

Islamic Religious Education Teacher Professionalism in Building a Religious School Environment: A Literature Review of Role Modeling, Religious Habituation, and School Culture

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Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis profesionalisme guru Pendidikan Agama Islam dalam membangun lingkungan sekolah religius melalui pendekatan kajian pustaka naratif. Kajian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh pentingnya peran guru PAI dalam mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai Islam ke dalam pembelajaran, keteladanan, pembiasaan keagamaan, budaya sekolah, dan kolaborasi dengan keluarga. Data penelitian bersumber dari literatur ilmiah yang relevan dengan profesionalisme guru PAI, pendidikan karakter religius, keteladanan guru, pembiasaan keagamaan, budaya sekolah religius, dan pembentukan karakter peserta didik. Analisis dilakukan melalui analisis isi kualitatif dan sintesis tematik. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa profesionalisme guru PAI tidak hanya berkaitan dengan penguasaan materi dan kompetensi pedagogik, tetapi juga mencakup integritas moral, kematangan spiritual, keteladanan, serta kemampuan membangun kultur sekolah yang bernilai islami. Keteladanan guru memperkuat internalisasi nilai; pembiasaan keagamaan membentuk perilaku religius secara berulang, sedangkan budaya sekolah melembagakan nilai-nilai Islam dalam aturan, interaksi, dan praktik keseharian. Kajian ini menegaskan bahwa lingkungan sekolah religius terbentuk melalui konsistensi guru PAI dalam menghadirkan nilai-nilai Islam secara pedagogis, moral, spiritual, inklusif, dan dialogis.

Kata Kunci: *profesionalisme guru PAI; lingkungan sekolah religius; keteladanan; pembiasaan keagamaan; karakter religius.*

Abstract

This article aims to analyze the professionalism of Islamic Religious Education teachers in building a religious school environment through a narrative literature review. The study is grounded in the important role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in integrating Islamic values into learning, role modeling, religious habituation, school culture, and collaboration with families. The data were obtained from scholarly literature on Islamic Religious Education teacher professionalism, religious character education, teacher role modeling, religious habituation, religious school culture, and students' character formation. The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis and thematic synthesis. The findings show that the professionalism of Islamic Religious Education teachers extends beyond mastery of subject matter and pedagogical competence to encompass moral integrity, spiritual maturity, role modeling, and the ability to foster an Islamic-values-based school culture. Teacher role modeling strengthens the internalization of values; religious habituation shapes repeated religious behavior; and school culture institutionalizes Islamic values through rules, interactions, and daily practices. This study confirms that a religious school environment is formed through the consistency of Islamic Religious Education teachers in presenting Islamic values pedagogically, morally, spiritually, inclusively, and dialogically.

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education teacher professionalism; religious school environment; role modeling; religious habituation; religious character

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Introduction

Islamic religious education has an important role in shaping the personality of students, especially in strengthening faith, piety, morals, social responsibility, and moral awareness. In basic education, religious character is not formed solely through the delivery of material; it must be reflected in school culture, worship practices, teacher role models, and social interactions that support Islamic values. International studies show that religious education contributes to the development of students' character, moral virtues, school climate, and social behavior when religious values are integrated into the learning experience and school culture. (Coman et al., 2024; Metcalfe et al., 2024). PAI teachers have a strategic role because the internalization of religious values requires dialogical pedagogical practice, exemplarity, attention to moral development, and the ability to present Islamic values contextually in the lives of students (Alabdulhadi & Alkandari, 2024; Saada, 2023). Therefore, the professionalism of PAI teachers is important to study because it is the main factor in building a religious school environment that not only emphasizes the transfer of religious knowledge but also shapes students' moral habitus, moderate attitude, and religious character.

Several previous studies have shown that Islamic educational values can build students' religious character through affective approaches, the cultivation of spiritual knowledge, religious activities, religious culture in schools, the integration of religious values into learning, and continuous supervision. (Badri, 2024; Nursalim, 2023). The formation of students' religious behavior can also be strengthened through the habit of praying in congregation, reading the Qur'an, social activities, school religious programs, and the integration of living values education that fosters honesty, responsibility, peace, and respect for others. (Achadah et al., 2022; Hidayatulloh et al., 2024). Contextual PAI learning has been proven to connect religious understanding with worship practices and the formation of virtue in daily life, while strengthening the competence of PAI teachers is needed so that teachers can respond to the educational challenges of the Society 5.0 era pedagogically, digitally, socially, and professionally. (Nasikin et al., 2024; Parhan et al., 2024). In addition, the clinical supervision and emotional intelligence of PAI teachers contribute to improving professional performance, empathic learning relationships, and the character formation of students. (Kurniaty & Indrayuda, 2024; Yanuarti et al., 2025). Thus, the professionalism of PAI teachers is an important factor in building a religious school environment because religious values need to be internalized through learning, example, habituation, school culture, teacher competence, and consistent religious experience.

