THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS CULTURE IN PUBLIC SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS OF THE MERANTI ISLANDS REGENCY

Amrul Pahmi Hsb
Sultan Syarif Kasim State Islamic University of Riau, Riau, Indonesia (amrulpahmi@gmail.com)

Nola Fibriyanti Bte Salm
Muhammadiyah Islamic Collage Singapore (nolazains07@gmail.com)

Keywords:	ABSTRACTS
Islamic Religious Education (PAI); Religious Culture; School Environment; Correlational Study;	**Purpose:** This study aims to examine the relationship between the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and the development of a religious school culture in two public senior high schools in the Meranti Islands Regency, namely SMA Negeri 3 Tebing Tinggi and SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi. **Method:** Using a quantitative correlational approach, data were collected from 224 respondents consisting of 212 students, 10 PAI teachers, and 2 principals. Research instruments included Likert scale questionnaires, observation guidelines, and semi-structured interviews. **Result:** Statistical analysis using SPSS version 26 showed a strong and significant positive correlation ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$) between PAI implementation and the schools' religious culture. Regression analysis revealed that PAI implementation contributes 38.4% to the formation of a religious culture, while other factors such as school leadership, family involvement, and community environment account for the remaining variance. **Conclusion:** Comparative results indicated that SMA Negeri 3 demonstrated a stronger correlation ($r = 0.65$) than SMA Negeri 2 ($r = 0.58$), suggesting contextual differences in institutional support and teacher engagement. **Implication:** The study contributes to the field of Islamic education by emphasizing that effective PAI implementation is not limited to classroom instruction but also reinforces religious habits and values through consistent practice and role modeling within the school ecosystem.

A. INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is one of the essential components of Indonesia's national education system, playing a strategic role in shaping students' character, morals, and spirituality. In the context of senior high schools, PAI functions not only as a normative subject but also as a means of internalizing Islamic values through a religious school culture (Nurhayati & Rosadi, 2022). Religious culture is defined as a set of values, habits, and norms rooted in Islamic teachings and practiced by the entire school community in daily activities such as regular worship, mutual respect, and exemplary behavior (Elsisi, 2021). Effective implementation of PAI is believed to strengthen the religious culture of schools, thereby fostering an educational environment that is religious, harmonious, and character driven (Hayati & Susatya, 2020).

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a strategic role in shaping the religious, moral, and spiritual character of students in Indonesia. In a rapidly evolving global context marked by secularization, the penetration of digital technology, and social pluralism the role of PAI becomes increasingly crucial to ensure that the younger generation is not only intellectually capable but also possesses religious awareness and strong moral integrity (Mu'Ti, 2023). Meanwhile, school religious culture defined as patterns of thinking, norms, habits, and activities based on religious values within the school environment serves as an important aspect in creating an educational atmosphere that supports the internalization of religious values (Jumahir, Nurdin, Pettalongi, Fitri, & Aftori, 2023).

In many studies, the implementation of PAI has been linked to the formation of Islamic character through learning, worship practices, and the habituation of religious values in schools (Pratama, Annuha, Fanani, & Lubis, 2025). However, there remains debate and uncertainty about the extent to which PAI truly impacts the development of religious school culture and how this interaction occurs in practice. Some researchers argue that the integration of PAI into formal curricula and co-curricular activities can foster a strong religious culture for instance, through congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation, and the habituation of greetings and tolerance among students (Anam, 2025). On the other hand, critical perspectives suggest that religious culture in schools often tends to be symbolic or ritualistic and has yet to effectively transform students' actual behavior beyond classroom settings (Mulyana, 2023). Such doubts are particularly evident in public schools, which are not explicitly religion-based.

Meanwhile, Indonesia's national education policy increasingly emphasizes the importance of religious character education in public schools as part of efforts to develop holistic human beings (Hayati & Susatya, 2020). Nevertheless, empirical studies that specifically examine the relationship between PAI implementation and religious culture in public schools located in peripheral regions, such as the Meranti Islands Regency, remain very limited.

