

## BETWEEN BOOKS AND BUNKS: REIMAGINING THE STUDENT MENTOR ROLES

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### Abstract

This study explores the challenges and potential improvements of the roles and responsibilities of Musyrif/Musyrifah at Ma'had Al-Jamiah UIN Syahada Padangsidempuan, focusing on the role of active students serving in these positions. Through document analysis, interviews with key stakeholders, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), the study identifies a significant imbalance between the academic responsibilities of student Musyrif/ah and their duties in dormitory mentoring and management. The findings of the research suggest that the transition to full-time Musyrif/ah—individuals who are not concurrently enrolled in academic studies—has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of the mentoring system and dormitory management. However, the main challenges such as limited funding and infrastructure become obstacles to the implementation of this program. The study also highlights the importance of ongoing training and development programs to improve the competencies and qualifications of Musyrif/ah, including the integrating technology into their roles. Based on these findings, the researchers recommend strategic policies such as the recruitment of full-time professional Musyrif/ah, the allocation of special funds for dormitory operations, the provision of certified training, and the strengthening of the performance evaluation system. These reforms are considered essential to optimize the Musyrif/ah system to improve the quality of student guidance and management of Ma'had in Islamic higher education institutions.

**Keyword:** Musyrif/ah, Islamic education, Educational Policy, Competency and Qualification, Dormitory Management

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi tantangan dan potensi peningkatan peran serta tanggung jawab Musyrif/Musyrifah di Ma'had Al-Jamiah UIN Syahada Padangsidempuan, dengan fokus pada peranan mahasiswa aktif sebagai pelaksana peran tersebut. Melalui analisis dokumen, wawancara dengan pemangku kepentingan, dan Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Penelitian menemukan ketidakseimbangan yang signifikan antara kewajiban akademik Musyrif/ah mahasiswa dengan tanggung jawab mereka dalam pembinaan asrama. Temuan penelitian ini mengindikasikan bahwa transisi menuju Musyrif/ah penuh waktu—yang tidak sedang menjalani studi akademik—berpotensi meningkatkan efektivitas sistem mentoring dan manajemen asrama. Kendati demikian, tantangan utama seperti keterbatasan pendanaan dan infrastruktur menjadi hambatan implementasi program ini. Penelitian ini juga menyoroti pentingnya program pelatihan dan pengembangan berkelanjutan untuk meningkatkan kompetensi dan kualifikasi Musyrif/ah, termasuk dalam integrasi teknologi dalam peran mereka. Berdasarkan temuan penelitian ini, peneliti merekomendasikan kebijakan strategis seperti rekrutmen Musyrif/ah profesional penuh waktu, pengalokasian dana khusus untuk operasional asrama, penyediaan pelatihan bersertifikat, dan penguatan sistem evaluasi kinerja. Reformasi ini dianggap penting untuk mengoptimalkan sistem Musyrif/ah demi peningkatan mutu pembinaan mahasiswa dan pengelolaan Ma'had di lembaga pendidikan Islam.

**Kata Kunci:** Musyrifah, Kebijakan Pendidikan, Kompetensi dan Kualifikasi, Manajemen Asrama, Pendidikan Islam

## Background

Islamic education at *Ma'had* or dormitory, particularly within institutions like UIN (State University for Islamic Studies) is characterized by a holistic approach that integrates religious knowledge, spiritual development, and academic proficiency<sup>1</sup>. This educational model is deeply rooted in the principles of the Qur'an and Hadith, where students engage not only in the memorization and recitation of these texts but also in a profound understanding of Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), theology (*Aqidah*), and the English and Arabic languages<sup>2</sup>. The purpose of this Islamic education is to ensure a strong connection with Islam's core sources while simultaneously incorporating contemporary knowledge to prepare students for both religious and worldly life<sup>3</sup>.

The *Ma'had* educational system extends beyond traditional academic instruction, placing significant emphasis on spiritual development, character building, and social responsibility<sup>4</sup>. Central to this system is the close mentorship relationship between teachers and students, facilitated by *Musyrif/ab*—senior students who serve as educational leaders within the dormitory environment<sup>5</sup>. This mentorship model aims to generate individuals who excel not only in their understanding of Islamic sciences but also embody virtues such as humility, patience, and service to others, thereby contributing positively to their communities and society at large<sup>6</sup>.

In the context of UIN Syahada Padangsidempuan, the role of *Musyrif/ab* is particularly significant as they stand at the intersection of preserving Islamic traditions and responding to the rapidly evolving educational needs of the contemporary world. Traditionally recognized for their competencies in conveying religious knowledge, the shifting educational

paradigm now requires *Musyrif/ab* to get a more comprehensive set of qualifications<sup>7</sup>. This evolution is not limited to adapting new teaching methodologies but also encompasses a broader approach that integrates pedagogical excellence, leadership skills, and a deep understanding of the ethical dimensions of education<sup>8</sup>.