Although previous studies have addressed religious character education, religious habituation, school culture, and PAI teacher competence, most studies still place these themes separately. Studies on religious character generally emphasize the internalization of students' religious values and activities. In contrast, studies on the professionalism of PAI teachers tend to focus on teacher competence, supervision, or readiness to face contemporary educational challenges. There have not been many studies that specifically synthesize the professionalism of PAI teachers as a driving factor in the formation of a religious school environment through the integration of learning, example, habituation, school culture, and institutional collaboration. Therefore, this article aims to analyze the professionalism of Islamic Religious Education teachers in fostering a religious

school environment through a literature review. In particular, this article is directed to identify the form of professionalism of PAI teachers, explain the mechanism of formation of a religious school environment, and formulate the conceptual relationship between teacher competence, religious habits, exemplarity, and school culture in the formation of students' religious character.

Theoretically, this study expands the discussion on the professionalism of PAI teachers by placing it as an important factor in the formation of a religious school environment. Teacher professionalism is understood not only as the ability to teach but also as the ability to provide examples, build religious habits, strengthen school culture, and establish institutional collaboration to shape students' character. Practically, this study provides a framework for understanding that schools' religious environments are shaped not only by routine religious activities but also by the consistent involvement of PAI teachers in learning, social interaction, worship practices, and the strengthening of school culture. Thus, this study can be the basis for the development of a more integrative Islamic religious education strategy in shaping the religious character of students.

Method

This study uses a narrative literature study method with a descriptive-qualitative approach. This method was chosen because the research is not directed at quantitatively testing hypotheses, but at examining, interpreting, and synthesizing the scientific literature on the professionalism of Islamic Religious Education teachers in building a religious school environment. The literature review in this article is presented as an independent study that examines, classifies, compares, and integrates prior findings to develop a comprehensive conceptual argument. In the review of the narrative literature, researchers still need to explain the scope of the study, search strategies, selection criteria, and analysis procedures so that the resulting synthesis does not stop at a summary of the literature but can systematically show the relationships between ideas and be traced academically. (Kraus et al., 2022; Sukhera, 2022).

The source of research data is in the form of scientific literature relevant to the professionalism of PAI teachers, religious character education, religious habituation, teacher examples, religious school culture, and the formation of a religious school environment. Literature search was carried out through Google Scholar, Garuda, SINTA, Crossref, and the official website of the journal using the keywords "professionalism of PAI teachers", "Islamic Religious Education teachers", "religious character", "school religious culture", "religious school environment", "religious habits", and "teacher examples". The literature used in the 2021–2026 publication is prioritized to ensure the discussion has an up-to-date reference base. The search process is not intended to be a full systematic literature review. However, it still adapts the principle of transparency in the search and selection of sources, especially through the recording of keywords, databases, topic relevance, and reasons for inclusion and exclusion of literature. (Liu et al., 2022; Page et al., 2021).

The inclusion criteria for this study are literature that directly addresses the professionalism of PAI teachers, Islamic religious education, school religious culture, teacher examples, religious habits, or the formation of students' religious character. The selected literature must be published in an accredited or reputable scientific journal, available in full text, have a clear bibliographic identity, and be relevant to the purpose of the research. Meanwhile, literature that is only in the form of popular opinion, lacks clarity of sources, is not fully available, is outside the focus of the study, or does not make a conceptual contribution to the research theme is excluded from the analysis.

Literature selection is carried out in stages by reading the title, abstract, keywords, and content of the article to ensure a fit between the selected sources and the research focus.