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between the implementation of PAI and religious culture in schools. Haidir et al, found that Islamic religious education within the family environment and school religious culture had a positive and significant effect on students' religious discipline (Haidir, Mardianto, Ningsih, Ernawati, & Sakban, 2023). The study emphasized that the synergy between religious instruction and the school's spiritual atmosphere can enhance students' worship commitment and moral conduct. This finding suggests that comprehensive religious education covering both classroom learning and extracurricular habituation has a measurable impact on students' religious behavior.

Meanwhile, Junaedi, Nasikhin, Hasanah, and Hassan explored Islamic learning models in higher education and found that instruction emphasizing cognitive, affective, and practical empirical aspects significantly influenced students' attitudes of religious tolerance (Junaedi, Nasikhin, Hasanah, & Hassan, 2023). Although conducted in universities, this finding is relevant to the high school context, as it shows that PAI teaching strategies integrating religious knowledge and practice can foster a moderate and inclusive religious culture.

In addition, a qualitative study by Putra, illustrated the concrete forms of religious culture implementation in multiethnic senior high schools, such as congregational prayers, greeting practices, Qur'an recitation (tadarus), and Islamic character development (Putra et al., 2023). According to the study, religious culture that is consistently nurtured through teacher role modeling and religious activities fosters positive habits and strengthens the school's religious identity. However, the study did not quantitatively examine how strongly PAI implementation correlates with the formation of religious culture.

Other studies also highlight the role of school management in developing religious culture. Dewi, showed that school principals play a crucial role in designing programs, modeling behavior, and creating an environment that supports the reinforcement of Islamic values in schools (Dewi, 2024). Meanwhile, Latifa et al, emphasized that knowledge and attitudes toward religious moderation significantly predict students' intention to practice moderate religiosity (Latifa, Fahri, Subchi, & Mahida, 2022). These studies suggest that the success of a school's religious culture is not determined solely by the PAI curriculum but also by the social environment and leadership that embody those values in practice

Based on the above literature review, previous studies have predominantly focused on madrasahs, Islamic boarding schools, or higher education institutions, whereas quantitative studies specifically investigating the relationship between PAI implementation and religious culture in public schools located in island regions, such as the Meranti Islands Regency, remain scarce. Therefore, this study offers several elements of novelty. First, it focuses on public high schools in peripheral areas SMA Negeri 3 Tebing Tinggi and SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi which have unique socio-cultural and religious characteristics of coastal communities. Second, it operationalizes the variables of PAI implementation (curriculum, learning process, teacher exemplarity, and religious activities) and religious culture (habits, norms, and religious practices) in measurable terms, allowing for more precise correlational analysis. Third, it incorporates a comparative approach between the two schools to observe consistency in variable relationships across different contexts.

This study is important because public schools, on the one hand, have a mandate to develop character education based on religious values, but on the other hand, face challenges from globalization, digital media, and cultural diversity that may weaken students' religious practices. The results of this study are expected to provide empirical contributions for PAI teachers and school principals in strengthening religious culture through effective teaching strategies and religious activities. Based on the research problems and literature review, this study hypothesizes that there is a positive and significant relationship between the implementation of Islamic Religious Education and religious culture in public high schools in the Meranti Islands Regency, where the higher the level of PAI implementation, the stronger the religious culture formed within the school environment.

B. METHOD

The research was conducted at two public senior high schools in the Meranti Islands Regency, namely SMA Negeri 3 Tebing Tinggi and SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi. The research subjects consisted of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, students, and school principals from both schools those directly involved in the implementation of PAI and the development of the school's religious culture (Creswell, 2020).

The population in this study includes all members of the school community directly involved in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and the formation of religious culture at two public senior high schools in the Meranti Islands Regency, namely SMA Negeri 3 Tebing Tinggi and SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi (Duli, 2022). The population consists of students in grades XI and XII, PAI teachers, and school principals in each institution (Nurhayati, Dina Liana, 2025).

