pesantren education.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Institutional Culture as a Pedagogical Medium for Character Internalization

The findings reveal that the hidden curriculum within the Basic Advanced Course (Kursus Mahir Dasar/KMD) program operates primarily through institutional culture embedded in the daily life system of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor. The pesantren's twenty-four-hour educational environment functions not merely as an administrative framework but as a pedagogical ecosystem designed to internalize discipline, responsibility, independence, and collective awareness among students. Based on participatory observations, students consistently followed structured schedules, complied with institutional regulations, and participated in various communal activities that cultivated behavioral discipline and self-management.

The researcher observed that all KMD participants were required to complete activities according to strict timelines, beginning from morning preparations until nighttime evaluations. This routine gradually shaped students' awareness of punctuality and responsibility. One supervising ustadz explained during the interview:

"KMD is not only about teaching organizational skills. The most important aspect is how students learn discipline through the system they experience every day. They are educated through habits, not merely through verbal instruction." (Interview with KMD Supervisor, March 2026)

This finding indicates that institutional culture functions as an implicit pedagogical mechanism through repetitive habituation and structured social control. Documentation data, including KMD activity schedules, institutional regulations, and leadership assignment records, further demonstrate that the educational process systematically integrates disciplinary values into all student activities. The hidden curriculum therefore emerges through the consistency between institutional norms and students' lived experiences rather than through explicit classroom instruction alone.

Table 1. Summary of Hidden Curriculum Dimensions in KMD Programs

Hidden Curriculum Dimension	Indicators Observed	Internalized Values
Institutional Culture	Daily schedules, institutional rules, social control	Discipline, responsibility, independence
Social Interaction And Role Modeling	Teacher modeling, peer interaction, collaborative activities	Cooperation, empathy, communication
Value Habituation Through Experiential Learning	Leadership tasks, organizational responsibility, reflection sessions	Leadership, accountability, emotional maturity

In addition, observations revealed that students gradually adapted to the pesantren culture by internalizing values of simplicity, obedience, and collective responsibility. The communal living system encouraged students to prioritize collective interests over personal preferences, contributing to the formation of social discipline and emotional maturity. These findings suggest that institutional culture within KMD programs operates as a continuous process of experiential value internalization embedded in everyday educational practices.

Social Interaction and Role Modeling in Character Formation

The findings further indicate that social interaction and role modeling constitute central dimensions of the hidden curriculum in KMD activities. Character internalization occurs through intensive interactions between students, supervising ustadz, mentors, and peer groups. Based on field observations, the pedagogical relationship between teachers and students was characterized by direct involvement, emotional closeness, and continuous interaction within both formal and informal settings.

The exemplary behavior demonstrated by ustadz significantly influenced students' attitudes and behavioral orientations. During observations, supervising teachers consistently displayed punctuality, responsibility, cooperative behavior, and effective communication while accompanying students throughout KMD activities. Students frequently imitated these behaviors in their interactions and leadership practices. One participant stated during the interview:

"What motivates us most is not the material itself, but how the ustadz demonstrate discipline and responsibility directly in daily activities. We learn by observing their actions." (Interview with KMD Participant, March 2026)

This finding demonstrates that the hidden curriculum operates through symbolic interaction and behavioral imitation occurring naturally within pesantren life. Students acquire values not only cognitively but also affectively through social identification processes. Moreover, group discussions, collaborative assignments, and organizational responsibilities within KMD activities created opportunities for students to develop communication skills, empathy, leadership capacity, and conflict-management abilities.

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Table 2. Sources of Empirical Evidence Supporting Hidden Curriculum Findings

<i>Theme</i>	Observation Findings	Interview Evidence	Documentation Evidence
Institutional Culture	Students followed structured schedules and regulations	“Students learn discipline through daily systems”	Activity schedules and institutional regulations
Social Interaction & Role Modeling	Teachers demonstrated discipline and cooperation	“We learn by observing ustadz behavior”	Leadership evaluation reports
Experiential Learning	Students conducted leadership and organizational tasks	“Repeated assignments increased confidence”	Activity evaluation documents

Documentation data from leadership evaluations and organizational activity reports also indicate that students were regularly assessed based on teamwork, responsibility, initiative, and discipline rather than solely on technical competencies. Such findings confirm that social interaction within KMD programs serves as an experiential learning environment where values are transmitted through participation and communal engagement.

