

Implementation Of Islamic Religious Education Through Religious Culture In Schools

Indra Iskandar¹, Fitriyani Kosasih²

Universitas Islam Nusantara Bandung, Indonesia^{1&2}

indraiskandar@uninus.ac.id, fitriyanikosasih@uninus.ac.id

Abstract: This study investigates the implementation of Islamic Religious Education through religious culture in two public schools with distinct characteristics: SMAN 9 Garut (general senior high school) and SMKN 7 Garut (vocational high school). Employing a qualitative, descriptive case study approach, the research explores how religious culture is developed, its supporting and inhibiting factors, and its impact on students' religious character. Findings reveal that both schools utilize routine, incidental, and daily cultural programs, demonstrating similarities in execution while adapting to their specific contexts. Success factors include strong leadership commitment and active IRE teacher involvement, whereas challenges stem from varying student motivation and limited non-IRE teacher engagement. Notably, SMKN 7 Garut faces additional constraints due to facility limitations and demanding vocational schedules. The study concludes that religious culture significantly shapes students' character across spiritual, social, academic, and vocational dimensions, offering an adaptive model for IRE integration and practical recommendations for educational administrators.

Keyword: Islamic Religious Education; Religious Culture; Character Building; Public Schools.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji implementasi Pendidikan Agama Islam melalui budaya religius di dua sekolah negeri dengan karakteristik berbeda: SMAN 9 Garut (sekolah menengah atas umum) dan SMKN 7 Garut (sekolah menengah kejuruan). Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan studi kasus deskriptif, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana budaya religius dikembangkan, faktor pendukung dan penghambatnya, serta dampaknya terhadap karakter religius siswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kedua sekolah menerapkan program rutin, insidental, dan budaya keseharian, dengan kesamaan dalam pelaksanaan, namun beradaptasi dengan konteks spesifik masing-masing. Faktor keberhasilan meliputi komitmen kepemimpinan yang kuat dan keterlibatan aktif guru PAI, sementara tantangan berasal dari perbedaan motivasi siswa dan keterlibatan guru non-PAI yang terbatas. Khususnya, SMKN 7 Garut menghadapi kendala tambahan karena keterbatasan fasilitas dan jadwal vokasional yang padat. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa budaya religius secara signifikan membentuk karakter siswa di dimensi spiritual, sosial, akademik, dan vokasional, menawarkan model adaptif untuk integrasi PAI serta rekomendasi praktis bagi pengelola pendidikan.

Kata kunci : Pendidikan Agama Islam; Budaya Religius; Pembentukan Karakter; Sekolah Umum.

Corresponding Author:

Indra Iskandar

Universitas Islam Nusantara, Indonesia; indraiskandar@uninus.ac.id

Introduction

Islamic Religious Education in schools is not only understood as a process of transferring knowledge about Islamic teachings, but further as an effort to form character and internalize religious values in the lives of students (Lestari et al., 2025; Suyatno et al., 2020). According to Zakiah (1992), Islamic Religious Education is education carried out based on Islamic teachings (Lestari et al., 2025; Yusri et al., 2023). The ultimate goal of PAI learning is a comprehensive understanding, appreciation, and practice of Islamic teachings as something that has been believed by students (Lestari et al., 2025; Marini et al., 2018). Understanding, appreciation, and practice of Islamic teachings will build the foundation for their worldview aimed at salvation and welfare in this world and the hereafter (Lestari et al., 2025; Nurhayati, 2022).

The emerging reality shows that although PAI has been taught formally in class, various problems are still found, such as student behavior that does not reflect religious values, low discipline in worship, and limited appreciation of religious teachings in daily life (Amaly et al., 2023; Herawati et al., 2022). This academic concern raises an important question about how school strategies can present PAI not merely as a subject, but as a living religious culture that shapes the school climate (Herawati et al., 2022; Jumahir et al., 2023).

