



**THE INFLUENCE OF SPIRITUAL AND LEADERSHIP
COMPETENCE OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS AND
CHARACTER EDUCATION TEACHERS ON STUDENTS'
RELIGIOUS CULTURE AT SMP NEGERI 2 TAKALAR**

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ABSTRAK

Fenomena menurunnya karakter religius di kalangan peserta didik saat ini menjadi keprihatinan bersama dan memerlukan perhatian khusus dari dunia pendidikan. Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti (PAI dan BP) diharapkan tidak hanya sekadar menyampaikan materi ajar, tetapi juga mampu menjadi teladan spiritual dan pemimpin moral yang hidup di lingkungan sekolah. Sayangnya, hasil observasi awal menunjukkan bahwa kompetensi spiritual dan kepemimpinan guru belum sepenuhnya tercermin dalam praktik sehari-hari. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh kompetensi spiritual dan kepemimpinan guru PAI dan BP terhadap budaya religius peserta didik kelas VIII di SMP Negeri 2 Takalar. Menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain ex-post facto, data diperoleh melalui angket skala Likert dan dokumentasi dari 171 responden. Data dianalisis secara deskriptif dan inferensial melalui regresi linear sederhana dan berganda. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kedua kompetensi guru dinilai rendah oleh mayoritas siswa, dan budaya religius peserta didik juga tergolong rendah. Secara statistik, kompetensi spiritual menyumbang 23,2%, kepemimpinan guru 32,5%, dan secara simultan keduanya berkontribusi 34,5% terhadap budaya religius siswa. Kesimpulannya, peran guru sangat krusial dalam membentuk karakter religius peserta didik. Oleh karena itu, penguatan spiritualitas dan kepemimpinan guru perlu menjadi prioritas dalam pengembangan profesi guru PAI dan BP.

Kata Kunci: Kompetensi Spiritual, Kepemimpinan, Budaya Religius, Pendidikan Islam, SMP

ABSTRACT

The declining religious character among students today is a concern that calls for serious attention from educational institutions. Teachers of Islamic Religious



TADBIR: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam

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Education and Character Development (PAI and BP) are expected not only to deliver subject content but also to become role models with strong spiritual awareness and leadership. Unfortunately, these two essential competencies are still not fully reflected in daily school practices. This study aims to examine how the spiritual competence and leadership competence of PAI and BP teachers influence the religious culture of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Takalar. A quantitative approach was employed using an ex post facto design. Data were gathered through Likert-scale questionnaires and documentation from 171 student respondents and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including simple and multiple linear regression. Findings reveal that both the spiritual and leadership competencies of teachers are perceived as low by the majority of students. Likewise, the students' religious culture is also categorized as low. Statistically, spiritual competence contributes 23.2%, leadership competence 32.5%, and both combined contribute 34.5% to students' religious culture. The study concludes that teachers play a vital role in shaping students' religious character. Therefore, strategic efforts are needed to strengthen these competencies through teacher training and school-based development programs.

Keywords: Spiritual Competence, Leadership Competence, Religious Culture, Islamic Education, Junior High School.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the main pillar in building a dignified civilization.¹ In Indonesia, this is affirmed in Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System Article 3, which states that education aims to develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe and fear God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens.² Education is not solely a process of knowledge transfer, but more than that, it is a process of forming a complete and holistic character through a network of human values.³

¹ Ade Maulana Adji and Daan Nida, 'A Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Efforts to Improve Learning Ability in Dyslexic Children (Case Study at SDIT Wirausaha)', *Khazanah*, 1.1 (2021), pp. 146–72.

² Ali Mustofa Arif Muadzin, 'The Conception of the Role of Teachers as Facilitators and Motivators in the Learning Process of Islamic Religious Education', *Journal of Islamic Education*, 7.2 (2021), pp. 171–86.

³ Susan Wang-Selfridge, 'Pursuing Higher-Purpose Education in a Globalized Society', *International Journal of Pedagogy, Innovation and New Technologies*, 8.1 (2021), pp. 108–15, doi:10.5604/01.3001.0014.9146.



