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## Learning Culture of Islamic Boarding School Students

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### ABSTRACT

The variety of different activities in Islamic boarding schools creates a variety of learning cultures that are very different from schools in general. The differences in student learning cultures are an interesting matter that is worth studying in depth. This research aims to explore the learning culture of Islamic boarding school students. The approach used is a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. This research involved seven students from various Islamic boarding schools in the Special Region of Yogyakarta as subjects. The results of this research explain various students' learning cultures, including social culture in the Islamic boarding school environment, spiritual values in students' motivation, students' interactions in social groups, students' learning methods and activities, the influence of figures as role models, and learning from experience. Guidance and counseling play an important role in supporting the development of students at Islamic boarding schools. Scientific implications include understanding social and cultural contexts, adapting to individual learning styles, developing social and emotional skills, strengthening spiritual values, and developing student identity and character.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools, as Islamic-based educational and social institutions, implement a boarding school system that focuses on supervision and application of discipline for students in every aspect of daily activities (Rista, 2023). The cultural roots that are deeply rooted in Islamic boarding schools come from the culture of Indonesian society which is strong with traditional values (Asrohah, 2004).

More than just an educational institution, Islamic boarding schools function as guardians and harmonizers of the deep traditions of Islamic learning, emphasizing the appreciation, mastery and implementation of Islamic teachings. The focus is on forming a Muslim character who is not only devout and faithful, but also has noble character, and can provide real benefits to the surrounding community (Untung, 2011).

Islamic boarding schools not only provide dormitories as a place to live for students, but also apply learning formats that are steeped in tradition such as *wetonan*, *bandongan*, or *sorogan*, and use the classical *Madrasah* system (Shiddiq, 2015). The variety of different activities in Islamic boarding schools creates a variety of learning cultures that are very different from schools in general. The differences in student learning cultures are an interesting matter that is worth studying in depth.

Learning culture is a concept that reflects behavior in the context of individual learning and development (Yang, 2003). Hodkinson (Hodkinson et al., 2007) describes learning culture as a series of patterns, values and norms that influence the way individuals learn and interact in an educational environment. Learning culture involves learning habits, values related to education, and learning methods that are recognized and accepted in a society or educational institution.

Apart from that, learning culture can also influence a person's interest and motivation in the learning process and includes the ways individuals overcome learning challenges and obstacles. Learning culture is seen as an integral part of a wider culture, including the values, norms and practices adopted by a particular society or group (Hodkinson et al., 2007).

Learning culture is the basis for behavior and learning processes that influence individuals in the educational environment (Yang, 2003). According to Hodkinson (Hodkinson et al., 2007), learning culture includes patterns, values and norms that influence the way individuals learn and interact in the educational environment. More than just learning methods, learning culture also concerns learning habits, values related to education, and methods recognized in a society or educational institution.

Learning culture plays a role in shaping a person's interest and motivation to learn, as well as guiding individuals in facing challenges and obstacles in the learning process. It is also an inseparable part of a larger culture, including the values, norms, and practices that are characteristic of a particular society or group (Hodkinson et al., 2007).

Learning culture is the richest domain with various theories that provide deep insight into the learning process. Vygotsky's Theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (Sage, 2022), for example, highlights that social interaction plays a major role in shaping learning. Lave and Wenger (Riley & Aubrey, 2022) emphasize participation in communities with similar interests or goals as the main foundation of learning.

Meanwhile, Dewey (Tu & Zhu, 2023) in his experience-based theory emphasized that experience is an essential foundation for the learning process. According to Bruner, social constructivism focuses on the influence of culture and the social environment in shaping the way individuals understand the world (Riley & Aubrey, 2022). Bandura (Koutroubas & Galanakis, 2022), through his social learning theory, emphasizes the importance of observation, imitation, and social interaction in the learning process.

Hall (Suryani, 2013) formulated the concept of how cultural depth influences intercultural interactions. Meanwhile, Gardner (Hasanuddin et al., 2022), with his concept of multiple intelligences, underlines that individuals have various types of intelligence which enable learning through various methods that suit the uniqueness of that intelligence. With these various theories, learning culture becomes a rich realm of understanding of how individuals learn in different contexts.