This study emerged from the need to explore the multifaceted challenges faced by *Musyrif/ab* at UIN Syahada Padangsidempuan as they navigated the transition from competencies to qualifications, using the Role Balance Theory as a framework. Role Balance Theory is a concept primarily developed in the field of social psychology and sociology, focusing on the balance and integration of multiple roles individuals occupy in their lives. According to this theory, people manage and balance various roles—such as those of a worker, parent, student, or community member—by allocating their time, energy, and resources in a way that allows them to fulfill these roles effectively without experiencing overwhelming stress or conflict<sup>9</sup>. The theory posits that maintaining a balance between roles is crucial for overall well-being and effectiveness. In the context of this study, which explores the roles and responsibilities of *Musyrif/ab* at UIN Syahada Padangsidempuan, Role Balance Theory is highly relevant, considering that the *Musyrif/ab* are expected to fulfill multiple roles, including: 1) Academic responsibilities: Engaging in their own studies and academic pursuits. 2) Mentorship: Guiding and supporting students in their personal, academic, and spiritual development. 3) Dormitory management: Overseeing the day-to-day operations and ensuring a conducive living environment for students. 4) Community engagement: Participating in and contributing to the broader community.

<sup>1</sup> (Arcanita, 2021; Erlina, Zulhannan & Hijriyah, 2024)

<sup>2</sup> (Arcanita, 2021; Ritonga, 2024; Syafi'i, Umami, Aziz, & Ma'arif, 2022)

<sup>3</sup> (Azzami, Sirait, & Muqowim, 2024; Irawan & Putra, 2022)

<sup>4</sup> (Jubba, Pabbajah, Abdullah & Juhansar, 2022)

<sup>5</sup> (Muafiah, Mumtaz & Maharani, 2023; Muafiah et al., 2022)

<sup>6</sup> (Ismail & Makhsin, 2023)

<sup>7</sup> (Hidayah, Rohmah & Hefniy, 2021; Thoha, Rahman & Ibdalsyah, 2020)

<sup>8</sup> (Solong, Mokodenseho & Rohmah, 2024; Suparjo & Hidayah, 2023)

<sup>9</sup> (Marks & MacDermid, 1996)

The theory helps to frame the challenges faced by *Musyrif/ab* in managing these diverse responsibilities. It highlights how the imbalances between their academic obligations and their duties within the dormitory can lead to stress, reduce effectiveness, and potential role conflict. For example, when *Musyrif/ab* are expected to balance the demanding academic schedules with extensive mentoring and administrative duties, it can strain their capacity to perform optimally in each area. By applying Role Balance Theory, this study examines how *Musyrif/ab* navigate these competing demands and the impact of role imbalances on their performance and well-being.

The theory also provides a framework for understanding the need for a reassessment of their roles and the potential benefits of transitioning to full-time positions. This change could help *Musyrif/ab* achieve a better balance between their various responsibilities, increasing efficacy as mentors and leaders while also improving the overall quality of the educational and residential environment. The research digs into the complexities of their roles, examining how these responsibilities are shaped by the institutional expectations and the intricate balance between tradition and the demands of modern education. Furthermore, this study also wants to understand how *Musyrif/ab* can maintain academic rigor while fostering character development and ethical values in students through the following questions: 1) How have the traditional roles of *Musyrif/ab* in Islamic education at UIN Syahada Padangsidempuan evolved over time, considering historical, cultural, and pedagogical factors? 2) How do *Musyrif/ab* at UIN Syahada Padangsidempuan experience changes in their understanding and implementation of competencies, particularly in relation to contemporary educational demands and societal changes? 3) How do *Musyrif/ab* at UIN Syahada Padangsidempuan perceive and navigate changes in their roles, especially concerning the development of broader qualifications, and how are these changes reflected in their day-to-day practical experiences?

Despite the importance of *Musyrif/ab* in the educational ecosystem of UIN Syahada Padangsidempuan, there is a significant gap in the existing literature regarding the dynamics of their roles, particularly in the transition from competencies to qualifications. This research aims to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the evolving responsibilities of *Musyrif/ab* within the context of Islamic education. The study's insights are designed to inform educational policymakers and administrators about the reforms required to optimize the *Musyrif/ab* system, ensuring it meets contemporary educational standards while preserving the institution's commitment to Islamic principles. The urgency of this study is underscored by the rapidly changing landscape of Islamic education and the swift evolution of global educational paradigms. As UIN Syahada Padangsidempuan seeks to maintain its position as a leading institution of Islamic learning, this study is both timely and crucial. It not only addresses the immediate needs of the institution but also contributes to the broader discourse on the role of educational leadership in Islamic education. By exploring the transition from competencies to qualifications among *Musyrif/ab*, the study aims to offer practical recommendations that will enhance the effectiveness of educational leadership and mentorship within the institution.