TADBIR: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam

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Vol. 13. No. 03. Oktober, 2025, Hal: 572-588

However, the current reality shows that the world of education is facing challenges that are not light.⁴ The phenomenon of moral crisis among students is increasingly visible, both through deviant behaviors such as brawls, drug abuse, and indifference to worship and religious values.⁵ This reality is a reflection that our education has not been fully able to touch the deepest aspects of humanity, namely spirituality and morality.⁶ Therefore, it is important for schools as educational institutions to not only become academic learning spaces but also centers for the formation of religious culture that internalizes religious values in daily life.⁷

The religious culture that grows in the school environment is a manifestation of spiritual values that are manifested through activities such as congregational prayers, reading the Qur'an, and the habit of greetings, smiles, and greetings.⁸ This culture is not only a ceremonial symbol but must also be a life practice that shapes the spiritual character of students. It is in this context that the role of Islamic Religious Education and Ethics (PAI and BP) teachers is very important. PAI and BP teachers are not only teachers but also moral guides and spiritual examples.⁹

Referring to the Decree of the Minister of Religion Number 211 of 2011, PAI and ethics (BP) teachers are required to have two additional competencies in addition to the four basic competencies, namely spiritual competence and leadership competence. Spiritual competence reflects a deep awareness that teaching is a form of worship and a vocation of the soul.¹⁰ Meanwhile, leadership competencies reflect the ability to move the school community toward the creation of a strong and valuable Islamic culture.¹¹

⁴ M Pd I Siyono, 'IMPLEMENTATION OF HUMANIST VALUES IN PESANTREN EDUCATION', *RELIGIOUS VALUES*, 2023, p. 11.

⁵ Muthi'ah Lathifah and Yakobus Ndona, 'The Role of Education in Building a Civilized Humanity', *Badge: Journal of Education Innovation*, 2.3 (2024), pp. 184–93, doi:10.55606/lencana.v2i3.3764.

⁶ Agus Ali, Nurwadjah Ahmad Eq, and Andewi Suhartini, 'Spiritual Intelligence of Students Through Fasting', *Reslaj: Religion Education Social Laa Roiba Journal*, 4.1 (2022), pp. 1–10.

⁷ Ahmad Lahmi, 'THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION', *Istawa: Journal of Islamic Education*, 1.2 (2016), p. 120, doi:10.24269/ijpi.v1i2.172.

⁸ Faliqul Isbah, 'Improving Spirituality in Facing Life Problems through Istighotsah', *Spiritual Healing: Journal of Sufism and Psychotherapy*, 1.2 (2021), pp. 24–31.

⁹ Tasya Aulia Rizka and others, 'The Role Of Islamic Religious Education In Shaping Students' Character', *Wahana*, 76.2 (2024), pp. 1–7, doi:10.36456/wahana.v76i2.9671.

¹⁰ Ulfah Fajarini, 'Anthropology of Education' (Rajawali Press, 2021).

¹¹ Sri Astuti A. Samad and others, 'Teacher's Spiritual Competence and Its Implication in Islamic Religious Education Learning in Pidie, Aceh', *Ulumuna*, 27.2 (2023), pp. 624–48, doi:10.20414/ujis.v27i2.710.



TADBIR: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam

P-ISSN: 2338:6673; E-ISSN 2442:8280
Vol. 13. No. 03. Oktober, 2025, Hal: 572-588

The theory of character education by Thomas Lickona reinforces that effective teaching touches on the moral and spiritual dimensions.¹² Meanwhile, the transformational leadership theory of Bass and Avolio explains that leadership that inspires and sets an example will be able to create systemic positive change in the educational community.¹³ These two theories are important foundations in understanding the central role of teachers as drivers of religious culture in schools.¹⁴

However, behind these ideals, the reality on the ground shows that the formation of religious culture has not been fully optimal, especially at SMP Negeri 2 Takalar. The results of interviews with teachers and school leaders show that there is a gap between normative ideals and empirical reality. Some PAI and ethics (BP) teachers have not demonstrated maximum mastery of spiritual competence and leadership. On the other hand, there are still many students who have not shown adequate religious character, shown by truant behavior, not performing congregational prayers, and not being able to read the Qur'an fluently.

