



The Role and Function of Islamic Counseling in Fostering Student Morals

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Abstract

This study examines the role and function of Islamic counseling in fostering students' moral character across state Islamic senior high schools (MAN) in Padangsidempuan. Using a qualitative multisite design, the research investigates how Islamic counseling practices integrated with the roles of PAI (Islamic Education) teachers contribute to strengthening students' religious values and behavioral discipline. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation across two MAN institutions, revealing that counseling interventions grounded in Qur'anic principles, prophetic character, and spiritual development effectively address contemporary moral challenges faced by adolescents in the digital era. The findings highlight that collaboration between BK (Guidance and Counseling) teachers and PAI teachers plays a crucial role in creating a supportive environment for moral cultivation, particularly in mitigating issues such as declining discipline, digital addiction, and weakening religious awareness. The study concludes that Islamic counseling provides a holistic framework for character formation, integrating cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains. Strengthening professional competence among counselors and enhancing school-based religious programs are recommended to ensure sustainable character development in madrasah settings.

Introduction

The cultivation of students' moral and religious character at the Madrasah Aliyah level holds a central position in shaping a generation with strong Islamic values. As adolescents face increasing moral challenges in the digital era, Madrasah Aliyah is expected to provide not only cognitive knowledge but also structured guidance that integrates Islamic ethics into everyday learning. Prior studies affirm that character-building activities embedded in Islamic education—such as honesty, responsibility, and tolerance significantly contribute to students' moral development when systematically incorporated into the curriculum (Basuki & Febriansyah, 2020; Maryana, 2024). This highlights the urgency of strengthening Islamic character education as a foundational mandate for madrasah.

In addition to curriculum integration, the design of learning in *akidah* and *akhlak* subjects has been shown to influence how effectively Islamic character is internalized. Research at Madrasah Aliyah An-Najah Bekasi indicates that curriculum alignment with the institution's vision enhances the formation of Islamic values among students (Basuki & Febriansyah, 2020). Furthermore, the application of character-based pedagogical models such as problem-based learning (PBL) helps strengthen students' analytical skills while simultaneously embedding moral values (Baharun & Ummah, 2018; Manik et al., 2025). These findings reveal that character development requires not only doctrinal teaching but also participatory methods that empower students intellectually and ethically.

Religious activities in madrasah also serve as essential instruments in reinforcing students' spiritual discipline. Regular programs such as *Salat Dhuha*, the recitation of *Asmaul Husna*,

and Qur'anic reading circles have consistently demonstrated positive impacts on students' spiritual refinement and responsibility (Aisyah & Ulum, 2024). The success of these programs at MA Nurul Falah shows that spiritual habituation plays a vital role in shaping students' behavioral consistency. When combined with classroom instruction, these religious routines support the holistic development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, which are the hallmarks of Islamic moral education (Nasucha et al., 2023; Umam, 2022).

Alongside institutional and curricular efforts, teachers play a decisive role in guiding students' moral development. Teachers are expected not only to teach theoretical concepts but also to embody the values they convey, thereby serving as moral exemplars for their students (Ghazali et al., 2025; Ni'mah et al., 2025; Wahyudi et al., 2024). Empirical studies have shown that effective character guidance in Madrasah Aliyah contributes to more balanced student personalities rooted in religious understanding and positive social behavior (Fahrurrozi et al., 2025; Idris & Usman, 2019; Munandar, 2025). This underscores the necessity of educators who actively model Islamic virtues in their daily interactions.

These expectations become more pressing when viewed against the backdrop of moral degradation among adolescents in the digital age. Rapid exposure to unfiltered information, online gaming addiction, and risky behaviors such as deviant sexual activity have become significant concerns. Islamic counseling offers a structured and value-based response to such challenges by providing spiritual grounding and moral direction (Ardi, 2019; Elzamzamy & Keshavarzi, 2019; Kapoh & Onibala, 2024; Rayani, 2025). Group counseling interventions have been shown to strengthen adolescents' self-image and prevent deviant behavior, particularly when combined with Islamic values and reproductive education (Dhulfikaar, 2025; Febrianti et al., 2025; Hidayati & Taufik, 2019; Muslihah et al., 2025). These findings affirm the relevance of Islamic counseling as a preventive and corrective approach to contemporary moral issues.