Research in the field of learning culture has been diverse, as evidenced by several recent studies. Usmawati (Usmawati, 2022) conducted research that focused on increasing multicultural awareness through experiential learning models. The findings show that the experiential learning model is effective in increasing students' multicultural awareness.

Meanwhile, Nisa and Pramono (Nisa & Pramono, 2023) reviewed the learning culture of the semester credit system at the high school level, finding that the implementation of semester credit system in the two years of study at the high school they studied was appropriate to facilitate a fast learning culture for students. Even though there are several obstacles related to administration, time and mental readiness, semester credit system provides positive benefits and is worthy of being continued in the Merdeka Curriculum at that level.

Mulia (Mulia, 2023) conducted research on the learning culture of students at the junior high school level which showed that the junior high school he studied had a prosperous school culture. The learning culture is analyzed from four aspects of the school, namely social culture, quality culture, and good artifacts.

On the other hand, Zuo (Zuo, 2022) focuses his research on the socio-cultural adaptation difficulties faced by international students, especially after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic which has had an impact on the global higher education system. International students are more concerned about innovative learning environments, cultural adoption, career planning, and personality development.

In addition, Jilani and Yang's research (Jilani & Yang, 2022) investigated cultural dilemmas in the learning context. A survey conducted by Jilani and Yang shows that the level of satisfaction of foreign students with adequate accommodation, the influence of Chinese culture, and the quality of education is at a very satisfactory level.

Several studies that specifically focus on Islamic boarding schools include; Faisol and Subaidi (Faisol & Subaidi, 2022) reviewed Islamic boarding school culture in the formation of humanistic educational values. Faisol and Subaidi found that in Islamic boarding school culture there are basic Islamic values regarding humanistic values mentioned in the Koran such as equality/equality, compassion, humanism, democracy, dialogical approach, justice, tolerance, togetherness, mutual help, peace, pluralism, inclusiveness, positive thinking, honesty and diversity.

Malik and his colleagues (Malik et al., 2016) highlighted the culture of Islamic boarding school education and its relationship with radicalism. Their research shows that the Islamic boarding schools studied tend towards radicalism and exclusivism, with the jihad curriculum becoming part of the understanding of religion developed in the Islamic boarding school environment.

Triana and her team (Triana et al., 2023) conducted research on the integration of Sufism in Islamic education in Islamic boarding schools. Triana and the team found that the Sufism values instilled in Sufism-based Islamic education include self-introspection, love of Allah, fear of Allah, hope in Allah, modesty, and faith.

Meanwhile, Fauziyah and colleagues (Fauziyah et al., 2022) observed social interactions between students in the context of Islamic boarding schools. Their research shows that social interactions between fellow students, students with kyai, asatidz, and the community run well in the Islamic boarding schools they studied. With these results, it can be concluded that the social life of students at the Islamic boarding school is developing well, with religious education and general knowledge integrated in accordance with the demands of the times, so that strong students' characters are formed and able to adapt to current developments.

Finally, research by Bashori and colleagues (Bashori et al., 2022) explored Islamic boarding school culture in the development of Turat learning. The results of the research show that the development of a culture of learning the Torah was carried out in stages, with the first step being the strengthening of values through the halaqoh learning paradigm. In addition, contributions to the structure and community of the Turat book are also visible, with individuals active in Turat book competitions. The modernization of education has also resulted in the development of digital methods and libraries.

Through these studies, a deeper understanding of how learning culture plays an important role in shaping students' character and knowledge, both in public schools and at Islamic boarding schools, is obtained. Further research that highlights the learning culture in Islamic boarding schools is an interesting thing that needs to be done. Moreover, research that focuses on the learning culture of students in Islamic boarding schools is still limited. Therefore, this research has an important aim to explore more deeply the learning culture of Islamic boarding school students in Islamic boarding schools. This research was conducted in the Special Region of Yogyakarta involving students from various Islamic boarding schools in the region.

## 2. METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative research approach with descriptive methods. Qualitative methods are an in-depth approach to explore processes, activities and events, including comprehensive studies of individual or group cultural behavior (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative research focuses on inquiry strategies to explore the meaning, understanding, concepts and characteristics of certain phenomena. This approach is holistic, emphasizes quality, and uses several approaches to narratively present various aspects of a phenomenon (Sidiq & Choiri, 2019). The choice of qualitative methods in this research is in line with its suitability for cross-cultural studies as well as research that highlights processes and outcomes (Heppner et al., 2015).