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically utilizing a phenomenological approach. The choice of a phenomenological design was driven by the need for a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the evolution of *Musyrif/ab* roles within the unique context of Islamic education at UIN Syahada Padangsidempuan. Phenomenological research is well-suited for exploring complex phenomena in their natural settings, capturing the depth and richness of participants' experiences, perceptions,

and practices<sup>10</sup>. This approach allowed for an in-depth examination of how *Musyrif/ah* experienced and interpreted their roles, going beyond surface-level quantitative measures to uncover the contextual factors that influence their responsibilities.

Data collection for this study involved several qualitative methods: 1) **Interviews:** In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 respondents consisted of a combination of *Mudir*, *Muwajjih/abs* (guidance counselors), *Musyrif/ah*, *Mahasantri/abs* (students), and top leaders of *Ma'had* Al-Jamiah. These interviews were designed to elicit detailed responses about the participants' experiences and views regarding the roles and responsibilities of *Musyrif/ah*. 2) **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** FGDs are organized to gather collective insights and facilitate discussions among participants. Two FGDs were conducted to gain information from 15 participants consisted of leaders of *Ma'had*, *Muwajjih/abs*, *musyrif/abs*, and students. This method enabled the exploration of shared experiences and perceptions, allowing for a deeper understanding of the group dynamics and collective viewpoints on *Musyrif/ah* roles. 3) **Document Review:** Relevant documents, including institutional guidelines, role descriptions, curriculum and historical records, were reviewed to provide additional context and supported the data obtained from interviews and FGDs. This review helped to triangulate findings and enriched the understanding of the roles and responsibilities of *Musyrif/ah*.

The data collected through these methods were systematically processed using qualitative analysis techniques. The data were first reduced to identify key themes and patterns. This involved organizing the information into manageable categories that reflected the core aspects of the *Musyrif/ah* roles and responsibilities. Following this, the data were categorized to further refined and grouped similar themes, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the findings. Finally,

conclusions were drawn based on the analyzed data, providing insights into the effectiveness and challenges of the *Musyrif/ah* system at UIN Syahada Padangsidempuan.

This methodological approach ensured a thorough exploration of the complex dynamics involved in the roles of *Musyrif/ah*, offering valuable perspectives for enhancing the effectiveness of Islamic education at the institution.

## Findings and Discussion

Based on the data reduction, categorization, display, and conclusion processes, several key findings emerged regarding the roles and responsibilities of *Musyrif/ah* at *Ma'had* Al-Jamiah UIN Syahada Padangsidempuan.

### Imbalance Between Academic and Dormitory Responsibilities

The most prominent finding is the significant imbalance between the academic obligations and dormitory management responsibilities of *Musyrif/ah*. Many *Musyrif/abs* reported that their academic commitments often conflicted with their duties in the dormitory, leading to stress and inefficiencies in both areas, as seen in the following table:

**Table 1.** Academic vs Dormitory Responsibilities Imbalances

Respondent	Quote
2	"Kalau banyak tugas dari fakultas, tugas di <i>Ma'had</i> kadang keteteran. Kami sering harus memilih mana yang harus diprioritaskan, karena dua-duanya menuntut waktu dan energi yang besar." [When there are a lot of lecturing responsibilities, tasks at the <i>Ma'had</i> sometimes get neglected. We frequently have to choose which one to prioritize, because both require amount of time and energy.]
5	"Sulit bagi saya membagi fokus antara kuliah, tugas penelitian, dan pembinaan santri. Kadang harus mengorbankan tugas <i>Ma'had</i> demi tugas kampus yang deadline-nya ketat." [It is difficult for me to keep up with lecturing, research assignments,

<sup>10</sup> N. Greening, 'Phenomenological Research Methodology', *Scientific Research Journal*, 7.5 (2019), 88–92.

