

Managing Islamic School Culture to Develop Students' Religious Character

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ABSTRACT

Religious culture-based management in educational institutions plays a crucial role in forming students' character by integrating Islamic values into daily practices. However, many current approaches lack a holistic synthesis between managerial systems and religious cultural development. This study aims to systematically analyze how religious culture management aligns with character education in a comprehensive and structured manner. Employing a qualitative design through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), the data were drawn from journal articles, books, and theses indexed in Google Scholar, DOAJ, and Sinta databases, spanning the years 2013 to 2024, with inclusion criteria focusing on Islamic education, school management, and character development. Key findings indicate that 76% of sources emphasized the role of school leaders in integrating religious values, 68% reported positive impacts of habituation strategies such as group prayer and Qur'anic recitation, and 63% highlighted the importance of teacher modeling and parent-community collaboration. Concrete implementation is visible in school policies, curricular integration, extracurricular activities, and symbolic religious environments. These findings offer practical guidance for policymakers and educators to construct culturally-aligned, ethically-driven education systems that support the holistic formation of students' intellectual, moral, and spiritual identity in line with national character goals.

Keywords: religious culture, character education, systematic literature review, educational management, islamic values.

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INTRODUCTION

Character education plays a crucial role in shaping the morality and ethics of students, especially at the basic education level. In Islamic educational institutions, special attention is given to incorporating religious values into character formation, emphasizing habitual practices to strengthen these values among students. The strategy for developing religious culture in schools is designed to build positive habits in students, so that they grow up with noble character and can become the next generation of the nation based on Islamic values. Strengthening school culture that focuses on Islamic values and religious character can be done through various habits in the school environment, such as reading the Koran, maintaining cleanliness, praying before and after studying, respecting teachers, and practicing tolerance.¹ Religious values have a vital role in education, especially in shaping the character of young children. Through habituation, children's character can develop positively in line with Islamic teachings.²

Character education in educational institutions has an important role in forming a young generation that has integrity, is polite, and behaves ethically.³ Religious activities and social skills play an important role in shaping students' religious character, which can be reflected in applying these values in everyday life.⁴ An approach to forming religious character in a religious-based school culture can strengthen students' religious character through providing worship facilities, carrying out religious ceremonies, and using religious symbols.⁵ Islamic religious education is critical in shaping and developing student character. By integrating religious values, this education can create individuals who have complete personalities.⁶ For example, the implementation of school culture-based religious character education at MI Nursyamiyah Plumpang Tuban is realized through various means, such as mandatory activities organized by the school, positive habits applied in daily life, examples set by teachers, as well as the implementation of school rules that support religious values.⁷ School culture, which includes routine activities and daily habits involving all school members, plays an important role in shaping students' religious character.⁸

¹ Elce Purwandari et al., "Analysis of School Culture Implementation in Forming Students' Religious Character," *Jurnal Basicedu* 6, no. 1 (2022): 506–14, <https://doi.org/10.31004/basicedu.v6i1.1968>.

² Miftahul Jannah et al., "FORMATION OF CHILD CHARACTER THROUGH RELIGIOUS CULTURE," in *Proceeding of The International Conference on Economics and Business*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.55606/iceb.v1i1.159>.

³ Evi Gusliana and Nurlela, "ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SHAPING CHARACTER IN HIGHER EDUCATION," *Al-Ibda: Jurnal Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, 2022, 12–17, <https://doi.org/10.54892/jpgmi.v2i02.244>.

⁴ Yayat Suharyat et al., "The Influence of Religious Activities and Social Intelligence to Form Students' Religious Character," *JlIP - Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan* 6, no. 12 (2023): 10972–77, <https://doi.org/10.54371/jiip.v6i12.3613>.

⁵ A Marini, D Safitri, and Iskandar Muda, "Managing School Based on Character Building in the Context of Religious School Culture (Case in Indonesia)," *Journal of Social Studies Education Research* 9, no. 4 (2018): 274–94.

⁶ Mala Komalasari and Abu Bakar Yakubu, "Implementation of Student Character Formation Through Islamic Religious Education," *At-Tadzki: Islamic Education Journal* 2, no. 1 (2023): 52–64, <https://doi.org/10.59373/attadzki.v2i1.16>.

⁷ Hepi Ikmal and Nurul Alfiyatus Sa'adah, "School Culture-Based Religious Character Education Design at MI Nursyamiyah Plumpang Tuban," *EDU-RELIGIA: Jurnal Keagamaan Dan Pembelajarannya* 6, no. 2 (2023): 126–35, <https://doi.org/10.52166/edu-religia.v6i2.5713>.

⁸ Imamudin Imamudin, Destri Astrianingsih, and Siska Resti Maysara, "PERANAN BUDAYA SEKOLAH DALAM MEMBANGUN KARAKTER RELIGIUS," in *National Conference on Applied Business, Education, & Technology (NCABET)*, 2022, 102–8, <https://doi.org/10.46306/ncabet.v2i1.70>.

Management has a crucial role in creating a religious culture in educational institutions. Religious culture in schools can be formed through a well-planned and organized managerial approach, which includes planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation stages.⁹ In the educational context, management focusing on religious culture aims to improve the quality of education by including religious values in the learning process and daily life in the school environment.¹⁰ The school principal has an important role in forming a religious culture in the school environment. As a leader, the principal is responsible for directing and monitoring the implementation of religious culture and ensuring active participation from all parties in the school, both teachers and students. Good leadership can help overcome challenges in implementing religious culture, such as ineffective power distribution or limited resources.¹¹

The development of religious culture also requires direct involvement from teachers, who act as examples (*uswah*) for students. Teachers must carry out their duties as well as possible to instill religious values in students, so they can behave well and become positive role models in society.¹² In addition, effective curriculum management can strengthen the development of religious culture by including religious values in the learning process and routines at school.¹³ Implementing management based on religious culture in schools can improve work discipline, increase motivation, and achieve maximum work results. This is achieved by instilling religious norms encouraging positive behavior and forming a good work ethic.¹⁴ Apart from that, religious culture can be seen from the regular implementation of religious activities at school, the use of language that contains religious values, and the norms that regulate the behavior of school members.¹⁵

Developing religious culture in schools requires collaboration between various parties, such as parents and the community. The involvement of all these elements is significant in shaping students' religious attitudes and making religious values an inseparable part of life at school.¹⁶ In this way, efficient educational management can build an atmosphere that supports students' spiritual and academic development.¹⁷ Implementing management that focuses on religious culture in schools contributes to improving the quality of education and plays a role in forming students' religious character. Programs related to the development of

⁹ M Saimima, "Management of Islamic Education Based on Religious Culture," *Waiheru* 8, no. 2 (2022): 197–204, <https://doi.org/10.47655/12waiheru.v8i2.16>.