Speaking of creating a religious culture in schools means talking about the process of creating a culture based on religious values (Fatimah et al., 2020; Yasir et al., 2022). Religious culture is the totality of human life patterns in society that are born and transmitted together from thoughts, actions, and habits grounded in faith and belief in God, so that all thoughts and actions are always based on faith and will form noble morals that are reflected in personal and behavioral aspects (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2025; Ubabuddin et al., 2021). Thus, what is meant by religious culture in schools is the totality of life patterns of school personnel that are born and transmitted together, starting from the principal, educators, education staff, students, and stakeholders, grounded in faith in God, so that the thoughts, actions, and habits of school personnel are always based on faith and reflected in daily personal and behavior (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2025; Rosadi et al., 2025).

Many factors can influence the creation of religious culture in schools, including the ability of school managers, school policies, and the active role of all school personnel in providing experiences and habituating students both outwardly

and inwardly (Halima et al., 2021; Lestari et al., 2025). This condition will be easily realized if supported by a religious educational environment (Herawati et al., 2022; Karwadi & Indrawan, 2023). Because the environment plays a very important role in shaping the attitudes and behavior of each individual, including in forming religious culture (Hidayat & Janan, 2023; Lestari et al., 2025).

School religious culture is a solution to improve negative character issues occurring in this nation (Abbas et al., 2021; Herawati et al., 2022). School religious culture has a significant contribution because with the religious culture applied in schools, there will be value inculcation, role modeling, and preparation of young generations to be independent by teaching and facilitating responsible moral decision-making and other life skills (Ismail et al., 2021; Lestari et al., 2025). In other words, the implementation of religious culture in schools is an effort to internalize religious values into students (Lestari et al., 2025; Qodri et al., 2022).

Religious culture aims to improve the quality of education delivery and outcomes in schools, directed towards achieving the formation of students' character and noble morals in a holistic, integrated, and balanced manner, in accordance with graduate competency standards (Fadillah et al., 2025; Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2025). Through religious culture, it is expected that students can independently improve and use their knowledge, examine and internalize, as well as personalize values and noble morals so that they are manifested in daily behavior (Kaharuddin et al., 2025; Lestari et al., 2025).

School religious culture programs need to be planned by involving all related parties so that the goals to be achieved gain mutual agreement, thus, the character formation of students receives support from all parties (Aziz et al., 2021; Herawati et al., 2022). This is done to accommodate suggestions, opinions, and needs in program planning implementation (Nuryana, 2019). The existence of religious culture in educational institutions is felt to have a very important role and becomes one of the ways that can be used to support the effectiveness of religious education (Hidayah et al., 2022; Yasir et al., 2022).

A number of previous studies have highlighted the importance of religious culture in education. For instance, Fathurrohman (2015) emphasizes that religious culture functions as a medium for the internalization of Islamic values in schools. Setyawati and Mulyo (2021) found that strengthening religious culture can enhance students' discipline in religious worship. Fauzi, Sari, and Junaidi (2025) (Fauzi et al., 2024) demonstrate that habituation through routine religious programs, such as congregational prayers and Qur'an recitation (tadarus), is able to consistently instill religious attitudes among students. Meanwhile, Dewi (2025) (Dewi, 2024) underscores that the successful implementation of religious culture is strongly influenced by the support of school principals and the involvement of teachers.

However, most of these studies tend to emphasize formal religious programs or activities, without comprehensively exploring how Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is integrated into the broader school culture, particularly in public schools. This gap indicates the need for further investigation.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on examining the implementation of Islamic Religious Education through religious culture in two public schools with different characteristics, namely SMAN 9 Garut, as a general senior high school and SMKN 7 Garut, as a vocational high school. This study not only documents ritual religious activities but also analyzes how religious culture is developed, the supporting and inhibiting factors, and its impact on the formation of students' religious character. Thus, this research offers a comprehensive perspective on the integration of PAI values into school culture, a topic that remains relatively underexplored in the context of public schools.

The expected outcome of this study is the identification of a model for implementing Islamic Religious Education based on religious culture that can serve as a reference for other schools in strengthening students' religious character education. In addition, this research aims to contribute academically to the development of studies on Islamic Religious Education in public schools and to provide practical recommendations for educational administrators in designing more effective and sustainable religious culture strategies.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach aimed at understanding and interpreting social phenomena in depth based on the perspectives of the research subjects. Qualitative research emphasizes processes, meanings, and the understanding of naturally occurring realities, and it produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words derived from people and observed behaviors (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Moleong, 2017). In qualitative research, the researcher acts as the primary instrument who is directly involved in data collection and analysis in the field.

