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The Moral Architecture of Ethical Education for the Golden Generation 2045: A Case Study of MAN 2 Malang Boarding Madrasah

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Abstract
This study examines how ethical education is produced at MAN 2 Malang, a leading state boarding madrasah in East Java, Indonesia, and how it prepares students for the Golden Generation 2045, Indonesia's national vision of a generation that will lead the country at the centenary of its independence. We argue that ethical education emerges not only from teaching but from the moral architecture of the institution: the deliberate alignment of vision, relationships, routines, spaces, and technologies across the madrasah's entire ecology. A qualitative single-case study drew on in-depth interviews with 13 informants (school leaders, teachers, library staff, and four students), participatory observation, and document analysis. Data were analyzed with Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive model, complemented by pattern matching and explanation building. Three interdependent layers of moral architecture were identified: (1) a normative layer, in which akhlakul karimah is set as the highest institutional goal and embedded in strategic planning and the "Juara Prima" work culture; (2) a relational layer, in which teachers, leaders, and peers model conduct and daily spiritual routines (Quzido) form collective habits; and (3) a material layer, in which spatial arrangements, CCTV, and a point-based code of conduct shape behavior preventively. Aristotle's virtue ethics, Al-Ghazali's tazkiyatun nafs, and Fazlur Rahman's "double movement" serve as complementary interpretive lenses rather than a unified theory. Sustaining the architecture is challenged by student heterogeneity, limited supervision, digital distraction, funding constraints, and external influences. The study offers a boarding-madrasah model of ethical education as institutional design.

Keywords:
Moral Architecture, Ethical Education, Boarding Madrasah, Institutional Ecology, Golden Generation 2045

A. INTRODUCTION

The transformation of education toward Golden Indonesia 2045 requires Islamic educational institutions to produce graduates who possess academic competence, digital literacy, and moral integrity. This challenge is becoming increasingly complex as the acceleration of digital transformation changes the way students learn, interact, and build their social identities. The use of technology opens opportunities for learning innovation but also increases the risk of declining discipline, responsibility, and ethical

sensitivity if not balanced by a governance system oriented toward values formation (Mothafar et al., 2024). Therefore, leading boarding madrasahs are required to build an educational system that integrates digital innovation with character development.

The "Golden Indonesia 2045" vision, the national aspiration for Indonesia to become an advanced nation by the centenary of its independence in 2045, aims to cultivate human resources who are outstanding, globally competitive, technologically proficient, and of strong character (Nurhasanah et al., 2026). Students in school today are the "Golden Generation 2045": the cohort who will be in their productive years when that milestone arrives. Various phenomena indicate that today's youth face increasingly complex challenges. These include excessive use of electronic devices, rising cases of cyberbullying, the spread of hate speech on social media, and a decline in discipline and responsibility. These conditions highlight the urgent need to strengthen ethical education so that students behave in accordance with moral and religious values.

Previous studies can be grouped into three streams. First, studies emphasizing the cultivation of religious behavior as a character-building strategy. Suryadi et al. (2025) demonstrated that the ethical culture at MTs Akhlaqiyah is built through the cultivation of daily behaviors such as bowing respectfully, arranging one's sandals, and showing respect to teachers. Second, these studies focus on integrating character education into the madrasah curriculum. Anwar & Nugraha (2024) found that most madrasahs still treat character education as a supplement to academic learning, so it has not yet become a primary focus in institutional governance. Third, these studies examine digital leadership and data-driven governance. Siswadi et al. (2025) demonstrate that digital leadership plays a role in building a culture of quality, while Abrar & R (2025) emphasize that Islamic educational institutions need to integrate spiritual values with evidence-based management in order to respond effectively to changes in the digital age.

Taken together, these streams treat ethical formation as the product of separate instruments (habituation, curriculum, or management) and rarely ask how these instruments operate together as one institutional ecology. Research on ethical cultivation has seldom been linked to leadership and governance, while research on digital leadership has focused on managerial effectiveness rather than on how ethical values are constructed. This study addresses that gap by proposing moral architecture as an analytic concept: the deliberate alignment of vision, relationships, routines, spaces, and technologies through which an institution makes ethical conduct thinkable, habitual, and visible. The concept extends the idea of a hidden curriculum by treating an institution's governance and material arrangements, not only its informal culture, as pedagogical. To interpret this architecture, the study draws on three lenses: Aristotle's virtue ethics (Curren, 2000), the concept of tazkiyatun nafs (al-Ghazali, 2016), and Fazlur Rahman's "double movement" approach (Maisarah et al., 2025; Putri et al., 2025). These lenses are used as complementary interpretive resources, not as a unified theory: virtue ethics illuminates the formation of character through habit, tazkiyatun nafs the transcendental orientation of that formation, and the double movement the contextual reinterpretation of Islamic values in institutional practice.

