

Implementation of Management Functions in Strengthening Students' Independent Character in Pesantren-Based Vocational High Schools

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Abstract: Pesantren-based vocational high schools have a strategic role in developing graduates who possess vocational competence, religious values, and independent character. However, character-strengthening programmes are often implemented as routine or fragmented activities without systematic management. This study aims to analyze the implementation of management functions in strengthening students' independent character in pesantren-based vocational high schools. The study employed a qualitative library research approach by reviewing relevant journal articles, academic books, research reports, and educational policy documents. Data were analyzed through qualitative content analysis, thematic analysis, thematic synthesis, and comparative conceptual analysis. The findings identify five interconnected management functions: planning, organizing, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation with continuous follow-up. Planning establishes character objectives, indicators, programmes, schedules, and resources. Organizing coordinates the participation of school leaders, teachers, pesantren supervisors, parents, students, and industry partners. Implementation translates institutional values into religious habituation, role modelling, vocational learning, student responsibilities, and reflective activities. Monitoring and evaluation provide evidence of students' progress and programme effectiveness. The study also finds that religious habituation does not automatically produce independent character unless it is connected with awareness, responsibility, self-discipline, initiative, self-regulation, confidence, and problem-solving. The integration of management functions, pesantren values, vocational learning, family participation, and school culture can gradually transform externally controlled compliance into internally regulated responsibility. The study concludes that systematic and continuous management is essential for developing graduates who are technically competent, religiously grounded, professionally responsible, and independently capable of managing their academic, social, digital, and workplace responsibilities.

Keywords: management functions, independent character, religious habituation, pesantren-based vocational school, character education, vocational education.

Introduction

Vocational high schools have a strategic responsibility to prepare graduates who possess technical competence, professional readiness, and strong personal character. Rapid technological development, changing workplace structures, and increasing competition require vocational graduates to demonstrate more than occupational skills. They need initiative, discipline, responsibility, adaptability, self-confidence, and the ability to complete tasks without continuous external direction. Evidence from vocational education indicates that student engagement and readiness for workplace learning are closely connected with self-efficacy, responsibility, and confidence in managing academic and practical demands (Hong et al., 2021), (Meutia et al., 2024).

Character education is therefore an essential part of vocational education. It supports the formation of work attitudes and personal qualities required in schools, internships, workplaces, and society. Character development in vocational schools needs to be integrated into school programmes, learning activities, internships, school culture, and student-development practices. Evaluations of character-strengthening programmes in vocational schools show that successful implementation depends on clear planning, adequate resources, consistent implementation, stakeholder communication, and continuous evaluation (Susatya et al., 2021), (Yhuto Wibisono Putra et al., 2025).

Independent character refers to the ability of students to manage themselves, make responsible decisions, initiate appropriate actions, complete obligations, and evaluate the consequences of their behaviour. Independence does not mean rejecting guidance, collaboration, or social support. It refers to the capacity to use guidance appropriately while developing personal responsibility and self-regulation. Students with strong independent character do not always wait for instructions before acting. They are able to organize their time, identify problems, maintain commitment, and complete academic or vocational assignments responsibly. These characteristics are particularly important in vocational education because students are expected to connect school learning with practical work and workplace expectations (A. M. Lestari & Astuti, 2024).

The development of independent character cannot rely only on classroom explanations or moral messages. Character grows through repeated practice, exemplary behaviour, institutional rules, social interaction, and consistent reinforcement. Character education becomes more effective when its values are integrated into school culture and students' daily experiences. Sociocultural approaches also show that character education needs to respond to the values, traditions, and institutional identity surrounding students rather than being delivered as an

isolated subject (Fadli, 2021).

Pesantren-based vocational high schools provide a distinctive environment for integrating vocational competence and character formation. These institutions combine the national vocational curriculum with Islamic education, religious traditions, disciplined routines, moral guidance, and school or boarding-school culture. This integration allows professional preparation to develop alongside spirituality, discipline, responsibility, respect, and social awareness. Recent evidence shows that the integration of vocational and pesantren curricula can produce an institutional environment in which technical learning, religious supervision, habituated worship, discipline, and role modelling support one another (Mubin & Moh. Arif Furqon, 2023).

The pesantren-based environment is also relevant to independent character because pesantren traditions often require students to regulate personal activities, comply with collective schedules, complete responsibilities, and participate in communal life. Independence in this context does not develop through unrestricted individual freedom. It develops through structured responsibility, moral discipline, and repeated participation in meaningful activities. Students learn to manage themselves while remaining accountable to religious principles, institutional rules, teachers, peers, and the wider community.

Religious habituation can function as an important mechanism for internalizing these values. Repeated activities such as congregational prayer, Qur'anic recitation, daily prayer, charitable practices, religious reflection, respectful communication, and shared responsibilities can strengthen discipline, responsibility, sincerity, and social awareness. The effectiveness of habituation depends on consistency, teacher role modelling, clear expectations, parental support, and the involvement of the entire school community (Abidin et al., 2025).