The subjects in this research consisted of 7 (seven) Islamic boarding school students who came from various Islamic boarding schools in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. With details in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Details of research subjects

No.	Name (disguised)	Gender	Age
1.	Subject 1	Male	25
2.	Subject 2	Female	23
3.	Subject 3	Female	22
4.	Subject 4	Male	23
5.	Subject 5	Female	25
6.	Subject 6	Male	22
7.	Subject 7	Female	22

The seven speakers are active students who have lived in Islamic boarding schools for at least the last three years. The selection of sources in the qualitative method was carried out purposively and snowball sampling, the research was carried out until comprehensive and in-depth saturated data was obtained (Sugiyono, 2013).

Qualitative research utilizes various techniques such as interviews, observation, and document analysis to collect descriptive and unstructured data (Sugiyono, 2013). The data analysis process in this method involves coding, categorization, and interpretation to reveal patterns, themes, and meanings that emerge from the collected data (Heppner et al., 2015).

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The learning culture of Islamic boarding school students in Special Region of Yogyakarta can be described in several topics, including; social culture in the Islamic boarding school environment, spiritual values in student motivation, student interaction in social groups, student learning methods and activities, the influence of figures as role models, and learning from experience.

#### 3.1 Social Culture in the Islamic Boarding School Environment

The Islamic boarding school environment, which is often busy and has minimal personal space, encourages students to develop learning methods that suit the social dynamics of the environment. In addition, differences in characteristics between students not only create new cultures and habits but also enrich the learning experience through a deeper understanding of the diverse personalities of their peers.

Even though the learning environment tends to be less conducive, students take proactive and creative steps in adapting their learning styles, such as setting aside time to study alone in a calmer and more supportive environment, or looking for study groups to share understanding. The demand to adapt to various social environments and other characteristics of students encourages students' adaptability in interacting and learning from the diversity of environments they face.

Differences in characteristics between students not only create new cultures and habits but also enrich the learning experience through a deeper understanding of the diverse personalities of their peers. This concept is in line with the opinion of Lave and Wenger (Riley & Aubrey, 2022) who state that group interactions consisting of various cultures and backgrounds can provide a better learning culture through joint practice. Even though the learning environment tends to be less conducive, students take proactive and creative steps in adapting their learning styles, such as taking time to study alone in a calmer and more supportive environment, or looking for study groups to share understanding.

The demand to adapt to various social environments and other characteristics of students encourages students' adaptability in interacting and learning from the diversity of environments they face. In addition, Bandura's theory (Koutroubas & Galanakis, 2022) regarding the influence of the environment and behavioral models emphasizes that humans tend to absorb information and choose the actions they will implement based on the environment and behavioral models around them. On the other hand, Jerome Bruner's theory (Riley & Aubrey, 2022) about culture and social experience highlights the importance of cultural context and interactions between teachers and students in the process of forming shared knowledge. In this process, social experiences, cultural values, and relationship dynamics between teachers and students play a central role in the construction of meaningful

knowledge. Collaboration in a cultural context enriches individual understanding and creates a strong foundation of knowledge.

### **3.2 Spiritual Values in Student's Motivation**

The traditions carried out in Islamic boarding schools generally carry very strong spiritual values. These values include belief in the existence of a divine essence in all aspects of life. Belief in spirituality such as *barokah* (blessing) is one of the motivational triggers for students. The spirituality reflected in Islamic boarding schools not only influences enthusiasm for learning but also emphasizes values such as the meaning of life, intentions and goals in pursuing knowledge. Things like this are often obtained through the study of classical books such as *the ta'lim muta'alim*.

A spiritual view that recognizes the existence of a higher essence (divinity), provides a unique perspective for students in viewing the world. One of them is the concept of "*tawakal*" or surrendering to God and seeing worldly desires as something temporary, which does not have to be fought hard for. The cultural values reflected in Islamic boarding schools also help students realize the importance of education which is not limited only to formal learning, but also to the understanding that can be gained from various life events from which lessons can be learned.