Based on this gap, this study asks how ethical education is produced through the moral architecture of a leading boarding madrasah, and how this architecture shapes students' character in facing the challenges of the Golden Generation 2045. Specifically, it aims (1) to describe how MAN 2 Kota Malang builds ethical values through three layers of moral architecture: institutional vision and governance, role modeling and habit formation, and the physical and digital environment; and (2) to identify the challenges the madrasah faces in sustaining that architecture.

B. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design enriched with a phenomenological perspective to understand the process of constructing ethical educational values as experienced by madrasah students. This design was chosen because the study aims to answer the "how" and "why" questions regarding the construction of ethical values within the natural context of an educational institution (Tenny et al., 2026). The study views the madrasah as an institutional ecology and uses moral architecture, the deliberate alignment of vision, relationships, routines, spaces, and technologies, as its sensitizing concept. The research was conducted at MAN 2 Kota Malang (Madrasah Aliyah Negeri, a state Islamic senior high school), a leading boarding madrasah that has developed a digital-based management system.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling according to their roles in the madrasah's governance, teaching, and student affairs. In-depth interviews were conducted with 13 informants, comprising the madrasah principal (1), vice principals responsible for curriculum, student affairs, facilities, and public relations (4), teachers of religious and general subjects (3), a library staff member (1), and students (4). Six sessions of participatory observation of classroom learning and habituation activities (e.g., Quzido) were carried out. Institutional documents were also analyzed, including the Strategic Plan (Renstra) 2025–2029, the code of conduct, habituation programs, curriculum guidelines, and the project-based character program (P5RA) documents. Data were collected through three techniques that followed the principle of multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2017), namely: (1) in-depth interviews; (2) participatory observation; and (3) document analysis.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2013), which includes data reduction, data display, and the drawing and verification of conclusions. Transcripts, field notes, and documents were analyzed thematically within this framework: irrelevant data were set aside, and relevant data were categorized into themes, displayed in narrative descriptions, matrices, and tables, and then organized into the three layers of moral architecture presented in Table 1. To strengthen the validity of the case study analysis, this research applied pattern matching and explanation building techniques (Vargas-Bianchi, 2025). Pattern matching was used to compare empirical patterns found in the field with propositions drawn from Aristotle's virtue ethics, Al-Ghazali's tazkiyatun nafs, Rahman's double movement, Bandura's Social Learning Theory, and the concept of moral architecture. Furthermore, explanation building was used to construct a conceptual explanation of the process of internalizing ethical values through leadership, madrasah culture, religious practices, teacher role modeling, curriculum integration, and data-driven governance, thereby producing a conceptual model of moral architecture at MAN 2 Kota Malang. Data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation, as well as member checking, in which interview transcripts and summaries of findings were returned to the principal, teachers, and several students to confirm the credibility and consistency of the research interpretations.

C. RESULT & DISCUSSION

Ethical education at MAN 2 Malang City is not produced solely through habitual activities or classroom teaching. The process begins with the madrasah's policy direction, which prioritizes akhlakul karimah as the primary goal of education. This vision is then translated into work programs, organizational culture, learning activities, and dormitory life, so that ethical values become an integral part of the daily activities of the entire madrasah community. The madrasah principal serves as the policy leader, while teachers, dormitory supervisors, and student organizations function as role models in daily life. Taken together, these arrangements constitute what this paper calls the moral architecture of the madrasah: ethical education is produced not only by what

is taught but by how the institution's vision, relationships, routines, spaces, and technologies are aligned. The findings are presented as three layers of this architecture (normative, relational, and material), followed by the challenges that test it.

Vision and Ethical Leadership: The Normative Layer of Moral Architecture

The construction of ethical values at MAN 2 Malang City is embedded at the level of the institutional vision. The principal explicitly emphasizes that akhlakul karimah serves as the highest priority, surpassing both academic and non-academic achievements, and this priority is systematically incorporated into annual planning mechanisms and the Madrasah Self-Evaluation (EDM). Ethical values, therefore, do not remain merely normative discourse but become an integral part of data-driven governance and periodic evaluation. This is a leadership model that can be termed "ethical-data governance," as the madrasah's strategic decisions are consistently grounded in the Strategic Plan (Renstra) and the results of quarterly performance evaluations.