Data analysis is conducted using qualitative content analysis and thematic synthesis. The initial stage involves critically reading each piece of literature to identify the objectives, key concepts, important findings, and arguments related to the professionalism of PAI teachers and the religious school environment. The next stage involves coding the main ideas and grouping them into analytical themes, such as PAI teacher professionalism, pedagogic-religious competence, teacher example, religious habituation, religious school culture, institutional collaboration, and student character formation. These themes were then compared, interpreted, and synthesized to explain the conceptual relationship between the professionalism of PAI teachers and the formation of a religious school environment. This procedure aligns with qualitative content analysis and thematic synthesis, which emphasize the processes of encoding, grouping, interpreting, and theme development to produce a deeper conceptual understanding. (Mata-McMahon et al., 2020; Nicmanis, 2024).

The validity of the study is maintained through the accuracy of the selection of sources, the relevance of the literature to the focus of the research, the up-to-date publication, and consistency between the research objectives, literature data, analysis process, and arguments built. The researcher also compared various sources to avoid dependence on a single perspective and pay attention to the compatibility between the concept of PAI teachers' professionalism, examples, religious habits, school culture, and student character formation. With this procedure, the literature review method in this article is directed to produce a conceptual synthesis that explains that the religious school environment is not formed spontaneously through routine religious activities, but through the professional role of PAI teachers who can integrate Islamic values into learning, social interaction, worship habits, and school culture consistently.

Results and Discussion

Professionalism of PAI Teachers as a Unit of Pedagogic, Moral, and Spiritual Competencies

The professionalism of Islamic Religious Education teachers cannot be understood only as administrative ability or compliance with learning tools. In the context of Islamic education, professionalism encompasses mastery of knowledge, pedagogical skills, integrity of character, spiritual maturity, and social responsibility. Professional PAI teachers are not only in charge of explaining religious teachings but also of presenting Islamic values in interactions, learning processes, and daily practices at school. Therefore, the professionalism of PAI teachers has a strong moral and spiritual dimension because religious education is oriented not only towards the mastery of knowledge but also towards the formation of morals, awareness of worship, and students' religious character. (Alhashmi & Moussa-Inaty, 2021; Tuna, 2022).

The professionalism of PAI teachers is also related to the teachers' ability to adapt religious learning to the social, cultural, and developmental context of students. Tuna (2022) explained that the professionalization of Islamic religious education teachers requires the ability of teachers to carry out professional roles in a plural and constantly changing educational space. This means that PAI teachers need to be able to connect Islamic teachings with the reality of students' lives pedagogically, ethically, and contextually. In line with that, contextual PAI learning is needed so that Islamic teachings do not remain normative knowledge but are understood, internalized, and applied in students' daily lives. (Budiyanti, 2024; Suhayib & Ansyari, 2023).

In the context of the development of a religious school environment, the professionalism of PAI teachers can be seen through commitment, discipline, example, and consistency in presenting

Islamic values in the school environment. Akmalludin et al. (2025) show that the professionalism of PAI teachers plays an important role in building a religious school environment through strengthening professional commitment, disciplined attitudes, and exemplary behavior in school life. Professional PAI teachers not only deliver religious material in the classroom but also serve as models of religious behavior that students can observe and emulate. Thus, teacher role models are an important part of professionalism because students learn religion not only through verbal explanations but also through teachers' behaviors, interactions, and habits in school life (Rachman et al., 2023; Usman & Zainuddin, 2021).

The professionalism of PAI teachers can be seen through three main interrelated domains. The pedagogic realm concerns teachers' ability to design, implement, and evaluate religious learning in an active, contextual, and meaningful manner. The moral realm relates to the teacher's consistency in demonstrating morals, responsibility, discipline, and attitudes aligned with Islamic values. Meanwhile, the spiritual realm is related to the teacher's ability to foster awareness of worship, closeness to Allah, and a life orientation that is valuable to students. These three domains are important foundations for PAI teachers in providing valuable learning, consistent examples, and a religious school atmosphere. (Akmalludin et al., 2025; Budiyaniti, 2024). Thus, the professionalism of PAI teachers can be understood as a unit of pedagogic, moral, and spiritual competencies that work in an integrated manner to shape students' religious character and build a school environment with Islamic values.

