

# Strengthening Character Development through Educational Management and Physical-Mental Guidance in Islamic Boarding Schools

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**Abstract.** This study investigates how educational management systems can be strengthened through structured physical and mental guidance to enhance character development among students in Islamic boarding schools. The research employed a quantitative descriptive–correlational design involving 80 students from three Madrasah Aliyah Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. Data were collected using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire measuring three main variables: Educational Management Systems (EMS), Physical and Mental Guidance (PMG), and Character Development (CD). Statistical analysis using SPSS revealed strong positive correlations between EMS and PMG ( $r = 0.69$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and between PMG and CD ( $r = 0.74$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Regression analysis indicated that EMS and PMG jointly explained 67% of the variance in character development. The findings demonstrate that structured integration of physical and mental programs within educational management significantly improves student discipline, emotional resilience, and moral integrity. This study contributes a practical management framework for holistic student development in Islamic boarding school contexts.

**Keywords:** Educational Management, Physical and Mental Guidance, Character Development, Islamic Boarding School.

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) play an important role in shaping students' intellectual, spiritual, and moral development. In addition to academic achievement, pesantren education emphasizes discipline, integrity, emotional maturity, and social responsibility as fundamental aspects of character formation [1,2]. However, many educational institutions continue to prioritize cognitive achievement while paying limited attention to structured physical and mental development programs [3]. As a result, students often experience low motivation, emotional instability, fatigue, and inconsistent behavioral discipline.

Educational management systems are essential in ensuring that all educational activities operate systematically and support holistic student development [3,4]. Effective management includes planning, organizing, implementation, supervision, and evaluation processes that integrate both academic and non-academic activities into institutional goals [5,6]. In Islamic boarding school contexts, educational management must not only regulate instructional activities but also coordinate dormitory life, religious programs, physical activities, and counseling systems.

Physical and mental guidance programs represent structured educational efforts designed to strengthen students' physical health, emotional resilience, psychological stability, and social adaptability [6]. Such programs may include sports, discipline training, spiritual reflection, counseling sessions, teamwork activities, and emotional mentoring. Previous studies indicate that physical and mental wellbeing significantly influences students' academic performance, emotional control, and moral behavior [7,8,9].

Character development refers to the process of cultivating ethical values and positive behaviors such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, cooperation, and respect [10,11,12]. Within Islamic education, character formation is inseparable from the cultivation of spiritual awareness and moral accountability. Nevertheless, observations conducted in several Madrasah Aliyah Islamic boarding schools revealed that physical and mental guidance programs were often implemented inconsistently and lacked managerial integration. Most activities were conducted as complementary programs rather than as structured educational interventions.

Several previous studies have examined educational management systems and character education independently [9]. However, limited research has explored the interaction between educational management systems, physical and mental guidance, and character development within Islamic boarding school contexts.[10] Existing studies also tend to emphasize leadership or curriculum implementation while overlooking the strategic role of physical and mental guidance as an integrated management mechanism.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the management of educational systems through physical and mental guidance programs for character development in Islamic boarding schools. Specifically, the study seeks to: (1) Examine the initial implementation of educational management systems, physical and mental guidance, and character development. (2) Analyze the relationship between educational management systems and physical–mental guidance. (3) Measure the contribution of educational management systems and physical–mental guidance toward character development among students. (4) Make sure the implementation of the crucial process.

## **2 Method**

### **2.1 Research Design**

This study adopted a quantitative descriptive–correlational design. The design was selected because it enables researchers to examine relationships among variables while describing the implementation level of educational management systems, physical and mental guidance, and character development [13]. This approach also allows empirical measurement of how management systems influence student character outcomes through structured guidance activities.

## 2.2 Population and Sample

The population consisted of students from three Madrasah Aliyah Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. A total of 80 students from grades 10–12 were selected using simple random sampling to ensure representativeness. Participants were distributed as follows:

**Table 1.** Distribution of Participants

| School         | Number of Participants | Male      | Female    |
|----------------|------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| MA Al-Hikmah   | 30                     | 18        | 12        |
| MA Darussalam  | 25                     | 15        | 10        |
| MA Nurul Falah | 25                     | 14        | 11        |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>80</b>              | <b>47</b> | <b>33</b> |

## 2.3 Data Collection Techniques

Conventional assessment methods often overlook the dynamic nature of language acquisition. Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of three dimensions: Educational Management Systems (EMS) = 10 items, Physical and Mental Guidance (PMG) = 10 items, Character Development (CD) = 10 items.

The instrument employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts in educational management and Islamic education. A pilot test involving 20 respondents was also conducted to measure reliability.

Cronbach's Alpha results showed satisfactory reliability levels: EMS = 0.87, PMG = 0.85, CD = 0.90. All reliability values exceeded the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70 [12].

## 2.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics through SPSS 26. Descriptive analysis was used to determine the implementation level of each variable. Pearson correlation analysis was applied to examine relationships among variables, while regression analysis was conducted to identify the contribution of educational management systems and physical–mental guidance toward character development [13].