Value Habituation through Experiential Learning Practices

Another important finding of this study is that the hidden curriculum in KMD programs operates intensively through value habituation and direct experiential learning. Students were actively involved in practical leadership activities, organizational management, decision-making processes, and problem-solving situations that required real responsibility and collective cooperation. Through these experiences, values were not merely introduced theoretically but repeatedly practiced within authentic social contexts.

Observational findings demonstrate that students were assigned various responsibilities, including event coordination, team leadership, logistical management, and public communication. These tasks encouraged students to develop self-confidence, accountability, emotional control, and adaptive leadership skills. During an interview, one student explained:

“At first, many of us felt unprepared to lead activities. However, through repeated assignments and evaluations, we gradually became more confident and responsible.” (Interview with Student Participant, March 2026).

The habituation process was reinforced through continuous reflection and evaluation sessions conducted after each activity. Supervisors provided constructive feedback emphasizing responsibility, discipline, teamwork, and ethical leadership. Documentation analysis further shows that evaluation mechanisms within KMD were

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designed not only to measure technical performance but also to strengthen moral and behavioral development among participants.

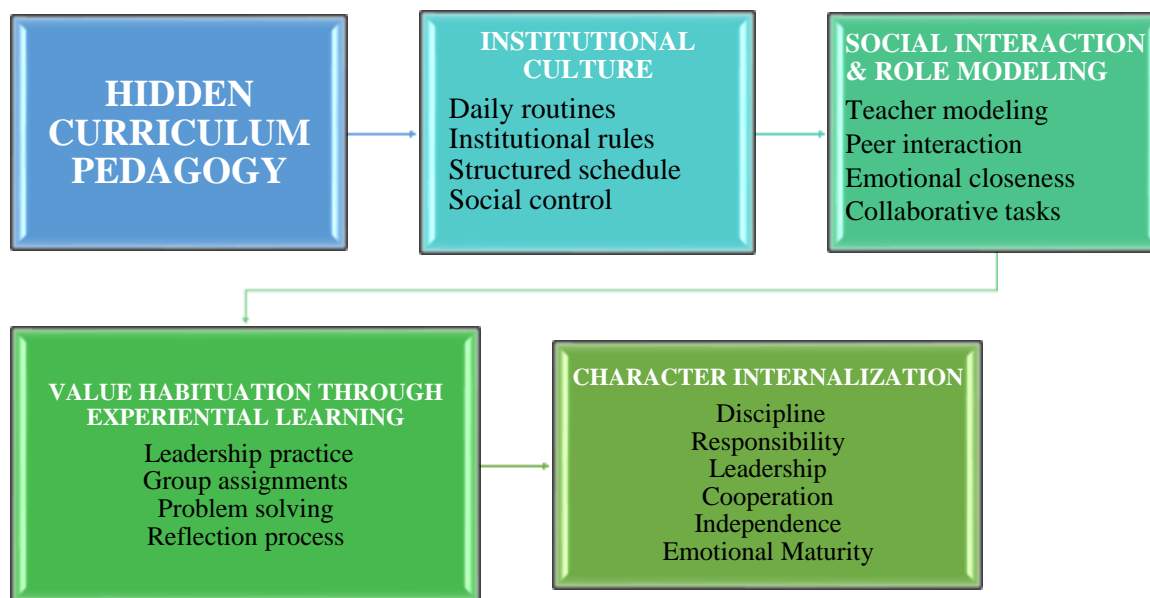


Figure 1. Pedagogical Process of Hidden Curriculum Internalization in KMD Programs

These findings indicate that experiential learning functions as a major pedagogical dimension of the hidden curriculum. Character values become internalized because students directly experience the consequences, responsibilities, and social dynamics associated with leadership practices. Consequently, KMD activities serve as a practical educational arena where cognitive understanding, emotional engagement, and behavioral transformation interact simultaneously.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the pedagogy of the hidden curriculum in KMD programs operates through the integration of institutional culture, social interaction, and value habituation. These three dimensions collectively construct a holistic educational environment that enables students to internalize character values through direct experience and continuous social engagement.