Religious habituation should not be understood only as the repetitive performance of ritual activities. Its educational value lies in connecting repeated actions with awareness, responsibility, and consistent behaviour. A student may participate in a religious activity because it is compulsory, but character formation requires the student to understand its meaning and apply its values in broader contexts. Discipline in worship needs to influence punctuality in learning. Responsibility in religious activities needs to influence responsibility in completing assignments. Respect for teachers needs to influence professional communication, while personal cleanliness and order need to influence work habits.

The success of this process depends on management. Character-strengthening activities may become ceremonial, fragmented, or inconsistent when schools do not manage them systematically. Management provides a structured process for translating institutional values into programmes, responsibilities, routines, evaluation standards, and follow-up actions. In this context, management functions include planning, organizing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating activities designed to strengthen students' independent character.

Planning determines the direction of the character-strengthening programme. Schools need to identify student needs, define indicators of independent character, determine religious habituation activities, establish schedules, prepare resources, and connect character goals with vocational learning. Clear planning helps schools avoid activities that are routine but lack measurable educational direction. Character programmes in vocational education need to align with student development, workplace expectations, school culture, and institutional values (Susatya et al., 2021).

Organizing determines how responsibilities, authority, resources, and coordination are distributed. School principals, vice principals, teachers, religious mentors, homeroom teachers, counselling staff, parents, and students need clear roles. Character education cannot depend on one Islamic education teacher or one student-affairs unit. It requires cooperation among school components so that the same values appear in classroom learning, vocational practice, religious activities, school regulations, and student interactions. A collaborative and structured school culture provides a stronger environment for sustained habituation than isolated activities (Ghozi & Amrullah, 2025).

Implementation translates plans into daily practices. At this stage, the school applies religious habituation, role modelling, guidance, reinforcement, discipline, reflection, and vocational learning activities. Implementation should provide students with opportunities to practise independence rather than merely obey instructions. Teachers need to assign responsibilities, provide reasonable choices, encourage problem-solving, and gradually reduce unnecessary assistance. Character development during vocational internships also shows that habituation, exemplary behaviour, personal guidance, and direct experience can strengthen discipline, creativity, politeness, responsibility, and sensitivity to the work environment (S. Lestari & Minsih, 2023).

Monitoring and evaluation determine whether the programme has produced meaningful changes. Evaluation should not focus only on student attendance or participation in religious activities. It should examine changes in punctuality, initiative, responsibility, task completion, self-control, decision-making, problem-solving, and consistency between school and daily behaviour. Evaluation findings can be used to revise programmes, strengthen teacher coordination, involve parents, and provide individual guidance. Evidence from vocational character programmes confirms that evaluation needs to address the context, resources, implementation process, and resulting student development (Yhuto Wibisono Putra et al., 2025).

Several challenges can weaken the implementation of character programmes. These include inconsistent teacher role modelling, limited family supervision, negative peer influence, excessive technology use, fragmented

programmes, weak coordination, and the tendency to treat religious activities as formal obligations. Students also come from different family, social, and educational backgrounds. A single strategy may not produce the same result for all students. Schools therefore need flexible guidance, consistent communication, and cooperation with parents and the surrounding community (Ghozi & Amrullah, 2025).

Previous studies have examined character education in vocational schools, religious habituation, school culture, work character, vocational internships, and curriculum integration in pesantren-based schools. However, these studies often discuss the subjects separately. Limited attention has been given to the integration of management functions as a systematic framework for strengthening students' independent character in pesantren-based vocational education. Studies of character education frequently emphasize programme implementation or student outcomes, while studies of pesantren-based vocational schools tend to emphasize curriculum integration and institutional culture.

This gap creates a need for a conceptual analysis of how planning, organizing, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation can be integrated into one character-strengthening process. A management perspective is important because independent character cannot be developed through occasional programmes. It requires clear objectives, coordinated actors, consistent habituation, supportive school culture, continuous assessment, and follow-up development.

This study therefore aims to analyze the implementation of management functions in strengthening students' independent character in pesantren-based vocational high schools through a library research approach. The study examines how management functions can organize religious habituation, vocational learning, school culture, role modelling, supervision, and student development within an integrated framework. The study is expected to contribute theoretically to educational management and character education literature. Practically, it may provide a conceptual foundation for pesantren-based vocational schools in developing structured, consistent, and sustainable independent-character programmes.

Method

This study employed a qualitative library research approach to analyze the implementation of management functions in strengthening students' independent character in pesantren-based vocational high schools. Library research was selected because the study used published literature and academic documents as its primary sources of data rather than collecting information directly through interviews, observations, surveys, or experiments. This approach enabled the study to examine, compare, interpret, and synthesize theoretical perspectives and research findings related to educational management, independent character, religious habituation, vocational education, pesantren-based education, and character-strengthening programmes.

Library research in this study was not limited to summarizing previous publications. It was conducted as a systematic process of identifying relevant literature, selecting credible sources, organizing information, analyzing conceptual relationships, and constructing an integrated explanation of how management functions can support students' independent-character development. Transparent documentation of literature identification and selection was applied to improve the traceability and academic accountability of the review process. The study adapted relevant reporting principles for identifying, screening, and selecting literature without positioning the research as a formal systematic review or meta-analysis (Page et al., 2021).