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that the spiritual competence and leadership of Islamic Religious Education and Character Education teachers play a pivotal role in fostering students' religious culture. Hairon Nisa and Makherus Sholeh emphasized that spiritual competence can be nurtured through various intra- and extracurricular religious activities, while Sri Astuti A. Samad et al. asserted that sincerity and wholeheartedness in teaching constitute the essence of spiritual competence, which significantly influences students' learning motivation and moral development. Likewise, Maemunah Sa'diyah, Nunung Nuraenih, and Aldrin et al. highlighted that teachers' leadership is crucial in sustaining religious culture within schools, despite internal and external challenges. Furthermore, Ari Haryadi Sulaeman and Masripah et al. underlined the multifaceted role of teachers as role models, motivators, facilitators, and evaluators in nurturing students' religious character, while Anis Nahdiyah et al. and Ida Nurjanah et al. presented various religious habituation programs that integrate Islamic values into school culture. Supporting these

¹² HAWWIN HUDA YANA and others, 'THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPIRITUAL COMPETENCE THROUGH ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH', *LEARNING: Journal of Education and Learning Research Innovation*, 4.3 (2024), pp. 682–89.

¹³ Nabila Dwi Cahyani and others, 'The Implementation of Islamic Religious Education in the Cultivation of Religious Culture to Improve the Formation of Islamic Characteristics', *Campus Pulpit: Journal of Islamic Education and Religion*, 23.1 (2024), pp. 477–93.

¹⁴ Imam Azhari and Anita Puji Astutik, 'Teachers as Catalysts for Shaping Religious Character in Youth', *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Studies*, 12.4 (2024), doi:10.21070/ijis.v12i4.1736.



TADBIR: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam

P-ISSN: 2338:6673; E-ISSN 2442:8280
Vol. 13. No. 03. Oktober, 2025, Hal: 572-588

findings, Abdul Mu'is employed a mixed-method approach and provided comprehensive evidence of the simultaneous influence of teachers' spiritual competence and leadership on students' religious culture. However, most previous studies were conducted at the elementary to senior high school levels and tended to examine these two variables separately. Therefore, this study seeks to fill the existing gap by quantitatively investigating the combined influence of Islamic Religious Education and Character Education teachers' spiritual competence and leadership on the religious culture of students at SMP Negeri 2 Takalar.

Answering some of these gaps is an urgent need. This research is here to fill the space with a quantitative approach that can objectively and measurably describe the influence of spiritual competence and leadership competence of PAI teachers and ethics (BP) on the religious culture of students. This research brings new things in the form of new methods and improvements from previous studies that have never been carried out before by simultaneously testing two teachers' competencies in influencing religious culture in a context that has never been thoroughly studied before.

Thus, this research not only contributes to enriching scientific treasures but also has a practical impact on the formulation of education policies, especially in fostering the professionalism of PAI teachers and ethics (BP). Suppose teachers are able to carry out their roles optimally with spiritual competence and good leadership. In that case, the creation of a strong religious culture in schools is not just a hope but a necessity.

The purpose of this study is to obtain a comprehensive picture of the role of Islamic Religious Education and Ethics (PAI and BP) teachers in shaping the religious culture of students. In particular, this study aims to describe the spiritual competence of PAI and BP teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Takalar and describe the leadership competencies possessed by these teachers. In addition, this study also aims to explain the actual condition of religious culture that is reflected in the behavior of students in the school. Furthermore, this study is intended to analyze in depth the influence of teachers' spiritual competence on the religious culture of students, as well as examine the impact of teachers' leadership competencies on the religious culture. Finally, this study aims to find out the extent to which spiritual competence and teacher leadership simultaneously affect the formation of students' religious culture at SMP Negeri 2 Takalar.



TADBIR: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam

P-ISSN: 2338:6673; E-ISSN 2442:8280
Vol. 13. No. 03. Oktober, 2025, Hal: 572-588

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed an ex-post facto design and was conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Takalar, located on Jl. H. M. Dg. Manjarungi, Pattallassang District, Takalar Regency, South Sulawesi Province. A positivistic (quantitative) approach was applied, as the phenomena studied are observable, measurable, and quantifiable. The study involved two independent variables—teachers' spiritual competence (X1) and teachers' leadership competence (X2)—and one dependent variable, students' religious culture (Y).

The population consisted of 347 eighth-grade students, from which 171 students (50% of the population) were selected using a simple random sampling technique. Data were collected through a questionnaire designed using a Likert scale, measuring the spiritual competence and leadership competence of Islamic Religious Education and Character Education teachers, as well as the religious culture of students.