Respondent	Quote
	and student mentorship. Sometimes I have to sacrifice <i>Ma'had</i> tasks for campus assignments with tight deadlines.]
1	"Seringkali saat ujian semester, kami tidak bisa optimal di <i>Ma'had</i> . Energi kami lebih banyak tercurah ke akademik, sehingga pembinaan ke santri menurun kualitasnya." [ During semester exams, we frequently are unable to perform optimally at the <i>Ma'had</i> . Most of our energy is dedicated toward academics, leading to a decline in the quality of student mentoring.]
7	"Ada benturan jadwal kuliah dengan jadwal kegiatan di <i>Ma'had</i> . Misalnya, saat ada presentasi penting di kampus, berbarengan dengan jadwal mentoring di asrama." [ University classes and <i>Ma'had</i> activities have conflicting schedules. For example, if an important presentation at the university overlaps with the mentoring programme at the dormitory.]
11	"Ketika sudah masuk masa ujian, tugas-tugas <i>Ma'had</i> hampir tidak tertangani dengan baik. Beban studi akademik terasa sangat berat." [When the exam period begins, <i>Ma'had</i> duties are often not handled properly. The burden of academic studies feels extremely heavy.]

The interview excerpts indicate that *Musyrif/ah* faced significant challenges in balancing their academic responsibilities with their mentoring duties at the *Ma'had*. The overlapping demands of coursework, research assignments, and student mentoring often forced them to prioritize, typically favoring academic obligations due to stricter deadlines and higher pressure. As a result, the quality of mentoring tended to decline, especially during exam periods when most of their energy was focused on academic performance. *Ma'had* responsibilities are frequently neglected or not properly handled during these times. Furthermore, scheduling conflicts between university classes and *Ma'had* activities exacerbated the difficulty, making it nearly impossible for *Musyrif/ah* to perform both roles effectively. This situation highlighted the urgent need for systemic support and better time management coordination between the faculty and *Ma'had* administration to enable *Musyrif/ah* to sustain their dual roles without compromising

either academic success or the quality of student mentoring.

### ***Inadequate Training and Development***

The study revealed that current training and development programs for *Musyrif/ah* were insufficient. Many participants indicated a lack of comprehensive training in areas such as contemporary pedagogical methods, technology integration, and leadership skills. This gap in training affected their ability to effectively performed their roles and met the evolving educational standards. Improved and targeted training programmes are required to provide *Musyrif/ah* with the skills and knowledge needed to excel in their positions.

### ***Need for Enhanced Competencies***

The analysis shows that there is a growing expectation for *Musyrif/ah* to possess a broader range of competencies beyond traditional knowledge. This includes advanced pedagogical skills, proficiency in educational technologies, and a strong understanding of ethical dimensions in teaching. The current competencies of *Musyrif/ah*, while adequate in traditional contexts, need to be expanded to address modern educational demands effectively. These expectations can be seen in the following table:

**Table 2.** Training and Competency Gaps

Respondent	Quote
1	"Waktu awal masuk, pelatihannya hanya umum sekali, tidak spesifik untuk kasus nyata. Jadi ketika menghadapi masalah riil seperti konflik antar santri, kami bingung harus bertindak bagaimana." [At the beginning of our duty, the training was very general and not specific to real cases. So, when we faced real problems like conflicts between <i>santri</i> , we were confused about how to act.]
4	"Kalau ada pelatihan lanjut, mungkin kami lebih percaya diri mendampingi. Sekarang banyak hal kami selesaikan berdasarkan feeling saja, tidak berdasarkan metode." [If there were follow-up training, we might feel more confident in mentoring. Right now, we handle the problems based mostly on our instincts, not on any established method.]
7	"Pendampingan dari senior itu minim, jadi banyak belajar dari pengalaman pribadi. Kadang merasa sendirian saat menghadapi kasus sulit di <i>Ma'had</i> ." [

Respon- dent	Quote
	Support from senior mentors is minimal, so we mostly learned from personal experience. Sometimes, we felt alone when facing difficult cases in the <i>Ma'had</i> .]
10	"Materi pelatihan kurang menyentuh realitas di lapangan. Teorinya banyak, tapi kasus-kasus khas di <i>Ma'had</i> jarang dibahas." [The training materials did not sufficiently address real-world situations. There were a lot of theory, but specific cases typical of the <i>Ma'had</i> environment were rarely discussed.]
13	"Setelah orientasi awal, tidak ada lagi pembinaan atau workshop berkala. Padahal tantangan di lapangan terus berubah." [After the initial orientation, there were no further regular training or workshops, even though the challenges in the field kept evolving.]

The interview excerpts reveal that the training and preparation received by *Musyrif/ah* at the beginning of their assignment were generally insufficient to meet the complex realities they faced in the *Ma'had*. The initial training was broad and theoretical, lacking specific guidance on handling real-world cases such as conflicts among *mahasantri/ah*. As a result, when confronted with actual problems, many *Musyrif/ah* felt confused and unsure of how to respond appropriately. The absence of regular follow-up training and minimal support from senior mentors forced them to rely heavily on personal experience and instinct rather than structured methods. Additionally, the theoretical focus of the training did not adequately prepare them for the unique challenges of the *Ma'had* environment, which continuously evolved over time. This situation made many *Musyrif/ah* feeling isolated and underprepared, emphasizing the importance of continuing, practical, and context-specific training and mentoring.

