

OVERCOMING TRADITIONALISM AND WEAK INTERNALIZATION OF ISLAMIC VALUES IN SCHOOL

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Abstract: *This study aims to examine the problem of traditionalism in teaching and the weak internalization of Islamic values in public schools, specifically at SMAN 10 Rejang Lebong. Using a qualitative approach involving observation, interviews, and questionnaires, the research found that Islamic Religious Education (IRE) classes remain dominated by passive lecture methods, limiting students' active engagement. Islamic values are not yet systematically embedded within the school culture, and support from family and social environments is also minimal. The study integrates theories from Piaget, Vygotsky, Bronfenbrenner, and Mezirow's Transformative Learning to interpret the findings. These results affirm previous research while introducing a new transformative learning model based on school culture integration. This research contributes a fresh perspective to Islamic education management in public schools and highlights limitations related to the scope and sample of the study.*
Keywords : Islamic education; traditional learning; Transformatif.

Introduction

Islamic education within public schools plays a strategic role in shaping students' character, morality, and spirituality amid the tides of globalization and technological advancement, which often result in value degradation. In this context, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) is expected to serve not only as a medium for delivering religious content, but also as a vehicle for instilling values of *tawhid* (monotheism), ethics, and universal humanism in accordance with the principles of Islam as a mercy to all creation (*rahmatan lil alamin*).

However, in practice, the implementation of IRE in many public schools faces significant challenges, particularly in relation to traditional pedagogical patterns, a lack of innovative learning approaches, and the weak internalization of Islamic values throughout school life. This phenomenon is observable at SMAN 10 Rejang Lebong, where Islamic education has not been fully optimized to cultivate students' Islamic character. A notable indicator is the dominance of lecture-based methods, which result in low levels of student engagement. Such approaches focus predominantly on cognitive knowledge transmission, often neglecting the affective and psychomotor dimensions. As a result, students tend to have a superficial understanding of Islamic values, and these values are rarely reflected in their daily behavior. Moreover, the lack of support from students' families and social environments further exacerbates the weak internalization of these values.

Preliminary research conducted in March 2025, involving 120 students from grades X and XI through surveys, revealed that 74% of respondents found IRE classes to be boring and irrelevant to their daily lives, often consisting of rote memorization or one-way lectures. Three weeks of classroom observation indicated limited student interaction during lessons. Teachers remained the central information source, with little space for critical discussion, exploration of religious experiences, or real-life value application. Interviews with ten IRE and counseling teachers confirmed their uncertainty in adopting more innovative and character-based teaching strategies.

The persistence of lecture-based instruction and surface-level religious understanding at SMAN 10 Rejang Lebong stands in stark contrast to several key learning theories. According to Piaget (1972), learning is a process of active construction, where students assimilate and accommodate knowledge through direct interaction with their environment. In the observed case, however, students are positioned as passive recipients, lacking the exploratory opportunities essential for meaningful religious understanding. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory further deepens this critique by emphasizing that learning—particularly moral and religious development—is socially mediated. The absence of dialogic engagement in IRE classes at SMAN 10 reflects a missed opportunity to scaffold

students' thinking within their zone of proximal development through peer and teacher interaction. Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory, which posits that education must provoke critical reflection and personal meaning-making, is particularly relevant in the context of character education. Yet, at SMAN 10, religious learning is rarely linked to students' lived experiences, thereby hindering transformative outcomes. Finally, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory provides a systemic lens to understand the disconnection between school, family, and community environments. The school's failure to cultivate a religious culture, combined with weak familial support, illustrates a lack of synergy across microsystems that should ideally reinforce students' internalization of Islamic values. Thus, each of these theories offers a layered understanding of the pedagogical and cultural deficiencies evident in the school's current approach to Islamic education.

A review of literature from the past decade indicates increasing scholarly attention to the issue of pedagogical traditionalism in Islamic education. Subkhan (2015) noted the predominance of expository and decontextualized methods in public schools. Arifin (2017) argued that religious education is often cognitively focused, neglecting the affective domain. Nurhayati (2019) demonstrated that project-based learning improved meaningful understanding of Islamic values. Mulyana (2020) stressed the importance of school culture in shaping religious identity. Alwi (2022) proposed problem-based learning to link religious teachings to social realities, while Hidayatullah (2022) emphasized integrating spirituality with modern pedagogy. However, much of this research focused on Islamic schools or *madrasahs*, with limited investigation into public schools with pluralistic and secular social contexts.

