

THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF THE DAAR AL ULUUM ASAHAN ISLAMIC INSTITUTE IN FORMING A GENERATION OF SUPERIOR MUSLIMS

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Abstract

Islamic Higher Education Institutions Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute play a pivotal role in shaping an excellent Muslim generation, particularly in Asahan Regency. This study aims to examine the existence and contributions of Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute in fostering students' character, intellectual capacity, and Islamic social competence. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document studies involving community leaders, academics, and Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute students. The findings indicate that Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute contributes to expanding access to education grounded in Islamic values, strengthening students' morality, and encouraging their engagement in social and da'wah activities. An integrated curriculum and Islamic campus activities further shape students' religious identity and competitiveness. Nevertheless, several challenges persist, including limited infrastructure, digital innovation, and inter-institutional collaboration. This study concludes that Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute plays a significant role in nurturing an excellent Muslim generation in the region; however, strategic reinforcement, partnerships, and policy support are required to enhance its future contributions.

Keywords: Existence; Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute; Superior muslim generation; Islamic education.

INTRODUCTION

Universities play a highly strategic role in shaping the direction and quality of a nation's civilization. They not only serve as centers for the development of science, technology, and the arts, but also have a moral and social responsibility to shape the character of the next generation. In the context of Muslim societies, this role becomes even more significant. Islamic religious universities, such as the Daar Al Ulum Asahan Islamic Institute, are not merely academic institutions, but centers for the development of insan kamil (perfect human beings), individuals who excel intellectually, spiritually, and socially (Al-Attas, 1991; Al-Abrasyi, 2003). This means that the output produced is not only oriented towards cognitive aspects alone, but also towards the formation of a personality that is firmly rooted in Islamic values (Born, 2019).

In today's era of globalization and digitalization, the challenges facing the younger generation are increasingly complex. The unstoppable flow of information, the unfiltered influx of foreign cultural influences, and the technological disruption that is transforming many aspects of life demand institutions capable of serving as bastions of values and character. This is where Islamic higher education institutions become crucial. They serve not only as formal educational institutions but also as driving forces for social transformation grounded in Islamic principles (UNESCO, 2021; Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2020). Therefore, the existence of the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute is not sufficient merely as an administrative presence, but rather must become an agent of change capable of responding to the challenges of the times with an integrative and transformative approach (Azra, 2014).

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Several studies have emphasized the vital role of the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute in Asahan in shaping student character. Alimuddin (2021) in the *Journal of Islamic Religious Education* stated that integrative learning, combined with extracurricular activities based on Islamic values, can have a significant impact on shaping students' religious character. Huda et al. (2020) in their research published in the *Universal Journal of Educational Research* emphasized the importance of synergy between curriculum, campus culture, and spiritual development in producing graduates who excel not only academically but also possess a strong Islamic identity. In a more contemporary context, Mustakim (2023) outlined that character education in the digital era requires the use of Islamic digital platforms integrated with learning, as an effort to synergize technology with moral values.

This thinking aligns with al-Attas's (1993) view, which states that the primary goal of Islamic education is to produce good people, not merely intelligent ones. Good people are those who know their true nature, know their God, and are aware of their social role in society. With this framework, Islamic higher education is expected to serve not only as a place to transfer knowledge but also as an institution that produces a generation with morals, knowledge, and a focus on the welfare of the community.

Asahan Regency, as a predominantly Muslim region in North Sumatra Province, needs higher education based on Islamic values. The presence of Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKI), such as the Daar Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute and several other private Islamic universities, is a source of hope for the community in fostering a superior generation of Muslims. (Central Statistics Agency of Asahan Regency, 2024; Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023). However, empirically, there have not been many scientific studies that specifically examine the existence and role of the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute in this area in shaping a generation of Muslims who are not only competent in the field of science, but also strong spiritually and active socially (Azra, 2019; Law Number 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education).