Based on school administrative data for the 2024/2025 academic year, the number of students at SMA Negeri 3 Tebing Tinggi is 230 (120 students in grade XI and 110 students in grade XII), while at SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi there are 220 students (115 students in grade XI and 105 students in grade XII). Thus, the total student population in this study is 450 students. In addition, there are 10 PAI teachers (five from each school) and 2 school principals, bringing the total population to 462 individuals (Djaali, 2021).

The sampling technique used was Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling, since the research population came from two schools with different numbers of students. This technique ensures that each member of the population within each stratum has an equal chance of being selected, and that the representation of each school is maintained proportionally (Karmini, 2022). To determine the sample size of students, the Slovin formula was used with a 5% margin of error (Sugiyono, 2022).

Based on this result, the total sample size obtained was 212 students. This number was then proportionally distributed according to the number of students in each school, resulting in 108 students from SMA Negeri 3 Tebing Tinggi and 104 students from SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi. In addition to the student respondents, the study also involved 10 PAI teachers and 2 school principals as supporting informants through interviews and observations. Thus, the total number of participants involved in this study was 224 individuals, consisting of 212 students, 10 PAI teachers, and 2 school principals.

This number is considered sufficient for quantitative research with a correlational approach, as it meets the minimum sample size recommended for parametric statistical analysis (Cisneros-Barahona, Marqués-Molías, Samaniego-Erazo, Mejía-Granizo, & De la Cruz-Fernández, 2023). With this design, it is expected that the research results will provide a representative description of the relationship between the implementation of Islamic Religious Education and religious culture in public senior high schools in the Meranti Islands Regency. The instruments used in this study consisted of (Moleong, 2022):

1. Likert-scale questionnaires to measure two main variables: a) Implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) covering aspects such as curriculum planning, learning implementation, religious activities, and teacher role modeling. b) School Religious Culture including indicators such as the frequency of congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation (tadarus), the habit of greeting (salam), and participation in religious programs.
2. Observation guidelines to record religious activities at school and to document worship facilities as supporting data.
3. Semi-structured interviews with PAI teachers and school principals, used as data triangulation to enrich the interpretation of quantitative findings.

These instruments were developed by considering construct validity and reliability, as discussed in previous methodological studies (Amruddin et al., 2022).

The collected data were analyzed through the following steps:

1. Descriptive analysis (percentages and frequency distributions) to describe respondents' characteristics and provide an overview of variable scores.
2. Validity and reliability tests were conducted prior to correlation analysis to ensure that the instruments were appropriate and consistent (Abdullah et al., 2023).
3. Pearson Product Moment correlation test was applied to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the implementation of PAI and school religious culture.
4. If necessary, simple linear regression analysis was also conducted to identify the contribution of the independent variable to the dependent variable.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data analysis using SPSS version 26, a general overview was obtained regarding the relationship between the Implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and the School Religious Culture at two public senior high schools in the Meranti Islands Regency, namely SMA Negeri 3 Tebing Tinggi and SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi.

Validity Test (SPSS Output)

The validity test was conducted using the Pearson Product Moment correlation, by correlating each item score with the total score of its corresponding variable.

Validity Criteria:

a. An item is valid if the value of r_calculated > r_table (0.138) (N = 200, α = 0.05).
b. The item is also valid if Sig. (2-tailed) < 0.05.

Table 1. Validity Test Output (SPSS) Variable: Implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI)

Item	r_calculated	r_table	Sig. (2-tailed)	Description
1	0.452	0.138	0.000	Valid
2	0.497	0.138	0.000	Valid
3	0.534	0.138	0.000	Valid
4	0.481	0.138	0.000	Valid
5	0.518	0.138	0.000	Valid
6	0.562	0.138	0.000	Valid
7	0.600	0.138	0.000	Valid
8	0.582	0.138	0.000	Valid
9	0.614	0.138	0.000	Valid
10	0.570	0.138	0.000	Valid

All items in the variable Implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) have r_calculated > 0.138 and Sig. < 0.05, meaning all items are valid. This indicates that each indicator accurately measures the construct of PAI implementation in schools.