Addressing this gap, this study seeks to contribute both academically and practically to a more contextual, participatory, and transformative model of Islamic education. Employing field observation, surveys, and in-depth interviews with teachers and students, the study offers a comprehensive understanding of Islamic education challenges in SMAN 10 Rejang Lebong. Theoretically, it enriches the discourse on learning management and Islamic values development in public education, especially through school culture and ecological support systems, as conceptualized in Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1979).

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the dominance of traditional learning patterns and the weak internalization of Islamic values at SMAN 10 Rejang Lebong. It also aims to develop innovative strategies for more relevant and effective IRE instruction by addressing pedagogical practices, school culture integration, and social-environmental support. The novelty of this research lies in its simultaneous examination of pedagogical practices and the institutional and social environments of learners. It not only critiques outdated teaching methods but proposes a new approach that synthesizes constructivist, sociocultural, transformative, and ecological theories into a holistic analytical framework.

The working hypothesis of this study posits that the traditionalism in IRE pedagogy and weak Islamic values at SMAN 10 Rejang Lebong result from decontextualized teaching methods and poor cultural integration. It is further assumed that value-based pedagogical models integrating constructivist, transformative, and institutional approaches can significantly improve the effectiveness of Islamic education.

Method

This study employed a qualitative case study approach aimed at exploring, in depth, the phenomena of pedagogical traditionalism and the weak internalization of Islamic values at SMAN 10 Rejang Lebong. This approach was deemed appropriate to uncover contextual meanings, perceptions, and practices of Islamic education, in accordance with Creswell's (2014) assertion that qualitative inquiry is suitable for examining social phenomena in their natural settings.

The research design was descriptive, focusing on the practices of Islamic Religious Education (IRE), school culture, and social interactions that influence students' development of Islamic values. The research subjects included two IRE teachers, one school counselor, one school principal, and fifteen students selected through purposive sampling. The research objects encompassed the learning processes of IRE and the application of Islamic values within the school environment.

Data were collected through classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and a student questionnaire. Observations were conducted in classrooms and during religious school activities. In-depth interviews were used to gain insights into the perceptions of teachers and students, while the questionnaire was distributed to 120 students to obtain preliminary quantitative data. The instruments were developed based on Spranger's (1928) value internalization theory and Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist learning theory.

Data analysis followed a thematic approach as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), which included coding, categorization, and the generation of thematic findings. The questionnaire results were analyzed using descriptive statistics to triangulate and reinforce the qualitative findings. The validity of the data was ensured through method

and source triangulation, as well as member checking with selected informants.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

The study identified three primary findings regarding the persistence of traditional pedagogical methods and the weak internalization of Islamic values at SMAN 10 Rejang Lebong. These findings emerged from data triangulation involving classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and student questionnaires. Each finding not only addresses the research questions but also provides insight into the broader context of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) implementation in public schools.

First, Dominance of Passive Pedagogy in IRE Classes Classroom observations at SMAN 10 Rejang Lebong revealed that 87% of instructional time was allocated to teacher-centered lecturing. Only 6% involved limited student responses, while 7% covered administrative or transitional activities. These observations are reflected in the students' perceptions: 71% of the 120 respondents described Islamic Religious Education (IRE) lessons as "boring," "monotonous," and "detached from daily life." As one student noted, "We just copy from the board and memorize. It doesn't feel like we're really learning about Islam."

Table 1. Classroom Time Allocation During IRE

Activity Type	Approx. Time Allocation (%)
Teacher Lecture	87%
Student Response	6%
Administrative Matters	7%

Source: Data 2025

This pattern reflects a critical disconnection from Piaget's theory of cognitive development (1972), which emphasizes that students actively construct knowledge through engaging and meaningful interaction with their environment. In contrast, the observed methods suppress curiosity, discourage exploration, and reduce learning to rote memorization. Similarly, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978) stresses that learning is most effective within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), achieved through scaffolded dialogue, peer interaction, and teacher facilitation. Yet, these elements were largely absent in the IRE learning process.

Second, Islamic values have not been systematically internalized into the school's culture. Observations and student interviews revealed that religious expressions within the school were largely symbolic and formalistic – such as routine prayers or weekly congregational Friday prayers – without sustained efforts to build a religious school culture. There was little evidence of structured initiatives like Islamic mentoring, value-based character building, or integration of religious values into cross-curricular learning. Moreover, 63% of students reported that peer behavior often failed to reflect core Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, and courtesy. These results support Tilaar's (2002) argument that value internalization requires institutional cultural structures, not just cognitive instruction.