The implementation of the Tridharma of higher education—education, research, and community service—provides a comprehensive framework for instilling Islamic values in students. Siregar (2022) in the *At-Tarbiyah Journal* states that the Tridharma can be an effective medium for instilling religiosity and sustainably shaping character. The integrated implementation of the Tridharma enables the ongoing internalization of values through classroom learning, research activities, and direct student involvement in community service activities (Nata, 2019; UNESCO, 2021).

Numerous researchers have conducted studies on the role of Islamic higher education institutions in human resource development and character formation. Most of these studies focus on the implementation of character education, the internalization of Islamic values, curriculum development, or the partial implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education. (Marzuki, 2015; Huda et al., 2020). Meanwhile, other studies have focused more on higher education governance, educational quality, and the contribution of Islamic higher education institutions to national development. However, several research gaps remain that have not received much attention.

First, there is a conceptual gap. Most studies view the existence of Islamic higher education solely from an institutional or educational delivery perspective. However, a university's existence is not only measured by its institutional sustainability, but also by its ability to generate tangible impacts on developing a superior generation of Muslims through the sustainable implementation of the Tridharma (Scott, 2014; Azra, 2019).

Second, there is an empirical gap. To date, there has been very little research specifically examining the contribution of private Islamic religious universities (PTKIS) at the local level, particularly the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute in Asahan. However, PTKIS have different characteristics, challenges, resources, and development dynamics than state Islamic universities, thus requiring separate empirical studies to obtain a more comprehensive picture of their role and contribution to society (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023; Huda et al., 2020).

Third, there is a methodological gap. Previous research generally examined the implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, character education, or institutional

development separately. Few studies have integrated institutional existence, implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, student character formation, and contributions to community development into a single, comprehensive analytical framework (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Marzuki, 2015).

Fourth, there is a contextual gap. Asahan Regency has socio-religious characteristics that are typical of strong indigenous tribes with the need to strengthen Muslim human resources that are adaptive to developments in science, technology, and global challenges (BPS Asahan Regency, 2024; Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023).

Based on these various gaps, this research is directed to answer several main questions, namely: (1) how is the existence of the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute as an Islamic university in Asahan Regency; (2) how does it contribute to forming a generation of Muslims who excel intellectually, spiritually, and socially; (3) what are the challenges faced in carrying out institutional functions; (4) how is the implementation of the tridharma of higher education in supporting the formation of student character; and (5) what strategies can be applied to strengthen the contribution of the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute to the development of a religious and competitive Muslim society.

The novelty of this research lies in the development of an analytical model that integrates four main dimensions: institutional existence, implementation of the Tridharma of higher education, student character formation, and the institution's social contribution, in explaining the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute of Asahan as a local Islamic higher education institution. Unlike previous studies that examined these aspects separately, this study presents a more comprehensive analysis by positioning the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute of Asahan as the main case study to explain how private Islamic religious higher education institutions contribute to developing a superior generation of Muslims in the modern era. Thus, this research is expected to not only enrich the treasury of Islamic higher education studies but also serve as a reference for the development of policies and strategies to strengthen PTKIS (Islamic Higher Education Institutions) in improving the quality of Muslim human resources in Indonesia (Yin, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Theoretically, this paper is expected to enrich the scientific literature in the field of Islamic education, particularly regarding the role of higher education institutions in character formation. It contributes to the study of Islamic-based character education, with a contextual approach based on local realities. Furthermore, the results of this study are expected to serve as an academic reference for future researchers in developing studies on the existence and contribution of Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions (PTKI) to the development of Muslim human resources in various regions (Azra, 2014).

From a practical perspective, the results of this study are expected to serve as a source of information and reference for the management of the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute, lecturers, student advisors, and educational policymakers in designing more effective character development programs. Thus, Islamic educational institutions can develop a more focused curriculum, campus culture, and student activities to produce a generation of Muslims who are intellectually, spiritually, and socially balanced. The findings of this study are also expected to serve as a basis for curriculum development, strengthening academic culture, and developing student activities that integrate intellectual, spiritual, and social intelligence in accordance with the goals of Islamic higher education (Republic of Indonesia, 2012; Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023). Furthermore, this study is expected to provide input to local governments, community organizations, and religious leaders to build more synergistic collaborations with Islamic higher education institutions as strategic partners in human resource development, strengthening religious moderation, and building a religious and competitive society (UNESCO, 2021; Azra, 2019).