The research design used is descriptive with a case study approach. Descriptive research aims to systematically, factually, and accurately describe the facts and characteristics of a particular phenomenon (Nazir, 2014). Meanwhile, a case study is a research strategy used to examine a phenomenon intensively, in depth, and holistically within its real-life context, whether at the level of individuals, groups, or institutions (Yin, 2014). This approach is considered relevant to the objectives of the study, namely to contextually describe the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) through religious culture at SMAN 9 Garut and

SMKN 7 Garut, so that the phenomenon under investigation can be comprehensively understood.

The research setting involves the school communities of SMAN 9 Garut and SMKN 7 Garut. The research subjects include school principals, Islamic Religious Education teachers, other educators involved in religious activities, and students. The selection of participants was conducted through purposive sampling, namely the determination of informants based on specific considerations, particularly their direct involvement and knowledge related to the implementation of religious culture in schools (Sugiyono, 2016). Data collection techniques were carried out using three main methods. First, participatory observation was conducted to examine religious activities in schools, such as congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation (Moleong, 2017). The research procedure was carried out through several stages: (1) the preparation stage, which included the development of research instruments and the acquisition of research permits; (2) the field data collection stage through observation, interviews, and documentation; (3) the data credibility stage through verification and triangulation; and (4) the data analysis and interpretation stage based on the research findings.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three concurrent activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data validity was strengthened through source and method triangulation. Triangulation is understood as an effort to examine the credibility of data by utilizing multiple sources, techniques, and perspectives, enabling the phenomenon under study to be understood more accurately and ensuring a high level of scientific trustworthiness (Denzin, 1978). Accordingly, the findings on the implementation of Islamic Religious Education through religious culture at SMAN 9 Garut and SMKN 7 Garut can be academically justified.

Result and Discussion

Result

Implementation of Islamic Religious Education through Religious Culture in Schools Forms of Implementation

The implementation of Islamic Religious Education through religious culture at SMAN 9 Garut and SMKN 7 Garut demonstrates similarities in the execution structure, divided into three main forms: routine programs, incidental programs, and daily culture. This finding aligns with Fathurrohman's view, which explains that religious culture in schools can be realized through routine activities, incidental activities, and the habituation of religious values in daily life, consistently carried out to shape students' character.

In terms of routine programs, SMAN 9 Garut has structured religious activities categorized as daily and weekly. Daily activities include collective prayers, Al-Qur'an

tadarus or recitation of Asmaul Husna, and congregational Dhuhr prayer at the school mosque. Weekly activities include congregational Dhuha prayer, collective dhikr, Al-Qur'an tadarus, Friday infaq, and congregational Friday prayer routinely conducted within the school environment. Meanwhile, SMKN 7 Garut also conducts daily religious activities such as congregational Dhuha prayer in the field, dhikr, Al-Qur'an tadarus, and prayers before and after lessons. The difference lies in the inability to hold congregational Friday prayer at SMKN 7 Garut due to limited mosque facilities, so routine religious activities are more adapted to the vocational school's conditions.

Based on interviews with PAI teachers and school principals, these routine activities are seen as an effective way to consistently shape students' religious character. A PAI teacher at SMAN 9 Garut stated, "This habituation not only makes students accustomed to rituals but also forms habits of discipline and a sense of togetherness among students." The principal of SMKN 7 Garut added, "Although we do not have adequate mosque facilities for Friday prayer, we still strive to create a religious atmosphere through religious activities adapted to vocational school conditions." Interview 2025. Some students also expressed that daily activities like tadarus and collective prayers help them feel calmer and more prepared for lessons. This finding aligns with research results showing that habituation of religious activities in schools plays an important role in sustainably shaping students' personality and religious character [Setyawati and Mulyo Dewi].

For incidental programs, both schools conduct various religious activities at certain moments, such as commemorations of Islamic holidays, the Prophet Muhammad SAW's Maulid event, Isra Mi'raj, and Short-Term Pesantren during Ramadan. SMAN 9 Garut holds Hijriah New Year activities with various Islamic competitions such as calligraphy, lectures, and Al-Qur'an memorization. Meanwhile, SMKN 7 Garut has its own distinctive feature with inter-class religious competitions such as tahfidz, tilawah, and short lectures (kultum).