The spiritual competence of Islamic Religious Education and Character Education teachers refers to their ability to maintain the conviction that teaching is an act of worship. This includes being aware that teaching must be carried out with enthusiasm and sincerity, believing it is both a blessing and a trust, viewing it as a calling and devotion, recognizing it as self-actualization and an honorable duty, embracing it as a form of service, and understanding it as both an art and a profession.

The leadership competence of Islamic Religious Education and Character Education teachers is the ability to mobilize the school's potential to build an Islamic religious culture. This involves taking full responsibility for Islamic Religious Education and Character Education learning, organizing the school environment to foster an Islamic atmosphere, initiating school development efforts, collaborating with all school stakeholders, participating in decision-making, and providing religious and social guidance.

Religious culture refers to a set of religious values that shape students' behavior, traditions, daily practices, and symbols. In this study, religious culture includes practices such as greetings (smile, salam, sapa), reciting the Qur'an, performing duha prayer, congregational zuhur prayer, Monday-Thursday fasting, and collective prayers (*istigasah*).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the results of the research are presented to answer the question of how much influence the spiritual competence and leadership competence of Islamic Religious Education and Ethics teachers have on the



TADBIR: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam

P-ISSN: 2338:6673; E-ISSN 2442:8280
Vol. 13. No. 03. Oktober, 2025, Hal: 572-588

religious culture of students. The presentation of the results is divided into three main parts, namely the descriptive results of each variable and the results of inferential analysis to test the influence between variables.

1. Spiritual Competence of Teachers

Teachers' spiritual competence in this context refers to the awareness and appreciation of religious values in the learning process. This competence is the foundation for forming moral and moral examples of teachers that students internalize.¹⁵ Data obtained from the results of the questionnaire of 171 respondents showed that, in general, the level of spiritual competence of teachers is still low based on student perception.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Spiritual Competence

| Statistics | Value |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Number of Respondents | 171 |
| Maximum Score | 80 |
| Score Minimum | 48 |
| Average | 57,53 |
| Standard Deviation | 5,29 |

Table 3. Categories of Spiritual Competence of Teachers

| Category | Score Range | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------------|------------|----------------|
| Low | $X < 66$ | 164 | 96% |
| currently | $67 \leq X < 79$ | 6 | 3,5% |
| high | $X \geq 80$ | 1 | 0,5% |
| Total | | 171 | 100% |

These results show that 96% of students assess the spiritual competence of teachers to be at a low level. This indicates that PAI and BP teachers have not been optimal in reflecting on their spiritual role in the classroom, which should be a major part of character education. With an average score of 57.53, there needs to be an increase in the dimensions of sincerity, service, and the presence of divine values in learning activities.

Partial analysis shows that the spiritual competence of Islamic Religious Education and Character Education (IRE-CE) teachers significantly

¹⁵ Sri Astuti, 'The Concept of Teachers' Spiritual Competence: Understanding and Implementation in PAI Learning in Junior High School in Pidie' (UIN Ar-Raniry Postgraduate S3 Islamic Religious Education, 2023).



TADBIR: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam

P-ISSN: 2338:6673; E-ISSN 2442:8280
Vol. 13. No. 03. Oktober, 2025, Hal: 572-588

affects students' religious culture ($\text{Sig. } 0.000 < 0.05$), with a regression equation of $Y = 28.855 + 0.481X$. This indicates that each one-unit increase in teachers' spiritual competence increases students' religious culture by 0.481 units. The contribution was 23.2%, while 76.8% was influenced by other unexamined factors.

This aligns with Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasizes learning through observing role models. Teachers with strong spiritual competence act as models of discipline, honesty, and respect. Lickona also stresses that character education must include moral knowing, feeling, and action, which are shaped through teachers' examples. Previous studies (Hairon Nisa & Makherus Sholeh; Sri Astuti A. Samad; Abdul Mu'is) similarly found that teachers' spiritual competence fosters religious culture.

However, the relatively small contribution suggests that spiritual competence alone is not enough, especially because junior high students are in Erikson's identity-seeking stage and are strongly influenced by peers. Thus, spiritual competence must be supported by empathetic communication, engaging teaching, and a religious school climate. Consistency between teachers' words and actions is crucial for credibility.

Religious culture must also be supported by all school elements—principals, teachers, staff, parents, and the community. Religious activities (3S greetings, Qur'an recitation, *duha* prayer, congregational *zuhur* prayer, Monday–Thursday fasting, and collective prayers) should be consistently implemented. Training, workshops, retreats, and mentoring can enhance teachers' spiritual competence.