The research data consisted of secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, conference proceedings, research reports, dissertations, and official educational policy documents. Peer-reviewed journal articles were used as the principal sources because they provided theoretical discussions and empirical findings relevant to the research focus. Books and policy documents were used selectively to explain foundational concepts, educational regulations, and institutional contexts.

The main literature covered publications issued between 2020 and 2026 to represent recent developments in character education, educational management, vocational education, religious habituation, and pesantren-based schooling. Earlier publications were included selectively when they contained foundational methodological concepts or theoretical principles that remained relevant to the study. The use of recent literature was intended to ensure that the proposed conceptual framework corresponded with contemporary educational conditions and current discussions regarding school management and character development.

The literature was identified through several academic databases and search platforms, including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, SAGE Journals, the Directory of Open Access Journals, and institutional repositories. Official educational regulations and policy documents were obtained from government and educational institution websites. Multiple databases were used because the research topic involved several interconnected fields, including educational management, vocational education, Islamic education, character education, and school culture.

The literature search used keywords derived from the main concepts of the study. The keywords included "management functions," "educational management," "independent character," "student independence," "character education," "religious habituation," "religious school culture," "pesantren-based school," "Islamic

vocational school,” “vocational character education,” and “student character development.” These keywords were used separately and combined through Boolean operators such as AND and OR. Examples of the combinations included “management functions AND character education,” “independent character AND vocational education,” “religious habituation AND student independence,” “pesantren-based school AND character development,” and “educational management AND religious school culture.”

The source-selection process applied inclusion and exclusion criteria. Literature was included when it discussed at least one of the principal research concepts, was published by an identifiable academic institution or peer-reviewed journal, provided full-text access, and contained a clear theoretical, empirical, or policy-based contribution. Studies conducted in elementary, secondary, vocational, or pesantren-based educational institutions were included when their findings contributed to understanding character management, religious habituation, student independence, or school culture. Sources written in English or Indonesian were considered.

Literature was excluded when it only mentioned character education or educational management without providing substantial analysis, lacked complete publication information, duplicated another record, or was unavailable in full text. Anonymous publications, commercial webpages, unsupported opinion pieces, and non-academic materials were not used as primary analytical sources. Studies discussing religious activities without connections to character development, education, school management, or student behaviour were also excluded.

The selection process began with the examination of titles, abstracts, keywords, publication years, and journal information. Sources that corresponded with the research objectives were subsequently read in full. Duplicate records were removed, while articles that did not meet the inclusion criteria were excluded. The selected literature was recorded in a review matrix containing the author and publication year, research context, research objectives, theoretical perspective, research method, principal findings, limitations, and contribution to the present study.

The literature-review matrix also classified each source according to its relevance to the principal analytical categories. These categories included planning, organizing, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, independent character, religious habituation, school culture, vocational education, pesantren values, role modelling, discipline, responsibility, self-regulation, and stakeholder participation. Systematic classification helped maintain a clear relationship between the evidence found in the literature and the conceptual arguments developed in the study.

The data were analyzed through qualitative content analysis, thematic analysis, and comparative conceptual analysis. Qualitative content analysis was used to identify definitions, assumptions, principles, management practices, character-development strategies, and research findings contained in the selected literature. The analysis involved preparing the textual data, identifying relevant information, coding meaningful statements, developing categories, and interpreting the relationships among the categories. A clear description of coding, categorization, and interpretation is important for strengthening the trustworthiness of qualitative content analysis (Elo et al., 2014).

The initial coding process focused on concepts directly associated with the research objective. The initial codes included programme planning, objective formulation, division of responsibilities, resource allocation, religious routines, exemplary behaviour, student discipline, responsibility, initiative, self-control, academic independence, vocational responsibility, supervision, programme evaluation, parental involvement, and school-community collaboration. These codes were developed from the reviewed literature and were revised when additional concepts emerged during repeated reading.

Related codes were subsequently grouped into broader categories. Codes concerning objectives, programmes, schedules, resources, and success indicators were classified under planning. Codes concerning institutional structure, division of responsibilities, coordination, and stakeholder involvement were classified under organizing. Codes concerning religious habituation, role modelling, discipline, guidance, vocational activities, and school culture were classified under implementation. Codes concerning observation, documentation, feedback, student-behaviour assessment, and programme review were classified under monitoring and evaluation.

Thematic analysis was used to develop broader patterns from the codes and categories. The analytical process included familiarization with the literature, initial coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and interpretive synthesis. Thematic analysis requires methodological coherence, explicit analytic decisions, and clear explanations of how researchers move from textual data to higher-order themes (Braun & Clarke, 2024).

The themes were developed through repeated comparison among the selected sources. The principal themes included management-based character strengthening, religious habituation as an internalization mechanism, integration of vocational and pesantren cultures, stakeholder participation, consistent role modelling, evaluation of independent-character development, and continuous programme improvement. The themes were reviewed to ensure that each theme had a clear focus and remained supported by evidence from multiple sources. Transparent coding records and theme development can strengthen credibility, dependability, and confirmability in qualitative analysis (Nowell et al., 2017).