The scope of this study includes an analysis of the existence and contribution of the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute in Asahan Regency, particularly focusing on institutional aspects, implementation of the Tridharma, and the role of lecturers and students in building an

academic ecosystem conducive to the formation of Islamic character. These values are analyzed through the implementation of the curriculum, academic culture, student organization activities, religious mentoring, Islamic studies, campus da'wah, and various forms of community service as part of the process of forming student character (Marzuki, 2015; Nata, 2019). In maintaining the focus and depth of analysis, this study is limited to the following: (1) only covers the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute which is located within the administrative area of Asahan Regency; (2) discussion of student character is limited to intellectual aspects (critical, analytical, and scientific thinking skills), spiritual (religious obedience, awareness of worship, and noble morals), and social Islam (social concern, da'wah spirit, and ability to contribute to society); (3) the time coverage is focused on the last three years (2022–2025), in order to obtain a relevant and up-to-date picture; (4) the approach used is descriptive-qualitative with data collection techniques in the form of observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, and literature studies; and (5) the discussion does not cover all forms of character education in general, but is limited to those directly related to the role of the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute in forming a superior Muslim generation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Matthew B. Miles, Huberman, & Johnny Saldana, 2014).

Thus, this research is expected to be a meaningful initial contribution in comprehensively explaining the role and challenges faced by the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute at the local level, as well as providing policy directions and strengthening strategies based on the real needs of the Muslim community in Asahan Regency.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a field research with a descriptive qualitative approach. The research was conducted through several stages, namely: (1) the preparation stage which includes the preparation of research instruments, determining informants using purposive sampling techniques, and managing research permits; (2) the data collection stage through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies; (3) the data analysis stage using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña which includes data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions; and (4) the data validation stage through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking with several key informants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data collection was conducted through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participatory observation was conducted for approximately three months while the researcher was at the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute in Asahan, participating in various academic and student activities, such as lectures, Islamic mentoring activities, scientific seminars, the Community Service Program (KKN), community service, spiritual development, and student organization activities. Through these observations, the researcher obtained data on the implementation of Islamic values, academic culture, and the practice of the Tridharma of Higher Education, which were then used to confirm and strengthen the interview results (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Spradley, 2016).

The interviews were conducted in depth (in-depth interview) to 20 informants selected by purposive sampling based on their involvement in the implementation of education at the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute. The informants consisted of 10 lecturers, 5 students, and 5 community leaders/*alumni* who understand the development and contribution of the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute to the community. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner using interview guidelines so that researchers obtained in-depth information regarding the existence of the institution, the implementation of the tridharma of higher education, the formation of student character, institutional challenges, and strategies for strengthening the role of the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

Documentation data was obtained from official institutional documents, such as the Statute of the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute, Strategic Plan (Renstra), performance reports, Tridharma activity reports, accreditation data, community service reports, lecturers' scientific publications, student activity archives, and various other supporting documents. All data obtained was analyzed simultaneously until data saturation was reached, which is the condition when the information obtained is repetitive and no longer yields new findings (Matthew B. Miles et al., 2014).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Existence of the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute

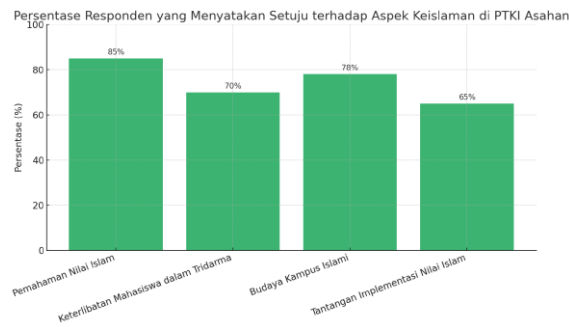
The results of the study indicate that the existence of the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute in Asahan is not only demonstrated by the institution's sustainability as a provider of Islamic higher education, but also by the level of public acceptance of its existence. Based on the results of interviews with 20 informants consisting of lecturers, students, and alumni, the majority of informants view the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute in Asahan as having developed as one of the Islamic higher education institutions that has made a real contribution to improving the quality of education in Asahan Regency. This existence is reflected in the increasing public trust in the institution, the increasing number of students from year to year, the development of study programs, and the increasingly broad involvement of the campus in various academic, religious, and community empowerment activities (Results of Informant Interviews, 2025).

The findings indicate that the existence of a university is not only measured by the institution's age or the number of study programs, but also by social legitimacy gained through public trust and the institution's ability to provide real benefits to its surrounding environment. From an Institutional Theory perspective, the sustainability of an organization is greatly influenced by its ability to gain social legitimacy, adapt to environmental changes, and build sustainable relationships with the community and various stakeholders (Scott, 2014). Thus, the existence of the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute can be understood as a form of institutional recognition obtained through the consistent implementation of the three pillars of higher education, namely education, research, and community service (Republik Indonesia, 2012).

The results of this study align with Azra's (2019) study, which explains that the success of Islamic higher education institutions is determined not only by their academic quality but also by their ability to build public trust through the internalization of Islamic values, strengthening institutional governance, and contributing to social development. These findings also support the research of Huda et al. (2020), which states that Islamic higher education institutions have a strategic role in developing superior human resources if they are able to integrate academic culture, learning, and community service in a sustainable manner.

However, this study yields findings that differ from those of some previous studies. While most previous studies have emphasized that the existence of higher education institutions is influenced by academic quality, organizational governance, and institutional accreditation (Marginson, 2016; Scott, 2014), this study shows that in the context of Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions (PTKIS) in the regions, the institution's existence is also greatly determined by social closeness to the community, consistency in implementing Islamic values, and active involvement in religious, educational, and community empowerment activities. This closeness forms public trust, which ultimately becomes important social capital for the institution's sustainability.

The findings show that the Islamic Institute of Daar Al Uluum Asahan is not only built through administrative indicators, but also through strengthening social capital which is reflected in relationships of mutual trust, cooperation, and community participation in various campus programs. In the perspective of Social Capital Theory, social capital built through networks, trust, and shared norms is an important factor in increasing organizational legitimacy and the sustainability of educational institutions (Putnam, 2000). Therefore, the Islamic Institute of Daar Al Uluum Asahan maintains its existence not only due to the implementation of higher education, but also by its ability to build harmonious relationships with the community as part of the implementation of Islamic values that are *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.



This research has successfully uncovered several important findings regarding the existence and contribution of the Islamic Religious College, the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute of Asahan in Asahan Regency in shaping a superior Muslim generation. These findings were obtained through in-depth interviews with 17 key informants, three months of field observations, and analysis of institutional documents from the selected Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute of Asahan: Daar Uluum Islamic Institute. These findings are divided into several main aspects: students' understanding of Islamic values, implementation of the three pillars of higher education, Islamic campus culture, and future challenges and strategies.

The Contribution of the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute to the Formation of a Superior Muslim Generation

Interviews with lecturers and students indicate that most students understand the importance of Islamic values in academic and social life. They believe that learning materials such as Akhlak (Islamic creed), Usul Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), and Islamic studies not only provide theoretical knowledge but also serve as a moral basis for behavior. Eighty-five percent of respondents stated that learning on their campus helps shape an Islamic mindset (Interview and Questionnaire Results, 2025).

A lecturer at the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute in Asahan stated: "Our students are beginning to understand that knowledge is not just a tool, but also a path to devotion to God. This is the foundation for every Tridharma activity." In terms of implementing Tridharma, student involvement is still uneven. From documentation and interviews, it is known that around 70% of students actively participate in national and international community service activities facilitated by the campus, such as National and International Community Service Programs (KKN), legal aid counseling from the Faculty of Sharia, TPA guidance, and community da'wah. Student research activities have also begun to increase, especially since the campus required theses based on field data and contextual Islam.