The Islamic boarding school tradition carries strong spiritual values, and its influence on students' views is in line with Bruner's view (Donaldson, 2023) which highlights the significant role of culture in the learning process. Culture has a great ability to shape a person's view of the world and deepen the experiences they have. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, aspects of spirituality instilled in this culture are an important basis for students' understanding and outlook on life. A spiritual view that recognizes the existence of a higher essence (divinity), provides a unique perspective for students in seeing the world, such as the concept of "*tawakal*" or surrendering to Allah and seeing worldly desires as something temporary.

The cultural values reflected in Islamic boarding schools also help students realize the importance of education which is not only limited to formal learning, but also to the understanding that can be gained from various life events from which lessons can be learned. This finding is in line with Peterson and Seligman's definition of spirituality (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) as a strength of character, which describes the relationship between individuals and transcendent values that provide meaning and purpose to their lives so that an attachment to higher and universal values is formed. Spirituality refers to consistent beliefs about one's place and purpose in the universe and the meaning of life (Niemiec & McGrath, 2019). Spirituality can influence a person's behavior and a person's determination of what is ultimately meaningful.

### **3.3 Student's Interaction in Social Groups**

The small social groups that form among students have a major impact on their learning experiences and patterns. This dynamic occurs because of the encouragement and motivation that arises when group members support each other in their activities. In Islamic boarding schools, learning interactions in small groups are a common method, where collaboration and assistance between group members strengthens the learning process. This learning method is supported by Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory (Sage, 2022) which states that individual learning occurs when they get support from someone who is more independent or more knowledgeable.



Social groups in Islamic boarding schools tend to experience more intense interactions compared to groups outside Islamic boarding schools because students spend more time together as friends in the Islamic boarding school environment. Social interaction in the Islamic boarding school environment not only influences the way students learn but also provides opportunities for them to learn to solve interpersonal problems wisely. According to Vygotsky in social learning theory, cultural tools such as language, stories, art, signs and models play an important role in human evolution. Social learning includes ongoing interactions between individuals with the same goals in a particular domain. In it, they not only share ideas and strategies but also develop solutions and inspire innovation. Collaborative processes occurring over long periods paved the way for continuous evolution in human thought and knowledge.

### **3.4 Student's Learning Methods and Activities**

Islamic boarding schools apply various learning methods, such as *sorogan* lectures where books are studied together with *Kyai* or *Ustadz*, as well as practical activities that allow students to witness the application of the material directly. When viewed from the perspective of Bobby De Porter and Mike Hernacki's learning style theory which differentiates human learning styles into three large groups - visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (De Porter & Hernacki, 2000) - learning methods in Islamic boarding schools reflect the application of these learning styles.

Methods such as lectures and *sorogan* represent auditory learning, where students focus more on listening to what is conveyed in the lecture. The use of blackboards and books as learning media refers to the visual learning style, allowing students to obtain information visually. Meanwhile, practical activities reflect the kinesthetic learning style, where students learn through direct experience and physical activity.

Islamic boarding schools also train discipline through structured and scheduled activities. The strict discipline and time structure there encourage students to manage their time wisely between study, boarding school activities, and rest.

The activities carried out by students refer to Skinner's behaviorist theory of operant conditioning which states that behavior that is reinforced tends to be repeated (Riley & Aubrey, 2022). The learning culture in Islamic boarding schools, with its emphasis on scheduled repetitive activities, reflects reinforcement that shapes the character and behavior of students. By implementing various methods and instilling values, Islamic boarding schools provide a solid foundation for students' personal development.

### **3.5 The Influence of Figures as Role Models**

Students often see teachers (*Ustadz*) and caregivers (*Kyai*) as role models in the learning process because their stories and experiences can trigger enthusiasm for learning. Every student generally uses the *Kyai* or caregiver as an example in various aspects, including charisma, knowledge, manners, and a simple lifestyle. Apart from that, students also emulate ancient Islamic figures as role models through narratives that depict inspirational stories of Islamic figures in the study of books.

This statement is in line with Bandura's social learning theory which highlights humans' unique cognitive capacities. Humans can internalize what is observed symbolically and use it as a basis for decision-making (Riley & Aubrey, 2022). Bandura's theory emphasizes that modeling has an important role in learning, where individuals can gain understanding from observing the behavior displayed by others.