Within this context, the roles of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers become strategically important. PAI teachers contribute to the internalization of Islamic values through direct instruction and practical religious activities, serving as role models for discipline and responsibility (Alhafidz et al., 2024; Musthofa, 2025; Muthmainnah et al., 2025). Complementing this, BK teachers support students' intrapersonal development by providing counseling aligned with Islamic principles and by applying approaches such as Outcome-Based Education (OBE) to strengthen character formation (Amelia et al., 2023; Haryati et al., 2025; Lubis et al., 2024). Their guidance helps students overcome behavioral issues, including introversion and disciplinary challenges (Azzam et al., 2024).

Finally, effective character development in Madrasah Aliyah requires strong coordination between PAI and BK teachers. Collaborative efforts ranging from integrated character programs to joint counseling initiatives have been shown to create a more supportive school climate and promote students' social and psychological growth (Inayah & Azmi, 2025; Sambo et al., 2024). This synergy ensures that Islamic values are reinforced consistently across learning and counseling settings. In an era of rapid globalization and moral uncertainty, such coordinated and systematic approaches are essential to nurturing students who are intellectually competent, spiritually grounded, and morally upright.

Methods

The study employed a qualitative approach using a multisite design to explore the role and functions of Islamic counseling in shaping student morality at state Islamic senior high schools (Madrasah Aliyah Negeri) in Padangsidempuan. A multisite qualitative design was chosen because it enables in-depth investigation across several sites that share similar characteristics such as institutional level, programs, and socio-cultural background while permitting the generation of broader, transferable propositions and theory (Hasiara, 2018). This field research focuses on MAN 1 and MAN 2 Padangsidempuan as comparable sites; the analytic orientation is inductive, emphasizing pattern discovery and theory development derived from empirical data. The study therefore treats each school both as a distinct case and as part of a multisite ensemble, adopting logic appropriate for cross-site theorizing rather than a simple multi-case aggregation (Nasruddin, 2024; Ulyatin, 2015).

Data collection took place in the natural settings of the two Madrasah Aliyah institutions during active school hours between April and November 2024. Primary participants included key informants such as school principals, BK (guidance and counseling) teachers, PAI teachers, and students; site observations covered offices (principal, curriculum, student affairs, facilities, public relations), classrooms, teacher rooms, counseling rooms, prayer spaces, auditorium, canteen, and surrounding school environment. Triangulated qualitative data were gathered through systematic observation, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (to capture both guided and emergent perspectives), and documentary review (institutional documents, curricula, program records, and photographic evidence). Interview procedures followed established protocols for structured and open interviews, with careful documentation (audio recordings, field notes, and supplementary materials) to support depth and reliability (Evanirosa, 2022).

To ensure the trustworthiness of findings the study applied Lincoln and Guba's criteria credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability operationalized through prolonged engagement and persistent observation, methodological and source triangulation, peer debriefing, negative-case analysis, member checking, and thick description. Data analysis proceeded in two interconnected stages: (1) within-site analysis, comprising data condensation (reducing and coding field materials), data display (systematic organization and thematic presentation), and iterative drawing of tentative conclusions grounded in Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's framework; and (2) cross-site (multisite) analysis, in which patterns, similarities, and divergences across the two Madrasah were compared to develop more generalizable propositions. Throughout analysis the researcher continuously verified interpretations with participants and peers, maintaining audit trails and reflexive notes to uphold dependability and confirmability and to enable findings that are both richly contextualized and analytically robust.

Results and Discussion

The Role of Islamic Counseling Teachers in Nurturing Students' Morals

Islamic counseling teachers at MAN 1 and MAN 2 Padangsidempuan play a fundamental role in guiding students' moral development by integrating spiritual, emotional, and behavioral support into daily school activities. Interviews with students confirm that BK teachers are viewed not only as problem solvers but also as moral role models who provide spiritual reflections and religious motivation. One student stated that counseling sessions "*helped bring peace of mind*" and strengthened their awareness of moral responsibilities in school settings. This demonstrates that the role of BK teachers extends beyond administrative discipline; it

involves nurturing students' spiritual consciousness and ethical judgment through interpersonal engagement.

Observational findings reinforce this perspective, particularly the consistent presence of BK teachers during school routines such as gate monitoring, supervising prayer activities, and maintaining discipline during congregational worship. These practices show that the teachers integrate Islamic values into structured routines, enabling students to internalize discipline, respect, and integrity. Visual documentation from school activities illustrates how BK teachers frequently accompany students during prayer sessions and religious gatherings, further emphasizing their commitment to shaping moral behaviors through example and guidance.

