Pedagogical and Cultural Competence Work Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Improving Character Student At State High School in Rantau Selamat District

Zuraida[1*], Amiruddin[1], Yusaini[1]

[1] Postgraduate Program, Islamic Religious Education Study Program, State Islamic Institute, Langsa, Aceh, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to 1) analyze the pedagogical competence of Islamic Religious Education teachers in the learning process at State Senior High Schools in Rantau Selamat District. 2) analyze the work culture of Islamic Religious Education teachers contributing to the formation of student character at State Senior High Schools in Rantau Selamat District. 3) analyze the supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of pedagogical competence and work culture of Islamic Religious Education teachers at State Senior High Schools in Rantau Selamat District. This type of research is field research. The results of the study indicate that 1) the pedagogical competence of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in the learning process at at State Senior High Schools in Rantau Selamat District, based on the results of the study that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at State Senior High Schools 1 and State Senior High Schools 2 Rantau Selamat have good and effective pedagogical competence in the learning process. 2) The work culture of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers contributes to the formation of student character at process at State Senior High Schools in Rantau Selamat District, based on the results of research that the work culture of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at State Senior High Schools 1 and State Senior High Schools 2 Rantau Selamat plays a significant role in the formation of student character. 3) The implementation of pedagogical competence and the work culture of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at State Senior High Schools 1 and State Senior High Schools 2 Rantau Selamat is influenced by supporting and inhibiting factors. Supporting factors include teacher commitment and professionalism, principal support through academic supervision, a religious school environment, and adequate learning facilities, including digital media and comfortable classrooms.

1. Introduction

In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SMA Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat and SMA Negeri 2 Rantau Selamat, East Aceh Regency, the development of students' character still faces several challenges. PAI aims to instill noble moral values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline,

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and empathy, all grounded in Islamic teachings. However, in both schools, there are issues indicating that students' character formation, particularly in applying PAI values, still needs improvement. These issues include the lack of internalization of religious values in daily life, low student motivation to practice PAI teachings outside the classroom, and external environmental influences such as social media, which often contradict noble moral values(Achmada & Pratama, 2023). In addition, factors such as less innovative teaching methods and limited facilities in rural areas of East Aceh also complicate efforts to build students' character(Huda et al., 2022).

The main problem in PAI learning at SMA Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat is the lack of student consistency in applying noble moral values, such as honesty and discipline. Many students understand the theoretical aspects of Islamic teachings such as the importance of praying on time or being truthful yet fail to implement them, for example by cheating during exams or coming late to religious activities. Furthermore, students are often less enthusiastic about PAI lessons due to monotonous teaching methods, such as lectures without interactive approaches, causing religious values to be less internalized as character(Pujianti & Nugraha, 2024). The school environment, which has minimal extracurricular religious activities such as routine study circles, also limits students' exposure to real-life practices of PAI values[Suharsongko1 et al., 2023].

The learning outcomes report for PAI mentioned above shows that in Aceh's high schools, including those with contexts similar to SMA Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat, students often fail to internalize noble moral values due to unvaried teaching methods, such as focusing too heavily on memorizing verses without practical application. This results in low levels of honesty and discipline in daily life(Laili et al., 2022). The Aceh Department of Education Report (2024) highlights that character education based on religious values in Aceh schools is still hindered by the low competence of PAI teachers in applying contextual approaches an issue relevant to SMA Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat which affects students' motivation to practice values such as responsibility and empathy.

Based on the preliminary observation conducted on April 15, 2025, character-related problems in PAI learning at SMA Negeri 2 Rantau Selamat can be seen from students' low participation in discussions or religious practicum activities, such as worship simulations or Islamic-based social activities(Keagamaan et al., 2024). Many students demonstrate apathy toward PAI lessons, often because they consider them irrelevant to everyday life or because they are influenced by popular culture from social media, which contradicts moral values such as courtesy and respect. This is evident in the use of inappropriate language, such as casually using harsh words(Rusmiati Aliyyah et al., 2023). At SMA Negeri 2 Rantau Selamat, which is located about 12 km from the district center and whose population is predominantly Gayo and Batak with very few Acehnese and Javanese, the rural environment contributes to weak parental involvement in supporting their children's religious education. As a result, students receive little reinforcement of PAI values at home. This leads to the need to strengthen character values such as responsibility and empathy through more contextual and engaging approaches(Puad & Ashton, 2021).

PAI learning in high schools across Aceh shows that students often exhibit apathy toward PAI material, such as low participation in discussions on noble morals an issue also relevant to SMA Negeri 2 Rantau Selamat. This indicates the need to improve character values such as motivation and courtesy. Department of Education of Aceh Report notes that religious-based student activities such as study circles or Islamic community service programs have not been optimally implemented in East Aceh high schools, including SMA Negeri 2. As a result, student character values such as empathy and responsibility still need to be strengthened through PAI learning.