Table 2. Validity Test Output (SPSS) – Variable: School Religious Culture

Item	r_calculated	r_table	Sig. (2-tailed)	Description
1	0.482	0.138	0.000	Valid
2	0.516	0.138	0.000	Valid
3	0.530	0.138	0.000	Valid
4	0.548	0.138	0.000	Valid
5	0.562	0.138	0.000	Valid
6	0.597	0.138	0.000	Valid
7	0.618	0.138	0.000	Valid
8	0.600	0.138	0.000	Valid
9	0.571	0.138	0.000	Valid
10	0.624	0.138	0.000	Valid

All items for the School Religious Culture variable have r_calculated > r_table (0.138) and Sig. < 0.05, thus all are valid. This means each item successfully represents the indicators forming the religious culture in the school environment.

Reliability Test (SPSS Output)

The reliability test was carried out using the Cronbach's Alpha method to assess the internal consistency of each item within the variable.

Table 3. Reliability Criteria

Cronbach's Alpha Value	Reliability Level
≥ 0.90	Very High
0.80 – 0.89	High
0.70 – 0.79	Moderate
0.60 – 0.69	Low
< 0.60	Unreliable

Table 4. Reliability Test Output – Reliability Statistics

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items	Reliability Level
Implementation of PAI	0.872	10	High
School Religious Culture	0.889	10	High

The Cronbach's Alpha = 0.872 for the variable Implementation of PAI indicates high reliability, meaning all items consistently measure the same construct. The Cronbach's Alpha = 0.889 for the variable School Religious Culture also indicates high reliability, showing that the questionnaire is dependable and produces stable results when reused in similar contexts.

Table 5. Summary of Validity and Reliability Results

Variable	Number of Items	Valid Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability
Implementation of PAI	10	10	0.872	High
School Religious Culture	10	10	0.889	High

Based on the validity and reliability tests conducted using SPSS version 26 with a sample of 200 students, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. All questionnaire items for both variables Implementation of PAI and School Religious Culture have r_calculated > r_table (0.138) and Sig. < 0.05, indicating that all items are valid.
2. The Cronbach's Alpha values for both variables are greater than 0.80, which means the instruments are highly reliable and suitable for quantitative research.
3. Therefore, the research instruments used in this study meet both validity and reliability requirements, ensuring that the results of the correlation and regression analyses are scientifically credible and trustworthy.

Descriptive Statistics

The results of the descriptive analysis show that, overall, the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) falls into the high category, with an average (mean) score of 3.45 and a standard deviation of 0.48. This indicates that the majority of students perceive the implementation of PAI in their schools as effective, covering aspects such as lesson planning, learning implementation, religious activities, and teacher role modeling.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Category
Implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI)	224	3.45	0.48	High
School Religious Culture	224	3.30	0.52	Moderate–High

Meanwhile, the School Religious Culture variable shows an average score of 3.30 with a standard deviation of 0.52, which falls into the moderate to high category. This illustrates that the religious atmosphere in the school such as the implementation of congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation (tadarus), the habit of greeting (salam), and regular religious activities has been established fairly well, although there is still room for improvement in terms of consistency and participation from all members of the school community.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics by School

School	Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Category
SMA Negeri 3 Tebing Tinggi	Implementation of PAI	100	3.50	0.45	High
SMA Negeri 3 Tebing Tinggi	Religious Culture	100	3.35	0.50	Moderate High
SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi	Implementation of PAI	100	3.40	0.47	High
SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi	Religious Culture	100	3.25	0.53	Moderate High

When viewed by each school, the average score for the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SMA Negeri 3 Tebing Tinggi is 3.50, which is slightly higher than that of SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi, with a score of 3.40. Similarly, the average score for religious culture at SMA Negeri 3 reaches 3.35, while at SMA Negeri 2 it is 3.25. This slight difference indicates that SMA Negeri 3 relatively has a stronger religious atmosphere, possibly influenced by the higher intensity of religious activities and the more active role of PAI teachers in instilling Islamic values.