The hidden curriculum in pesantren education therefore functions not as a supplementary educational element but as a central pedagogical mechanism shaping students' discipline, leadership, responsibility, cooperation, and independence. The KMD program specifically illustrates how experiential leadership training can become an effective medium for character formation when supported by consistent institutional culture and meaningful social interaction.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the hidden curriculum within the Basic Advanced Course (Kursus Mahir Dasar/KMD) programs functions as a pedagogical

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mechanism for character internalization through institutional culture, social interaction, and experiential habituation. Unlike formal instructional approaches that primarily emphasize cognitive achievement, the hidden curriculum in pesantren education operates through lived experiences, behavioral modeling, collective discipline, and continuous social engagement. This finding reinforces recent studies arguing that character education becomes more effective when values are embedded within students' daily educational experiences rather than transmitted solely through explicit instruction (Salim et al., 2024; Rossouw & Frick, 2023).

This study further reveals that institutional culture serves not merely as a supporting educational environment but as the primary pedagogical structure shaping students' behavioral orientations. The twenty-four-hour boarding system at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor creates an immersive educational ecosystem where discipline, responsibility, independence, and leadership are repeatedly practiced through routine activities and organizational structures. This finding aligns with Umam et al. (2025), who argue that pesantren-based hidden curriculum operates effectively through the synergy of habituation, institutional rituals, peer norms, and role modeling. However, this study extends previous research by demonstrating that KMD programs institutionalize these values specifically through leadership-training mechanisms, thereby positioning the hidden curriculum not only as a cultural phenomenon but also as an intentional pedagogical design embedded within organizational learning practices.

Table 3. Comparison Between Previous Studies and Current Study

Aspect	Previous Studies	Present Study
Research Focus	Religious habituation and disciplinary culture	Leadership-training pedagogy in KMD
Hidden Curriculum Perspective	Implicit educational by-product	Structured pedagogical ecosystem
Character Formation Mechanism	Rituals and social norms	Experiential leadership practices
Educational Setting	General pesantren environment	KMD leadership-training program
Contribution	Understanding religious culture	Leadership-based hidden curriculum model

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the discourse on experiential character education by emphasizing that character internalization in pesantren occurs through experiential learning processes rather than normative indoctrination alone. Students in KMD activities developed leadership, emotional maturity, responsibility, and self-confidence through direct participation in organizational management, collective decision-making, and problem-solving situations. These findings support experiential learning theory, which emphasizes that authentic

learning emerges from concrete experience, reflective engagement, and social adaptation processes (Andresen et al., 2020). At the same time, this study expands the theory by contextualizing experiential learning within Islamic boarding school traditions, where spiritual values, institutional discipline, and communal responsibility become integrated into a holistic pedagogical environment.

Another important finding concerns the central role of social interaction and role modeling in shaping students' moral consciousness. Observational and interview data indicate that students internalized values primarily through observing the behaviors of ustadz, supervisors, and senior students rather than through formal doctrinal instruction. This confirms the argument that the hidden curriculum functions through symbolic interaction, emotional identification, and behavioral imitation within educational communities (Croce & Vaccarezza, 2020). The pedagogical relationship between teachers and students therefore becomes a living curriculum in which moral authority is constructed through consistency between discourse and action. In this context, the hidden curriculum operates as what Sahrandi et al. (2026) describe as the "soul" of pesantren education, where authenticity and exemplary conduct become more influential than formal pedagogical content.