This model is reinforced by the role of other institutional actors, namely the Vice Principal for Curriculum, indicating that the instillation of values is designed through cross-departmental collaboration, not as a sole initiative of the madrasah principal. A symbolic instrument in the form of the "Juara Prima" slogan (honest, hardworking, high-achieving, dignified) serves as an ethical compass for teachers and educational staff before these values are transmitted to students. This reinforces the principle that educators' exemplary conduct is a prerequisite for the character development of students (Sariani & Nugraha, 2026). The consistency of these values is then maintained through a formal structure, the Madrasah Honorary Board, whose value oversight mechanisms do not rely solely on individual awareness (ethical infrastructure).

These findings answer the research question that the construction of ethical values stems from leadership that consciously directs the entire institutional system toward a single moral goal; the normative layer thus supplies the direction that the relational and material layers make operational. Theoretically, this pattern resonates with Aristotle's concept of eudaimonia in virtue ethics, in which education is directed toward the actualization of virtue as the highest goal (Ryff, 2017). However, at MAN 2 Kota Malang, moral values are interpreted as acts of worship. This aligns with Al-Ghazali's critique that ethics without a transcendental dimension produces only intelligence devoid of spiritual depth (Ali & Muhammad, 2025; Yahya et al., 2025). What distinguishes this finding from a mere citation of classical concepts is its transformation into a modern institutional system. That is, the vision is translated into strategic planning and data evaluation, in line with the importance of digital leadership and data-driven governance.

This pattern can be read through Fazlur Rahman's "double movement," a hermeneutic that moves from the Qur'anic text to its original context and back to present conditions. The madrasah does not apply Rahman's method as such, but its practice is analogous: it does not quote verses on akhlak literally but reformulates their meanings within the context of 21st-century excellence in madrasah governance (Herwati et al., 2026; Hidayah, 2024). Compared to Lailiyah et al. (2026), who found that madrasahs generally still struggle to integrate character education into the academic curriculum, these findings point to a different configuration: at MAN 2 Kota Malang, ethics serves as the institutional foundation, not merely an end goal that follows academic achievement.

Role Modeling and Collective Habituation: The Relational Layer

If vision and leadership serve as the normative foundation, then role modeling and habituation become the operational mechanisms for the construction of values. The madrasah principal and teachers are positioned as central figures whose behavior

students emulate. This is affirmed by both teachers and students themselves, who state that their sense of responsibility and ethics stems more from teachers' daily behavior than from verbal instructions. This habituation is institutionalized through the daily spiritual program Quzido (Qur'an, Zikir, and Prayer), which integrates the dhuha prayer, Qur'an recitation, and spiritual guidance as a routine before classes, further reinforced by weekly activities (Friday religious study sessions, Qur'an memorization) and annual events (Dakwah Safari). Interestingly, ethical values are also incorporated into general subjects, such as the practice of reciting the basmalah and hamdalah. This demonstrates that the responsibility for moral education is not limited to religious education teachers.

Student organizations (OSIS and BDI) and peers play a role in the process of internalizing ethical values. These findings indicate that ethical development occurs through social interactions among students in their daily lives (Supratno et al., 2025). The approach adopted by the madrasah in addressing violations, such as tardiness and dishonesty during exams, emphasizes guidance rather than punishment. Students who arrive late are directed to participate in religious guidance sessions, while seating arrangements during exams are designed to foster honesty and responsibility, not because the madrasah assumes students will commit violations.

This pattern illustrates how the values formulated at the vision level are translated into students' daily lived experiences. Theoretically, these findings align with social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), which emphasizes modeling and repeated reinforcement as pathways for the formation of moral behavior, and are relevant to Lickona's (1991) notion that effective character education requires consistent exemplary behavior from the entire school community. MAN 2 Kota Malang adds an institutional point to this literature: ritual practices work as moral education when they are anchored in a shared philosophical foundation and supported by leadership, that is, when the relational layer is aligned with the normative one.

Physical Space and Digital Governance: The Material Layer

The physical environment and infrastructure are not merely supports for learning, but rather intentional pedagogical tools. The arrangement of access to spaces (floor restrictions, separation of male and female worshippers in the mosque and auditorium), religious symbols in the physical environment (boards displaying verses and hadiths), and technology-based surveillance (CCTV in high-risk areas) function as mechanisms for preventive, rather than repressive, behavioral conditioning. This fosters an awareness that every action has moral consequences, rather than merely a sense of being watched. The point-based disciplinary system, whose results are presented at plenary meetings for teachers' affective evaluations, demonstrates that character assessment is managed in a structured and data-driven manner.