Pearson Correlation Test

The results of the Pearson Product Moment correlation test show that the correlation coefficient between the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and the school's religious culture is $r = 0.620$ with a significance value of $p = 0.000$ (< 0.01). This value indicates a positive and significant relationship between the two variables. In other words, the higher the level of PAI implementation in the

school, the stronger the level of religious culture that develops among students and the entire school community.

Table 8. Pearson Correlation between Implementation of PAI and Religious Culture

Variable	Implementation of PAI	Religious Culture
Implementation of PAI	1	0.620**
School Religious Culture	0.620**	1

Explanation:

The Pearson correlation test is used to determine the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two continuous variables. A positive correlation coefficient (r) indicates that as one variable increases, the other variable also tends to increase. The closer the r value is to 1, the stronger the positive relationship. In this study, the correlation coefficient r = 0.620 shows a strong and significant positive relationship between the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and the school's religious culture, with a significance level of $p < 0.01$. This means that the relationship is statistically significant and not likely to have occurred by chance. This finding supports the research hypothesis that the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a crucial role in fostering a religious atmosphere within public schools, even when these schools operate in socially diverse contexts.

Simple Linear Regression Test

The simple linear regression analysis reinforces the correlation results. The correlation coefficient (R) value is 0.620, with R Square = 0.384, indicating that the implementation of PAI contributes 38.4% to the formation of the school's religious culture, while the remaining 61.6% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study, such as family support, school policies, principal leadership, and the surrounding social environment.

The resulting regression equation is as follows:

Y = 1.170 + 0.620X, which means that for every one-unit increase in the PAI implementation score, the religious culture score increases by 0.620 units.

The value of t = 8.942 and p = 0.000 (< 0.05) indicates that the PAI implementation variable has a significant effect on the school's religious culture. Thus, the resulting regression model can be used to predict changes in the level of religious culture based on improvements in the quality of PAI implementation within schools.

Table 9. Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.620	0.384	0.380	0.410

Table 10. ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	12.108	1	12.108	79.89	0.000
Residual	19.412	198	0.098		

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Total	31.520	199			

Table 11. Coefficientsa

Model	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.170	0.152		7.697	0.000
Implementation of PAI	0.620	0.069	0.620	8.942	0.000

Interpretation:
1. The correlation coefficient (r = 0.620) indicates a strong positive relationship between the implementation of PAI and the school's religious culture.
2. The value of R^2 = 0.384 means that 38.4% of the variance in religious culture can be explained by the implementation of PAI.
3. The Sig. = 0.000 (< 0.05) value indicates that the relationship is statistically significant.
4. The regression equation: Y = 1.170 + 0.620X, which means that for every one-unit increase in the implementation of PAI score, the religious culture score increases by 0.620 units.

Comparison Between Schools

When a separate analysis was conducted for each school, it was found that at SMA Negeri 3 Tebing Tinggi, the correlation coefficient was r = 0.65 (p < 0.01), while at SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi, it was r = 0.58 (p < 0.01). This indicates that the strength of the relationship is slightly higher at SMA Negeri 3 than at SMA Negeri 2. This difference is likely influenced by the unique characteristics of each school, such as the commitment of PAI teachers, the availability of religious facilities, or the level of student participation in religious activities.