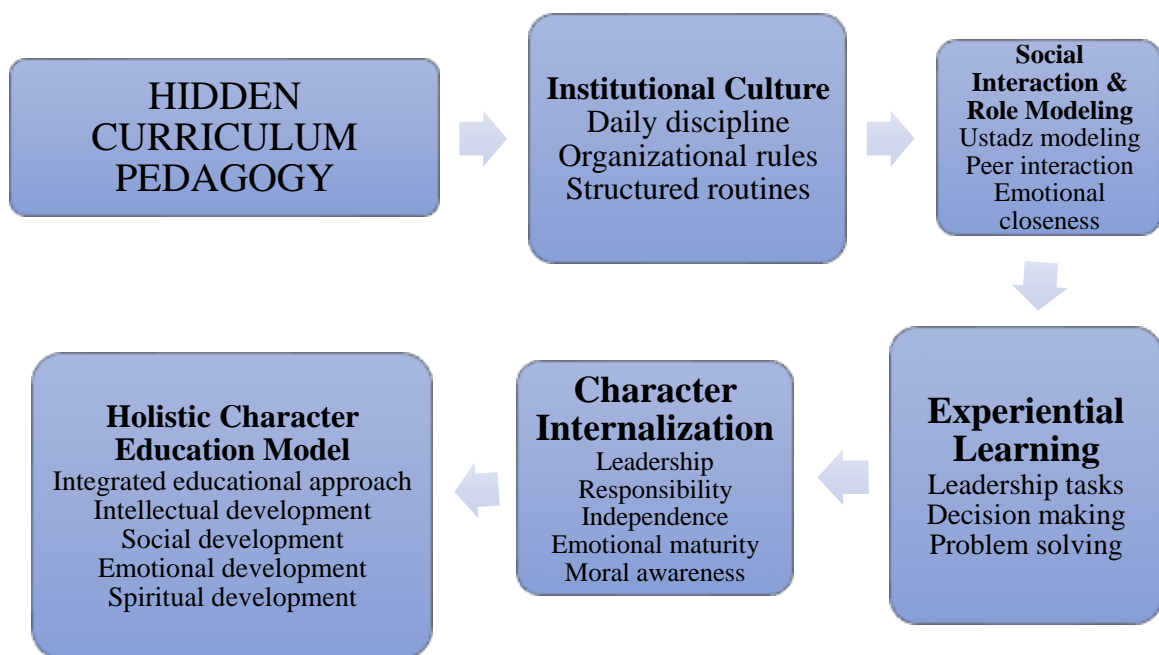


Figure 2. Theoretical Contribution of Hidden Curriculum Pedagogy in KMD Programs

This study also highlights that the hidden curriculum within KMD programs differs from conventional character education models commonly implemented in formal schooling systems. In many formal institutions, character education is frequently fragmented into ceremonial activities or isolated moral instruction disconnected from students' real social experiences. By contrast, the pesantren system integrates cognitive,

affective, social, and behavioral dimensions simultaneously through continuous communal interaction. This finding supports previous research suggesting that pesantren education possesses a unique advantage in creating sustainable character transformation due to its integrated educational environment (Homsiyah et al., 2026). Nevertheless, the present study introduces a novel analytical perspective by positioning KMD activities as a micro-pedagogical arena where hidden curriculum processes become operationalized through leadership-based experiential structures.

The novelty of this study lies in three major contributions. First, unlike previous studies that generally discuss hidden curriculum in relation to religious habituation or obedience culture, this study specifically examines the pedagogy of hidden curriculum within leadership-training programs in pesantren education. Existing studies predominantly focus on spiritual practices, disciplinary culture, or symbolic traditions (Muttaqin et al., 2026; Rahmi et al., 2025). This study expands the discourse by demonstrating how organizational leadership training functions as an effective medium for implicit character internalization. Figure 2 illustrates the theoretical contribution of this study in explaining the pedagogical mechanism of hidden curriculum within KMD programs.

Second, this study develops a conceptual understanding of hidden curriculum as an experiential pedagogical system rather than merely an unintended educational by-product. In many educational studies, hidden curriculum is often conceptualized as implicit norms emerging unintentionally from institutional structures. However, the findings of this research indicate that within pesantren education, hidden curriculum is strategically cultivated through structured routines, leadership assignments, role distribution, and collective responsibilities. Thus, the hidden curriculum in KMD programs operates as a consciously maintained pedagogical ecosystem designed to shape students' moral and leadership capacities.