Teacher's Example as the Foundation for Value Internalization

Exemplification is an important mechanism in religious character education because it helps students understand values through concrete examples rather than abstract normative explanations. Teachers who teach honesty need to demonstrate honesty in assessment, communication, and decision-making in the classroom. Teachers who teach discipline need to show punctuality, consistency of worship, and obedience to school rules. Teachers who teach good manners need to bring tenderness in speech, respect for students, and a fair attitude in educational interactions. Therefore, the example cannot be positioned as a complement to learning but rather as a core part of the professionalism of PAI teachers in shaping students' religious character. (Karwadi & Deni indrawan, 2023; Shanti & Shohib, 2026).

Karwadi and Indrawan (2023) show that the strategy of PAI teachers for internalizing character values among madrasah students is carried out by strengthening self-efficacy, habituation, the formation of a caring environment, self-example, personal commitment, and full service. The findings show that the success of character education is greatly influenced by the consistency of teachers as moral figures present in the lives of students. In line with that, Osman (2024) emphasized that role-modeling in character education needs to be designed consciously because students learn from behaviors that are visible, repetitive, and gain reinforcement from the environment. In the context of religious education, Metcalfe et al. (2024) also emphasized that religious education teachers have an important position in the development of character, moral virtues, and ethical reflection of students because religious education works in the areas of values, meaning, and the formation of life orientation.

The example of PAI teachers strengthens the moral legitimacy of teachers in front of students. Religious advice will be more receptive when students see the fit between the teacher's speech and actions in school life. Conversely, the inconsistency between the material taught and the behavior of teachers can weaken the moral message of religious education. Therefore, the development of the

professionalism of PAI teachers needs to encompass personality development, professional ethics, spiritual awareness, and the ability to build valuable educational relationships. Every interaction between teachers and students, both in and out of the classroom, is a space for character education that can strengthen the internalization of religious values in a sustainable way. Therefore, the development of the professionalism of PAI teachers must include personality development, professional ethics, and awareness that every interaction between teachers and students is a space for character education.

Religious Habituation as a Strategy for Religious Character Formation

The formation of religious character does not occur instantaneously but requires a process of repetition, meaning, and reinforcement within a supportive social environment. Religious values need to be presented in real practice so that students not only understand Islamic teachings as knowledge, but also experience them as a habit of life. In the context of schools, religious habituation can be realized through 5S culture, prayer before and after studying, reading the Qur'an before learning activities, dhuha prayer, congregational zuhur prayer, Friday infaq, tahfiz, social activities, and caring for sick friends. These various activities are an important means to connect religious knowledge with real behavior in school life.

Nurizah and Amrullah (2024) Show that Islamic habituation in primary education, such as daily prayer, gratitude, and 5S culture, contributes to the improvement of moral behavior and religious engagement of students. These findings show that religious habituation is effective when it is carried out systematically and repeatedly, and when supported by a conducive school environment. In line with that, Pakpahan and Habibah (2021) emphasized that the formation of religious character through the development of the PAI curriculum and Budi Pekerti requires program planning, the implementation of religious activities, habituation methods, and school institutional support. Badri and Malik (2024) also added that an affective approach based on the Qur'an can build religious character through gentleness, attention, habituation, imitation, and appreciation for students' positive attitudes.

Religious habituation has an educational, affective, and social function in the formation of religious character. Educationally, habituation helps students understand the value of religion through direct experience. Affectively, habituation fosters students' emotional closeness to religious activities, so that worship is not understood solely as a formal obligation. Socially, habituation forms togetherness, care, discipline, responsibility, and solidarity between students. However, habituation should not be done mechanically without an explanation of the meaning. PAI teachers need to help students understand that congregational prayer builds discipline and togetherness, that infak fosters social awareness, that reading the Qur'an fosters a spiritual connection to Islamic teachings, and that 5S culture shapes social manners in school life. Thus, religious habituation is an important strategy for shaping religious character because it transforms taught values into consistently practiced behaviors.

Religious School Culture as a Moral Ecology

A religious school environment cannot be built through PAI subjects alone. This environment is formed when Islamic values become part of the moral ecology of the school, namely the overall atmosphere, rules, symbols, routines, relationships, and social practices that students experience every day. In this moral ecology, students learn from formal instruction, daily habits, discipline,

interactions with teachers, relationships with friends, and religious symbols that are present in schools.

