Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam, VOL: 14/No: 02 **P-ISSN: 2252-8970**
DOI: 10.30868/ei.v14i02.10895 **E-ISSN: 2581-1754**

Date Received	**:**	**May 2025**
Date Revised	**:**	**May 2025**
Date Accepted	**:**	**May 2025**
Date Published	**:**	**May 2025**

LEARNING MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS IN CREATING STUDENTS' RELIGIOUS CULTURE AT PUBLIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN METRO CITY

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Kata Kunci:
Manajemen Pembelajaran; Budaya Religius; Budaya Sekolah; Pendidikan Agama Islam; SMP

ABSTRAK

Budaya religius di sekolah umum merupakan mekanisme sekolah secara menyeluruh untuk menerjemahkan nilai-nilai keagamaan ke dalam perilaku keseharian peserta didik. Disertasi yang menjadi dasar artikel ini menemukan persoalan praktis di Kota Metro: keterbatasan waktu formal Pendidikan Agama Islam dan keterlibatan siswa yang belum merata membuat internalisasi nilai sulit dicapai apabila pembelajaran hanya berlangsung di kelas. Penelitian ini menganalisis implementasi, efektivitas, dan implikasi manajemen pembelajaran dalam menciptakan budaya religius di SMPN 1, SMPN 2, dan SMPN 4 Metro. Penelitian menggunakan desain kualitatif multi-kasus. Data diperoleh melalui observasi naturalistik, wawancara terstruktur dan tidak terstruktur, serta dokumentasi sekolah dengan melibatkan kepala sekolah, wakil kepala sekolah, guru, staf, siswa, dan sumber sekunder pendukung. Kredibilitas diperkuat melalui triangulasi sumber, teknik, dan waktu, kemudian data dianalisis melalui pengodean dalam kasus dan analisis lintas kasus. Hasil menunjukkan dasar kelembagaan yang kuat melalui persiapan, sosialisasi, pembiasaan, keteladanan guru, partisipasi siswa, pengayaan ekstrakurikuler, kontrol teman sebaya, dan evaluasi terprogram. Praktik tersebut berkaitan dengan meningkatnya disiplin, motivasi belajar, keteraturan kelas, dan partisipasi dalam kegiatan keagamaan. Manajemen pembelajaran yang efektif melembagakan nilai religius ketika pembelajaran kurikuler terintegrasi dengan budaya sekolah sehari-hari. Kepala sekolah perlu memperkuat konsistensi guru, keterlibatan orang tua, sumber belajar, dan evaluasi sistematis, sedangkan penelitian lanjutan perlu menguji model ini pada konteks sekolah yang lebih luas.

Keywords:
Learning Management; Religious Culture; School Culture; Islamic Religious Education; Junior High School

ABSTRACT

Religious culture in public schools is a school-wide mechanism for translating religious values into students' everyday conduct. The dissertation underlying this article identifies a practical problem in Metro City: limited formal Islamic Religious Education time and uneven student engagement make value internalization difficult when learning is confined to classrooms. This study therefore examines learning-management implementation, effectiveness, and implications for creating religious culture at SMPN 1, SMPN 2, and SMPN 4 Metro. The study used a qualitative multiple-case design. Data were generated through naturalistic observation, structured and unstructured interviews, and school documentation involving principals, vice principals, teachers, staff, students, and supporting secondary sources. Credibility was strengthened through source, technique, and time triangulation, followed by within-case coding and cross-case analysis. Findings show a strong institutional rationale supported by preparation, socialization, habituation, teacher exemplarity, student participation, extracurricular enrichment, peer control, and programmed evaluation. These practices were associated with stronger discipline, learning motivation, orderly classrooms, and active participation in religious activities. Effective learning management institutionalizes religious values when curricular learning is integrated with daily school culture. School leaders should strengthen teacher consistency, parent involvement, learning resources, and systematic evaluation. Future studies should test the resulting management model across broader school contexts.