Interview results with religious activity committees and students indicate that these incidental activities serve as important moments in strengthening Islamic brotherhood (ukhuwah Islamiyah) and exploring students' religious potential. A committee member at SMAN 9 Garut stated, "Activities like the Prophet's Maulid and Short-Term Pesantren are effective means to deepen religious understanding and foster a spirit of togetherness." Meanwhile, a teacher at SMKN 7 Garut said, "We see that inter-class religious competitions can ignite students' enthusiasm to participate and build their confidence in religious fields." Interview 2025.

Daily culture in both schools also shows similarities in instilling religious values, such as habituation of greetings, politeness, and maintaining school environmental cleanliness. SMAN 9 Garut emphasizes creating an overall religious atmosphere through discipline, ethics, and Islamic brotherhood in the school environment. Meanwhile, SMKN 7 Garut integrates religious habituation with vocational characteristics through instilling responsibility in maintaining practice rooms and classrooms, wearing Muslim attire every Friday, and habituating polite behavior in vocational activities.

From interviews with students and teachers, it is evident that this daily culture greatly influences changes in students' attitudes. One student from SMAN 9 Garut mentioned, "At

first, we were shy to greet teachers, but now it has become a habit.” A teacher from SMKN 7 Garut added, “Through this daily culture, students learn responsibility, discipline, and respectful attitudes, both in classrooms and practice workshops.” Interview 2025. To clarify the comparison of the implementation of Islamic Religious Education through religious culture at SMAN 9 Garut and SMKN 7 Garut, the following table summarizes the forms of execution of routine programs, incidental programs, and daily culture in both schools.

Table 1. Findings on Forms of PAI Implementation through Religious Culture

Implementation Aspect	SMAN 9 Garut	SMKN 7 Garut
Routine Programs	Daily: joint prayers, Qur’an recitation/Asmaul Husna, congregational Dhuhr prayer. Weekly: Dhuha prayer, dhikr, Qur’an recitation, Friday charity (infaq), congregational Friday prayer.	Daily: Dhuha prayer in the school yard, dhikr, Qur’an recitation, joint prayers before and after lessons. Does not conduct congregational Friday prayer due to limited facilities.
Incidental Programs	Commemoration of Islamic holy days (PHBI), Mawlid of the Prophet, Isra Mi’raj, Ramadan Islamic boarding activities. Islamic New Year activities with competitions such as calligraphy, preaching, and Qur’an memorization.	Commemoration of Islamic holy days (PHBI), Mawlid of the Prophet, Isra Mi’raj, Ramadan Islamic boarding activities. Inter-class religious competitions: tahfidz, tilawah, short sermons (kultum) with vocational characteristics.
Daily Culture	Habituation of greetings, politeness, and environmental cleanliness. Emphasis on a comprehensive religious atmosphere through discipline, ethics, and Islamic brotherhood (ukhuwah Islamiyah).	Habituation of greetings, politeness, and cleanliness. Cultivation of responsibility in maintaining practice rooms and classrooms. Wearing Muslim attire every Friday and maintaining propriety in vocational activities.

Based on the table above, it is evident that both schools have a similar implementation structure in three main aspects, namely routine programs, incidental programs, and daily culture. Although there are similarities in the form of activities, their implementation shows adjustments to the characteristics and conditions of each school. SMAN 9 Garut stands out in forming an overall religious atmosphere through structured activities and adequate mosque facilities, whereas SMKN 7 Garut places greater emphasis on adapting religious activities to the vocational context and available infrastructure conditions.

Supporting Factors and Inhibiting Factors

From the perspective of supporting factors, both schools share similarities in terms of leadership support from the school principals and the active role of Islamic Religious Education teachers. Interview 2025. This finding aligns with Dewi, who emphasizes that the success of religious culture implementation in schools is greatly influenced by structural

support from leadership, as the principal plays the primary role in creating a religious climate in the school environment.

At SMAN 9 Garut, the success of implementation is also heavily influenced by the availability of facilities and infrastructure, particularly the representative school mosque that serves as the center for religious activities. A PAI teacher stated, "The school mosque is not just a place of worship, but also a center for nurturing students' religious character through various religious activities." Interview 2025. This finding aligns with the research results of Fauzi, Sari, and Junaidi, which show that the presence of religious facilities such as mosques and spiritual activity rooms supports the habituation of religious behavior and increases student participation in routine religious activities.