Third, this study contributes to Islamic education scholarship by proposing that leadership-based experiential learning can become a strategic model for contemporary character education. Amid increasing concerns regarding moral degradation, social fragmentation, and the ineffectiveness of formal moral instruction, the pesantren model offers an alternative educational paradigm emphasizing immersive learning, communal discipline, and value internalization through direct experience. This finding is particularly relevant for contemporary educational discourse advocating holistic education models integrating intellectual competence with moral and social development (Berkowitz, 2022).

Moreover, the findings indicate that the effectiveness of the hidden curriculum depends significantly on the consistency between institutional values and everyday educational practices. Character formation becomes sustainable when institutional culture, social interaction, and experiential activities reinforce one another continuously. This supports recent arguments that hidden curriculum implementation requires systemic

integration rather than isolated moral interventions (Carnawi et al., 2024). Therefore, the success of KMD programs lies not only in leadership training itself but also in the pesantren's ability to create an educational environment where values are collectively lived, practiced, and socially reproduced.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The research focuses on a single pesantren institution, which may limit the generalizability of the findings across different pesantren traditions and educational contexts. Furthermore, this study primarily examines short-term character internalization processes during KMD activities and does not comprehensively investigate the long-term sustainability of character transformation among alumni. Future research may therefore explore comparative studies across multiple pesantren models or investigate the longitudinal impact of hidden curriculum implementation on students' leadership trajectories, professional ethics, and social engagement. The major findings and their theoretical implications are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Major Findings and Theoretical Implications

Major Findings	Supporting Theory	Theoretical Implication
Institutional culture shapes behavior	Hidden Curriculum Theory	Institutional culture functions as a pedagogical structure
Role modeling influences moral behavior	Social Learning Theory	Character develops through behavioral imitation
Experiential activities strengthen character	Experiential Learning Theory	Learning becomes effective through direct experience
Leadership practices support character development	Character Education Theory	Leadership serves as a medium for value internalization

Overall, this study confirms that the pedagogy of the hidden curriculum in pesantren education operates through the integration of institutional culture, social interaction, and experiential learning practices. KMD programs demonstrate that leadership-oriented activities can function as strategic pedagogical arenas for character internalization when supported by a consistent communal environment and authentic role modeling. Consequently, this study positions pesantren not merely as a traditional religious institution but as a holistic educational system capable of offering an alternative paradigm for contemporary character education.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the pedagogy of the hidden curriculum in Basic Advanced Course (Kursus Mahir Dasar/KMD) programs at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor operates through the integration of institutional culture, social interaction, and experiential habituation, which collectively contribute to students' character internalization. Character formation within pesantren education is not primarily

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constructed through formal instructional content, but through continuous lived experiences embedded within the twenty-four-hour boarding school environment. Discipline, responsibility, leadership, cooperation, and independence emerge through repetitive practices, organizational engagement, role modeling, and communal interaction. These findings confirm that the hidden curriculum functions as a central pedagogical mechanism in shaping students' moral and social identity within Islamic boarding school education.

The findings further imply that contemporary character education requires a holistic pedagogical approach integrating cognitive, affective, social, and behavioral dimensions simultaneously. This study positions pesantren education, particularly KMD programs, as an alternative model of experiential character education capable of addressing the limitations of formal moral instruction commonly found in modern schooling systems. Theoretically, this research contributes to the discourse on hidden curriculum by conceptualizing it not merely as an implicit educational by-product, but as an intentional pedagogical ecosystem systematically cultivated through institutional culture and leadership-based experiential learning. Practically, the study suggests that educational institutions should strengthen value internalization through habituation, authentic role modeling, and participatory leadership experiences rather than relying solely on classroom-based character instruction.

Despite its contributions, this study is limited to a single pesantren context and focuses primarily on the immediate pedagogical processes occurring within KMD activities. Future studies are recommended to conduct comparative and longitudinal research examining the sustainability of character transformation across different pesantren traditions and educational settings. The authors would like to express sincere appreciation to Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, supervising ustadz, KMD participants, and all research informants for their valuable support and participation throughout this study. Their openness and cooperation significantly contributed to the completion of this research.

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