¹⁰ Zulvan Maulana, "Pengembangan Budaya Religius Melalui Manajemen Kurikulum Di SMK Darussalam Blokagung 2," *IHSANIKA : Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 2, no. 3 (2024): 353–71, <https://doi.org/10.59841/ihsanika.v2i3.1457>.

¹¹ Imaniah Elfa Rachmah, "PERAN KEPALA SEKOLAH DALAM MENCIPTAKAN BUDAYA RELIGIUS PADA SMP MUHAMMADIYAH 4 BANJARMASIN," *Al-Falah: Jurnal Ilmiah Keislaman Dan Kemasyarakatan* 17, no. 1 (2018): 1–26, <https://doi.org/10.47732/alfalahjikk.v17i1.15>.

¹² Syarifah Rahmah and Muhammad Ilham, "Management of Students' Religious Culture," *Development: Studies in Educational Management and Leadership* 1, no. 1 (2022): 039–054, <https://doi.org/10.47766/development.v1i1.644>.

¹³ H Mulyasa and W Aryan, "Developing Religious Culture In School," *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research* 6 (2017): 263–67.

¹⁴ Hefniy Razaq and Alif Rahman Ardiyansyah, "Religious Culture-Based Management in the Focus of Education," *Scaffolding: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Multikulturalisme* 6, no. 1 (2024): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.37680/scaffolding.v6i1.4098>.

¹⁵ Rachmah, "PERAN KEPALA SEKOLAH DALAM MENCIPTAKAN BUDAYA RELIGIUS PADA SMP MUHAMMADIYAH 4 BANJARMASIN."

¹⁶ Rahmah and Ilham, "Management of Students' Religious Culture."

¹⁷ Rosmey Meriaty and Sormin, "Managing Spiritual Growth: The Crucial Role Of Educational Management In Christian Religious Education," *Fonologi: Jurnal Ilmuan Bahasa Dan Sastra Inggris* 1, no. 3 (2023): 70–76, <https://doi.org/10.61132/fonologi.v1i3.587>.

religious culture, such as teaching ethics, improving religious skills, and extracurricular activities, can support the achievement of this goal.¹⁸ Regular evaluation of these programs is essential to ensure the achievement of educational goals and the continued development of religious culture.¹⁹

The development of religious culture in the educational environment plays an important role in forming student character. The application of religious culture in schools aims to instill positive habits in students, which aligns with national education goals, which want students to have spiritual strength and good character.²⁰ In this case, implementing religious culture development strategies is crucial so that students can grow into the next generation with Islamic character.²¹ Religious character education not only aims to create intelligent individuals, but also to instill positive moral values as a response to society's need for education that can counter various negative impacts of current developments.²² Schools as educational institutions play an important role in forming students' religious attitudes by using various appropriate approaches and strategies, including the involvement of parents and the community.²³

Implementing religious culture in schools can be done in various ways, such as habituation, providing role models, and applying religious symbols. The aim is to create a school atmosphere that supports students' religious character development.²⁴ Activities such as carrying out group prayers, reading the Koran, and celebrating Islamic holidays can be part of efforts to shape religious character in schools.²⁵ Research conducted by Devi Wangsa shows that forming a religious culture in schools can shape the character of students with discipline, honesty, and independence. Students are also encouraged to be very curious and have an attitude of tolerance towards other people.²⁶ The religious culture implemented in schools shapes each individual's personality and creates a community atmosphere that supports the religious learning process.²⁷

However, challenges in developing religious character at school remain, such as maintaining student consistency in carrying out good habits and monitoring the continuation of these practices at home. Therefore, the involvement of all parties in the school, including

¹⁸ M Ghoftar and Munirul Abidin, "IMPLEMENTASI MANAJEMEN KULTUR SEKOLAH SEBAGAI UPAYA PEMBENTUKAN KARAKTER RELIGIUS DI MTs ALMAARIF 01 SINGOSARI MALANG," *Pendas : Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar* 8, no. 1 (2023): 3319–28, <https://doi.org/10.23969/jp.v8i1.8264>.

¹⁹ Maulana, "Pengembangan Budaya Religius Melalui Manajemen Kurikulum Di SMK Darussalam Blokagung 2."

²⁰ Devi Wangsa et al., "RELIGIOUS CULTURE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR SHAPING CHARACTER OF STUDENTS," *Jurnal MUDARRISUNA: Media Kajian Pendidikan Agama Islam* 11, no. 1 (2021): 57–77, <https://doi.org/10.22373/JM.V11i1.8969>.

²¹ M Wening and Enung Hasanah, "STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING RELIGIOUS CULTURE TO SHAPE THE CHARACTER OF STUDENTS," *International Journal on Education, Management and Innovation (IJEMI)* 1, no. 3 (2020): 262–70, <https://doi.org/10.12928/IJEMI.V1i3.2592>.

²² Umi Nasikhah, Zulkifli, and Nurudin, "BUILDING A RELIGIOUS CULTURE IN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT," *IJGIE (International Journal of Graduate of Islamic Education)* 2, no. 1 (2021): 64–73, <https://doi.org/10.37567/ijgie.v2i1.418>.

²³ Rahmah and Ilham, "Management of Students' Religious Culture."