At SMKN 7 Garut, interview results with vocational teachers and Rohis advisors indicate that the impact of religious culture implementation is evident not only in spiritual and social aspects but also in vocational aspects. A vocational teacher conveyed, "The students have become more honest and responsible during practice. They also started applying religious values such as discipline and cooperation when working in the workshop." A student added, "Religious activities make us calmer and more focused, so during practice, we can be more serious and not fool around." Interview 2025. This aligns with research findings concluding that active participation of PAI teachers and student religious organizations can strengthen religious culture in schools even under limited facility conditions.

Meanwhile, inhibiting factors in both schools also share similarities, particularly differences in religious motivation among students and the lack of involvement of non-PAI teachers in supervising and reinforcing religious culture. A PAI teacher at SMAN 9 Garut mentioned, "There are still some students who lack enthusiasm for religious activities, especially those from family backgrounds that provide less support." Interview 2025. This condition aligns with findings stating that family background significantly influences student participation in school religious activities.

SMKN 7 Garut faces additional challenges in the form of limited mosque facilities and the dense vocational practice schedule that often conflicts with religious activities. One teacher at SMKN 7 explained, "Students often struggle to participate in religious activities due to their very packed practice schedules. We have to find alternative times to ensure activities continue." Interview 2025. These time and schedule constraints were also identified in a study that found the dense agenda of vocational schools often becomes a hindering factor for the optimal continuity of religious programs. Variations in students' family backgrounds also affect their level of participation and consistency in following religious activities, as expressed by one student: "If at home they're not accustomed to routine worship, sometimes at school they follow along reluctantly." Interview 2025.

Thus, the supporting and inhibiting factors of religious culture implementation at SMAN 9 and SMKN 7 Garut demonstrate that program success is not only determined by structural aspects such as facilities and policies but also by cultural and personal factors of students as well as the involvement of the entire school community. This is consistent with public policy implementation theory according to Edwards III. Support from the principal,

PAI and non-PAI teachers, and policies from the vice principal for student affairs can be included in the resource and bureaucratic structure aspects, while student motivation and school community involvement reflect the implementer disposition factor.

Table 2. Findings on Supporting Factors and Inhibiting Factors of PAI Implementation Through Religious Culture

Aspect	SMAN 9 Garut	SMKN 7 Garut
Supporting Factors	Support from school principal leadership. Active role of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers. School policies supporting religious culture. Availability of facilities and infrastructure (a representative mosque as the center of religious activities).	Support from school principal leadership. Active role of PAI teachers and Rohis (Islamic student organization). School policies supporting religious culture. Adaptability to facility limitations.
Inhibiting Factors	Differences in students' religious motivation. Limited involvement of non-PAI teachers in supervision and reinforcement of religious culture. Diverse family backgrounds influencing student participation.	Differences in students' religious motivation. Limited involvement of non-PAI teachers. Limited mosque facilities. Dense vocational practice schedules often conflicting with religious activities. Diverse family backgrounds of students.

Based on the table above, it is evident that both schools share similarities in terms of leadership support, the role of PAI teachers, and school policies as supporting factors, as well as challenges related to students' religious motivation and the involvement of non-PAI teachers as inhibiting factors. However, SMKN 7 Garut faces additional constraints in the form of limited mosque facilities and a dense vocational practice schedule that requires adaptive strategies in implementing religious activities.

Impact of Religious Culture Implementation

The impact of religious culture implementation in both schools is significantly evident in the formation of students' character. Based on interview results with PAI teachers and students at SMAN 9 Garut, religious culture influences the increase in routine worship habits, polite manners, social concern, discipline, and the creation of a conducive learning atmosphere. A PAI teacher stated, "After the religious program has run consistently, we have seen real changes in students' discipline and politeness, especially in respecting teachers and fellow students." A student also shared, "We have become accustomed to congregational prayers, greeting teachers when meeting them, and being neater in following school rules." Interview 2025. This demonstrates that religious culture not only impacts the spiritual aspect but also comprehensively shapes students' social character and ethics.