Thematic synthesis was then applied to move beyond descriptive summaries and produce an integrated conceptual interpretation. The synthesis involved coding relevant findings, developing descriptive themes, and constructing analytical themes that explained how management functions contributed to independent-character development. Thematic synthesis makes it possible to preserve a transparent connection between the conclusions of a review and the findings contained in the primary literature (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

Comparative conceptual analysis was used to examine the similarities, differences, and complementary relationships among the reviewed concepts. Educational management was examined through planning, organizing, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement. Independent character was examined through initiative, responsibility, discipline, self-regulation, confidence, decision-making, and task completion. Religious habituation was examined through repeated religious practices, role modelling, moral guidance, reflection, reinforcement, and institutional culture.

The conceptual analysis also examined the limitations of each domain. Management functions may become administrative when they focus only on programmes, schedules, documentation, and compliance. Religious habituation may become ceremonial when activities are performed repeatedly without understanding or behavioural internalization. Character education may remain abstract when independence is not translated into observable student behaviour. The study therefore integrated the three domains by positioning management functions as a systematic framework, religious habituation as an internalization process, and independent character as the intended developmental outcome.

The trustworthiness of the study was strengthened through source triangulation, theoretical triangulation, systematic documentation, and repeated verification. Source triangulation involved comparing findings from journal articles, academic books, research reports, and educational policy documents. Theoretical triangulation involved examining the research problem through educational management, character education, religious habituation, vocational education, and pesantren-based education.

An audit trail was maintained through keyword records, inclusion and exclusion criteria, the literature-review matrix, initial codes, analytical categories, and thematic mapping. Emerging interpretations were repeatedly compared with the original literature to reduce unsupported conclusions. Contrasting findings were also considered so that the study did not assume that every religious activity, management programme, or pesantren tradition automatically produced independent character.

This research did not involve human participants or direct field-data collection. Therefore, informed consent and ethical clearance for human-subject research were not required. Academic ethics were maintained by acknowledging all sources, avoiding plagiarism, preserving the contextual meaning of previous findings, and clearly distinguishing previous research results from the interpretations developed in this study. Since the findings were produced through library research, the resulting framework remains conceptual and requires further empirical examination in pesantren-based vocational high schools.

Results and Discussion

The literature synthesis identified five interconnected management functions in strengthening students' independent character in pesantren-based vocational high schools: planning, organizing, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation with continuous follow-up. These functions do not operate separately or in a rigid linear order. They form a continuous management cycle in which evaluation results provide information for revising objectives, programmes, responsibilities, habituation strategies, and student-development activities.

The synthesis also indicates that management functions cannot directly produce independent character without appropriate educational mechanisms. Religious habituation, teacher role modelling, school culture, vocational learning, student responsibility, parental involvement, guidance, and reflective activities function as the principal mechanisms through which management policies are translated into daily student behaviour. Independent character develops when these mechanisms gradually move students from externally controlled obedience toward internally regulated responsibility.

Table 1. Management Functions for Strengthening Independent Character

Management function	Principal activities	Expected character development
Planning	Needs assessment, formulation of objectives, determination of indicators, programme design, scheduling, and resource preparation	Clear direction for developing discipline, initiative, responsibility, and self-regulation
Organizing	Division of responsibilities, coordination, stakeholder participation, and integration of school and pesantren units	Consistency of guidance and collective responsibility
Implementation	Religious habituation, role modelling, vocational practice, guidance, reflection, and student	Internalization and practical application of independent

	assignments	character
Monitoring	Behavioural observation, student reflection, task records, attendance, teacher feedback, and parental communication	Identification of student progress and emerging difficulties
Evaluation and follow-up	Analysis of programme effectiveness, student development, improvement needs, and subsequent intervention	Continuous improvement and sustainable character formation

1. Management Functions as an Integrated Character-Strengthening Cycle

The first result is that character education needs to be managed as an integrated institutional process rather than as a collection of incidental religious activities. Character-strengthening programmes in vocational schools become more effective when planning, implementation, school culture, stakeholder participation, and evaluation are connected systematically. Programme effectiveness is weakened when schools organize activities without determining clear developmental outcomes or evaluating changes in student behaviour (Simatupang et al., 2024).

Management provides the structure that connects the philosophical values of pesantren education with the practical demands of vocational education. Pesantren values provide spiritual, ethical, and communal foundations, while vocational education requires discipline, professional responsibility, initiative, adaptability, and work readiness. Management functions organize these two orientations so that religious values are not separated from vocational competence.

A management-based approach also positions character education as an institutional responsibility. Independent character cannot be assigned only to Islamic education teachers, counselling teachers, or student-affairs personnel. It needs to become part of school leadership, curriculum implementation, vocational practice, classroom management, religious programmes, internship preparation, student organizations, and communication with parents. School organizational culture is constructed through interactions among leadership, policies, shared values, teachers, students, families, and the wider community (Torres, 2022).