²⁴ Bagus Cahyanto et al., "Integration of Religious Character in School Culture: An Investigation of Character Development Practices in Islamic Elementary School," *ELEMENTARY: Islamic Teacher Journal* 12, no. 1 (2024): 49–74, <https://doi.org/10.21043/elementary.v12i1.23309>.

²⁵ Purwandari et al., "Analysis of School Culture Implementation in Forming Students' Religious Character."

²⁶ Wangsa et al., "RELIGIOUS CULTURE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR SHAPING CHARACTER OF STUDENTS."

²⁷ Ainawa Kholilatul Nurizah and M Amrullah, "Religious Character Formation Through Islamic Habituation in Primary Education," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Studies*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.21070/ijis.v12i4.1741>.

teachers as role models, is significant to ensure the success of this program.²⁸ Another research conducted by Antika Susanti stated that it is important to incorporate religious values in the school curriculum, both through intracurricular and extracurricular activities, in order to strengthen students' religious character. Therefore, a school culture that emphasizes religious values can positively impact student character development.²⁹

Thus, developing student character through religious culture strengthens personal moral development and creates a community atmosphere that supports religious learning. This, in turn, strengthens the role of character education in education as a whole. Apart from that, applying management based on religious culture in educational institutions can improve education quality and shape students' positive character. By integrating religious values into every aspect of school life, educational institutions can create an atmosphere that supports student development in both spiritual and academic aspects. Therefore, educators and stakeholders must adopt best practices in education management to achieve these goals. Overall, developing religious culture in schools is an effective strategy in forming the character of students who are not only intellectually intelligent but also have strong morals and ethics. This aligns with the broader goal of education, namely to form a complete human being with faith and piety. Thus, the relevance of this study is significant in the context of current developments in the world of education.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method based on the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework to ensure transparency and rigor in the selection and synthesis process of the literature. The literature search used electronic databases including Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, SAGE Journals, and Garuda (*Garba Rujukan Digital*). The search was limited to publications from 2017 to 2024 to ensure the inclusion of the most recent and relevant studies. The search string used was: "management of religious culture", "character education", "Islamic values", and "educational institutions". All identified articles were screened based on titles and abstracts, followed by full-text eligibility assessment. Inclusion criteria involved peer-reviewed journal articles, theses, and conference proceedings written in English or Indonesian that specifically discussed religious culture strategies or implementation in schools or higher education settings. The review process consisted of three main stages: (1) Screening—selection of studies based on relevance to the topic, (2) Data Extraction—identifying key findings, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks, and (3) Thematic Analysis—grouping the findings into key themes related to religious culture development and character education. The final synthesis highlights best practices,

²⁸ Cahyanto et al., "Integration of Religious Character in School Culture: An Investigation of Character Development Practices in Islamic Elementary School."

²⁹ Atika Susanti, Ady Darmansyah, and Abdul Mukhtadir, "Fostering Religious Character through the Implementation of School Culture in Pancasila Student Profiles," *Jurnal Riset Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (JURMIA)* 4, no. 2 (2024): 117–29, <https://doi.org/10.32665/jurmia.v4i2.3202>.

challenges, and strategic frameworks in managing religious culture for character development in educational institutions.

DISCUSSION

Result

Modeling

Modeling strategies in developing religious culture emphasize the role models provided by the principal, teachers, and staff to students. In 18 of the 35 studies analyzed (51%), it was found that the role of role models was very significant in shaping students' religious character. Teachers who are role models in worship, use of polite language, and daily religious behavior are strong drivers of the internalization of Islamic values. Examples of practice: Conducting congregational prayers led by teachers, reading the Qur'an together, and teachers actively advising and providing examples of attitudes of tolerance and discipline.

Habituation

Habituation is the most dominant strategy, found in 27 of 35 studies (77%). This method involves routine activities integrated into school life, such as dhuha prayer, tadarus Al-Qur'an, greetings when entering the class, and carrying out flag ceremonies with joint prayers. Habituation trains students to practice religious teachings and strengthens the values of discipline, responsibility, and perseverance. Habituation has been proven to form positive habits firmly embedded in students through repetition and reinforcement.

Collaboration

14 of the 35 studies (40%) mentioned collaboration between schools, parents, and the community. This collaboration included regular meetings, two-way communication between teachers and parents, and community involvement in school religious activities. Synergy between parties is an important factor in strengthening religious culture.

Studies show that religious character-building programs are more successful if there is continuity of values instilled at home and reinforced by the community environment.

Table 1. Summary Table of findings by theme.

Development Strategy Theme	Number of Studies	Percentage (%)
Modeling	18	51%
Habituation	27	77%
Collaboration	14	40%

A systematic study shows that habituation strategies are the most effective method in developing students' religious culture, considering students' involvement in repetitive activities that consistently shape character. Modeling by teachers and principals also plays a vital role, but ongoing supervision and assessment must be supported to maintain exemplary behavior. Although not as large as the other two themes, cross-party collaboration is the key to ensuring the sustainability of religious values outside the school environment. In practice, the success of implementing religious culture management depends on the internal school

and the external commitment of families and communities. Thus, the simultaneous combination of the three strategies – modeling, habituation, and collaboration – is a holistic approach that is very effective in forming the religious character of students in the context of Islamic education that is adaptive to social dynamics and the times.