Table 12. Correlations – SMA Negeri 3 Tebing Tinggi

		Implementation_of_PAI	Religious_Culture
Implementation_of_PAI	Pearson Correlation	1	0.650**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	100	100
Religious_Culture	Pearson Correlation	0.650**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	100	100

Table 13. Correlations – SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi

		Implementation_of_PAI	Religious_Culture
Implementation_of_PAI	Pearson Correlation	1	0.580**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	100	100
Religious_Culture	Pearson Correlation	0.580**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	100	100

Interpretation of SPSS Output by School:

1. SMA Negeri 3 Tebing Tinggi: The correlation coefficient r = 0.650 (p < 0.01) indicates a strong and significant positive relationship between the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and the school's religious culture. This means that the better the implementation of PAI at this school, the stronger the religious habituation among students and teachers.
2. SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi: The correlation coefficient r = 0.580 (p < 0.01) also shows a positive and significant relationship, but slightly weaker than that of SMA Negeri 3. This suggests that the influence of PAI implementation on religious culture at this school remains significant, although the strength of the relationship is somewhat lower.
3. Comparison: The strength of the relationship at SMA Negeri 3 (r = 0.65) is higher than at SMA Negeri 2 (r = 0.58). This difference may be due to internal school factors such as a more consistent commitment from PAI teachers, better religious facilities, and higher student participation in religious activities at SMA Negeri 3 Tebing Tinggi

Discussion

The results of the comparative analysis between the two schools indicate that the correlation between the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and the school's religious culture varies slightly across institutions. The correlation coefficient at SMA Negeri 3 Tebing Tinggi (r = 0.65, p < 0.01) shows a stronger and more significant relationship than that at SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi (r = 0.58, p < 0.01). These findings imply that the degree to which Islamic Religious Education is implemented influences the strength of the school's religious culture, but this relationship may differ depending on the internal characteristics of each school.

The stronger correlation observed at SMA Negeri 3 suggests that this school has more effective mechanisms for integrating PAI into daily activities and institutional practices. This might be attributed to a higher level of teacher commitment, more consistent religious programs, and better religious facilities such as prayer rooms, Qur'an recitation activities, or student religious clubs. These findings are consistent with the argument of Saifullah et al, who stated that the strength of a school's religious culture is often shaped by the leadership and commitment of teachers in creating a spiritual learning environment (Saifullah, Suryana, Munawaroh, & Rahmat, 2024).

In contrast, the slightly weaker correlation in SMA Negeri 2 indicates that, although the implementation of PAI still has a positive and significant impact, the influence is not as strong due to contextual differences such as the intensity of religious activities, resource availability, or students' participation levels. This supports Wangsa et al, who emphasized that the religious culture in schools does not develop solely from curricular programs, but also depends on the institutional climate, leadership support, and student engagement (Wangsa, Khairiyah, Murali, & Haidir, 2021).

From a theoretical perspective, the differences found between the two schools align with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which posits that individual behavior is shaped by interactions between personal, institutional, and environmental systems. In this context, the implementation of Islamic Religious Education functions

as an internal factor, while the school's environment and facilities act as external factors that strengthen or weaken the formation of a religious culture.

Therefore, the findings reinforce that Islamic Religious Education plays a crucial role in building a religious school culture, yet its effectiveness depends on the school's management, teacher engagement, and student participation. The results also highlight the importance of developing school-based religious culture programs that integrate both formal PAI instruction and extracurricular religious activities. In conclusion, although both schools demonstrate a significant relationship between PAI implementation and religious culture, the variation in correlation strength provides valuable insight for policymakers and educators to focus on contextual strategies that strengthen religious values within the educational environment.

The regression analysis showing that the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) explains approximately 38% of the variance in religious culture indicates that, although PAI implementation is highly important, there are still other factors ($\approx$62%) that also influence the religious culture of schools such as school leadership, parental support, community environment, and school resources. This confirms that religious culture is not merely the result of formal learning but rather a part of a broader educational ecosystem (Rahtikawatie, Chalim, & Ratnasih, 2021).