The management cycle begins by identifying the character needs of students. Schools then formulate objectives, organize responsible actors, implement appropriate activities, monitor behavioural changes, and evaluate programme effectiveness. The evaluation results should return to the planning stage. This process enables the programme to respond to differences in student backgrounds, emerging behavioural problems, technological changes, and workplace requirements.

2. Planning Independent-Character Strengthening

Planning is the first management function identified in the synthesis. It establishes the direction, objectives, activities, indicators, resources, schedule, and responsibilities of the character-strengthening programme. Without clear planning, religious habituation may continue as a routine inherited from previous school practices without a clear relationship with independent-character development.

Planning should begin with an assessment of students' actual needs. Pesantren-based vocational high schools may serve students from different family backgrounds, levels of religious understanding, academic abilities, motivations, and degrees of independence. Some students may experience difficulty managing time, completing assignments, maintaining personal cleanliness, regulating technology use, or accepting responsibility. Other students may demonstrate adequate discipline but lack initiative, confidence, or problem-solving skills.

Needs assessment can use teacher observations, counselling records, student reflections, attendance data, vocational assignment results, parental information, and internship evaluations. The purpose is not to classify students as having good or bad character. It is to identify the specific dimensions of independence that require development.

The findings indicate that independent character should be translated into observable indicators. Broad statements such as "developing independent students" do not provide sufficient guidance for implementation or evaluation. More operational indicators may include the ability to arrive on time, prepare personal learning equipment, complete assignments without repeated reminders, manage daily schedules, maintain personal and environmental cleanliness, solve routine problems, seek assistance appropriately, accept consequences, and reflect on mistakes.

In the vocational context, the indicators should also include work-related behaviour. Students need to follow safety procedures, care for equipment, complete practical assignments, report problems honestly, communicate professionally, and demonstrate initiative during workplace learning. Work character in vocational education requires the integration of personal discipline, responsibility, technical competence, and professional attitudes (Meutia et al., 2024).

Planning should connect the indicators with the school's vision, curriculum, pesantren traditions, and graduate profile. Religious habituation activities need to be selected according to their contribution to the intended

character outcomes. Congregational prayer, for example, can support punctuality, order, personal preparation, and collective responsibility. Qur'anic recitation can develop consistency and self-discipline. Cleaning duties can support responsibility, cooperation, and concern for the environment.

However, character outcomes do not arise automatically from participating in these activities. Planning needs to explain the educational meaning of each routine, the expected student responsibilities, the role of teachers, and how progress will be evaluated. A well-planned programme connects religious action with moral understanding and daily behaviour.

Planning should also integrate character development into academic and vocational learning. Independence cannot be developed only before or after classroom instruction. Teachers can provide problem-solving assignments, independent projects, practical responsibilities, learning contracts, group leadership rotation, and reflective activities. Vocational education is particularly suitable for developing independence because students encounter practical tasks that require preparation, decision-making, perseverance, and accountability.

Student self-efficacy should be considered during planning. Students who believe they can complete academic and vocational responsibilities are more likely to participate actively and persist when facing difficulties. Evidence from vocational education shows that academic self-efficacy is related to behavioural engagement in school and workplace internships (Hong et al., 2021). Character programmes should therefore combine responsibility with achievable challenges, constructive feedback, and opportunities for students to experience progress.

3. Organizing School, Pesantren, Family, and Industry Participation

The second result concerns organizing. This function determines how roles, authority, communication, resources, and coordination are distributed among the actors involved in character development. Independent-character strengthening requires coordination because students interact with different teachers, supervisors, parents, peers, religious mentors, and industry instructors.

The school principal has a central role in defining institutional direction, building commitment, allocating resources, and ensuring programme continuity. Leadership influences character development through policies, expectations, communication, role modelling, supervision, and the creation of school culture. Principals contribute to school quality by establishing shared values, facilitating professional cooperation, and controlling the consistency of organizational practices (Sumiran et al., 2022).

Vice principals, Islamic education teachers, vocational teachers, counselling teachers, homeroom teachers, dormitory supervisors, and student-organization advisers should have clear but interconnected responsibilities. Islamic education teachers may explain the religious meaning of responsibility and discipline. Vocational teachers can connect these values with professional practice. Counselling teachers can assist students who experience self-regulation difficulties. Homeroom teachers can coordinate information concerning daily behaviour and learning responsibilities.

Organizing does not mean dividing character education into isolated responsibilities. It requires a coordinated system in which different actors reinforce the same core values. Students may become confused when pesantren supervisors emphasize discipline but classroom teachers tolerate lateness, incomplete assignments, or irresponsible use of equipment. Consistency among school components is essential for transforming institutional values into school culture.

School culture represents the shared values, assumptions, routines, relationships, and practices experienced by students. It cannot be created only through slogans or written regulations. Culture is formed through repeated organizational actions, leadership practices, interpersonal relationships, rewards, sanctions, and daily examples. Effective school management therefore needs to ensure that institutional practices reflect the character values communicated to students (Torres, 2022).

Parental involvement is another important organizational element. Students may experience different standards of discipline, technology use, worship, and responsibility at school and at home. Inconsistent expectations can weaken habituation. Families contribute to independent character by providing responsibilities, opportunities for decision-making, emotional support, and appropriate supervision.