### **Financial and Infrastructural Constraints**

The study also identified financial and infrastructural constraints as significant barriers to the proposed transition to full-time *Musyrif/ah*. Limited financial resources and inadequate infrastructure posed challenges to implementing changes in the system. These constraints need to be addressed to support the transition and enhance

the overall effectiveness of the *Musyrif/ah* roles, as highlighted in the following table:

**Table 3.** Financial and Infrastructural Barriers

Respon- dent	Quote
3	"Tanpa insentif yang memadai, agak berat sebenarnya mengharapkan <i>Musyrif/ah</i> aktif penuh. Apalagi tugas kami tidak ringan, banyak yang harus dikorbankan dari segi waktu dan tenaga." [Without adequate incentives, it is actually quite difficult to expect the <i>Musyrif/ah</i> to be fully active. Moreover, our duties are not easy; a lot has to be sacrificed in terms of time and energy.]
4	"Asrama kami fasilitasnya terbatas sekali, bahkan untuk hal dasar seperti ruang belajar bersama. Kadang kalau mau adakan pembinaan, kami kesulitan mencari tempat." [Our dormitory facilities are very limited, even for basic things like a shared study space. Sometimes, we have problems locating a space to conduct a mentoring session.]
7	"Kalau fasilitas mendukung, semangat kami membina juga akan naik. Rasanya lebih dibarengi kalau kebutuhan dasar sudah terpenuhi." [If the facilities are supportive, our enthusiasm for mentoring will also increase. It feels more valuable when the basic needs are met.]
13	"Ada kebutuhan mendesak untuk ruang diskusi, ruang ibadah yang layak, dan koneksi internet, karena kegiatan pembinaan tidak hanya ceramah, tapi juga butuh aktivitas kreatif." [There is an urgent need for a discussion room, a proper prayer room, and internet connection, because mentoring activities are not just lectures, but also require creative activities.]
15	" <i>Musyrif/ah</i> butuh dukungan finansial supaya lebih bisa fokus membina. Kalau semua serba tanggung sendiri, lama-lama motivasi turun seperti yang terjadi saat ini." [ <i>Musyrif/ah</i> need financial support to better focus on fostering. If they do everything themselves, their motivation will gradually decline, as is currently happening.]

The interviews highlight that the effectiveness and motivation of *Musyrif/ah* are heavily influenced by the availability of adequate support, both financial and infrastructural. Without sufficient incentives, it is challenging to expect *Musyrif/ah* to remain fully active and committed, especially considering the heavy sacrifices they make in terms

of time and energy. Many pointed out the serious limitations in dormitory facilities, even for basic needs like shared study spaces, which hampers their ability to conduct mentoring sessions effectively. Participants stressed that if the proper facilities were provided—such as discussion rooms, decent prayer spaces, and reliable internet connections—their enthusiasm and sense of being valued would significantly improve. Furthermore, financial support was seen as crucial for maintaining their focus on mentoring responsibilities; when *Musyrif/ah* had to bear all the costs themselves, it eventually led to a decline motivation, as many were already experiencing.

### **Holistic Role of Musyrif/ah**

*Musyrif/ah* plays a crucial role in not only imparting academic knowledge but also in fostering the moral and spiritual development of the students. Several *Musyrif/ahs* and stakeholders expressed this point in their interview:

**Table 4.** Holistic Mentoring Role

Respondent	Quote
10	"Kami mendampingi dari aspek akademik sampai perilaku keseharian. Mulai dari bangun subuh, cek shalat, hingga membantu kesulitan belajar mereka." [We guide them in both academic and daily behavioral aspects. From waking them up for dawn prayer, checking their prayers, to helping with their learning difficulties.]
17	"Musyrif/ah itu ibarat kakak, guru, sekaligus teman diskusi adik-adik Ma'had. Jadi hubungan emosional juga harus dibangun, tidak cukup hanya perintah dan kontrol." [The <i>Musyrif/ah</i> is like an older sibling, a teacher, and also a discussion partner for the younger students in the <i>Ma'had</i> . Therefore, emotional bonds need to be built; it's not enough to just give orders and control.]
19	"Membangun karakter adik-adik itu lebih sulit daripada sekadar mengawasi aturan. Karena karakter itu butuh contoh langsung, bukan cuma kata-kata." [Building the character of the younger students is more difficult than just supervising the rules. Because character requires direct examples, not just words.]
20	"Tanggung jawab kami bukan hanya soal disiplin, tapi membentuk adab dan spiritualitas. Itulah bedanya Ma'had dengan sekadar asrama biasa."