A. INTRODUCTION

Schools are not only organizations for transmitting subject knowledge; they are also social environments in which repeated routines, symbols, relationships, and rules shape students' dispositions. In the dissertation from which this article was developed, religious culture is treated as a vehicle for value transmission: values become educationally meaningful when they are enacted in daily interactions rather than confined to formal religious instruction. This concern is especially relevant in public junior high schools, where Islamic Religious Education must operate within a broader general curriculum and where the time formally assigned to religious instruction is limited. Recent studies similarly show that school culture can strengthen religious character when values are embedded in routines, expectations, and shared practices rather than presented only as cognitive content (Purwanto, Setyowati, and Suhandini 2022; Augita and Arif 2022; Arimbi and Minsih 2022).

The substantive problem is therefore managerial as well as pedagogical. A school may possess religious programs, yet their educational effect depends on whether those programs are planned, organized, implemented, monitored, and evaluated consistently. Learning management links classroom instruction with the wider environment in which students practice discipline, worship, courtesy, responsibility, and social respect. Research on Islamic Religious Education management has emphasized the importance of connecting instructional planning with learner characteristics, organizational support, evaluation, and school-wide objectives (Syukur et al. 2023). In a similar direction, school-management research on religious culture indicates that planning, organizing, directing, and evaluating must work as an integrated cycle if religious values are to become part of institutional life (Hasani, Sulhan, and Subki 2023).

The dissertation focuses on three public junior high schools in Metro City: SMPN 1 Metro, SMPN 2 Metro, and SMPN 4 Metro. The research problem emerged from a tension between educational aims and everyday conditions. Schools are expected to develop students who are intellectually capable, morally responsible, and faithful, but classroom time alone is insufficient to accomplish the affective and behavioral dimensions of those aims. The original study consequently concentrated on learning-management effectiveness and religious culture, with attention to planning, organization, supervision, and evaluation, as well as students' faith, understanding, practice, and adherence to Islamic values. This focus positions religious culture not as an additional ceremony but as an organizational environment that supports the internalization of learning.

Recent Indonesian research reinforces the importance of this wider environment. School culture has been associated with religious-character development through compulsory activities, teacher example, rules, and routine worship (Ikmal and Sa'adah 2023). Other qualitative studies show that religious and civic values are internalized through daily routines, learning activities, extracurricular programs, environmental arrangements, and commemorative events (Hariyono et al. 2023). In public-school settings, systematic habituation is particularly important because students experience religious formation within institutions that serve diverse educational functions. Studies at public and general schools report that planned cultural activities can reinforce religious awareness without reducing learning to ritual compliance (Ngadhimah et al. 2023; Retnasari et al. 2023).

Leadership is a central part of the mechanism. Principals create the policy space in which a religious culture can be developed, while teachers translate policy into visible practice. Studies of principal strategy report that religious-character formation is strengthened when school leaders coordinate programs, model expected conduct, mobilize teachers and students, and address supporting and inhibiting factors (Fajariyah and Sholehuddin 2023). Research on headmaster leadership likewise finds that collective responsibility is essential for sustaining religious culture (Hariyanto and Nisa' 2023), and research on principals as educators shows that supervision, guidance, and participation in religious programs can turn institutional expectations into shared routines (Anggraini et al. 2023). This leadership dimension is highly relevant to the three Metro schools because the dissertation repeatedly identifies commitment from principals and school members as a condition for implementation.

Teacher exemplarity and habituation form the second mechanism. The dissertation documents practices such as collective prayer, Qur'anic recitation, congregational prayers, greetings, handshakes, religious commemorations, extracurricular activities, and student involvement in monitoring routines. These practices are consistent with a growing body of recent research in which repeated, socially supported activities are used to cultivate religious character (Lestari, Amrullah, and Hikmah 2023; Febriyanti and Supriyadi 2023; Ali and Marzuki 2023). Habituation is educationally important because it connects knowledge with performance: students encounter the same value through language, schedule, teacher example, peer expectations, and institutional rules. The resulting culture can make religious conduct more predictable and socially reinforced, although repetition must still be accompanied by meaning and reflection.