Teacher-parent collaboration can include regular communication, behavioural progress reports, parenting discussions, home responsibilities, and joint responses to recurring problems. Collaborative character management is more effective when parents participate in planning, communication, monitoring, and evaluation rather than being contacted only when students violate school regulations (Ariani et al., 2026).

Involving parents does not mean transferring school responsibilities to families. Schools need to recognize variations in parental availability, educational background, economic conditions, and parenting styles. Communication and participation mechanisms should therefore remain accessible and flexible. The school may use meetings, telephone communication, digital platforms, home visits, or short written reports according to family conditions.

Industry partners also need to participate, particularly during internships and workplace-based learning. Industry supervisors can provide information regarding students' punctuality, initiative, responsibility,

communication, compliance with safety standards, and care for equipment. These observations provide valuable evidence because students may behave differently in school and workplace environments.

The organizing function should therefore connect school, pesantren, family, and industry as complementary educational environments. Each environment contributes different experiences, but all should support responsible independence rather than dependence, fear-based obedience, or uncontrolled freedom.

4. Implementation through Religious Habituation and Role Modelling

The third result concerns implementation. The literature synthesis indicates that religious habituation is one of the principal mechanisms used by Islamic schools to strengthen student character. Repeated religious activities can develop discipline, consistency, moral awareness, social responsibility, and positive school culture when they are implemented systematically (Nowell et al., 2017; Thomas & Harden, 2008).

Religious habituation may include congregational prayer, Qur'anic recitation, daily prayer, remembrance, charitable activities, religious study, respectful greetings, personal cleanliness, communal work, and reflection. Daily and weekly habituation creates a structured educational environment in which students repeatedly practise values instead of only discussing them theoretically. Consistent religious practices can strengthen school culture and support sustainable character formation (Sumiran et al., 2022).

Habituation is relevant to independent character because it develops students' capacity to organize actions consistently. Students learn to prepare themselves, manage time, complete responsibilities, and participate without continuous personal instruction. Through repetition, appropriate behaviour can gradually become part of students' self-regulation.

Nevertheless, repetition alone does not guarantee character internalization. Students may follow routines because of supervision, fear of punishment, peer pressure, or institutional requirements. When external control is removed, the behaviour may disappear. The educational process therefore needs to connect action, understanding, reflection, and responsibility.

Teachers should explain why an activity matters and how its values apply to learning, vocational practice, family life, and social interaction. Punctuality in prayer should be connected with punctuality in attending lessons and internships. Cleanliness should be connected with personal health, workshop safety, and care for shared facilities. Honesty in religious teaching should influence reporting mistakes and completing assignments without plagiarism.

Teacher role modelling reinforces this connection. Students evaluate not only what teachers say but also how teachers manage time, fulfil promises, treat others, respond to mistakes, maintain cleanliness, and complete professional responsibilities. Religious character development through habituation becomes stronger when teachers consistently demonstrate the values they expect from students (S. Lestari & Minsih, 2023).

Role modelling needs to involve all school personnel. Students may receive contradictory messages when teachers demand discipline but frequently arrive late, ignore school regulations, or fail to fulfil their own responsibilities. Character education loses credibility when institutional actors do not demonstrate consistency between values and actions.

Religious extracurricular activities can also support implementation. Religious organizations, Qur'anic programmes, social-service activities, student sermons, and commemorations provide students with opportunities to practise leadership, teamwork, communication, and responsibility. Their contribution becomes stronger when students are assigned meaningful roles rather than remaining passive participants (Nasrudin et al., 2023).

The implementation process should provide gradual autonomy. At the initial stage, teachers may use explicit rules, schedules, reminders, and direct supervision. As students demonstrate progress, teachers should gradually provide greater responsibility. Students may organize activity schedules, lead groups, manage equipment, evaluate their performance, or design social projects.

This gradual release is important because independence cannot develop when adults continue to control every student action. Excessive control may produce compliance but limit initiative. Conversely, providing complete freedom without sufficient preparation may lead to disorder. Independent character develops through a balanced process of guidance, practice, feedback, and increasing autonomy.

5. Integration of Religious, Pesantren, and Vocational Values

The fourth result is the need to integrate religious habituation with vocational education. Pesantren-based vocational high schools should not create a separation between religious character and work character. Religious values need to inform how students learn, practise skills, interact with others, and prepare for employment.

Independent character in a pesantren context should not be interpreted as individualism or freedom from communal obligations. It refers to responsible self-management within ethical, religious, and social commitments. Students should be capable of making decisions and completing responsibilities while respecting teachers, peers, school regulations, religious principles, and community interests.

Boarding-school environments can support character development because students experience structured routines, communal living, spiritual development, extracurricular participation, shared responsibilities, and direct guidance. Character-building models in boarding schools show that personal development, spiritual formation, academic activities, healthy lifestyles, and inspirational role models can operate as interconnected components (Sobon et al., 2025).

The pesantren environment also offers opportunities to assign authentic responsibilities. Students can manage personal belongings, maintain rooms, organize activities, lead worship, assist younger students, coordinate communal work, and participate in social programmes. These responsibilities provide practical settings for developing initiative, discipline, and accountability.