At SMKN 7 Garut, interview results with vocational teachers and Rohis advisors show that the impact of religious culture implementation is evident not only in spiritual and social aspects but also in vocational aspects. A vocational teacher conveyed, "The students have become more honest and responsible during practice. They also started applying religious values such as discipline and cooperation when working in the workshop." A student added, "Religious activities make us calmer and more focused, so during practice, we can

be more serious and not fool around.” Interview 2025. Thus, the implementation of religious culture at SMKN 7 Garut also strengthens students' work ethic, honesty, and responsibility in vocational practice activities, in addition to habituating them to worship and behave religiously in daily life. Previous research also indicates that the implementation of religious culture in schools is effective in fostering students' religious character, especially through worship habituation, teacher role modeling, and creating a conducive religious environment. The same is found in other research that the implementation of religious values in school life can provide tangible impacts on changes in students' attitudes and behavior in the long term.

In general, both schools demonstrate that the implementation of religious culture serves as an effective instrument in forming students' character, both in religious, social, academic, and vocational aspects. The principal of SMAN 9 Garut emphasized, “Religious culture is the main foundation for students' character formation. This is not merely an additional activity, but part of our education system.” Interview 2025.

The differences lie in the conditions of facilities and infrastructure, institutional characteristics, and the form of adaptation of religious programs to the school environment. SMAN 9 Garut emphasizes a systematic program structure with complete facility support, while SMKN 7 Garut develops a contextual religious culture approach suited to vocational school conditions. Despite differences in implementation, both demonstrate success in sustainably forming students' religious character through planned programs, daily culture, and support from the entire school community. To clarify the comparison of the impact of religious culture implementation at SMAN 9 Garut and SMKN 7 Garut, the following table summarizes various aspects of impact as well as differences in religious program approaches in both schools.

Table 3. Findings on the Impact of Religious Culture Implementation

Aspect	SMAN 9 Garut	SMKN 7 Garut
Spiritual Impact	Increased habits of routine worship and the creation of a religious atmosphere.	Students become accustomed to practicing worship and religious behavior in daily life.
Social Impact	Improvement in politeness and social awareness.	Increased social awareness as well as honesty and responsibility in daily interactions.
Academic Impact	Improved discipline and the creation of a conducive learning atmosphere.	Reflected in the application of religious values during learning and practical activities.
Program Approach	Emphasizes a systematic program structure supported by complete facilities and infrastructure, including mosque facilities.	A contextual religious culture approach adapted to the conditions of a vocational school.
General Outcomes	Sustainable development of students' religious, social, and academic character.	Sustainable development of students' religious, social, academic, and vocational character.

From the table above, it can be seen that the implementation of religious culture in both schools equally contributes significantly to the formation of students' character, both in religious, social, academic, and vocational aspects. Although there are differences in approaches and school conditions, both have succeeded in creating an environment that supports the sustainable development of religious character.

Discussion

The findings of this study consistently affirm that religious culture plays a central role as an instrument for internalizing Islamic Religious Education values in schools, aligning with Fathurrohman's view (Fathurrohman, 2015) which emphasizes the function of religious culture as a medium for instilling Islamic values. Observations at SMAN 9 Garut indicate that the formation of a religious atmosphere is achieved through structured routine programs supported by adequate mosque facilities, which Fauzi, Sari, and Junaidi (Fauzi et al., 2024) consider effective in instilling religious attitudes through habitual religious activities. On the other hand, SMKN 7 Garut demonstrates an adaptation of religious culture to its vocational context, which is relevant to the identified research gap in your Literature Review, highlighting the need for further study exploring the integration of IRE into broader school culture, especially in public schools with distinct characteristics like vocational schools.

The successful implementation in both schools is significantly influenced by the commitment of leaders, the active role of IRE teachers, and school policy support. This is consistent with Dewi's findings (Dewi, 2024), which state that the implementation of religious culture heavily relies on structural support from leaders and teacher involvement. The mosque at SMAN 9 Garut, as a representative facility, serves as a center for religious character development, supporting Fauzi, Sari, and Junaidi's argument (Fauzi et al., 2024) about the importance of religious facilities in fostering religious behavior. Meanwhile, at SMKN 7 Garut, despite limited facilities, collaboration between IRE teachers and the Rohis organization is the primary mechanism, demonstrating adaptive strategies in overcoming constraints relevant to the vocational school context.