A third mechanism is integration. Religious culture becomes stronger when the school does not treat Islamic Religious Education as the sole responsibility of one subject teacher. Recent studies describe the value of integrating religious character with broader educational programs, including science learning, institutional management, and moral development (Danumiharja et al. 2023; Sarip et al. 2023). The role of Islamic Religious Education teachers remains important, particularly in discipline and moral guidance, but sustainable character education requires cooperation among leaders, teachers, staff, students, and families (Nasrullah et al. 2023). The Metro dissertation similarly emphasizes that the school community as a whole must participate if the religious atmosphere is to extend beyond scheduled lessons.

The empirical gap addressed by this article lies in the relationship between management processes and cultural outcomes across multiple public junior high schools. Many recent studies describe particular religious routines or the leadership of one school. Fewer analyses compare how preparation, socialization, student empowerment, classroom learning, extracurricular enrichment, supervision, and evaluation combine across several public schools. Recent work on religious-culture management and curriculum management points toward this integrated perspective (Maulana et al. 2024; Dewi 2024; Subandi et al. 2024), while newer studies of school culture continue to underline the contribution of habituation and discipline to religious character (Hadi and Prayogi 2025; Rosadi et al. 2025). A multi-case synthesis can therefore clarify which patterns are school-specific and which appear consistently across settings.

Accordingly, this article has three objectives derived directly from the dissertation: first, to describe the rationale and implementation of religious-culture development at SMPN 1, SMPN 2, and SMPN 4 Metro; second, to analyze the effectiveness of learning management in creating that culture; and third, to explain the implications of learning management for student participation and the religious atmosphere of the schools. The article also reframes the dissertation's theoretical interpretation into a practical change sequence: desire for change, preparation, unfreezing existing routines, movement through new practices, and refreezing through normalization and evaluation. The principal conclusion is that learning management becomes effective when classroom learning, extracurricular time, teacher example, student agency, and organizational evaluation operate as one cultural system.

B. METHOD

This research used a qualitative multiple-case design. The dissertation identifies the methodological approach as qualitative descriptive research with a case-study design, selected because the research questions concern processes, meanings, practices, and organizational implications rather than statistical relationships. The cases were SMPN 1 Metro, SMPN 2 Metro, and SMPN 4 Metro. The three schools were selected because the study regarded them as prominent public junior high schools in Metro City, with strong community demand, supporting facilities, and qualified educational personnel. The research and dissertation-writing process was planned across approximately seven months in the 2022/2023 academic year.

Primary data were obtained mainly from school leaders and teachers in the three schools. The broader field material also involved vice principals, administrative staff, students, and, as supporting secondary sources, parents and school documentation.

This combination made it possible to compare formal policy with the everyday experiences of implementation. The unit of analysis was not a single lesson but the management of learning as it interacted with school culture. Therefore, attention was given to instructional routines, extracurricular enrichment, religious activities, student participation, leadership practices, monitoring, and the organizational arrangements that connected these elements.

Three principal data-collection techniques were used: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was naturalistic and conducted in the school setting without intentionally manipulating the situation. Field notes were used to record routines, interactions, learning conditions, and religious-culture practices. Interviews included structured and unstructured forms, allowing the researcher to obtain comparable information from selected informants while also exploring unexpected issues. Documentation was used as a non-human source to complement observation and interviews and included written records, school guidelines, reports, and other materials relevant to learning-management effectiveness and religious culture.

Data credibility was strengthened through triangulation. The dissertation explicitly describes source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation. Source triangulation compared information obtained from different participants or documentary sources. Technique triangulation checked information obtained by one method against another, for example comparing observation with interview evidence. Time triangulation involved rechecking information in different situations or at different times when necessary. This strategy was important because the study examined institutional habits; a practice observed once could not automatically be treated as an established culture without supporting evidence from other sources.