Discussion

Management Strategy

The institutional approach to creating a religious culture in the educational environment is an increasingly relevant topic in the world of education today. Educational institutions not only act as a place to develop intellectual abilities, but also as a means to instill moral and religious values. This is important to meet the needs of society in facing various challenges of changing times. Religious culture in educational institutions can be formed through power strategies, persuasive approaches, and normative re-education approaches. These approaches involve modeling, habituation, giving rewards and punishments, and persuasive communication.³⁰ The formation of religious attitudes in students does not occur instantly, but through stages involving the active role of various parties, including parents and the community. Applying this religious culture aims to shape students into polite personalities, noble characters, and positive societal role models.³¹ In the context of higher education, one strategy to strengthen institutional identity is to require students to take religious education courses and obtain certification aimed at instilling Islamic values.³²

A religious culture-based approach in educational management improves educational standards by integrating religious values into the learning process. In this case, educators and heads of educational institutions have a crucial role in supervising the implementation of management methods that prioritize religious culture.³³ In several higher education institutions, religious moderation is implemented through an integrative model that includes interactions between institutions and culture and symbolic and paradigmatic schemes.³⁴ The development of religious culture within educational institutions aims to make religious teaching values part of the traditions in daily behavior and organizational culture implemented by all members of educational institutions.³⁵ For example, at the Indonesian Higher Education Lab School, the approach to religious education and conflict resolution is carried out through inter-religious dialogue and communication with non-Muslim parents to prevent misunderstandings.³⁶ Strategies for developing religious culture in educational

³⁰ Nasikhah, Zulkifli, and Nurudin, "BUILDING A RELIGIOUS CULTURE IN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT."

³¹ Rahmah and Ilham, "Management of Students' Religious Culture."

³² Engelian Yusniar Permanasari, Soebiantoro Soebiantoro, and Nik Haryanti, "Optimizing Institutional Identity: A Strategic Approach through Religious Culture in Higher Education," *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 4 (2023): 1290–1303, <https://doi.org/10.33650/al-tanzim.v7i4.6821>.

³³ Razaq and Ardiyansyah, "Religious Culture-Based Management in the Focus of Education."

³⁴ Nunu Burhanuddin and Darul Ilmi, "TYPOLOGIES OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN INDONESIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS," *JOURNAL OF INDONESIAN ISLAM* 16, no. 2 (2022): 455–79, <https://doi.org/10.15642/jiis.2022.16.2.455-479>.

³⁵ Jadid Khadavi, "Development of Religious Culture in The School Community," *Journal of Scientific Research, Education, and Technology (JSRET)* 2, no. 1 (2023): 94–100, <https://doi.org/10.58526/jsret.v2i1.48>.

³⁶ Agus Fakhruddin et al., "RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, DIVERSITY, AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION: A Case Study of Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia Lab School in Building a Culture of Tolerance and Interreligious Dialogue," *Religió Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 13, no. 1 (2023): 20–40, <https://doi.org/10.15642/religi.v13i1.2182>.

institutions include providing special time for religious learning and activities such as reciting the Asmaul Husna.³⁷

Religious character education at the basic educational institution level is implemented through the practice of congregational prayers and the use of artifacts that contain religious values and patterns.³⁸ Managing the Islamic religious education curriculum in educational institutions is designed to support creating a religious culture. However, there are still obstacles, such as the educational institutional environment, which is not yet entirely conducive.³⁹ Therefore, the institutional approach in building religious culture in the educational environment requires active involvement from all related parties to achieve national education goals, namely, developing the potential of students based on spiritual strength and noble morals.

The role of heads of educational institutions, educators, and parents is vital in managing religious culture in educational institutions to shape the character of students based on religious values. Religious culture in educational institutions improves the quality of education and shapes the personality of polite students, who have good morals and can have a positive attitude in social life.⁴⁰ The head of an educational institution plays a role as the main driver in creating a religious culture through practical administrative functions, ensuring that religious values are integrated into various aspects of the life of educational institutions.⁴¹ The role of heads of educational institutions is vital in building an attitude of religious tolerance within educational institutions. They lead the educational institutional community to develop internal guidelines and implement programs that support inter-religious harmony.⁴² Apart from that, heads of educational institutions also play a role in forming religious culture through group prayer, reading holy books, and extracurricular activities to develop students' religious character.⁴³

Educators are crucial in managing religious culture by being role models for students and integrating religious values into the learning process.⁴⁴ The professionalism of educators in teaching and evaluating students is essential to ensure the consistent application of religious values within educational institutions.⁴⁵ Harmonious cooperation between educators, parents, and heads of educational institutions is needed to improve the quality of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning and ensure that religious values are applied both in

³⁷ Wangsa et al., "RELIGIOUS CULTURE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR SHAPING CHARACTER OF STUDENTS."

³⁸ Dinda Velita Bela and A Santosa, "Implementation of Primary School Students' Religious Character Through School Culture," *TA'DIBUNA: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 6, no. 2 (2023): 106–15, <https://doi.org/10.30659/jpai.6.2.106-115>.

³⁹ Mulyasa and Aryani, "Developing Religious Culture In School."

⁴⁰ Rahmah and Ilham, "Management of Students' Religious Culture."

⁴¹ Rachmah, "PERAN KEPALA SEKOLAH DALAM MENCIPTAKAN BUDAYA RELIGIUS PADA SMP MUHAMMADIYAH 4 BANJARMASIN."

⁴² S Watung et al., "School Principals as Leaders in Fostering Attitudes of Religious Tolerance in Schools," *Nidhomul Haq : Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 3 (2023): 424–36, <https://doi.org/10.31538/ndh.v8i3.4078>.

⁴³ Idayani Idayani, Khairuddiin Khairuddiin, and Bahrin Bahrin, "The Leadership of School Principles in Developing Religious School Culture at the Basic Education Level in Jagong Jeget District, Cen-Tral Aceh District, Indonesia," *Path of Science* 9, no. 5 (2023): 3001–6, <https://doi.org/10.22178/pos.92-2>.

⁴⁴ Razaq and Ardiyansyah, "Religious Culture-Based Management in the Focus of Education."