Obstacles to implementation, such as differences in students' religious motivation, lack of involvement from non-IRE teachers, time constraints, and facilities, were also revealed in this study. Specifically at SMKN 7 Garut, the demanding schedule of vocational practices often clashes with religious activities, underscoring the need for flexibility in program implementation. These findings highlight that the effectiveness of religious culture requires continuous adaptation and comprehensive support, as well as the involvement of all stakeholders. Furthermore, the variation in students' family backgrounds also affects their participation, indicating the complexity of factors influencing implementation.

Significant differences between SMAN 9 Garut and SMKN 7 Garut lie in (a) organizational structure and facilities, and (b) curriculum context (general vs. vocational). SMAN 9 Garut stands out with a comprehensive religious atmosphere due to facility support and a more structured curriculum rhythm. Conversely, SMKN 7 Garut emphasizes relevance to the vocational context, adapting religious activities to the dynamics of the vocational curriculum. This comparison, especially in public schools with distinct characteristics, forms the core novelty of this study as explained in the Literature Review, as previous research tends to explore this aspect less comprehensively.

The impact of religious culture implementation in both schools is proven significant in shaping students' character. The observed increase in regular worship habits and polite behavior in both schools has the potential to enhance social cohesion and a sense of belonging to the school environment. This aligns with Setyawati and Mulyo (Setyawati & Mulyo, 2022) who found that strengthening religious culture can improve student discipline in worship. Furthermore, at SMKN 7 Garut, this impact extends to vocational aspects, where students demonstrate increased honesty and responsibility during practical work, and apply religious values such as discipline and cooperation. This shows that religious culture not only shapes spiritual and social character but also contributes to work ethic and professionalism, which is a significant contribution of this study in expanding the understanding of the impact of religious culture in vocational school settings.

Overall, this research enriches the existing literature by demonstrating how Islamic Religious Education can be integrated as a living culture in public schools with diverse characteristics, an area previously less comprehensively explored. This study successfully presents an adaptive model for implementing IRE based on religious culture and provides practical recommendations for educational managers in designing more effective and sustainable religious culture strategies.

Conclusion

This study meticulously examined the implementation of Islamic Religious Education through religious culture at SMAN 9 Garut and SMKN 7 Garut, revealing its profound role in internalizing religious values and shaping student character. Consistent with existing literature (Fathurrohman, 2015), the findings affirm that religious culture acts as a vital medium for this internalization, manifesting through structured routine programs, incidental activities, and daily habits. A key contribution of this research lies in its comparative analysis of two public schools with distinct characteristics a general high school (SMAN 9 Garut) and a vocational high school (SMKN 7 Garut) addressing a gap in previous studies that often overlook the broader integration of IRE into diverse school cultures. SMAN 9 Garut

showcased a systematic, facility-supported approach, whereas SMKN 7 Garut demonstrated an adaptive, vocational-contextualized implementation, successfully navigating limitations such as the absence of a dedicated mosque for Friday prayers by leveraging teacher collaboration and student organizations. The success of these implementations was consistently linked to strong leadership commitment, the active involvement of IRE teachers, and supportive school policies (Dewi, 2024). Conversely, common challenges included variations in student religious motivation and insufficient engagement from non-IRE teachers, with SMKN 7 Garut facing additional hurdles due to facility constraints and a demanding vocational timetable.

Crucially, the study found that religious culture significantly impacts students' character development across spiritual, social, and, particularly in vocational settings, professional dimensions. The observed enhancements in worship discipline, politeness, and, at SMKN 7 Garut, honesty and responsibility during practical work, underscore religious culture's capacity to foster not only spiritual growth but also valuable work ethics and social cohesion (Setyawati & Mulyo, 2022). This dual impact, especially in a vocational context, enriches the understanding of religious education's far-reaching benefits. In conclusion, this research enriches the academic discourse on IRE by providing a comprehensive, comparative perspective on its implementation as a living culture in varied public school environments. It offers an adaptive model for integrating IRE values and furnishes practical recommendations for educational administrators to cultivate more effective and sustainable religious culture strategies.

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