The strongest contributing aspect was viewing teaching as an art and a profession (76.88%). Seeing teaching as a calling to shape souls and as a professional duty helps internalize religious values. This supports Lickona's and Erikson's views that students need inspiring, consistent role models. Therefore, spiritually aware teachers who view teaching as both an art and a profession can more effectively nurture students' religious culture.

2. Teacher Leadership Competencies

Leadership competencies in the context of PAI and BP teachers include the ability to lead in religious activities at school, be an example, and nurture students through a personal and collaborative approach.¹⁶ From the results of

¹⁶ Aldrin Aldrin, Happy Fitria, and Mulyadi Mulyadi, 'The Implications of Teacher Leadership in Developing Islamic Culture at SMA Negeri 1 Prabumulih', *Tambusai Education Journal*, 5.2 (2021), pp. 5141–48.



TADBIR: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam

P-ISSN: 2338:6673; E-ISSN 2442:8280
Vol. 13. No. 03. Oktober, 2025, Hal: 572-588

the analysis, the average score was 60.05, and the majority of respondents assessed that this competence was also still relatively low.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Teacher Leadership Competencies

| Statistics | Value |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Number of Respondents | 171 |
| Maximum Score | 80 |
| Score Minimum | 48 |
| Average | 60,05 |
| Standard Deviation | 5,61 |

Table 6. Leadership Competency Categories

| Category | Score Range | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------------|------------|----------------|
| Low | $X < 68$ | 159 | 93% |
| currently | $69 \leq X < 79$ | 10 | 5,8% |
| high | $X \geq 80$ | 2 | 1,2% |
| Total | | 171 | 100% |

As many as 93% of students stated that teacher leadership was at a low level. This shows that PAI and BP teachers have not optimally displayed an inspiring and transformative leadership style, even though this is very important in fostering a religious culture in schools. Leadership is not only a matter of authority, but it concerns the ability to influence and guide students in living a spiritual life.

The study found that the leadership competence of Islamic Religious Education and Character Education (IRE-CE) teachers significantly influences the religious culture of eighth-grade students, contributing 32.5% to its development. Teachers who demonstrate transformational and moral leadership—through inspirational motivation, ethical modeling, and personal integrity—serve as strong role models, inspiring students to adopt religious values. Their influence is especially crucial during early adolescence, a stage marked by identity exploration and susceptibility to social influences.

The most influential leadership aspect was the ability to organize a religious school environment (82.81%), showing that leadership extends beyond classroom instruction to shaping the entire school culture. When teachers successfully build a collective religious atmosphere through routines, rules, and positive relationships, religious values become ingrained habits



TADBIR: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam

P-ISSN: 2338:6673; E-ISSN 2442:8280

Vol. 13. No. 03. Oktober, 2025, Hal: 572-588

rather than imposed obligations. Therefore, strengthening teachers' leadership must be supported by collaboration with school leaders, other teachers, staff, and parents to create a sustainable religious culture in schools.

3. Religious Culture of Students

Religious culture reflects the extent to which Islamic values are internalized and realized by students in their daily lives in the school environment, both in the form of worship, morals, and social interaction.¹⁷ From the results of the analysis, the average score of the students' religious culture was 58.46, and the majority of students were in the low category.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics of Religious Culture

| Statistics | Value |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Number of Respondents | 171 |
| Maximum Score | 80 |
| Score Minimum | 46 |
| Average | 58,46 |
| Standard Deviation | 5,66 |

Table 8. Categories Religious Culture

| Category | Score Range | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|-------------|------------|----------------|
| Low | $X < 75$ | 168 | 98,2% |
| high | $X \geq 80$ | 3 | 1,8% |
| Total | | 171 | 100% |

The religious culture of students, in general, is still concerning. Only 1.8% of students are in the high category. This reinforces the importance of the role of PAI and BP teachers in fostering and internalizing religious values, both through example and spiritual leadership approaches in schools.

4. Inferential Analysis Results

Before testing the hypothesis, a classical assumption test is first carried out to ensure that the data meets the statistical requirements, namely normality, homogeneity, and linearity tests.

¹⁷ Siti Nailah Butsiani, 'Religious Culture in Schools in Realizing the Character of Students', *JIIP-Scientific Journal of Education*, 6.4 (2023), pp. 2661–67.