However, religious identity should not narrow the meaning of character. A character programme that concentrates only on ritual compliance may neglect creativity, critical thinking, professional competence, communication, social sensitivity, and adaptability. Religion-based character management needs to accommodate a broader range of human and professional values so that students can respond to contemporary social and workplace demands (Salamah et al., 2023).

This critical point is particularly important in vocational education. Students need to combine religious commitment with technical accuracy, occupational safety, innovation, problem-solving, digital literacy, teamwork, and professional communication. Work readiness requires students to apply ethical principles within complex and changing situations rather than merely demonstrate formal religious behaviour.

Vocational practice can become an important character-learning environment. Teachers may assign individual and collaborative projects that require students to plan tasks, prepare tools, follow procedures, solve technical problems, document results, and evaluate their work. Students should be held responsible for both the quality of the product and the process used to produce it.

Internships provide another authentic context. Character education during vocational internships can strengthen discipline, responsibility, creativity, communication, politeness, and environmental sensitivity when students receive guidance and meaningful practical experience (S. Lestari & Minsih, 2023). Internship evaluation should therefore include character indicators alongside technical competence.

Digital technology also needs attention. Technology can support religious and character learning, but its effect depends on students' wellbeing, critical thinking, social competence, and the quality of educational interaction. Technology-supported character education is more effective when accompanied by reflection, dialogue, guidance, and attention to students' psychosocial conditions (Madjid & Shodiq, 2026).

Students should be taught to regulate technology use, evaluate information, protect privacy, communicate ethically, and maintain responsibility for online learning. Digital self-regulation is part of contemporary independence. Schools should not only prohibit inappropriate technology use but also develop students' capacity to make responsible digital decisions.

6. Monitoring Independent-Character Development

The fifth result concerns monitoring. Monitoring is required to determine whether programmes are implemented consistently and whether students demonstrate developmental change. Without monitoring, schools may assume that attendance in religious activities indicates successful character formation.

Monitoring should distinguish programme implementation from student outcomes. Programme monitoring examines whether activities occur according to schedule, whether teachers perform their responsibilities, whether facilities are available, and whether coordination functions effectively. Student-development monitoring examines changes in discipline, initiative, responsibility, self-control, task completion, and decision-making.

Independent character needs to be monitored across contexts. A student may demonstrate discipline during religious activities but remain dependent during learning assignments. Another student may complete practical tasks independently but fail to maintain personal responsibilities. Monitoring should therefore involve classroom learning, religious activities, vocational practice, school organizations, dormitory life, family behaviour, and internships where applicable.

Relevant monitoring methods include structured observation, anecdotal records, student portfolios, task-completion records, reflective journals, self-assessment, peer feedback, teacher discussions, counselling records, parental information, and internship reports. No single instrument can fully capture independent character.

Student self-assessment should be included because independence requires self-awareness. Students can reflect on responsibilities they have completed, difficulties they encountered, assistance they required, mistakes they made, and changes they plan to implement. Reflection changes monitoring from external control into an opportunity for self-regulation.

Teacher feedback should be descriptive and developmental. General statements such as "be more independent" provide limited guidance. Feedback should explain which behaviour requires improvement, why it matters, and what action the student should take. Specific feedback allows students to understand the relationship between their decisions and their consequences.

Monitoring should also identify contextual barriers. A student's repeated failure to complete assignments may result from limited ability, low confidence, family problems, poor time management, excessive technology use, or unclear teacher instructions. The school should avoid interpreting every difficulty as a moral failure. Accurate monitoring supports appropriate guidance.

Management in pesantren can integrate curriculum, leadership, daily practices, and character formation. Its effectiveness depends on the institution's ability to respond to contemporary challenges while preserving its educational identity (Nowell et al., 2017). Monitoring therefore needs to evaluate both student behaviour and the institutional conditions supporting that behaviour.

7. Evaluation and Continuous Follow-Up

The sixth result concerns evaluation and follow-up. Evaluation determines the relevance, consistency, effectiveness, and sustainability of the character-strengthening programme. It should examine whether management activities contribute to meaningful student development rather than only programme completion.

Evaluation can address several questions. Are the objectives and character indicators clear? Are activities appropriate for student needs? Do school personnel perform their responsibilities consistently? Are religious values connected with vocational learning? Do students demonstrate improvement? Which activities are effective? Which barriers continue to appear?

Character programme evaluation in vocational schools needs to examine planning, resources, implementation processes, stakeholder participation, school culture, and outcomes (Susatya et al., 2021). This comprehensive approach prevents evaluation from being reduced to attendance records, event documentation, or reports of completed activities.

Evaluation should use evidence collected over time. Character development is gradual and may not be visible after one activity or one semester. Longitudinal records can help schools identify whether behaviour is consistent, temporary, situational, or developing. Comparisons should focus primarily on individual progress rather than ranking students publicly.

The evaluation process should involve students. Student discussions and reflections can reveal whether activities are meaningful, burdensome, repetitive, or disconnected from their experiences. Students can also explain which forms of guidance help them become more responsible and which practices create dependence or passive compliance.