Document analysis also highlights the formalization of this role through institutional structures. As reflected in the official documents and role-mapping charts provided by the schools, the responsibilities of Islamic counseling teachers include moral coaching, religious habituation, emotional guidance, conflict resolution, and implementation of character-based program. These structured expectations demonstrate that the BK role is not incidental but embedded within the school's pedagogical and administrative system. Overall, the evidence indicates that BK teachers act as spiritual mentors, emotional counselors, and moral educators whose integrated approach has a strong influence on students' character development.

Functions of Islamic Counseling in Developing Students' Character

The functions of Islamic counseling in MAN 1 and MAN 2 Padangsidempuan encompass preventive, developmental, and curative aspects aimed at shaping holistic student character. Interviews with counseling teachers reveal that preventive functions include early identification of risky behaviors, value-based coaching, and continuous religious reminders. A BK teacher noted that consistent counseling prevents students from "falling into misconduct" and helps them remain aware of school regulations and religious obligations. Similarly, the head of MAN 2 emphasized that Islamic counseling fosters a culture of discipline and strengthens students' moral resilience against negative influences.

Developmental functions were also highly evident in the findings. Students reported feeling "more motivated" and "calmer" after engaging in Islamic counseling sessions, with several noting increases in their religious commitment and overall emotional stability. Observational data show that activities such as congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation, and moral reflection sessions are regularly integrated into counseling programs, supporting students in developing consistent religious habits that translate into improved moral behavior. The developmental function therefore addresses long-term character formation, strengthening both spiritual identity and socio-emotional maturity.

Curative functions are demonstrated in the handling of behavioral problems such as absenteeism, minor disciplinary violations, and peer conflicts. Documentation shows detailed records of interventions conducted by BK teachers, including scheduled meetings, follow-up sessions, and collaboration with parents when needed. Students confirmed that these interventions helped them regain focus and understand the consequences of inappropriate behavior. As one student expressed, counseling

"helped me correct my mistakes and return to better habits".

The combination of preventive, developmental, and curative functions demonstrates that Islamic counseling operates as a comprehensive moral support system that contributes significantly to character building across both schools.

Supporting Factors in the Implementation of Islamic Counseling

Several supporting factors significantly enhance the implementation of Islamic counseling at MAN 1 and MAN 2 Padangsidempuan. First, the strong institutional commitment from school leadership provides an enabling environment for BK teachers to carry out moral development programs. Interviews with the vice principal for student affairs at MAN 2 revealed that the school administration consistently encourages Islamic-based character programs and allocates. This administrative support ensures that Islamic counseling is not merely an additional service but an integral part of the school's moral education framework.

Another strong supporting factor relates to the competence and dedication of the BK teachers themselves. Interviews with Islamic counseling teachers from both schools indicate that they possess a deep understanding of Islamic psychological principles and demonstrate a strong personal commitment to student character development. For instance, one BK teacher explained that their motivation to guide students

“comes from a sense of responsibility to Allah and the need to help students grow spiritually and morally”.

This personal conviction enhances the effectiveness of counseling services, as teachers serve as credible role models whose behavior reinforces the values they teach.

The religious atmosphere of the madrasah further strengthens counseling effectiveness. Observations show that the physical and social environment such as prayer halls, daily congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation programs, and visible reminders of Islamic values creates a consistent moral climate that supports students' spiritual and behavioral growth. Documentation such as rules, attendance sheets, and evidence of routine worship activities indicates a structured system that reinforces students' habituation to good moral conduct. These factors collectively create an environment conducive to effective Islamic counseling, where students not only receive guidance but are also immersed in a culture that nurtures moral development.

Hindering Factors in the Implementation of Islamic Counseling

Despite the strengths of Islamic counseling services, several challenges hinder their optimal implementation across MAN 1 and MAN 2. One major obstacle is the limited number of BK teachers compared to the large student population. Interviews with teachers revealed that managing counseling responsibilities alongside administrative tasks often results in overload, reducing the time available for in-depth individual counseling. A teacher noted that

“the number of cases requiring attention is high, but the number of available counselors is not sufficient”.

This structural constraint affects the consistency and reach of Islamic counseling programs.

External factors, particularly the influence of digital media and social environments, also pose significant challenges. Teachers reported increasing cases of behavioral issues related to social media misuse, online addiction, and exposure to inappropriate content. This trend aligns with documented cases recorded in school disciplinary files, which include violations such as absenteeism, inappropriate relationships, and minor delinquent behavior. These issues demonstrate that negative external influences can undermine the moral guidance provided by the school, making it more difficult for counseling teachers to maintain students' behavioral consistency.