However, some students complained about the lack of support in terms of facilities and guidance from their supervisors. "We want to be more active in society, we need guidance and structured official programs," said a 7th semester student from the Islamic Education Study Program. Despite receiving positive feedback from informants, this study also identified several challenges facing the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute in Asahan. These challenges include limited learning facilities and infrastructure, the need to improve human resource capacity, strengthen collaboration with various institutions, and increase research productivity and community service.

Some students also expressed the need to improve the quality of academic services, particularly regarding the equitable distribution of lecturer attendance and the optimization of learning facilities. These findings indicate that improving institutional quality is determined not only by student growth but also by the quality of academic services provided to the academic community.

Islamic Campus Culture

Islamic campus culture is reflected in several daily practices, such as beginning lectures with a prayer and reciting five verses from the Quran, the practice of modest dress and covering the genitals, congregational prayer, weekly Islamic mentoring activities through intra-campus

organizations, and the use of Islamic greetings on campus. Seventy-eight percent of respondents acknowledged that this campus culture supports the development of their morals. Even non-academic activities such as seminars and entrepreneurship training, both online and offline, are always opened with a recitation of the Quran and a short sermon (Informant Interview Results, 2025).

However, researchers also noted a gap between the values taught and the reality of some students' behavior off-campus. As one student activity unit (UKM) advisor put it: "Our campus culture is good, but when students are off-campus, there's less control. This presents a challenge for sustainable character development."

Challenges in Implementing Islamic Values

Other findings indicate that the main challenges facing the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute in developing a superior Muslim generation lie in limited human resources and budget. Intensive training in integrating Islamic values into contemporary learning methods is one of the challenges ahead (Sallis, 2015; Tilaar, 2012). In addition, Islamic-based student activities often lack adequate operational funds, thus limiting student initiatives.

As many as 65% of respondents complained about this challenge, and they hoped for collaboration between campuses and local government institutions and Islamic organizations.

Table 1. Summary of Findings Based on Interviews and Observations

No	Aspects Studied	Finding Indicators	Percentage of Respondents Agreeing (%)
1	Understanding Islamic Values	Students relate learning to Islamic life	85%
2	Involvement in Tridharma	Active in community service, research, and teaching based on Islamic values	70%
3	Islamic Campus Culture	There are Islamic customs in the campus environment	78%
4	Challenges of Implementing Islamic Values	Limited human resources, funds and training	65%

Strategies that have been and need to be implemented

Based on the results of data analysis, several strategies have begun to be implemented by the campus, including:

1. Integration of Islamic values into all courses through the Islamization of knowledge approach.
2. Training of students as preachers and Quran reciters by the campus LTTQ Institute in national and international KKN activities.
3. Intensive coaching through Student Activity Units (UKM) and moral mentoring in every study program at the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute (Lickona, 2013; Astin, 1993).

However, this strategy is deemed insufficient to reach all students equally. Therefore, a more holistic approach is needed through the addition of applicable Islamic character courses, ongoing spiritual and Islamic leadership development programs, and the development of a character development roadmap that aligns with the profile of outstanding Muslim graduates. This holistic approach aligns with the concept of Islamic education, which emphasizes a balance between the intellectual, spiritual, moral, and social development of students (Muhaimin, 2012; Nata, 2017).

Based on the findings presented previously, it can be concluded that the existence of the Islamic Religious College, the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute in Asahan Regency has a real contribution in shaping a superior generation of Muslims, both in terms of religiosity, academics, and social service. The existence of PTKI not only plays a role in transferring Islamic knowledge, but also forms the character of students through Islamic values that are systematically instilled through academic, co-curricular, and non-academic activities. This finding strengthens the view that Islamic higher education has a strategic function as a center for the development of science, moral development, and community empowerment in realizing human resources that are faithful, knowledgeable, and competitive (Law Number 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education; Azra, 2012).