TADBIR: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam

P-ISSN: 2338:6673; E-ISSN 2442:8280
Vol. 13. No. 03. Oktober, 2025, Hal: 572-588

Table 9. Classic Assumption Test

| Test Type | Significance Value | Information |
|----------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Normality (KS) | 0,200 | Normal |
| Homogeneity | 0,822 | Homogeneous |
| Linearity X1-Y | 0,402 | Linear |
| Linearity X2-Y | 0,202 | Linear |

The test results showed that the data was normally distributed homogeneous, and there was a linear relationship between variables. This suggests that the data is worthy of further analysis using linear regression.

a. Simple Regression Test: Effect of X1 on Y

Regression equations:

$$Y=28,855+0,481X_1$$

Table 10. Regression Results of X1 to Y

| Statistics | Value |
|---------------------------|-------|
| t-counting | 7,137 |
| t-table ($\alpha=0,05$) | 1,975 |
| Sig. | 0,000 |
| R^2 | 0,232 |

The spiritual competence of teachers has a positive and significant influence on the religious culture of students. The t-calculated value is greater than the t-table, and the significance < 0.05 . This means that the higher the spiritual competence of the teacher, the better the religious culture of the students. This variable contributes 23.2% to religious culture.

b. Simple Regression Test: Effect of X2 on Y

Regression equations:

$$Y=23,924+0,570X_2$$

Table 11. Regression Results X2 to Y

| Statistics | Value |
|---------------------------|-------|
| t-counting | 9,022 |
| t-table ($\alpha=0,05$) | 1,975 |
| Sig. | 0,000 |
| R^2 | 0,325 |



TADBIR: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam

P-ISSN: 2338:6673; E-ISSN 2442:8280
Vol. 13. No. 03. Oktober, 2025, Hal: 572-588

Teacher leadership competencies also have a positive and significant influence on the religious culture of students. With a contribution of 32.5%, this variable shows that the teacher's leadership style is very decisive in shaping the spiritual character of students.

c. Multiple Regression Test: Influence of X1 and X2 on Y

Regression equations:

$$Y=19,831+0,188X_1+0,447X_2$$

Table 12 Multiple Regression Results X1 and X2 to Y

| Statistics | Value |
|---------------------------|--------|
| F-counting | 44,283 |
| F-table ($\alpha=0,05$) | 3,900 |
| Sig. | 0,000 |
| R^2 | 0,345 |

Simultaneously, the spiritual competence and leadership of teachers have a significant influence on the religious culture of students. The contribution of these two variables was 34.5%, which means that they together affect almost one-third of the religious-cultural variation of learners. The rest (65.5%) were influenced by other factors outside of the study, such as family environment, peers, or the role of the principal.

The results of this study reinforce the importance of the role of Islamic Religious Education and Ethics (PAI and BP) teachers as central figures in shaping religious culture in the school environment. Teachers are not only in charge of transferring religious knowledge, but they also have a strategic position as spiritual figures and moral leaders who are real examples for students in their daily lives. These findings confirm that both spiritual competence and teacher leadership exert a significant influence on students' religious behavior.

In reality, the results of this study reveal the gap between normative expectations and practical reality. Formally, PAI and BP teachers are required to have adequate spiritual competence and leadership. However, the perception of the majority of students actually shows that these two aspects are still relatively low. This indicates that there is a discrepancy between the regulations that idealize the profile of teachers as spiritual leaders in schools and the implementation in the field that has not been maximized. This is the meeting point of the practical and contextual gap in this study.



TADBIR: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam

P-ISSN: 2338:6673; E-ISSN 2442:8280
Vol. 13. No. 03. Oktober, 2025, Hal: 572-588

On the other hand, methodologically, this study also answers the gap in the approach in previous studies. Many previous research has focused on only one variable or used a descriptive qualitative approach without measuring the direct contribution of both factors statistically. This study comes with a more structured quantitative approach, analyzing two independent variables simultaneously and presenting a regression model to map how much influence each variable has on religious culture. Thus, the results of this study provide a more complete methodological contribution and can be used as a reference for further research.