# 3 Result and Discussion

## 3.1 Descriptive Findings

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of educational management systems, physical and mental guidance, and character development.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics

| Variable | Mean | SD | Category |
|----------|------|----|----------|
|----------|------|----|----------|

|                                      |      |      |           |
|--------------------------------------|------|------|-----------|
| Educational Management Systems (EMS) | 4.05 | 0.47 | High      |
| Physical and Mental Guidance (PMG)   | 4.00 | 0.49 | High      |
| Character Development (CD)           | 4.12 | 0.45 | Very High |

The findings indicate that students perceived educational management systems and physical–mental guidance programs to be implemented effectively. Character development achieved the highest mean score, suggesting that Islamic boarding schools generally provide supportive environments for moral and behavioral growth.

However, deeper analysis suggests that the effectiveness of character formation is closely related to the integration of guidance activities within school management systems. Schools that consistently scheduled sports activities, counseling programs, discipline monitoring, and reflective sessions tended to demonstrate stronger student discipline and emotional stability.

### 3.2 Correlation Analysis

Table 3 presents the correlation among variables.

**Table 3.** Correlation Analysis

| Variables | EMS  | PMG  | CD   |
|-----------|------|------|------|
| EMS       | 1    | 0.69 | 0.65 |
| PMG       | 0.69 | 1    | 0.74 |
| CD        | 0.65 | 0.74 | 1    |

**Note:**  $p < 0.01$

The strongest relationship occurred between physical and mental guidance and character development ( $r = 0.74$ ). This finding indicates that guidance activities significantly influence students' behavioral and emotional outcomes. Educational management systems also demonstrated strong positive relationships with both physical–mental guidance and character development.

From an analytical perspective, the findings suggest that management systems alone are insufficient to shape student character unless supported by structured physical and mental development programs. Management functions become effective when translated into practical guidance activities that directly engage students in behavioral formation processes.

### 3.3 Regression Analysis

Table 4 presents the regression results.

**Table 4.** Regression Analysis

| Predictor                      | $\beta$ | t    | Sig.  |
|--------------------------------|---------|------|-------|
| Educational Management Systems | 0.32    | 4.98 | 0.000 |
| Physical and Mental Guidance   | 0.45    | 6.42 | 0.000 |

$$R^2 = 0.67$$

The regression analysis shows that educational management systems and physical–mental guidance jointly explained 67% of the variance in character development. Physical and mental guidance demonstrated the strongest contribution, indicating that direct guidance activities serve as the primary mechanism through which management systems influence character outcomes.

This finding contributes a new perspective to educational management literature by positioning physical and mental guidance not merely as supplementary student activities, but as central managerial instruments for holistic education. The results indicate that systematic guidance practices strengthen emotional resilience, discipline, cooperation, and ethical awareness more effectively when integrated into institutional management structures.

### **3.4 Discussion**

This study confirms previous findings emphasizing the importance of educational management in supporting student development. However, unlike earlier studies that primarily focused on administrative effectiveness or curriculum organization, this research highlights the strategic role of physical and mental guidance within educational management systems.

The findings demonstrate that educational management systems become more effective when they integrate physical discipline, emotional mentoring, counseling, and spiritual reflection into institutional routines. Such integration creates a balanced educational environment that supports intellectual, emotional, physical, and moral development simultaneously.

Another important contribution of this study lies in identifying physical and mental guidance as a mediating mechanism between management systems and character development. While leadership and organizational structures provide institutional direction, guidance activities translate those structures into direct behavioral experiences for students. This integrated approach supports sustainable character formation within Islamic boarding school environments.

Furthermore, the study contributes empirical evidence from Indonesian Islamic boarding schools, which remain underrepresented in international educational management research. The findings reinforce the importance of holistic management models that combine educational administration with student wellbeing and character formation practices

## **4. Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **4.1 Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that educational management systems significantly influence character development when integrated with structured physical and mental guidance programs. Physical and mental guidance emerged as the strongest contributor to student character formation, indicating its strategic role in strengthening discipline, emotional resilience, cooperation, and moral integrity.

The study also contributes a conceptual perspective by positioning physical and mental guidance as a central managerial mechanism rather than merely a supporting activity. Educational

management systems that integrate guidance programs systematically create more effective and sustainable character development outcomes in Islamic boarding schools.

#### 4.2 Recommendations

Future studies are encouraged to apply mixed-method or longitudinal approaches to explore long-term impacts of integrated management systems on student behavior and academic performance. Islamic boarding schools are also recommended to strengthen counseling systems, reflective learning activities, and physical development programs as part of institutional management strategies.

School leaders should ensure that physical and mental guidance activities are formally planned, monitored, and evaluated within annual educational programs. Teachers and dormitory supervisors should collaborate in implementing character-oriented activities that integrate discipline, spirituality, and emotional mentoring.

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