In the context of Islamic higher education, Al-Attas (1993) emphasized that Islamic education should be able to produce good people, not just intellectually intelligent people. This is in line with the vision of several PTKI in Asahan which strive to produce a superior generation that is not only knowledgeable, but also has noble morals. Students of the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute Asahan are expected to be able to become agents of change firmly rooted in Islamic values and able to respond to global challenges. Interview findings with community leaders indicate that the majority of the Asahan community views graduates of the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute Asahan as individuals who have good morals, are able to lead religious activities, and care about their social environment.

However, some users of graduates agree that the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute in Asahan has been fully effective in developing a superior generation of Muslims. Some community leaders and alumni have criticized the quality of the curriculum and learning methods at the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute in Asahan, which tend to be monotonous and lack integration. As quoted by Azra (2002), the main challenge of Islamic higher education in Indonesia is the inability to balance Islamic knowledge with modern science. This results in PTKI graduates being less competitive in the workforce and unable to compete with graduates from general universities.

Furthermore, challenges also arise in the internalization of Islamic values through the Tridharma (three pillars of higher education) activities at the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute in Asahan. Although research shows that 70% of students are actively involved in Islamic-based community service activities, there are also students who participate but have not yet understood their duties and adjusted to the community service environment (Boyer, 1996; Bringle & Hatcher, 1995).

In response to this, the researcher believes that the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute in Asahan needs to improve and evaluate its teaching system, student development strategies, and the integration of Islamic values into all campus activities. The Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute in Asahan should not merely be a normative institution that teaches religion theoretically, but rather a progressive and solution-oriented institution in addressing the problems of the people and the nation, particularly in the religious field. Therefore, the concept of integration between science and Islam needs to be emphasized more in all elements of Islamic higher education, from the curriculum, academic culture, to community service programs that directly impact the community (Law Number 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education).

Huda et al.'s (2020) research shows that Islamic campus culture has a positive correlation with strengthening students' Islamic identity. Field findings indicate that the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute has implemented intensive Islamic development programs, although challenges in consistency and supervision remain important. Furthermore, Islamic campus culture at the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute is an important aspect in character building. The culture of congregational prayer, Qur'an recitation by the LTTQ of the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute, the science council forum in the form of online and offline seminars both nationally and internationally, and regular socio-religious activities can shape a strong religious character in students.

In this regard, lecturers and educational staff play a central role in shaping a superior generation through the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute campus. Lecturers not only act as teachers but also as role models in terms of morals, enthusiasm for learning, and social awareness.

Findings, based on interviews with the institute's leadership, lecturers, and students, indicate that lecturers' exemplary behavior in both academic and social life is seen as one of the main factors influencing student character formation. This finding aligns with the concept of Islamic education that positions educators as good examples in the learning process and the formation of students' personalities (Muhaimin, 2012; Nata, 2017).

Research findings indicate that, based on qualitative data obtained through interviews and focus group discussions with students, improvements to learning models are still needed because some teaching methods used tend to be conventional and have not fully motivated students to think critically, creatively, collaboratively, and be able to solve real-world problems in society. This condition indicates the importance of transforming learning towards a more participatory, contextual, and student-centered approach, as is the demand for 21st-century higher education (Biggs & Tang, 2011; UNESCO, 2021).

Researchers assess that improving the quality of lecturers in Islamic pedagogy and andragogical approaches is a very urgent need. Lecturers need to receive continuous training in learning strategies that integrate Islamic values with modern scientific approaches, the use of learning technology, and active learning methods. Furthermore, the implementation of a mentoring system between lecturers and students is believed to increase the effectiveness of internalizing Islamic values in academic life and in students' daily lives. Based on research observations, a more intensive academic relationship between lecturers and students can strengthen character development, increase learning motivation, and support the realization of the vision and mission of the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute as an excellent Islamic university (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015; Lickona, 2013).