Analysis proceeded through organization, transcription or verbatim preparation, coding, categorization, interpretation, and comparison. The dissertation discusses coding as a way to summarize the essence of segments of language or visual data and refers to initial, focused, axial, and selective forms of coding. For the present article, these procedures are reported as a practical within-case and cross-case process: data from each school were first organized around the research focus, patterns were identified within each case, and then similarities and differences were compared across SMPN 1, SMPN 2, and SMPN 4 Metro. This approach is consistent with the dissertation abstract, which states that analysis was conducted in two stages: individual-case analysis followed by cross-case analysis.

The conversion from dissertation to article did not add new field data or alter the empirical claims. The article condenses the original case descriptions, preserves the study's key categories, and places the findings in dialogue with recent literature published during 2022-2025. Particular care was taken not to reinterpret qualitative statements as statistical effects. Thus, the term 'effectiveness' is used in the organizational sense documented in the dissertation: practices were considered effective when they supported discipline, motivation, orderly learning conditions, achievement of learning objectives, and sustained participation in religious activities.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The cross-case findings show that religious culture was developed from a strong institutional rationale rather than from isolated events. Across the three schools, two motives repeatedly appeared: religious values were regarded as practical provisions for students' daily lives, and the limits of scheduled classroom time were addressed through additional or extracurricular activities. The rationale also included concern about the influence of technology and the wider social environment, the need to strengthen faith and piety, and the expectation that students would translate what they learned into conduct at school, at home, and in society. This reflects the dissertation's central premise that a school becomes an effective site of value education when management supports repeated practice.

At SMPN 1 Metro, the school's vision and mission provided an institutional basis for developing religious life alongside academic achievement, global competitiveness, environmental awareness, and character. The principal explained that religious culture was developed to practice religious values, use additional learning time, and form an intelligent generation. This rationale was reinforced by vice-principal perspectives stressing obedience to religious teachings and by the view that all school members must participate. The school therefore located religious culture within its organizational identity rather than assigning it exclusively to Islamic Religious Education lessons.

The implementation pattern at SMPN 1 can be described in four linked phases: preparation, implementation, socialization, and control-evaluation. Preparation responded to the limited two-to-three-hour weekly allocation for formal religious learning by discussing enrichment policies and programs with school components. Implementation included additional learning opportunities and habituation of religious activities. Socialization empowered students through the student council (OSIS), so that students did not merely receive rules but also helped communicate them and exercise peer control. Control and evaluation involved both routine monitoring and principal-led review at mid-year, end-year, and incidental meetings when urgent problems required attention.

The visible practices at SMPN 1 were varied. They included a culture of smiles, greetings, and salutations; Qur'anic literacy; Dhuha and Dhuhr congregational prayers; istighasah and collective prayer; Islamic holy-day commemorations; IMTAQ activities; Qur'anic recitation; prayers at the beginning and end of lessons; handshakes among members of the school community; Muslim dress practices; and participation in mosque youth activities. Classroom learning also began with religious expressions or short Qur'anic passages. Student-council representatives could remind peers about expectations and, in some situations, check whether teaching or routine activities were proceeding as scheduled.

The implications at SMPN 1 were generally positive but not uniform. School leaders described broad student participation in religious activities inside and outside the classroom. Observation and interviews also indicated that congregational prayer and school-attribute discipline had become habitual for many students. At the same time, teachers reported variation: some students participated with high motivation, others attended passively, and a smaller group required additional guidance because of lateness or weak engagement. This variation is important because it shows that a

religious culture can be institutionally strong without producing identical responses from every student.

At SMPN 2 Metro, the religious culture was also supported by collective commitment and principal policy. The documented practices included smiling, greeting, and saluting; the habits of saying excuse me, sorry, and thank you; completion of Qur'anic reading and writing; Qur'anic memorization; Dhuha and Dhuhr congregational prayer; istighasah and collective prayer; Islamic holy-day commemorations; short Islamic boarding-school programs; tadarus; prayers before and after lessons; and handshakes. The school also sought to respect religious difference by facilitating religious instruction for non-Muslim students without mixing beliefs, indicating that religious culture was implemented alongside recognition of students' different religious affiliations.