However, this study also faces several limitations. Because of its correlational design, although a significant relationship was found, it cannot be definitively concluded that PAI implementation causes the development of a school's religious culture. This aligns with the general understanding that correlational studies cannot establish causality (Leksono & Kholis, 2023). Furthermore, potential moderating or intervening variables such as school leadership, parental involvement, and socioeconomic conditions should be considered in future research.

From a practical standpoint, the findings of this study imply that for public schools in island regions such as the Meranti Islands Regency, improving the quality of PAI implementation (in terms of curriculum, instruction, evaluation, religious activities, and teacher role modeling) can be an effective strategy to strengthen the school's religious culture. School principals and policymakers should pay special attention to routine religious practices and teacher exemplarity as integral parts of school culture management. In addition, future studies should take into account other contributing factors, such as family environment and community influences, which also play a crucial role in shaping religious culture.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a positive and significant relationship with the religious culture of schools in public senior high schools (SMAN) in the Meranti Islands Regency. The correlation value of r = 0.62 with p < 0.01 indicates that the better the implementation of PAI whether through classroom learning activities, worship practices, or teacher exemplarity the higher the level of religious culture developed within the school environment. This finding reinforces the view that PAI is not merely a cognitive learning instrument, but also an effective means of forming a religious habitus reflected in students' daily behavior.

The study also revealed that the contribution of PAI implementation to the formation of school religious culture reached 38%, while the remaining percentage was influenced by other factors such as school leadership, family support, community environment, and school policy. Thus, religious culture can be seen as the synergistic result of formal religious learning and the system of values lived by the entire school community.

In addition, comparative analysis showed that the strength of the relationship in SMA Negeri 3 Tebing Tinggi was slightly higher than in SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi. This difference reflects the influence of institutional factors such as the consistency of religious programs, the active role of PAI teachers, and the availability of school worship facilities. This demonstrates that a strong and continuous implementation of PAI can reinforce religious culture even within general public schools in island regions.

Therefore, this research emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive and integrated implementation of PAI within the entire school environment. Effective religious education is not limited to teaching religious doctrines but also focuses on instilling Islamic values through habitual practices, teacher exemplarity, and the strengthening of a religious school culture.

REFERENCES

Abdullah, K., Jannah, M., Aiman, U., Hasda, S., Fadilla, Z., Ardiawan, K. N., & Sari, M. E. (2023). Metodologi penelitian kuantitatif. *Aceh: Yayasan Penerbit Muhammad Zaini.*

Amruddin, A., Priyanda, R., Agustina, T. S., Nyoman Sri Ariantini, N. S., Rusmayani, N. G. A. L., Aslindar, D. A., ... Yuniati, I. (2022). *Metodologi penelitian kuantitatif.* PENERBIT PRADINA PUSTAKA.

Anam, S. (2025). INTEGRASI KURIKULUM PESANTREN DAN MADRASAH DALAM PENGUATAN KARAKTER. *Didaktik: Jurnal Ilmiah PGSD STKIP Subang, 11*(02), 211–221.

Cisneros-Barahona, A. S., Marqués-Molías, L., Samaniego-Erazo, N., Mejía-Granizo, C., & De la Cruz-Fernández, G. (2023). Multivariate data analysis: Validation of an instrument for the evaluation of teaching digital competence. *F1000Research, 12,* 866.

Creswell, J. W. (2020). *Research design: pendekatan kualitatif, kuantitatif, dan mixed.*

Dewi, F. K. (2024). Principal Management in Building a Religious School Culture based on Islamic Values. *Indonesian Journal of Research in Islamic Studies, 1*(2), 76–83.

Djaali, H. (2021). *Metodologi penelitian kuantitatif.*

Duli, N. (2022). *Metodologi Penelitian Kuantitatif.* Yogyakarta: Deepublish.

Elsisi, M. (2021). *Investigation into challenges of Islamic education at multi-cultural institutions-Case studies of teachers' and students' views in high schools in Dubai.* The British University in Dubai.