Parents and industry partners can contribute additional perspectives. Parents may observe whether school routines influence behaviour at home. Industry supervisors may evaluate whether students demonstrate punctuality, initiative, responsibility, and professional communication in authentic workplace settings.

Evaluation findings should produce follow-up actions. Students who demonstrate progress can receive greater autonomy, leadership roles, peer-mentoring opportunities, or more challenging responsibilities. Students who require additional support may receive counselling, individual mentoring, structured routines, parental collaboration, or repeated practice.

Follow-up should also address institutional weaknesses. If teachers apply different standards, the school may need coordination and professional development. If activities become ceremonial, the school may need reflective content and student participation. If evaluation instruments are unclear, indicators and documentation procedures need revision.

Educational management in vocational character education can provide a coordinated framework for guidance, counselling, school programmes, and student development (Simatupang et al., 2024). The evaluation function completes this framework by connecting evidence with decision-making and programme improvement.

8. Contribution to Students' Independent Character

The synthesis indicates that effective implementation of management functions can contribute to several dimensions of independent character. The first is self-discipline. Consistent routines train students to manage time, prepare themselves, and comply with responsibilities without repeated reminders.

The second is responsibility. Students learn to accept duties, maintain facilities, complete assignments, and recognize the consequences of their choices. Responsibility becomes meaningful when students understand the purpose of their duties rather than merely avoiding punishment.

The third is initiative. Students need opportunities to begin tasks, propose solutions, and participate in decision-making. Initiative cannot develop when every activity is completely determined by adults. Management should therefore provide structured spaces for student participation.

The fourth is self-regulation. Students learn to control impulses, manage technology use, maintain motivation, and adjust behaviour according to goals and values. Religious habituation supports self-regulation when external routines are accompanied by reflection and internal awareness.

The fifth is confidence. Students become more confident when they successfully complete responsibilities and receive constructive feedback. Confidence supports independence because students are more willing to make

decisions and face challenges.

The sixth is problem-solving. Vocational learning provides authentic problems that require students to analyse situations, use knowledge, evaluate alternatives, and take responsibility for results. These experiences connect independent character with professional competence.

The seventh is social independence. Independent students do not reject cooperation. They contribute responsibly, communicate needs, respect others, and avoid placing unnecessary burdens on peers. This understanding prevents independence from being interpreted as isolation or individualism.

9. Conceptual Contribution of the Study

The conceptual contribution of this study lies in integrating management functions, religious habituation, pesantren culture, vocational learning, and independent character into one framework. Previous research frequently discusses character education, religious activities, school management, vocational work character, and pesantren traditions separately.

The proposed framework positions planning as the process of determining character needs and objectives. Organizing coordinates school, pesantren, family, and industry actors. Implementation translates values into habituation, role modelling, learning, and authentic responsibility. Monitoring collects evidence of programme implementation and student progress. Evaluation and follow-up maintain continuous improvement.

The framework also distinguishes compliance from independence. Compliance may represent an initial stage in learning institutional rules, but independent character requires students to understand, accept, and apply values without continuous external control. Therefore, successful character management should gradually reduce unnecessary supervision while increasing personal responsibility.

Religious habituation functions as a means rather than the final outcome. The intended outcome is not simply frequent participation in religious activities. It is the development of students who can regulate themselves, act responsibly, solve problems, fulfil professional obligations, and apply Islamic values within school, family, community, digital, and workplace contexts.

The integration of management functions can help pesantren-based vocational schools avoid fragmented character programmes. It provides a systematic structure for connecting institutional identity, religious practices, vocational competence, student development, and quality improvement. Nevertheless, the framework remains conceptual because it was developed through library research. Empirical research is required to examine its applicability in pesantren-based vocational schools with different organizational, cultural, and student characteristics.

Conclusion

The implementation of management functions provides a systematic framework for strengthening students' independent character in pesantren-based vocational high schools. Planning establishes character objectives, indicators, programmes, schedules, and resources. Organizing coordinates the roles of school leaders, teachers, pesantren supervisors, parents, students, and industry partners. Implementation translates institutional values into religious habituation, role modelling, vocational learning, student responsibilities, and reflective activities. Monitoring and evaluation provide evidence for determining student progress and improving subsequent character-development programmes.

The findings indicate that independent character is not formed merely through participation in religious routines. Religious habituation becomes meaningful when it is connected with awareness, responsibility, self-discipline, initiative, self-regulation, confidence, and problem-solving. Islamic and pesantren values should therefore be integrated with academic learning, vocational practice, school culture, internships, family involvement, and daily student life. This integration gradually moves students from externally controlled compliance toward internally regulated responsibility.

Overall, effective character strengthening requires consistent leadership, coordinated stakeholder participation, exemplary behaviour, meaningful habituation, authentic responsibilities, and continuous evaluation. Through this integrated management cycle, pesantren-based vocational high schools can develop graduates who are technically competent, religiously grounded, professionally responsible, and capable of managing themselves independently in educational, social, digital, and workplace environments.

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