A distinctive organizational feature at SMPN 2 was the use of explicit commitment and coordinated control. New students were reported to sign a commitment to comply with school programs. Socialization sought to create a conducive environment in which daily religious practices were understood as a shared school routine. Teachers and staff were expected to model the behavior they encouraged. Coordination meetings involved the principal, vice principals, counseling personnel, teachers, and duty teachers, while program evaluation was conducted in a structured manner. In this case, management worked by aligning formal expectation, adult example, daily habituation, and periodic coordination.

The SMPN 2 case also revealed clear constraints. The dissertation identifies limited time for religious instruction, a shortage of learning modules, uneven participation among some teachers and students, and insufficient parental support for evaluating or sustaining students' worship practices at home. These barriers show that school culture cannot be understood as an internally closed system. Home routines, resource availability, and adult consistency influence whether school practices are reinforced or weakened. The school responded by providing motivation through leadership and weekly forums and by seeking external partnerships for Islamic Religious Education learning resources.

Table 1. Cross-case synthesis of learning management and religious-culture practices

Dimension	SMPN 1 Metro	SMPN 2 Metro	SMPN 4 Metro	Cross-case pattern
Rationale	Practice religious values; enrich limited lesson time; strengthen student character.	Build school-wide commitment; integrate religious routines and respectful coexistence.	Strengthen faith-piety and behavior through example, habituation, and school support.	Values are treated as daily-life provisions and reinforced beyond formal lesson hours.
Implementation	Preparation; program discussion; OSIS socialization;	Student commitment; conducive environment; teacher example;	Teacher/staff example; classroom prayer and Qur'anic	Implementation combines formal learning, habituation,

Dimension	SMPN 1 Metro	SMPN 2 Metro	SMPN 4 Metro	Cross-case pattern
	classroom and extracurricular habituation.	religious routines and extracurricular activities.	routines; student responsibility and peer control.	adult modeling, and student agency.
Core practices	3S/5S-related manners, Qur'anic literacy, Dhuha/Dhuhr prayer, IMTAQ, PHBI, tadarus, Remus.	Greetings and courtesy, Qur'anic literacy/memorization, Dhuha/Dhuhr prayer, istighasah, pesantren kilat, PHBI.	Thayyibah expressions, Qur'anic passages, prayer, religious activities, Muslim dress, student participation.	Religious values are made visible through repeated daily, weekly, and periodic practices.
Control and evaluation	OSIS peer control; principal evaluation at scheduled and incidental times.	Coordination among principal, vice principals, counseling staff, teachers, and duty teachers; programmed evaluation.	Weekly/monthly coordination plus mid-year, year-end, and incidental evaluation.	Culture is maintained through shared supervision and periodic organizational review.
Implications and constraints	High participation but varied student motivation; discipline and routine strengthened.	Discipline and participation strengthened; constraints include time, modules, uneven participation, and parent support.	Religious participation, IMTAQ, conduct, and learning discipline reinforced.	Positive effects depend on adult consistency, resources, family support, and continuous evaluation.

Source: Synthesized from the dissertation field findings at SMPN 1, SMPN 2, and SMPN 4 Metro.

At SMPN 4 Metro, the implementation emphasized exemplarity by teachers and staff, habituation of religious activities, and creation of an environment supportive of religious behavior. Classroom learning was reported to begin with thayyibah expressions, short Qur'anic passages or Yasin, and collective prayer. Student participation in regulation was also visible: if a teacher had not entered class shortly after the lesson began, the student council's education section could seek the teacher, and student representatives were involved in peer control. These details show that the management system connected religious culture with broader norms of punctuality, responsibility, and learning discipline.

Control and evaluation at SMPN 4 were built into the organizational rhythm of the school. Coordination could occur weekly, in larger meetings at the end of the month, at mid-year and year-end, and incidentally when a problem required immediate attention. Evaluation was not limited to religious programs; it was part of a wider school-management practice. The implication of this system was described in terms of strengthening faith and piety while supporting achievement, good conduct, and skills. Teachers were expected to model religious values, support religious activities, and give students opportunities to participate actively in creating the school's religious atmosphere.