These findings also reinforce a number of character education theories. Within the framework of Bandura's social learning theory, students are strongly influenced by the observation of the behavior of the figures they consider important—in this case, the teacher. When teachers display consistent spiritual attitudes and inspiring leadership, students are indirectly encouraged to replicate those attitudes in their behavior. Similarly, Thomas Lickona's character theory and Bass's transformational leadership theory underscore the importance of exemplary leadership styles that encourage value change in learners.

Quantitatively, the contribution of teachers' spiritual competence to students' religious culture was recorded at 23.2%, while teacher leadership accounted for 32.5%. Together, the two explain 34.5% of the religious-cultural variation that occurs in students. This shows that the teacher competency factor is crucial but not the only one. There are still 65.5% of other factors that influence the school, such as family influence, social environment, and religious atmosphere in general.

Thus, the formation of students' religious culture cannot be imposed only on PAI and BP teachers but requires an educational ecosystem that supports each other. Teachers remain the main catalyst, but the success of fostering religiosity will only be achieved if all parties are actively and harmoniously involved.

The multiple linear regression analysis showed that the spiritual and leadership competencies of Islamic Religious and Character Education (IRE-CE) teachers significantly influence the religious culture of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Takalar (Sig. 0.000 < 0.05; F = 44.283 > 3.900). The regression equation $Y = 19.831 + 0.188X_1 + 0.447X_2$ indicates that these two competencies jointly contribute 34.5% to students' religious culture, while the remaining 65.5% is influenced by external factors such as family, peers, social media, and the broader school climate.

According to Bandura's social cognitive theory, students learn by observing role models, while Lickona's character education theory emphasizes moral knowledge, feeling, and action. Teachers with high spiritual competence



TADBIR: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam

P-ISSN: 2338:6673; E-ISSN 2442:8280

Vol. 13. No. 03. Oktober, 2025, Hal: 572-588

and transformational leadership act as moral role models, fostering religious behavior not only through teaching but also through daily attitudes and conduct.

This finding aligns with studies by Hairon Nisa, Makherus Sholeh, Maemunah Sa'diyah, Nunung Nuraenih, and Abdul Mu'is, which show that teachers' spiritual and leadership competencies jointly shape students' religious character. At SMPN 2 Takalar, differences in teacher backgrounds (certified ASN and non-ASN) highlight the need for integrity and personal commitment, not just formal status, to effectively model religious values.

Since adolescents value authenticity and emotional connection over formal authority, teachers must lead with empathy, participation, and consistent behavior. Strategic efforts to strengthen teachers' spiritual and leadership competencies include spiritual values training, mentoring by senior certified teachers, leadership development forums, collaborative religious practices, and institutional support from school leaders and stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the spiritual competence and leadership of Islamic Religious Education and Ethics (PAI and BP) teachers have a significant influence on the formation of religious culture of grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 2 Takalar. The average score of teachers' spiritual competence was 57.53 and was rated low by 96% of students, indicating that the spirituality possessed by teachers has not been optimally implemented in learning practices. Similarly, teachers' leadership competencies obtained an average score of 60.05, with 93% of students rating it low. This shows that teachers have not fully played the role of leaders who are able to guide students in religious life at school. As a result, the spiritual culture of students is relatively low, with an average score of 58.46, and as many as 98.2% of students fall into this category.

Statistically, this study shows that teachers' spiritual competence contributes 23.2% to the religious culture of students, while leadership competence contributes 32.5%. When these two variables were tested together, the contribution increased to 34.5%, indicating a strong relationship between the teacher's internal qualities and the religious character of the students. The rest, which is 65.5%, is influenced by other factors outside the scope of this study, such as family background, social environment, and overall school policies and culture. This confirms that the formation of religious culture requires a holistic and collaborative approach.



TADBIR: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam

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Vol. 13. No. 03. Oktober, 2025, Hal: 572-588

This research makes an important contribution to the development of Islamic education, especially in positioning PAI and BP teachers as central figures in fostering students' religious character. These findings provide a foothold that improving religious culture in schools cannot be achieved only by improving learning methods but needs to be accompanied by strengthening the spiritual capacity and leadership of teachers. Therefore, schools and policymakers are advised to design ongoing training programs that are not only pedagogical but also touch on the spiritual and moral dimensions of leadership. In addition, this study encourages follow-up studies to explore other factors that play a role in shaping students' religious culture, such as the role of family, peers, and the spiritual climate of the school, in order to design a more comprehensive and sustainable character-building strategy.

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