Another hindering factor is the varying level of parental involvement. Interviews with school leaders highlight that while some parents actively collaborate with BK teachers, others are less responsive, making it difficult to reinforce counseling outcomes at home. A school administrator stated that

“Without parental engagement, students often fall back into negative habits after school hours”.

Limited collaboration reduces the potential impact of Islamic counseling, as effective moral development requires synergy between school and home environments. These obstacles indicate the need for improved stakeholder engagement, enhanced counselor capacity, and more systematic interventions to address modern moral challenges.

Strategies Implemented to Strengthen Islamic Counseling Services

In response to the challenges identified, both MAN 1 and MAN 2 have implemented several strategic initiatives to strengthen the delivery of Islamic counseling. One major strategy is the integration of counseling activities into daily religious routines, ensuring that moral development becomes part of students' lived experience. Interviews with BK teacher SF indicate that structured schedules including morning guidance, midday supervision, and afternoon reflection sessions help maintain student discipline and emotional balance throughout the school day. These routines reinforce the spiritual dimension of counseling and support the internalization of Islamic values.

Another strategy involves strengthening collaborative mechanisms among school stakeholders. Observational data show that BK teachers regularly coordinate with homeroom teachers, the student affairs department, and OSIM (student council) to monitor student behavior and implement preventive programs. Documentation supports this, showing scheduled joint meetings, shared monitoring logs, and coordinated disciplinary actions that involve multiple parties. This collaborative approach ensures that counseling is not an isolated service but a collective responsibility shared across the institution.

The schools have also adopted targeted interventions for students with specific behavioral challenges. These include one-on-one counseling, follow-up sessions with parents, group discussions on moral topics, and religious mentoring activities such as Qur'an study and Friday reflection sessions. Observations reveal that BK teachers maintain an active presence during student activities monitoring prayer, providing gentle reminders, and building supportive relationships with students. This proactive approach enhances student trust and encourages them to seek guidance voluntarily. The combination of structured routines, collaborative systems, and targeted interventions reflects the schools' commitment to a holistic Islamic counseling model.

Students' Perceptions of Islamic Counseling Services

Students generally perceive Islamic counseling at MAN 1 and MAN 2 as beneficial and impactful in improving their emotional well-being and moral behavior. Interview data show that many students view counseling sessions as sources of comfort and clarity. One student mentioned that the counselling.

“Helped reduce stress and made me more conscious of my daily behavior,”

indicating a positive emotional outcome from counseling interactions. Others reported that the moral advice received from counselors helped them better understand religious obligations and the importance of self-discipline in school life.

Observations supported these perceptions, as students were seen engaging respectfully with BK teachers, seeking assistance voluntarily, and showing improved behavior following counseling interventions. Documentation also contains positive feedback from students who noted changes such as increased prayer discipline, reduced conflict behavior, and more responsible classroom conduct. This reflects the internalization of the guidance received and indicates an effective transfer of counseling influence into students' daily routines.

Students also expressed appreciation for the personal approach taken by BK teachers. Many reported feeling “heard,” “understood,” and “supported,” particularly during times of stress or moral confusion. Interviews reveal that students value the counselors not merely as authority figures but as trusted mentors who guide them toward maturity and spiritual awareness. These perceptions highlight the relational dimension of Islamic counseling, showing that its success depends not only on structured programs but also on the compassion, empathy, and interpersonal warmth demonstrated by the counselors.

The development of Islamic character education at the Madrasah Aliyah level holds significant strategic importance, as it shapes students' moral, cognitive, and social foundations during a critical stage of adolescence. Studies show that the integration of Islamic moral values such as honesty, responsibility, and tolerance—within classroom learning contributes substantially to the formation of well-rounded student character (Firdaus & Suwendi, 2025; Mau, 2024). In several Madrasah Aliyah, *akidah* and *akhlak* curricula have been specifically designed to align with institutional visions and community needs, demonstrating a strong institutional commitment to moral education (Hasanah, 2025; Maulana, 2024). Furthermore, the implementation of character-based approaches, including problem-based learning, has been shown to promote students' analytical abilities while simultaneously cultivating moral sensitivity (Manik et al., 2025). These findings underline the relevance of a curriculum that integrates both intellectual and ethical constructs as a foundation for holistic student development.