Across the three cases, the central effectiveness indicators were remarkably similar. The dissertation concludes that learning management contributed positively to student discipline, appropriate use of learning media, motivation to attend and participate in lessons, orderly classroom arrangements, and the achievement of expected learning goals. Effectiveness was therefore not defined by the number of religious ceremonies alone. It was reflected in whether managerial practices produced a learning environment in which students were more orderly, engaged, and willing to participate in school religious life.

A further cross-case implication was the development of student mindset through repeated social expectations. The dissertation's conclusion specifically highlights student opportunities to play an active role in religious activities and the consistent construction of a 5S culture - smile, greeting, salutation, politeness, and courtesy. Although the specific labels and activities varied by school, the underlying process was similar: the school translated values into recognizable behaviors, repeated those behaviors across settings, supported them through adult example, and used peer participation and evaluation to sustain them.

The findings also indicate that extracurricular time functioned as a managerial solution to the limited time available in formal lessons. Rather than treating the schedule as a fixed constraint, schools redistributed opportunities for religious learning across the school day and week. Dhuha prayer, congregational Dhuhr prayer, Qur'anic reading, IMTAQ programs, Islamic commemorations, religious arts, and short intensive programs expanded the places where students could encounter and practice religious values. This is consistent with recent studies in which school culture and habituation create continuity between formal learning and repeated practice (Nurizah and Amrullah 2024; Solihah, Sugara, and Fathoni 2024; Ma'arif et al. 2024).

Teacher behavior was a second recurring source of effectiveness. In all three cases, students were expected to observe adults who practiced the values they taught. The dissertation repeatedly links habituation with example: asking students to greet, pray, behave politely, or participate consistently is less persuasive if teachers and staff do not show comparable conduct. Recent research has reached similar conclusions, describing teachers as role models, facilitators, evaluators, and organizers of habituation (Ali and Marzuki 2023; Solihah, Sugara, and Fathoni 2024). The cross-case evidence therefore suggests that religious culture is not only a student program; it is an adult-performance standard as well.

Student agency was a third recurring feature. OSIS or other student representatives participated in socialization, peer reminders, classroom responsibility, and religious activities. Such involvement reduces the distance between institutional rules and student practice because norms are communicated not only vertically from

adults to students but also horizontally among peers. The dissertation's data show that peer control was expected to operate through example rather than punishment alone. This is important because a culture becomes sustainable when students can reproduce its practices even when direct adult supervision is limited.

Finally, evaluation linked the daily practices back to management. The three schools used different combinations of weekly, monthly, semester, year-end, and incidental meetings. The common purpose was to determine whether programs were operating, identify obstacles, and adjust action. This feature distinguishes managed culture from spontaneous routine. It also corresponds with recent studies in which religious-culture development is tied to planning and evaluation rather than treated as a series of disconnected activities (Dewi 2024; Maulana et al. 2024; Subandi et al. 2024).

Analysis/Discussion

The findings support an interpretation of religious culture as an organizational outcome produced by the interaction of management, pedagogy, and repeated social practice. In each school, the formal lesson remained important, but it did not carry the entire responsibility for character formation. Instead, school leaders and teachers extended learning into routines before class, prayer schedules, extracurricular programs, student organizations, greetings, dress practices, and periodic religious events. This pattern closely resembles recent research showing that religious character is strengthened when schools transform values into routines that are visible across multiple settings (Ikmal and Sa'adah 2023; Lestari, Amrullah, and Hikmah 2023; Muna et al. 2024). The Metro cases add a management perspective by showing how these routines are prepared, coordinated, monitored, and revised.