The digitization of madrasahs (smart IT) is designed to help foster a sense of responsibility and "sense of ownership" among students regarding the madrasah's digital facilities. The library, symbolized by the letter "G" (Golden Generation), serves a dual purpose as a literacy resource and a representation of the institution's hopes for the students' future, although its philosophical significance has not yet been fully grasped by the students because it was recently renovated. This indicates that the effectiveness of symbols within the physical environment depends on ongoing socialization, not merely their physical presence.

This finding expands the understanding that data-driven governance at MAN 2 Kota Malang applies not only at the macro-policy level (Strategic Plan, EDM) but is also implemented down to the micro-level of space management and students' daily behaviors. This represents a unity between ethical leadership and evidence-based governance from upstream to downstream, reinforcing Riyanto's (2026) argument that Islamic educational leadership in the digital age must integrate spiritual values with data-driven management. It further supports the argument that the physical

environment, when designed with values in mind, can function as a hidden curriculum that operates simultaneously with the formal curriculum. Across the three layers, moral architecture works through alignment: the "G" library symbol, for instance, loses much of its pedagogical force when its meaning is not socialized through the relational layer.

Table 1. Three Layers of Moral Architecture at MAN 2 Kota Malang

Layer of Moral Architecture	Mechanism	Findings
Normative: Vision & Ethical Leadership	Strategic Plan, EDM, annual work meeting, the "Juara Prima" slogan, Madrasah Honorary Board (BKM)	Good character has been established as the primary goal of education starting at the vision level, and this is translated into data-driven governance
Relational: Role Modeling & Habit Formation	Daily Quzido, Friday religious study sessions, Da'wah Outreach, Student Council/BDI, integration of values into general education subjects	Ethical values are transmitted through various moral role models (teachers, madrasah principals, peers)
Material: Physical Environment & Digital Governance	Spatial access planning, religious symbols, CCTV, point systems, and the digitization of madrasahs	Physical and technological spaces serve as a preventive and educational moral framework

Challenges to the Moral Architecture

This study also identified a number of challenges that cannot be ignored, namely (1) the heterogeneity of students' cultural backgrounds and initial ethical values, which requires an ongoing moderation process without erasing their cultural identities; (2) the limited teacher-to-student ratio, which restricts the intensity of supervision; (3) the impact of smartphone dependency on Generation Z students' mental resilience and sense of responsibility toward learning; (4) funding constraints that hinder some physical and digital programs; and (5) the influence of the external environment and inter-institutional collaboration, which may introduce values inconsistent with the madrasah's ethical culture.

These challenges underscore that the construction of ethical values is an adaptive process that is continually negotiated between institutional systems and students' social realities. These findings regarding the negative impact of digital technology align with common concerns in the literature on character education for Generation Z. However, what distinguishes MAN 2 Kota Malang is its non-anti-technology response. The madrasah continues to digitize its operations while effectively managing the associated ethical risks, consistent with the findings of Sacavém et al. (2025) who argued that effective digital leadership serves as a catalyst for strengthening a culture of quality rather than threatening it. Similarly, the challenges of external collaboration highlight the need for value-filtering mechanisms to ensure that openness does not compromise the madrasah's ethical integrity. Viewed through the concept of moral architecture, these challenges show that the structure is not static: each layer needs continual maintenance, through the socialization of symbols, adequate supervision, and sustained resources.

D. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that ethical education at MAN 2 Malang City is produced through three interdependent layers of moral architecture: a normative layer (ethical leadership and data-driven governance), a relational layer (exemplary behavior and

collective habit formation), and a material layer (physical and digital infrastructure). These layers address the research objectives by demonstrating that the character development of students for the Golden Generation 2045 cannot be reduced to a single program or to classroom teaching alone, but is produced by the institutional ecology of the boarding madrasah as a whole.

The contribution of this research lies in proposing moral architecture as an analytic concept for ethical education in boarding madrasahs: ethical education is treated as an outcome of institutional design and ecology rather than of instruction alone. Virtue ethics, tazkiyatun nafs, and the double movement served here as complementary interpretive lenses; developing them into an integrated theory remains a task for future research. This study has limitations as a single-case study; therefore, the findings cannot be directly generalized to all elite boarding madrasahs in Indonesia. Further research is recommended to conduct a multi-case study or use a mixed-methods approach to test the three-layer model in other madrasahs, as well as to quantitatively measure the impact of moral architecture on students' readiness to face the challenges of the Golden Generation 2045.

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