Respondent	Quote
	[Our responsibility is not just about discipline but also shaping manners and spirituality. That's what makes <i>Ma'had</i> different from a regular dormitory.]
22	"Musyrif/ah perlu menjadi contoh nyata dalam ibadah dan akhlak. Karena adik-adik lebih cepat meniru tindakan daripada mendengarkan ceramah." [Musyrif/ah need to be a real example in worship and morals, because the younger ones tend to imitate actions more quickly than they listen to lectures.]

The *Musyrif/ah* play a multifaceted role in the *Ma'had*, guiding students not only in academic matters but also in their daily behavior, including responsibilities such as waking them for dawn prayer, monitoring their religious practices, and supporting their learning challenges. Their role extends beyond supervision, requiring them to act as older siblings, teachers, and discussion partners, emphasizing the importance of building strong emotional bonds rather than relying solely on authority and control. Participants noted that shaping students' character is far more complex than merely enforcing rules; it demands consistent, real-life examples rather than mere verbal instructions. The responsibility of a *Musyrif/ah* encompasses instilling proper manners and spiritual values, setting the *Ma'had* apart from ordinary dormitory life. Therefore, being a tangible role model in both worship and moral conduct is essential, as students are more influenced by the actions they observe than by the words they hear.

### **Need for Institutional Support**

The study highlighted the need for more institutional support to address the challenges faced by *Musyrif/ah*. This included providing adequate resources, facilitating professional development opportunities, and creating a supportive environment that aligned with the institution's educational goals and values:

**Table 5.** Institutional Support Needs

Respondent	Quote
17	"Kalau Ma'bad mau kuat, support dari kampus itu wajib, mulai dari SDM sampai program pembinaan. Tidak bisa hanya mengandalkan Musyrif/ah bekerja sendiri tanpa arahan jelas." [If the Ma'bad is to be successful, support from the university is essential, from human resources to development programs. We cannot rely solely on Musyrif/ah working independently without clear guidance.]
	"Kami butuh kebijakan yang konsisten, bukan hanya inisiatif temporer. Misalnya, tahun ini ada program, tahun depan hilang tanpa kejelasan." [ We need consistent policies, not just temporary initiatives. For example, a program may exist this year but disappear the following year without any clarity.]
19	"Ketersediaan supervisor atau pembimbing senior yang secara intens dan konstan mendampingi dalam aspek apapun sangat diperlukan. Supaya Musyrif/ah tidak merasa berjalan sendiri dalam menyelesaikan masalah berat." [The availability of supervisors or senior mentors who provide intensive and consistent guidance in any aspect is very necessary. This way, Musyrif/ah won't feel like they are facing difficult problems on their own.]
20	"Ma'bad seharusnya punya divisi khusus yang fokusnya membangun program-program untuk membina Musyrif/ah secara terus-menerus. Seperti mentoring bulanan yang berkelanjutan atau peningkatan kemampuan komunikasi interpersonal musyrif/ah sebagai modal untuk berkomunikasi dan berinteraksi dengan mahasiswa/ah." [ Ma'bad should have a dedicated division focused on developing continuous programs to support Musyrif/ah, such as ongoing monthly mentoring or improving Musyrif/ah's interpersonal communication skills as a foundation for communicating and interacting with students.]
23	"Tanpa dukungan sistemik, Musyrif/ah akan bekerja sendirian menghadapi tantangan. Ini yang membuat banyak yang kelelahan dan akhirnya kurang optimal." [Without systemic support, Musyrif/ah will face challenges on his or her own. This is what makes many of them exhausted and ultimately less effective.]

The respondents emphasized that strong institutional support from the university is crucial

for the Ma'bad's effectiveness, covering aspects from human resources to clear and structured development programs. They stressed that it is unrealistic to expect Musyrif/ah to work effectively without clear guidance and backing. A consistent policy framework is needed, rather than temporary, short-lived initiatives that create uncertainty and disrupt continuity. The presence of supervisors or senior mentors providing consistent and intensive guidance was identified as vital to prevent Musyrif/ah from feeling isolated when facing difficult situations. Furthermore, respondents suggested the establishment of a dedicated division within the Ma'bad focused on continuously developing Musyrif/ah through sustainable programs, such as regular monthly mentoring sessions and interpersonal communication training. Without a systemic and structured support system, many Musyrif/ah become overwhelmed and eventually struggle to perform their roles optimally.