The first analytical contribution is the importance of alignment. Religious culture became more coherent when school vision, learning programs, teacher behavior, student activities, and evaluation pointed in the same direction. At SMPN 1, the vision of religious life and character was connected with program enrichment and OSIS participation. At SMPN 2, shared commitments, teacher modeling, and coordinating meetings reinforced one another. At SMPN 4, adult exemplarity, habituation, peer control, and scheduled evaluation were mutually supportive. This alignment echoes studies that connect principal management and school culture with Islamic values (Dewi 2024) and those that place curriculum management at the center of religious-culture development (Maulana et al. 2024).

The second contribution concerns habituation as a managed process rather than simple repetition. Repetition can produce compliance, but character education requires students to encounter a stable relationship between the meaning of a value and its performance. The Metro schools used collective prayer, Qur'anic literacy, greetings, handshakes, religious commemorations, and other routines to normalize religious conduct. Comparable recent research finds that morning habits, congregational worship, Qur'anic activities, and socially reinforced routines can support religious character (Febriyanti and Supriyadi 2023; Nurizah and Amrullah 2024; Hidayah, Kurniawaty, and Parhan 2025; Rahayu and Istanto 2025). The present findings suggest that the strongest habituation occurs when routines are accompanied by adult example, peer participation, and evaluation.

The third contribution is the role of discipline as both a management indicator and a cultural pathway. The dissertation identifies discipline as one of the clearest signs that

learning management was working. Students were expected to arrive on time, participate in activities, follow school attributes, and maintain classroom order. More recent evidence has explicitly examined discipline as a mechanism through which school culture shapes religious character (Rosadi et al. 2025). The Metro cases provide qualitative detail for that mechanism: discipline was not separate from religious culture but was embedded in repeated expectations, student reminders, prayer schedules, teacher attendance, and school evaluation.

The fourth contribution concerns leadership. The principal's role was not limited to approving religious activities. Leaders articulated reasons for change, supported program design, motivated school members, convened evaluation meetings, and addressed constraints. This pattern is consistent with research emphasizing principal strategy and leadership in developing religious culture (Fajariyah and Sholehuddin 2023; Hariyanto and Nisa' 2023; Anggraini et al. 2023). In the Metro schools, leadership effectiveness also depended on distribution: vice principals, teachers, counseling staff, duty teachers, and student organizations took part in implementation. Religious culture therefore emerged from coordinated leadership rather than from one charismatic individual.

The fifth contribution is the role of the Islamic Religious Education teacher within a whole-school system. The dissertation views teachers, particularly religious-education teachers, as a leading sector in implementation, but it also insists that responsibility is shared. This is compatible with recent studies showing that Islamic Religious Education teachers are important for discipline and moral formation while broader institutional support determines the reach of character education (Nasrullah et al. 2023). Research integrating religious character with other educational domains also suggests that moral and academic aims need not be separated (Danumiharja et al. 2023). The Metro findings extend this point by showing that school culture can provide continuity across subjects and spaces even when formal PAI hours are limited.

The sixth contribution is the identification of organizational barriers. SMPN 2 provides the clearest account: limited instructional time, inadequate modules, uneven staff and student participation, and weak parental reinforcement. These constraints are theoretically important because they reveal where a school-only approach reaches its limits. Religious culture can be strong during school hours yet remain fragile when learning resources are scarce or home practices do not reinforce school expectations. Recent school-culture studies similarly identify supporting and inhibiting factors and emphasize collaboration among the school community (Retnasari et al. 2023; Ngadhimah et al. 2023). The practical implication is that parent communication and resource support should be managed as part of the cultural strategy, not as external additions.

The dissertation's theoretical interpretation can be organized as a five-stage change sequence. The first stage is desire for change: leaders and teachers recognize a gap between formal religious learning and the behavior they seek to cultivate. The second is preparation: programs, responsibilities, schedules, and additional learning opportunities are discussed. The third is unfreezing: old assumptions that religious education belongs only to a classroom subject are loosened through socialization and leadership. The fourth is movement: habituation, teacher exemplarity, student participation, extracurricular activities, and peer control are put into practice. The fifth is refreezing: stable routines are reinforced through rules, recognition, repeated

participation, and evaluation. This sequence preserves the dissertation's conceptual interpretation while expressing it in operational terms.