In this theory, Bandura emphasizes that reinforcement is not the only factor that shapes a person's behavior; Learning can also occur through observation and imitation. More than just the presence of reinforcement, the process of internalizing observed information is key for individuals in understanding and imitating observed behavior. This shows that humans are not only passive in receiving information from the environment but also have an active role in interpreting and using this information to guide their behavior.

### **3.6 Learning from Experience**

Experience in Islamic boarding schools makes a big contribution to the learning process by emphasizing the importance of understanding the various characteristics of fellow students. When students succeed in understanding the uniqueness of their friends, this indirectly trains their cognitive abilities to understand various things. The various situations and experiences faced in Islamic boarding schools become an expansive field of learning for students, including understanding their characteristics. The difficulties faced by students at Islamic boarding schools also act as strong learning triggers, providing opportunities for them to continue learning and developing themselves from the experiences they face.

This statement parallels Bandura's view which emphasizes that humans can observe and control their behavior, providing reinforcement or punishment for actions taken (Koutroubas & Galanakis, 2022). This concept also underscores the ability of humans to regulate their environment, establish cognitive support, and be responsible for the actions they take. In Islamic boarding schools, students can learn and develop themselves by understanding the social characteristics and environment in which they live.

In the context of Dewey's experiential learning theory, he emphasized that education can be obtained through experience and practice (Riley & Aubrey, 2022). Dewey rejected a mechanical approach to learning and emphasized the importance of practical life experience and social interaction in the learning process. In Islamic boarding schools, students' social interactions in the context of practical life experiences form a learning culture that emphasizes aspects of real experience.

Constructivism theory is also in line with the Islamic boarding school learning culture which prioritizes learning from experience. Constructivism not only views learning as a generative process but also views knowledge as the result of construction rather than discovery or acceptance (Donaldson, 2023). In this view, students are considered active learners who build their understanding through experience, reflection, and interaction with the environment. The role of the teacher or educator here is as a facilitator who helps students understand concepts and solve problems.

### **3.7 Implications for Guidance and Counseling Science**

Implications for guidance and counseling science from the research results include the importance of understanding students' social and cultural contexts, accommodating various learning styles, building social and emotional skills, strengthening spiritual values, and encouraging the development of students' identity and character. Guidance and counseling need to be sensitive to the dynamics of the busy Islamic boarding school environment and have minimal personal space, and provide support that suits individual learning preferences. Intense social interaction in this environment emphasizes the importance of developing healthy social and emotional skills, while the spiritual values instilled in Islamic boarding schools can be strengthened through fostering attitudes based on spiritual values. Learning experiences and interactions at Islamic boarding schools can also be a basis for developing students' identity and character, which can be supported through guidance and counseling in



exploring and understanding identity and developing characteristics such as fortitude and independence. By paying attention to these implications, guidance and counseling practitioners can design relevant and effective programs to support the holistic development of students in the educational environment of Islamic boarding schools.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The Islamic boarding school environment plays an important role in forming students' character, with social dynamics that encourage adaptability and the development of various learning methods. The instillation of spiritual values, such as belief in divine essence and the concept of blessings, motivates students in learning and affirms the meaning of life. Social interactions and diverse learning methods, such as sorogan lectures and practical activities, provide an in-depth learning experience. The boarding school experience emphasizes the importance of understanding fellow students and contributes to the development of character, social skills, and spiritual understanding, enhancing students' holistic development.

Guidance and counseling play an important role in supporting the development of students at Islamic boarding schools. Scientific implications include understanding social and cultural contexts, adapting to individual learning styles, developing social and emotional skills, strengthening spiritual values, and developing student identity and character. Sensitivity to busy environments and minimal personal space, as well as support tailored to student needs is required. The intense social interaction and spiritual values instilled in this environment are the foundation for the formation of students' identity and character, which can be supported through in-depth guidance and counseling.

This research is still limited to a descriptive exploration of the learning culture of Islamic boarding school students in Islamic boarding schools. Recommendations for further research, guidance and counseling practitioners can design relevant and effective programs to support the holistic development of students in Islamic boarding schools.

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