In summary, the findings suggest that while the current system of Musyrif/ah at UIN Syahada Padangsidimpuan is functional, significant reforms are needed to address the imbalances and gaps identified. One major challenge faced by the Musyrif/ah is the difficulty of balancing academic responsibilities with Ma'bad duties, especially during exam periods or when campus deadlines are pressing, often leading to a decline in the quality of student mentoring. Additionally, initial training programs were reported to be too general, lacking practical guidance for real-world cases typical of Ma'bad environments. Without sufficient ongoing training and mentorship, Musyrif/ah frequently rely on instinct rather than structured methods, which affects their confidence and effectiveness.

The issues of inadequate incentives and limited facilities further compound these challenges. Many Musyrif/ah expressed that without financial support, proper mentoring spaces, or essential facilities like discussion rooms and internet access, maintaining motivation and delivering high-quality guidance becomes increasingly difficult. Moreover, the Musyrif/ah role itself is deeply demanding, requiring not only the



enforcement of discipline but also the modelling of character, spirituality, and interpersonal warmth, which necessitates both emotional and moral leadership beyond mere rule enforcement.

Underlying all these concerns is the need for strong, systemic, and consistent institutional support. Respondents highlighted that *Musyrif/ab* cannot be expected to succeed without clear policies, continuous mentoring programs, senior supervision, and a dedicated organizational structure focused on their professional growth. Without such systemic reinforcement, many *Musyrif/ab* experience exhaustions and a decline in

effectiveness over time. Therefore, enhancing training programs, expanding competencies, providing sustainable institutional support, and ensuring consistent policies are critical steps toward optimizing the *Musyrif/ab* system and improving the overall quality of Islamic education at UIN Syahada Padangsidempuan.

Based on these findings, key aspects requiring attention have been identified, along with their main issues, sources of evidence, and proposed recommendations, as outlined in the following table:

**Table 6.** Key Aspects and Recommendations

Aspect	Main information	Data source	Recommendations
Role and Responsibility Description	The role of <i>Musyrif/ab</i> involves coaching students in the dormitories, which often clashes with academic responsibilities. Ideally, this role is filled by a non-student individual.	Interviews with stakeholders, <i>Musyrif/abs</i> , Document Analysis, FGD.	Recruitment of <i>Musyrif/ab</i> from among alumni or individuals who can work full-time to ensure focus on coaching duties.
Competency and Qualifications	Expected competencies include mastery of religion, leadership, and communication. The existing <i>Musyrif/ab</i> are still students, so their qualifications are not optimal.	Interviews with stakeholders, <i>Musyrif/ab</i> , Document Analysis, FGD.	Implementation of certification training in Islamic education, dormitory management, and communication. Recruitment of <i>Musyrif/ab</i> with higher qualifications.
Training and Development	Existing training programs are inadequate, limited to basic orientation and leadership. More intensive training is needed.	Interviews with stakeholders, <i>Musyrif/ab</i> , Document Analysis, FGD.	Organizing periodic training with a focus on improving competencies, such as dormitory management, communication skills and educational technology.
Professional Evaluation	<i>Musyrif/ab</i> performance evaluations often do not reflect actual performance due to academic load. Evaluation criteria are still conventional.	Interviews with stakeholders, <i>Musyrif/ab</i> , Document Analysis, FGD.	Improvement of the evaluation system with clearer and more relevant performance indicators. Implementation of mentoring for new <i>Musyrif/ab</i> to support better performance.
Improvement implementation	The implementation of changes in the role of <i>Musyrif/ab</i> is limited, hampered by financial and infrastructure limitations. There has been no significant impact on the quality of education in <i>Ma'had</i> .	Interviews with stakeholders, <i>Musyrif/ab</i> , Document Analysis, FGD.	Review of recruitment policies and improvement of compensation. Further implementation of role changes and training to improve dormitory quality.

The findings from this study provide valuable insights into the evolving roles and responsibilities of *Musyrif/ab* at *Ma'had* Al-Jamiah UIN Syahada Padangsidempuan; highlighting both challenges and opportunities within the Islamic education context. To interpret these results more effectively, this discussion draws on Role Balance Theory,

which emphasizes that individuals experience optimal well-being and performance when they can manage multiple roles in a balanced way. According to this theory, role conflict arises when individuals are unable to allocate sufficient time or resources to fulfil all their responsibilities effectively, leading to stress and inefficiencies.

This study sought to explore the evolution of *Musyrif/ah* roles and assess how these align with contemporary educational needs. The results revealed a significant imbalance between the academic and dormitory responsibilities of *Musyrif/ah*. This imbalance confirms the hypothesis that managing dual roles can lead to conflicts and inefficiencies. It supports the idea proposed by Role Balance Theory<sup>11</sup> that when multiple roles, such as teaching and dormitory management, are not balanced properly, role strain occurs, resulting in decreased performance in both areas. The theory suggests that in such cases, individuals may experience burnout, job dissatisfaction, or diminished sense of efficacy<sup>12</sup>.