⁴⁵ Razaq and Ardiyansyah.

educational institutions and at home.⁴⁶ Parents have an important role as educators and prominent supporters in forming a religious culture in their children. They are expected to work with educational institutions to create a conducive environment for applying religious values. Close relationships through intensive communication and regular meetings between parents and educational institutions can strengthen this collaboration.⁴⁷

The strategy of heads of educational institutions in building a religious culture includes integrating religious values into the curriculum, creating a supportive educational institutional atmosphere, and collaborating with parents and the community.⁴⁸ Challenges such as resistance to change and limited resources must be overcome with adaptive policies and clear and effective communication.⁴⁹ Overall, the role of heads of educational institutions, educators, and parents is crucial in building a religious culture. Good leadership and solid cooperation between all parties can create an inclusive educational environment that respects diversity and prepares students to live harmoniously in a society full of differences.⁵⁰

Implementing educational policies and religious programs in educational institutions is increasingly becoming an important topic globally. In Indonesia, efforts to promote religious moderation in Islamic higher education have become a primary focus. Academic policies in education, research, and community service at State Islamic Religious Higher Education (PTKIN) have been prepared to support religious moderation, based on Pancasila values.⁵¹ For example, in South Africa, religious education policy has undergone significant changes since 1995, emphasizing the role of heads of educational institutions in implementing this policy. However, research shows that heads of educational institutions often ignore these policies and maintain the existing situation.⁵²

On the other hand, the management of religious policy changes in South African educational institutions shows that a mediation approach to problem-solving and transformation is critical in implementing religious policy changes.⁵³ Meanwhile, in Indonesia, religious education policies in educational institutions are regulated by Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007. However, there are still various obstacles in its implementation, including a lack of coordination between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of

⁴⁶ A Baihaqi, Alkusaeri Alkusaeri, and S Saparudin, "Sinergitas Guru Agama, Orang Tua, Dan Kepala Sekolah Dalam Meningkatkan Mutu Pembelajaran PAI Di SMA NW Narmada," *MANAZHIM* 5, no. 2 (2023): 992–1011, <https://doi.org/10.36088/manazhim.v5i2.3661>.

⁴⁷ Baihaqi, Alkusaeri, and Saparudin.

⁴⁸ Rosiyana and Samiyah, "Strategi Kepala Sekolah Dalam Membangun Budaya Religius Siswa Di SMP Negeri 05 Pontianak," *PIJAR: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran* 2, no. 3 (2024): 175–82, <https://doi.org/10.58540/pijar.v2i3.587>.

⁴⁹ Nurpan Efendi et al., "Peran Kepala Sekolah Untuk Mengembangkan Moderasi Beragama Di Lingkungan Sekolah," *Global Education Journal* 2, no. 2 (2024): 149–61, <https://doi.org/10.59525/gej.v2i2.364>.

⁵⁰ Efendi et al.

⁵¹ M Muhlisin, Nur Kholis, and Juwita Rini, "Navigating the Nexus: Government Policies in Cultivating Religious Moderation Within State Islamic Higher Education," *QIJS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 11, no. 1 (2023): 207–36, <https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v11i1.12677>.

⁵² Albertina Maitumeleng Ntho-Ntho and J Nieuwenhuis, "Religion in Education Policy in South Africa: A Challenge of Change," *British Journal of Religious Education* 38 (2016): 236–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2014.984583>.

⁵³ Ntho-Ntho and Nieuwenhuis.

Religion.⁵⁴ In addition, research at Yadika Baturaja Vocational School revealed that although there was compliance with regulations, there were significant obstacles, such as limited adequate worship facilities.⁵⁵ The importance of religious moderation is also recognized in the management of Islamic educational institutions, where new policies are proposed to direct the management of Islamic education by the principles of religious moderation.⁵⁶ The Religious Moderation Program initiated by the Indonesian government aims to face challenges to national life, with higher education having an important role in supporting this goal.⁵⁷ At Wahid Hasyim higher education, religious moderation is implemented through structured and academically based programs, including in the general basic course curriculum.⁵⁸ Apart from that, higher education is also the primary target for the spread of radical Islam among the younger generation, even though there are regulations in place to introduce a national outlook. Research conducted at Nurul Jadid Higher Education shows that the religious certification program has proven effective in educating students about moderation and tolerance.⁵⁹ Overall, the implementation of educational policies and religious programs in educational institutions requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach to ensure success and sustainability in the long term.

The Impact of Religious Culture

Education is vital in shaping students' character, especially instilling religious values. These values not only serve to increase students' knowledge but also to shape their character, which is the primary goal of character education in schools.⁶⁰ In this case, implementing religious character education at the primary and secondary school levels has proven effective in shaping students' religious behavior through habitual activities such as congregational Dhuha and Dhuhur prayers and reading the Al-Quran together.⁶¹ The importance of developing religious character as the primary foundation that teachers must teach in schools cannot be ignored. A strong religious character allows students to judge everything based on

⁵⁴ S Suprpto and M Kadafi, "Evaluation of the Policy Implementation for Religious Education Teachers in Schools," *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Religion and Education, INCRE 2020, 11-12 November 2020, Jakarta, Indonesia*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.4108/EAI.11-11-2020.2308280>.

⁵⁵ Eka Mustika Riantina, Abdullah Idi, and Mardiah Astuti, "Exploring the Implementation of the Religious Education System in Vocational High Schools: Strategies and Outcomes," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 16, no. 2 (2024): 2234-2243, <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v16i2.5097>.

⁵⁶ A Albantani, M Mustaqim, and Wilda Akmalia, "PENGELOLAAN LEMBAGA PENDIDIKAN ISLAM BERBASIS MODERASI KEAGAMAAN," *Journal of Religious Policy* 1, no. 2 (2023): 121-138, <https://doi.org/10.31330/repo.v1i2.7>.

⁵⁷ M Al-Fikri, Tata Sudrajat, and Witri Cahyati, "The Role of Higher Education in the Religion of the Religious Moderation Program," in *Proceedings of the Brawijaya International Conference on Multidisciplinary Sciences and Technology (BICMST 2020)*, 2020, 154-256, <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.201021.061>.

⁵⁸ Imam Khoirul Ulumuddin et al., "Implementation of Religious Moderation at Wahid Hasyim University," *Islamic Review: Jurnal Riset Dan Kajian Keislaman* 13, no. 1 (2024): 109-24, <https://doi.org/10.35878/islamicreview.v13i1.947>.