In terms of tangible contributions, the National and International Community Service Program (KKN) activities carried out by students of the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute in Asahan have proven to have a positive impact on the community. Based on the results of activity documentation, LPPM reports, and interviews with field supervisors and the community, the programs implemented include guidance on reading and writing the Quran, Islamic family law counseling, assistance in resolving Islamic economic disputes, zakat and waqf education, Islamic entrepreneurship training, and various mosque-based community empowerment activities. These programs demonstrate the concrete implementation of the Tridharma of Higher Education in the form of community service that integrates science with Islamic values. This finding is in line with the results of research by Mustakim (2023) which emphasizes that Islamic education must be adaptive to social change and able to provide solutions that suit the needs of the community.

However, the effectiveness of these programs is highly dependent on institutional support, budget availability, student readiness, and coordination between stakeholders. Interviews with LPPM administrators, supervising lecturers, and student participants in the Community Service Program (KKN) revealed that several community service programs have not been running optimally due to limited coordination, minimal practical training prior to deployment, and limited funding. Therefore, the monitoring and evaluation system for the implementation of the Tridharma of Higher Education needs to be strengthened, not only through administrative reports but also through impact assessments on the community as a basis for program refinement in the following period. This impact-based evaluation approach is an essential part of the higher education quality assurance system, which is oriented towards continuous quality improvement (Sallis, 2015; Republic of Indonesia, 2012).

Most findings support that the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute in Asahan has great potential to develop a superior generation of Muslims. However, this potential will be suboptimal without strong institutional management, a relevant curriculum, and a conducive campus culture (Azra, 2012; Muhaimin, 2012; Republic of Indonesia, 2012). Therefore, the researcher recommends the development of a long-term strategic program that includes: (1) strengthening Islamic identity through community-based activities with religious organizations in Asahan; (2) developing an integrative curriculum based on maqashid sharia and local needs; (3) involving alumni and stakeholders in developing student character (Harvey & Green, 1993); and (4) increasing

partnerships between the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute and local and international institutions.

From a socio-cultural perspective, as proposed by Vygotsky (1978), learning and character development cannot be separated from the social and cultural context. In this context, the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute must become an ecological system that supports holistic individual development. Therefore, the Islamic values instilled at the Daar Al Uluum Asahan Islamic Institute must be internalized in student behavior, not simply memorized or learned through the rhetoric and theories found on campus.

Overall, this discussion demonstrates that the existence and contribution of the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute in Asahan have significantly influenced the formation of a superior generation of Muslims. However, for this impact to be more profound and sustainable, a comprehensive reform strategy is needed, encompassing ideological, structural, and operational aspects. The researcher emphasizes that improving the institutional and human quality of students and graduates of the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute in Asahan depends heavily on the institution's courage and consistency in reforming the education system and developing student character holistically and oriented towards the needs of the community.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to identify and analyze the contribution and existence of the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute in Asahan Regency in shaping a generation of Muslims who excel intellectually, spiritually, and socially. The results show that the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute plays a significant role in transforming Islamic values into the learning process, community service, and character development of students. Through the implementation of the Tridharma of Higher Education based on Islamic principles, the Daar Al Uluum Islamic Institute in Asahan has succeeded in building an educational ecosystem that prioritizes morality, ethics, and integrity. However, several challenges still require serious attention, such as the need to increase cross-sector collaboration, improve campus facilities, and increase the integration of Islamic values in the holistic management of the institution. Therefore, continuous innovation in the curriculum, strengthening an Islamic-based academic culture, and increasing the role of lecturers as spiritual and intellectual role models are needed.

Further research is recommended to explore the contributions of graduates of the Daar Al Ulum Islamic Institute in Asahan from an alumni perspective and their impact on the wider community, as well as to further analyze new approaches to technology-based and social-digital Islamic education. Furthermore, a comparative study between the Daar Al Ulum Islamic Institute in Asahan and other religious universities could broaden understanding of the effectiveness of Islamic educational approaches in local and global contexts.

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