In the context of *Musyrif/ah*, this imbalance highlights a need for role clarification and restructuring. The current system, which requires *Musyrif/ah* to manage both academic duties and dormitory responsibilities simultaneously, has placed considerable stress on them. This imbalance undermines the effectiveness of their role, as observed in previous studies<sup>13</sup>, which document the challenges of multitasking in educational settings. The lack of a clear distinction between roles, combined with inadequate training and support, results in role overload—a key concept within the Role Balance Theory, which leads to decreased well-being and job satisfaction.

Moreover, the study reveals a gap in training and development programs for *Musyrif/ah*, which aligns with broader literature on educational leadership. Role Balance Theory underscores that individuals perform best when they have the appropriate skills, knowledge, and resources to fulfil their roles. The lack of advanced pedagogical skills and technological proficiency among *Musyrif/ah* suggests that their training does not align with modern educational demands, further contributing to the imbalance they experience.

This finding reinforces the theory's perspective on how a lack of role support can exacerbate role strain and conflict.

The findings about the need for enhanced competencies and improved training programs are consistent with existing literature on educational leadership and the evolving demands of teaching roles<sup>14</sup>. However, the unique focus of this study on the dual responsibilities of *Musyrif/ah* and the resulting imbalance highlights a gap in the existing research on role balance. While role conflict is widely recognized in general work settings across diverse population<sup>15</sup>, the particular context of Islamic education in this study and the specific challenges of balancing academic duties with dormitory management is less explored. By applying Role Balance Theory, this study offers a new perspective on the difficulties faced by *Musyrif/ah*, providing insights into how Islamic educational institutions can better support these educators in balancing their multiple roles.

## Conclusion

The roles of *Musyrif* and *Musyrifah* at UIN Syahada Padangsidempuan have undergone significant evolution over time, shaped by historical, cultural, and pedagogical shifts. This study reveals how *Musyrif/ah* have needed to balance the demands of contemporary education with the preservation of fundamental Islamic values, often facing challenges in harmonizing traditional responsibilities with new administrative and educational tasks.

The experiences of *Musyrif/ah* demonstrate resilience and dedication yet also reflect the stress and complexity arising from unbalanced role demands. Applying Role Balance Theory, it becomes clear that the simultaneous fulfilment of heavy academic and dormitory responsibilities without adequate structural support compromises

<sup>11</sup> (Marks & MacDermid, 1996)

<sup>12</sup> N. J. Greenhaus, J. H., & Beutell, 'Sources of Conflict between Work and Family Roles', *Academy of Management Review*, 10.1 (1985), 76–88.

<sup>13</sup> (Collier, 2023; Gunn, Lee & Steed, 2017; Holt & Lopez, 2014; Marshall, Dobbs-Oates, Kunberger & Greene, 2021)

<sup>14</sup> (Mainali & Bhurtel, 2024; Zaragoza, Díaz-Gibson, Caparrós & Solé, 2021)

<sup>15</sup> (Creary & Gordon, 2016; Duxbury, Lyons & Higgins, 2008; Spreitzer, Snyder & Larson, 1979)

both personal well-being and professional effectiveness. This underscores the importance of creating conditions that facilitate better role integration, through systemic reforms such as full-time appointments, professional development, and resource support.

Despite efforts to reconcile Musyrif/ah roles with institutional expectations, notable gaps remain. This study emphasises the urgent need for continuous reform in training, mentoring, and institutional policies to strengthen the contribution of *Musyrif/ah* to student development and to the overall quality of Islamic education at UIN Syahada Padangsidempuan.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

#### Authors' contributions:

The authors conceptualized the research study, developed the methodology, and were responsible for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The authors also drafted and revised the manuscript, ensuring that all sections were thoroughly reviewed and aligned with the study's objectives. Contributions from various participants in the study, including *Musyrif/ah*, *Muwajjih/ah*, *Mahasantriah*, and the leaders at UIN Syahada Padangsidempuan, were instrumental in providing insights and context for the research. The author takes full responsibility for the integrity and accuracy of the data presented and the conclusions drawn from the study.

#### Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available upon reasonable request. For access to the primary data, including interview transcripts, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) notes, and document analysis results, please contact the corresponding author at [muhlison@uinsyahada.ac.id](mailto:muhlison@uinsyahada.ac.id). The data will be shared in compliance with institutional and ethical guidelines, ensuring the protection of participant confidentiality and privacy.

#### Disclaimer

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position or opinions of UIN Syahada Padangsidempuan or any funding organizations associated with the research. The author assumes full responsibility for the content and conclusions presented in the article.

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