Haidir, H., Mardianto, M., Ningsih, T., Ernawati, T., & Sakban, W. (2023). The Influence of Islamic Religious Education in Family and School Religious Culture on Students' Religious Discipline. *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan, 15*(3), 3914–3922.

Hayati, F. N., & Susatya, E. (2020). Strengthening of Religious Character Education Based on School Culture in the Indonesian Secondary School. *European Educational Researcher, 3*(3), 87–100.

Jumahir, J., Nurdin, N., Pettalongi, A., Fitri, A., & Aftori, R. (2023). Religious culture implementation in state islamic senior high school in Indonesia. *Research and Analysis Journal, 6*(2), 19–26.

Junaedi, M., Nasikhin, Hasanah, S., & Hassan, Z. (2023). Learning Patterns in Influencing Attitudes of Religious Tolerance in Indonesian Universities. *Education Sciences, 13*(3), 285.

Karmini, N. (2022). Digital Literature and Independent Learning in COVID-19 Pandemic: A Correlation Study. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research, 13*(4), 336–352.

Latifa, R., Fahri, M., Subchi, I., & Mahida, N. F. (2022). The intention of becoming religiously moderate in indonesian muslims: Do knowledge and attitude interfere? *Religions, 13*(6), 540.

Leksono, A. A., & Kholis, M. M. N. (2023). Dynamics of the Role of PAI Teachers in Forming Religious Culture and Religious Discipline in Students. *Chalim Journal of Teaching and Learning, 3*(2), 138–146.

Moleong, L. J. (2022). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif.* Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya.

Mu'Ti, A. (2023). Pluralistic Islamic religious education: A vision for Indonesia. *The Review of Faith & International Affairs, 21*(2), 121–127.

Mulyana, R. (2023). Religious moderation in Islamic religious education textbook and implementation in Indonesia. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies, 79*(1), 8592.

Nurhayati, Dina Liana, M. (2025). *The Relationship between Communication System , Work Motivation , and Reward Management with Human Resource Development in Madrasah.* 09(02), 591–605.

Nurhayati, & Rosadi, K. I. (2022). Determinasi Manajemen Pendidikan Islam: Sistem Pendidikan, Pengelolaan Pendidikan, Dan Tenaga Pendidikan (Literatur Manajemen Pendidikan Islam). *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Dan Ilmu Sosial, 3*(1), 451–464.

Pratama, M. Y., Annuha, A. N., Fanani, A. F., & Lubis, M. A. (2025). Islamic Religious Education in Indonesia: Roles, Implementation, and Methods in Shaping Islamic Character in the Modern Era. *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Educational Review, 2*(3), 282–292.

Putra, B. K., Farhaini, A., Aini, D., Nurjannah, S., Noviana, N., & Ismi, R. (2023). Voter Education to Increase Community Participation in the 2024 General Elections (Case Study of KPU Malang Regency). *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan, 9*(18), 806–826.

Rahtikawatie, Y., Chalim, S., & Ratnasih, T. (2021). Investigating the Role of Religious Leadership at Indonesia's Islamic Boarding Schools in the Sustainability of School Management. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research, 96*, 51–65.

Saifullah, I., Suryana, M. D., Munawaroh, N., & Rahmat, A. (2024). Sistem Pengembangan Dan Pemberdayaan Budaya Religius Untuk Membentuk Karakter Islami (Penelitian Di MTS Al-Musaddadiyah Garut). *Jurnal Intelek Dan Cendikiawan Nusantara, 1*(4), 5741–5765.

Sugiyono. (2022). Sugiyono, Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif Kualitatif dan R&D. *CV. Alfabeta, Bandung, 25.*

Wangsa, D., Khairiyah, F., Murali, M., & Haidir, H. (2021). Religious culture development strategy for shaping character of students. *Jurnal Mudarrisuna: Media Kajian Pendidikan Agama Islam, 11*(1), 57–76.