Third, family and community support for students' religious development was found to be lacking. Interviews with the school counselor and students indicated that many students did not receive religious guidance at home, and some came from dysfunctional households. Only 28% of students reported having regular religious discussions with their parents. Based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, the absence of positive interaction between microsystems (family and school) and mesosystems (social relationships) weakens the synergy necessary for effective religious education.

These three findings indicate that IRE in public schools remains locked in a knowledge transmission paradigm, rather than a transformative one. According to Mezirow (1997), education must foster critical reflection and raise learners' awareness of values and meaning. The inability of teachers to create meaningful dialogue, the lack of an Islamic school culture, and the minimal family support serve as key barriers to the development of students who genuinely understand and live Islamic values in daily life.

Discussion

The dominance of traditional lecture-based instruction in IRE, the inadequate integration of Islamic values into school culture, and the limited support from students' families and social environments corroborate earlier

findings in the field. Previous studies (e.g., Rahmawati, 2015; Sari & Hidayat, 2018) have shown that monotonous, non-participatory learning methods hinder the development of students' character and religious understanding.

From a pedagogical perspective, the prevalence of lecturing highlights a failure to implement Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist approach, which emphasizes the role of social interaction and scaffolding in effective learning. Other studies (Suryani et al., 2019; Dewi & Putra, 2020) have confirmed that active learning strategies – such as discussion, problem-based learning, and contextual instruction – significantly enhance student engagement and religious comprehension. However, as noted by Hasanah (2017) and Munandar (2021), public school teachers often lack the necessary training and resources to innovate in their religious teaching practices.

The weak internalization of Islamic values into school culture is also consistent with Wahyuni (2016) and Azizah (2020), who emphasized that a religious culture must be cultivated systemically through value-oriented leadership and character-building activities. Tilaar (2002) stressed the importance of institutional culture in value education. This is supported by research from Kartini & Sulaiman (2018) and Nugroho et al. (2022), which showed that the formation of a religious culture in schools depends on exemplary teacher conduct and principal leadership.

From a socio-ecological perspective, Bronfenbrenner (1979) explained the complex interplay between family, school, and social environments in child development. Studies by Susanti & Fadilah (2017) and Lee & Choi (2019) confirmed that strong familial support enhances students' religious character formation. Conversely, families with limited religious involvement or internal conflict pose risks to religious development, as shown by Nurhayati (2021) and Putri et al. (2023).

Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory, which underscores the value of critical reflection, is supported by empirical evidence from Ahmad & Hanafiah (2018) and Suharto (2020). These studies demonstrated that religious education fostering critical dialogue and reflection leads to more meaningful shifts in students' attitudes and behaviors compared to traditional methods. In contrast, Rahman & Jannah (2019) showed that religious instruction lacking critical engagement tends to reduce religious content to mere memorization without practical application.

Furthermore, studies by Nasution et al. (2020) and Oktaviani & Sari (2021) highlighted the potential of integrating digital technology in IRE to enhance student motivation and understanding. This presents an opportunity for SMAN 10 Rejang Lebong to modernize its instructional strategies and break free from pedagogical traditionalism.

As a limitation, this study focused on a single school site, echoing the recommendation of Kurniawan et al. (2018) and Hartono (2022) for multi-site studies to improve the generalizability and validity of research findings. Nevertheless, the integration of these findings advances the theory of value internalization in Islamic education by emphasizing the need for synergy among pedagogical strategies, school culture, and socio-ecological support. Without a living institutional culture and collaborative environmental structures, religious education risks stagnation and ineffectiveness.

In sum, the findings affirm the initial hypothesis that traditional learning methods and weak religious culture negatively impact the internalization of Islamic values in public schools. Practical recommendations include the adoption of participatory and transformative teaching methods, revitalization of Islamic school culture, and enhancement of family and community involvement as part of a holistic character education ecosystem.

To address the deeply rooted traditionalism in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) and the weak internalization of values at SMAN 10 Rejang Lebong, several actionable strategies need to be implemented. The transformation of IRE pedagogy should begin with modular teacher training programs. The regional education office and school leadership are encouraged to initiate in-service training specifically designed for public school IRE teachers. This training should emphasize active learning models such as project-based and inquiry-based learning, peer-teaching simulations, and the contextual integration of values using real-life student cases. For example, IRE teachers can be equipped to guide students in community-based religious service activities, such as mosque clean-ups or local charity drives, embedding Islamic values through lived experiences.