This five-stage sequence also clarifies why the same activity can have different outcomes in different schools. A Dhuha prayer program, for example, is only one observable activity. Its cultural strength depends on whether students understand its place in the school program, whether teachers model participation, whether time and facilities are available, whether student organizations support the routine, and whether the school evaluates implementation. Research on school-culture habituation increasingly points to this systemic character of practice (Ghozi and Amrullah 2025; Hadi and Prayogi 2025). Thus, program lists should not be treated as evidence of effectiveness without attention to the management processes that sustain them.

The study also has limits that should shape interpretation. It is a qualitative study of three public junior high schools in one city, and the dissertation reports institutional perceptions and observations rather than standardized measures of religious character. The schools were purposively selected and had characteristics that may not represent every public junior high school. Some outcomes, such as discipline and motivation, were inferred from participant accounts and field observations rather than longitudinal instruments. Accordingly, the results support analytical transferability rather than statistical generalization. Their value lies in identifying a management pattern that can be examined, adapted, and tested in other contexts.

Even with these limits, the cross-case evidence offers a coherent answer to the research questions. Religious culture was developed because schools saw a need to turn religious knowledge into daily practice and to compensate for limited classroom time. Learning management was effective when it linked program planning, socialization, classroom and extracurricular implementation, teacher modeling, student agency, supervision, and evaluation. Its implications were visible in student participation, school discipline, learning motivation, orderly learning environments, and the normalization of courteous and religious behavior. This interpretation is consistent with contemporary research that treats religious character as an outcome of a sustained school culture rather than a one-time instructional intervention (Sarip et al. 2023; Ma'arif et al. 2024; Rahayu and Istanto 2025).

D. CONCLUSION

The conversion of the dissertation into an article yields three main conclusions. First, the rationale for developing religious culture at SMPN 1, SMPN 2, and SMPN 4 Metro was institutionally strong. The schools sought to help students practice religious values in everyday life and used additional or extracurricular time to extend learning beyond the limited formal allocation of Islamic Religious Education. Religious culture was therefore positioned as a school-wide educational environment rather than as a collection of ceremonial activities.

Second, learning management was effective when managerial functions were integrated with cultural practices. Preparation and program design were followed by socialization, classroom and extracurricular implementation, habituation, teacher exemplarity, student participation, peer control, and scheduled or incidental evaluation. Across the cases, the dissertation associates this pattern with stronger discipline, appropriate use of learning media, student motivation, orderly classrooms, and achievement of expected learning goals. The process can be summarized as desire

for change, preparation, unfreezing, movement, and refreezing through institutional routine.

Third, the principal implication was increased opportunity for students to participate actively in creating a religious atmosphere. Repeated practices, including prayer, Qur'anic activities, greetings, politeness, religious commemorations, and extracurricular involvement, helped build a shared mindset represented by the 5S culture of smile, greeting, salutation, politeness, and courtesy. Nevertheless, variation in student motivation and the constraints identified in the cases show that culture requires continuing reinforcement.

The study recommends that principals maintain strong commitment while integrating religious-culture goals into school vision, learning programs, staff coordination, and evaluation. Teachers should sustain consistent exemplarity, and schools should strengthen parent engagement and learning resources, particularly where modules or home reinforcement are limited. Future research should examine the model in a broader range of public schools, compare different leadership arrangements, and use longitudinal or mixed-method designs to assess how management practices influence religious character, discipline, and learning outcomes over time.

Acknowledgments: The author gratefully thank to the principals, vice principals, teachers, staff, students, and school communities of SMPN 1, SMPN 2, and SMPN 4 Metro for their participation and support in the dissertation research.
Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.
Author contributions: Wahid Asngari contributed to conceptualization, methodology, investigation, analysis, writing of the original dissertation, and preparation of this journal article.
Funding: Funding information was not reported in the dissertation source.
Data availability: The dissertation does not report a public data repository; access to underlying field materials is therefore subject to the original research arrangements and participant confidentiality.
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