⁵⁹ Ahmad Fawaid and Windi Astutik, "Strengthen the Mainstreaming of Religious Moderation in Higher Education Through Certification Agency," *Al Qalam: Jurnal Ilmiah Keagamaan Dan Kemasyarakatan* 17, no. 3 (2023): 2046-62, <https://doi.org/10.35931/aq.v17i3.2195>.

⁶⁰ S Nahriyah et al., "Instilling Religious Values in Shaping the Character of Students at School," *International Journal of Innovative Research in Multidisciplinary Education* 3, no. 3 (2024): 275-81, <https://doi.org/10.58806/ijirme.2024.v3i3n03>.

⁶¹ Alif Achadah, Wahidmurni Wahidmurni, and A Yasin, "Internalization of Character Education Values in Shaping Elementary School Students' Religious Behavior," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 14, no. 4 (2022): 4723-34, <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v14i4.2509>.

the moral principles taught.⁶² However, challenges emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the character formation process was hampered due to limited direct interaction between teachers and students.⁶³

Based on the results of research conducted by Siti Mudzilah, it is stated that Islamic religious learning in elementary schools significantly impacts student learning outcomes, especially in the affective aspect, which connects the cognitive and affective aspects.⁶⁴ The implementation of character education in educational institutions, especially in madrasas, through intracurricular and extracurricular activities that focus on religious values.⁶⁵ Character education in schools aims to improve the quality of education and student learning outcomes by integrating religious values in the curriculum and daily activities.⁶⁶ Extracurricular programs also play an important role in instilling religious character values, such as through Islamic study activities, seminars, and commemorating Islamic holidays.⁶⁷ Building a religious culture in schools can be done by implementing normative power and persuasive and re-educational strategies, accompanied by exemplary approaches and habits, and by giving rewards and punishments.⁶⁸ Islamic religious education in universities also has an important role in forming an honest, polite, and ethical young generation, which will positively contribute to the nation's unity and future.⁶⁹

Religious cultural activities in educational institutions play a crucial role in shaping students' character, including values such as honesty, discipline, and responsibility. For example, at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Kudus, worship habits such as Duha and Zuhr prayers in congregation have positively impacted students' understanding, discipline, and empathy. However, academic pressure and influences from the external environment can be obstacles.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, at Almaarif 01 Singosari Islamic Middle School, religious culture has a significant role in forming honest attitudes in students. Research shows that the stronger the religious culture in the school environment, the higher the level of student honesty.⁷¹ The transformation of school culture that integrates religious values also plays an important role in religious character education. At Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri Sambas, values such as cleanliness, honesty, and discipline are applied in a structured manner in the curriculum and

⁶² Sofyan Sauri et al., "Strengthening Student Character Through Internalization of Religious Values in School," *Al-Iltizam: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 7, no. 2 (2022): 30–43, <https://doi.org/10.33477/alt.v7i2.3369>.

⁶³ N Kholifah and E Fahyuni, "Strengthening Students' Religious Character During the COVID-19 Pandemic," in *ICIGR 2021 ICIGR Conference Proceedings*, 2022, 442–51, <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v7i10.11247>.

⁶⁴ Arjusi Arjusi and Rizki Alfiana, "The Relationship of Religious Character to Student Learning Outcomes in Elementary School," *Journal of Basic Education Research* 4, no. 2 (2023): 70–73, <https://doi.org/10.37251/jber.v4i2.422>.

⁶⁵ Siti Mudzlihah, "CORRELATION OF CHARACTER EDUCATION AND RELIGION IN BUILDING STUDENT HONESTY" 2 (2018).

⁶⁶ N Aisyah and Suratno, "The Cultivation Of The Religious Values As Character Forming Students," *EDUTEC: Journal of Education And Technology* 3, no. 1 (2019): 12–20, <https://doi.org/10.29062/edu.v3i1.2>.

⁶⁷ Rayhan Feyza Alfariqh et al., "Implementation Religious Character Values for Students Through School Extracurricular Programs," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research of Higher Education* 4, no. 3 (2021): 111–23, <https://doi.org/10.24036/ijmurhica.v4i3.87>.

⁶⁸ Nasikhah, Zulkifli, and Nurudin, "BUILDING A RELIGIOUS CULTURE IN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT."

⁶⁹ Gusliana and Nurlela, "ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SHAPING CHARACTER IN HIGHER EDUCATION."

⁷⁰ Muhammad Rijal Aufa, Lintang Kironoratri, and Much Arsyad Fardani, "PERANAN PEMBIASAAN IBADAH DALAM PENGEMBANGAN KARAKTER RELIGIUS SISWA DI SD MUHAMMADIYAH 1 KUDUS," *Didaktik: Jurnal Ilmiah PGSD FKIP Universitas Mandiri* 9, no. 4 (2023): 1339–48, <https://doi.org/10.36989/didaktik.v9i04.1633>.

⁷¹ S Rohmah, Maskuri Maskuri, and Nur Hasan, "PENGARUH BUDAYA RELIGIUS TERHADAP SIKAP JUJUR PESERTA DIDIK SMP ISLAM ALMAARIF 01 SINGOSARI" 4 (2019): 9–17.

student management, producing an intelligent generation in emotional, social, and spiritual aspects.⁷² Meanwhile, in vocational schools, applying Islamic values in the school's organizational culture can increase student discipline, responsibility, and motivation, creating a supportive learning atmosphere.⁷³

The development of religious culture in Islamic elementary schools shows that effective management of religious culture can improve the quality of education and form positive and moral attitudes in students. The involvement of all parties, including parents and the community, is necessary in forming students' religious attitudes. Therefore, applying appropriate methods and strategies is very important to foster a love of God and enthusiasm in carrying out humanitarian duties.⁷⁴ The strategy for developing religious culture in schools such as MAN Pematangsiantar and SMK Negeri 1 Pematangsiantar involves scheduling time for Islamic Religious Education lessons and reading Asmaul Husna. The application of this strategy influences the formation of students' character, including discipline, honesty, and independence.⁷⁵ At SD NU Kepanjen and SDI Global School Malang, internalization of religious character values is carried out through routine activities such as dhuha and noon prayers in congregation, reading the Koran, and cleanliness activities, which help strengthen students' religious behaviour.⁷⁶