Despite these structured efforts, the digital era has introduced new and complex challenges that contribute to moral degradation among adolescents. Increased access to digital media, coupled with exposure to unfiltered information, contributes to behavioral issues such as addiction, social withdrawal, and shifts in value orientations (Islam, 2024; Kapoh & Onibala, 2024). Islamic counseling emerges as an essential response to these issues, offering a value-based framework rooted in Qur'anic principles, prophetic traditions, and Islamic psychological concepts. Research demonstrates that counseling grounded in Islamic teachings through modeling (*uswah hasanah*), conditioning, and *tazkiyatun nufus* can effectively address issues such as online gaming addiction and declining self-regulation (Ardi, 2019). Similarly, group counseling has been found effective in mitigating deviant sexual behavior by helping students strengthen their self-image, social functioning, and moral awareness (Hidayati & Taufik, 2019). This indicates the need for adaptive counseling approaches that are both technologically responsive and spiritually grounded.

The strategic role of teachers particularly Islamic Education (PAI) teachers and Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers also constitutes a central pillar in the formation of Islamic character at the Madrasah Aliyah level. PAI teachers serve not only as conveyors of religious knowledge but also as moral exemplars whose actions influence students' character development (Alhafidz et al., 2024; Musthofa, 2025; Pujianti & Nugraha, 2025). Through school-based religious practices such as prayer, Qur'an recitation, and ethical routines, they facilitate the internalization of values that contribute to disciplined and responsible behavior (Fahmi et al., 2024; Riantina, 2025). Meanwhile, BK teachers complement these efforts by addressing

students' psychosocial needs through individualized and group counseling sessions. Research shows that Outcome-Based Education (OBE) frameworks adopted in BK services have strengthened students' behavioral competencies and improved their socio-emotional functioning (Dano, 2024; Haryati et al., 2025). In addition, Islamic values embedded in counseling reinforce students' self-awareness, discipline, and interpersonal skills (Amelia et al., 2023; Lubis et al., 2024).

The intersection of roles between PAI and BK teachers underscores the necessity of a collaborative model in character development programs. Studies reveal that coordinated interventions between both teacher groups result in more holistic outcomes, as students receive consistent moral guidance across academic and psychosocial settings (Azzam et al., 2024; Inayah & Azmi, 2025). Collaborative activities such as integrated guidance programs, joint religious mentoring, and coordinated monitoring have been shown to enhance school environments and foster positive behavioral climates (Sumar et al., 2025). Such synergy also helps ensure that character development is not fragmented but rather systematically embedded into students' daily routines and supported by multiple stakeholders. The relevance of this collaborative model becomes even more pronounced in addressing contemporary adolescent challenges where moral, emotional, and digital realities intersect.

Given the multifaceted challenges of digitalization, globalization, and shifting social norms, the reinforcement of Islamic character education in Madrasah Aliyah requires a comprehensive and adaptive framework. Integrating religious instruction, structured counseling, and collaborative school-wide programs provides a robust foundation for nurturing students who are intellectually competent and morally grounded. Digital counseling platforms also present new opportunities to reach students through media they frequently engage with, reinforcing that technology can support rather than obstruct Islamic character formation when utilized effectively (Fahyuni, 2021). Ultimately, these combined efforts aim to produce a generation capable of navigating modern complexities while upholding the ethical values central to Islamic teachings.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the development of Islamic character among Madrasah Aliyah students requires an integrated approach that combines curriculum alignment, religious activities, and the strategic collaboration of PAI and BK teachers. Islamic counseling plays a central role in addressing contemporary moral challenges posed by digitalization, helping students strengthen self-control, emotional resilience, and moral reasoning through Qur'anic principles and prophetic values. The synergy between instructional processes and counseling interventions contributes to a holistic moral formation that supports students' academic growth, spiritual awareness, and social behavior. This integrated framework becomes especially relevant as adolescents navigate complex moral disruptions in the digital era, highlighting the essential role of madrasah institutions in shaping morally grounded and socially responsible youth.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be proposed to strengthen Islamic character education in Madrasah Aliyah. First, schools should enhance coordination between PAI and BK teachers through structured collaborative programs, shared monitoring systems, and unified character-building strategies. Second, Islamic counseling services need to be strengthened with professional development opportunities that equip counselors to address digital-era challenges more effectively, including online addiction, behavioral risks, and spiritual disengagement. Third, madrasah institutions should optimize religious activities and digital-based counseling platforms to ensure continuous moral guidance. Finally,

policymakers and educational stakeholders are encouraged to support madrasah through curriculum innovation, resource enhancement, and community–school partnerships that reinforce Islamic values both within and beyond the classroom setting. These recommendations aim to ensure that Islamic character development remains relevant, impactful, and sustainable in guiding the next generation.

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