Hidayatulloh et al. (2024) shows that the integration of living values education in Islamic schools can be an innovation in character formation because values are not only conveyed as concepts but also institutionalized in educational practices. Akmalludin et al. (2025) also show that the religious school environment is shaped by concrete activities such as recitation, congregational prayers, Friday almsgiving, and teacher role modeling. In the context of increasingly competitive Islamic educational institutions, Maemonah et al. (2023) show that the Islamic identity of schools is also presented through social media and digital public spaces. This shows that the religious culture of schools now lives not only in physical space but also in digital space.

Religious school culture needs institutional support. The principal needs to establish a vision, a program, and an evaluation. PAI teachers need to be the motor of values. Classroom teachers need to strengthen character through learning interactions. Education personnel need to maintain a polite service atmosphere. Parents need to support habituation at home. If religious values depend on only one teacher, the school culture will be fragile. On the other hand, if religious values are institutionalized in the school system, then the formation of students' character becomes more consistent.

School and Family Collaboration in the Formation of Religious Character

The formation of religious character is not completed in schools. Many of the values instilled by teachers will weaken if they are not strengthened in the family environment. Activities such as memorization, murojaah, congregational prayers at home, helping parents with work, making beds, and greeting when going to or from school are forms of habituation that strengthen the continuity of values between school and family. This continuity is important because learners need consistent moral messages from their immediate environment.

Within the framework of the professionalism of PAI teachers, the ability to communicate with parents is an important part of their educational task. PAI teachers not only arrange school religious activities but also need to explain the purpose of habituation to families so that parents do not view religious activities as an administrative burden. School-family collaboration allows religious character to develop by strengthening it in two spaces at once: the formal school space and the informal family space.

The challenges of this collaboration are increasingly complex in the digital era. Maemonah et al. (2023) shows that social media has become an important space for Islamic educational institutions in building identity. Therefore, teachers and schools can use digital media to strengthen value communication with parents, for example, by sharing information on worship activities, moral messages, habituation documentation, and reflections on character education. However, the use of digital media must still be directed at strengthening values, not just institutional imagery.

An Inclusive and Dialogical Religious School Environment

Religious schools should not be narrowly understood as schools that emphasize only formal rituals. The religious school environment needs to reflect the broad Islamic morals, such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, compassion, tolerance, respect for differences, social concern, and love of peace. Mature religious values are evident in students' ability to maintain worship while building polite and harmonious social relationships.

Mu'ti (2023) emphasizes the importance of pluralistic Islamic religious education in Indonesia, which helps students maintain strong religious beliefs while understanding and respecting different perspectives. Putkonen and Poulter (2023) Also, show that Islamic religious education teachers need to balance internal differences within Islam with an emphasis on common values to ensure religious learning supports social cohesion. Saada (2023) added that Islamic religious education, from the perspective of global citizenship, needs to foster self-reflection, tolerance, and moral reasoning.

The implication is that professional PAI teachers need to build a religious school environment that is not only obedient to worship but also friendly, dialogical, and open to diversity. Religious values must encourage students to become moral individuals, not exclusive individuals. Thus, religious habituation needs to be accompanied by the strengthening of social morals so that the religious school environment is in harmony with the goals of Islamic education and the needs of a pluralistic society.

Based on this description, the professionalism of PAI teachers plays an important role in building a religious school environment by integrating pedagogic-spiritual competence, moral exemplarity, religious habituation, and the strengthening of school culture. The four elements are interrelated because religious learning provides an understanding of values, example offers concrete guidance, habituation fosters repetition, and school culture institutionalizes religious values in common life. Thus, the religious school environment is not formed only through formal religious programs but through the consistency of PAI teachers in integrating Islamic values into learning, interactions, routines, and school culture.

Conclusion

The professionalism of PAI teachers plays an important role in fostering a religious school environment of integrates pedagogic, moral, and spiritual competencies. The findings of the study show that the religious school environment is shaped not only by formal religious activities but also by the consistency of PAI teachers in presenting Islamic values in learning, such as religious habits, school culture, and collaboration with families. Teachers' examples strengthen the internalization of values; religious habits repeatedly shape religious behavior, while school culture institutionalizes Islamic values in students' rules, interactions, and daily practices. Thus, the professionalism of PAI teachers is the main foundation for the formation of students' religious character and the driving force behind the creation of a religious, inclusive, and dialogical school environment. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of strengthening the professionalism of PAI teachers not only in the aspects of mastery of materials and pedagogy, but also in the development of personality, spirituality, example, collaborative skills, and awareness that every educational interaction is a space for moral formation.

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