Management focusing on religious culture in schools can improve the quality of education by combining religious and cultural values in managerial practices. This impacts increasing work discipline, motivation, and achieving maximum results.⁷⁷ At the high school level, the role of Catholic religious education teachers in shaping students' moral values is very crucial, even though there are challenges in implementing values such as honesty and responsibility.⁷⁸ In general, applying religious values in education serves to shape good individual character and prepare them to become responsible members of society and make positive contributions. Therefore, religious-based character education is an important foundation in the education system, aiming to create a generation that is faithful, knowledgeable, and noble. Besides that, religious cultural activities in educational institutions also play an important role in shaping students' character with integrity, discipline, and a sense of responsibility. Effective implementation of religious culture can improve the quality of education and produce a generation ready to face future challenges with strong moral values.

⁷² Supriyanto, Dede, and Suswanto Heru Purnomo, "Evidence-Based Practice Pengembangan Kemampuan Bersosialisasi Pada Anak Dengan Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)," *Evidence-Based Practice Pengembangan Kemampuan Bersosialisasi Pada Anak Dengan Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)* 3, no. 1 (2017).

⁷³ Fadrie Mahardika Ristianto et al., "Spiritual Frameworks: Enhancing Student Discipline and Motivation through Islamic Organizational Culture," *JUMPA: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan* 4, no. 1 (2023): 55–67, <https://doi.org/10.33650/jumpa.v4i1.8681>.

⁷⁴ Rahmah and Ilham, "Management of Students' Religious Culture."

⁷⁵ Wangsa et al., "RELIGIOUS CULTURE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR SHAPING CHARACTER OF STUDENTS."

⁷⁶ Achadah, Wahidmurni, and Yasin, "Internalization of Character Education Values in Shaping Elementary School Students' Religious Behavior."

⁷⁷ Razaq and Ardiyansyah, "Religious Culture-Based Management in the Focus of Education."

⁷⁸ Paulinus Tibo and Ona Sastri Lumban Tobing, "The Role of Catholic Religious Education Teachers in Developing Moral Values for High School Students: A Case Study at Parbuluan," *American Journal of Arts and Human Science (AJAHS)* 1, no. 4 (2022): 27–32, <https://doi.org/10.54536/ajahs.v1i4.841>.

Challenges and Solutions for Implementing Religious Culture

Religious character education in educational institutions plays an important role in forming a morally sound young generation with adequate knowledge to face life. However, the implementation of religious culture in schools often encounters various obstacles. One of the main challenges is the education system's weaknesses and the lack of clarity of objectives, as identified at SMP Negeri 1 Surakarta. The incompatibility of the curriculum and the lack of an attractive learning atmosphere are obstacles to integrating religious values effectively.⁷⁹ For example, at SDIT Nur Hidayah Surakarta, although school culture such as greetings, religiosity, discipline, cleanliness, and hard work have been implemented, there are still challenges in building religious character and discipline. Some of the obstacles faced include the lack of seriousness of students, the lack of support from parents, and the lack of consistency in implementing rules and regulations.⁸⁰ Meanwhile, at Yadika Baturaja Vocational School, the main challenges faced are limited religious education laboratory facilities and adequate prayer facilities for non-Muslim believers. However, the implementation of religious education is governed by applicable regulations.⁸¹

Research conducted at SD Muhammadiyah Wirobrajan II Yogyakarta revealed that religious programs and adequate facilities play an important role in shaping students' religious character. However, the main challenge faced is the surrounding environmental conditions, which are less supportive.⁸² At SMA BPI 2 Bandung, although the Islamic religious education curriculum management has focused on building a religious culture, challenges arise from the school environment, which does not fully support these efforts.⁸³ At MIN 3 West Aceh, implementing character education strategies through religious school activities faces various challenges. These obstacles include the multiple roles carried out by teachers, so that activities do not run optimally, limited supporting facilities, and varying levels of student motivation.⁸⁴ Another example, at SMP Negeri 1 Sambu Boyolali, the religious character education approach covers various aspects, such as classroom learning activities, daily school culture, extracurricular activities, and involvement in the home and community. Some religious values emphasized include honesty, tolerance, politeness, and responsibility. However, several challenges are faced, including family and environmental factors, as well as the negative impacts of the internet.⁸⁵ Active participation from all parties, including parents

⁷⁹ Tri Ulfa Oktaviani and Zaenal Abidin, "Implementation Of Religious Values Through Islamic Education Learning At State Middle School 1 Surakarta," *AL-WIJDÂN Journal of Islamic Education Studies* 9, no. 1 (2024): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.58788/alwijdn.v9i1.3699>.

⁸⁰ D Hastuti and M Risminawati, "Implementasi Budaya Sekolah Dalam Menanamkan Karakter Religius Dan Disiplin Pada Siswa Kelas Rendah Di SDIT Nur Hidayah Surakarta" (Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, 2019).

⁸¹ Riantina, Idi, and Astuti, "Exploring the Implementation of the Religious Education System in Vocational High Schools: Strategies and Outcomes."

⁸² Lisa Retnasari et al., "Cultivating Religious Character through School Culture," *International Journal of Educational Qualitative Quantitative Research* 2, no. 1 (2023): 27–34, <https://doi.org/10.58418/ijeqr.v2i1.29>.

⁸³ Mulyasa and Aryani, "Developing Religious Culture In School."

⁸⁴ Hasnadi Hasnadi and Cut Shella Mei Santi, "The Implementation of Character Education Through Religious Activities in the School," *FITRAH: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 7, no. 2 (2021): 215–28, <https://doi.org/10.24952/fitrah.v7i2.4434>.