Furthermore, the internalization of Islamic values can be strengthened by embedding these values into school policies and routines. Rather than limiting religious practice to routine prayers, the school could implement a "value of the month" initiative, focusing on a particular Islamic virtue such as honesty, discipline, or empathy. This value can be displayed prominently in classrooms and corridors, reflected in reward systems like "Most Honest Student of the Month," and discussed regularly during morning assemblies and briefings. This approach makes Islamic values more tangible and connects them directly to students' daily learning environments.

To address the issue of weak family support in value internalization, the school could establish a Parent-School Religious Partnership Unit composed of IRE teachers, counselors, and volunteer parents. This unit would organize monthly family religious forums, distribute parenting bulletins containing practical guides for faith-based

education at home, and conduct home visits for students with low engagement or problematic behavior, particularly those from vulnerable households. Active family involvement will help reinforce religious values both at school and at home.

Considering the technological literacy of Generation Z learners, integrating digital religious learning could broaden student engagement. Pilot programs might include short TikTok-style video reflections on weekly lessons, student-managed Instagram accounts for Islamic messages, or “Digital Da’wah Challenges” where students submit brief videos or quotes reflecting core values. Such innovations resonate with contemporary youth culture and make religious education more accessible and relatable.

Additionally, appointing a School Religious Culture Facilitator is crucial. This teacher or counselor would coordinate all religious activities in the school, monitor students’ spiritual development in collaboration with class teachers, and evaluate the integration of Islamic values across disciplines using a religious culture rubric. This role ensures the continuity and coherence of value internalization efforts.

Conceptually, these strategies embody a constructivist-transformative-ecological approach. The constructivist perspective, inspired by Piaget and Vygotsky, emphasizes learning through real-life tasks and social interactions. The transformative dimension, based on Mezirow’s theory, involves critical reflection through service, digital expression, and family forums. Meanwhile, Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model highlights the importance of strengthening interactions between the school, home, and peer environments. By implementing these strategies holistically, it is expected that entrenched traditionalism will be mitigated and Islamic values will be deeply internalized at SMAN 10 Rejang Lebong.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the persistent use of traditional lecture-based teaching methods and the weak institutional and ecological support for value internalization have significantly limited the effectiveness of Islamic education at SMAN 10 Rejang Lebong. These challenges are not merely pedagogical but structural, rooted in a lack of contextual innovation, cultural integration, and social synergy.

The findings underscore the need for public schools to move beyond cognitive transmission toward transformative, participatory, and contextually grounded Islamic Religious Education (IRE). Specifically, the study recommends the following context-driven actions: First, regional and school-level education authorities should design and implement modular, in-service training for IRE teachers, focused on active learning strategies (e.g., project-based, discussion-based) and reflective religious instruction aligned with students’ realities. These programs must account for the limited time and resources often found in public schools. Second, Islamic values must be institutionalized through policy-level mechanisms, such as the incorporation of a “value of the month” program, student-led value campaigns, and reward systems that align behavioral expectations with Islamic virtues. This cultural embedding strategy should be coordinated by a designated School Religious Culture Facilitator drawn from existing staff. Third, to address the gap in familial religious support, the school can establish a Parent-School Religious Partnership Unit, tasked with hosting regular family religious forums, distributing simple parenting materials on Islamic education, and conducting targeted outreach (e.g., home visits) for students from vulnerable households. Fourth, leveraging student engagement with technology, the school should integrate digital media into religious learning, such as producing short videos, running social media-based da’wah projects, and facilitating online reflection journals—approaches that align with the digital habits of contemporary learners.

These recommendations are rooted in the study’s theoretical framework: Constructivist theory (Piaget, Vygotsky) advocates for active, socially mediated learning. Transformative learning theory (Mezirow) requires space for critical reflection and personal meaning-making. Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner) urges multi-layered synergy among school, home, and community contexts.

While this study provides a contextualized and theory-informed roadmap for reforming Islamic education in public schools, its limitation lies in the single-case design and relatively small participant scope. Future research should employ multi-site, comparative studies and mixed methods to develop more generalizable policy models and empirically validated interventions.

Ultimately, this study contributes both conceptually and practically to the discourse on Islamic education management in pluralistic public school environments. It offers an integrative framework that links pedagogical renewal with cultural transformation and ecological alignment—an urgent agenda for public education in the 21st century.

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