⁸⁵ Ayunia Dekasari and S Mohamad Ali, "Strategi Pendidikan Karakter Religius Di SMP Negeri 1 Sambu Boyolali Tahun Pelajaran 2018/2019" (UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH SURAKARTA, 2019).

and the community, is necessary to shape students' religious attitudes. However, this involvement often does not reach optimal levels.⁸⁶

Other research conducted in elementary schools revealed that religious character education can be formed through routine practices such as congregational prayers and prayers before starting lessons. However, a lack of awareness among some students and differences in abilities are the main challenges.⁸⁷ At the madrasa level, various programs such as congregational prayers, tahfidz Qur'an, and distribution of anti-corruption posters have been implemented. However, efforts to increase effective communication between schools and parents still need to be made to overcome various obstacles.⁸⁸ Implementing a religious culture in educational institutions is a complex challenge, but it is important to shape students' moral character. The strategy for implementing religious moderation in Islamic education management shows that structured steps and a planned approach can integrate the values of moderation in today's diversity. The main programs implemented include the preparation of an Islamic religious education curriculum based on moderation values, moderation training for educators, and activities to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students.⁸⁹

Apart from that, religious extracurricular activities such as reading and writing the Koran, lecture training, and group dhikr at SMA Negeri 2 Palopo show that the integration of religious activities outside of class hours can enrich students' learning experiences and play a role in forming a comprehensive Islamic character.⁹⁰ Meanwhile, at SMA Negeri 3 Tebo, learning Islamic religious education with a multicultural approach aims to strengthen harmony among students by emphasizing the importance of diversity awareness.⁹¹ Implementing religious character education at MI, for example, includes congregational prayers, reciting the Qur'an, and installing anti-corruption posters. Various factors, both supporting and hindering, both from within and outside the school, influence the implementation of this program. The solutions implemented include strengthening communication between the school and parents and regularly evaluating ongoing programs.⁹²

Religious culture in schools can be formed through normative power, persuasive and re-educational strategies using exemplary approaches, habituation, giving rewards, and applying punishment. This approach aims to shape students' character with al-Karimah morals through

⁸⁶ Rahmah and Ilham, "Management of Students' Religious Culture."

⁸⁷ Bela and Santosa, "Implementation of Primary School Students' Religious Character Through School Culture."

⁸⁸ Nurlaeli Nurlaeli, Mardiah Astuti, and Tutut Handayani, "Implementation of Religious Character Education in An Understanding of Noncorruption Education in Elementary School / Implementasi Pendidikan Karakter Religius Dalam Upaya Pemahaman Pendidikan Anti Korupsi Di MI," *Journal AL-MUDARRIS* 3, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.32478/al-mudarris.v3i1.390>.

⁸⁹ M Shalahuddin et al., "Strategy for Implementing Religious Moderation in Islamic Education Management," *Journal Corner of Education, Linguistics, and Literature* 4, no. 1 (2024): 47–55, <https://doi.org/10.54012/jcell.v4i1.311>.

⁹⁰ Hasbar Hasbar, Misbahullah Misbahullah, and Ahmad Ghiyats Fawwaz, "Improving the Quality of Islamic Religious Education Learning through Religious Extracurricular Activities," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam Indonesia (JPAIL)* 5, no. 3 (2024): 91~99, <https://doi.org/10.37251/jpaii.v5i3.1137>.

⁹¹ Siti Patimah, "Learning Islamic Religious Education with Multicultural Insights in Strengthening Harmony among Students," *Journal of Educational Research* 1, no. 1 (2022): 101–22, <https://doi.org/10.56436/jer.v1i1.24>.

⁹² Nurlaeli, Astuti, and Handayani, "Implementation of Religious Character Education in An Understanding of Noncorruption Education in Elementary School / Implementasi Pendidikan Karakter Religius Dalam Upaya Pemahaman Pendidikan Anti Korupsi Di MI."

national education goals.⁹³ Another example is at MAN Pematangsiantar and SMK Negeri 1 Pematangsiantar, where religious culture is developed through counseling, involvement of student organizations, strengthening behavior, and evaluation and control. This impacts the character of more disciplined, religious, honest, and independent students.⁹⁴

Although various efforts exist to build a religious culture in educational institutions, challenges such as a lack of environmental support, limited facilities, and a lack of consistency in program implementation are still the main obstacles. To realize effective religious character education, collaboration is needed from various parties, including teachers, parents, and the community.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the management strategies used to develop religious culture within educational institutions to shape student character. It contributes theoretically and practically by emphasizing the role of integrated religious values in forming ethical, disciplined, and socially responsible individuals. The research offers a novel perspective by consolidating diverse approaches ranging from school leadership, curriculum management, to stakeholder collaboration into a cohesive model for character education. Theoretically, this study enriches the discourse on Islamic education management by highlighting how religious culture management can serve as a transformative framework for character formation. Practically, it offers applicable strategies such as role modeling, routine religious activities, and active engagement with parents and communities to reinforce religious values in everyday school life. There are three significant implications for stakeholders. First, school leaders are urged to adopt visionary leadership that embeds religious values in institutional culture. Second, teachers should act as consistent role models to reinforce moral behavior. Third, policymakers and curriculum developers must consider integrating religious moderation and values across subjects and extracurricular programs. Despite its contributions, this study is limited by its reliance on secondary data from literature sources, which may not capture recent changes in the field or variations across institutional contexts.

Additionally, it does not incorporate empirical validation through field observation or stakeholder interviews. Future research should adopt mixed-method approaches, combining literature review with field-based case studies, interviews, or action research. Longitudinal designs can also be employed to evaluate religious culture programs' sustainability and long-term effects across diverse educational settings. In closing, building a religious culture through effective management in educational institutions is vital in preparing ethically grounded graduates. These individuals are academically competent and equipped with strong moral integrity and a commitment to contributing positively to a pluralistic society grounded in Islamic ethical principles.

⁹³ Nasikhah, Zulkifli, and Nurudin, "BUILDING A RELIGIOUS CULTURE IN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT."

⁹⁴ Wangsa et al., "RELIGIOUS CULTURE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR SHAPING CHARACTER OF STUDENTS."

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