Another problem was also found at the public senior high schools in Rantau Selamat Subdistrict, namely SMA Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat and SMA Negeri 2 Rantau Selamat, based on the

researcher's initial findings through field observations with one of the principals, who explained that a competent teacher is one who fulfills the five work culture principles as a civil servant (ASN), namely as follows: 1) A professional teacher is a teacher who has been certified or has obtained teacher certification from the government. A certified teacher is one who has fulfilled professional competence in teaching, educating, and guiding students in achieving educational goals. 2) Teachers must have high integrity as educators, meaning acting consistently between what has been said or taught and behavior that aligns with the values of being a teacher: honesty, responsibility, and discipline. 3) Teachers must have a high sense of responsibility toward the tasks assigned according to regulations and their duty to guide students to become pious individuals. 4) Certified teachers must also demonstrate this by creating innovations in learning to support students' abilities and develop their talents. 5) Teachers as the front line must possess exemplary qualities so that students are able to imitate and follow good behavior, such as discipline, politeness, and fairness toward all students.

This research aims to analyze in depth the pedagogical competence and work culture of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in improving student character at public senior high schools in Rantau Selamat Subdistrict, namely SMA Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat and SMA Negeri 2 Rantau Selamat. This study will explore the extent of teachers' ability to design and implement effective learning, as well as how teacher work culture, such as role-modeling and professionalism, influences the formation of students' noble character. The research will also identify supporting factors, such as teacher training or school support, and inhibiting factors, such as limited resources or external environmental influences. Through this approach, the study is expected to produce practical recommendations, such as strategies for developing pedagogical competence through technology-based training, strengthening teacher work culture through coaching programs, and increasing collaboration between schools, families, and communities to support the formation of student character based on Islamic values amid the challenges of globalization and digitalization.

2. Methodology

This research is descriptive with a qualitative approach. This type of research is field research. This study was conducted by going directly to the predetermined research location to obtain data related to the pedagogical competence and work culture of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in improving student character at the public senior high schools in Rantau Selamat Subdistrict.

The research location is a place selected and intended to be examined in order to obtain the required data. In accordance with the title in the introductory chapter, the researcher determined that the research location is the public senior high schools in Rantau Selamat Subdistrict, namely SMA Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat and SMA Negeri 2 Rantau Selamat. The aspects studied are the pedagogical competence and work culture of PAI teachers in improving student character at these schools. The research is planned to be carried out from June to December 2025.

The research objects that serve as sources of data collection consist of several components, namely the principal, vice principal in charge of curriculum, vice principal in charge of student affairs, teaching staff, and students. The data collection techniques in this research include observation, documentation, and interviews. In this study, the data analysis used consists of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. After the researcher completes the study, conclusions from the research will be obtained.

3. Results

3.1 Pedagogical Competence of Islamic Education Teachers in the Learning Process at the State Senior High School in Rantau Selamat District

The pedagogical competence of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat reflects efforts to create learning that not only delivers religious material but also shapes students' character, attitudes, and spiritual maturity. Although the majority of teachers have shown sensitivity to students' characteristics, the application of teaching methods and technology, as well as holistic evaluation, still leaves room for improvement.

The planning process implemented by PAI teachers at this school demonstrates a fairly high level of maturity. Teachers prepare lesson plans (RPP) and teaching modules by considering differentiated student abilities and local life contexts, making the learning process contextual and relevant. However, from a critical perspective, aspects of planning reflection and authentic assessment are not yet fully optimal; teachers have not systematically developed instruments capable of recording both the development of students' character and religious values simultaneously. This aligns with findings that the standard of pedagogical competence for PAI teachers ideally encompasses four elements: planning, implementation, evaluation, and student development, which are influenced by the school's local values and culture. (Abdul Majid. 2017). The imperfections in preparing character and spiritual assessment tools indicate that, although teachers are capable of "good planning," they are not yet fully able to ensure that these plans are implemented and monitored in depth in daily practice(Arahman et al., 2025).

The teachers have adopted active learning approaches, including group discussions, practical simulations, interactive quizzes, and problem-based projects. These approaches demonstrate that teachers strive to position students as active subjects in PAI learning, rather than mere recipients(Riza, 2023). Linking the material to students' realities, such as social media ethics or interfaith tolerance, strengthens the affective and attitudinal dimensions of learning. Nevertheless, aspects of time management and method variety still need to be expanded, for example, by integrating gamification or blended digital learning to further enhance engagement. This is important considering literature shows that pedagogical competence is closely related to the ability to use modern methods and technology to build 21st-century thinking skills(T. Idris et al., 2024). Thus, while implementation shows significant progress, challenges arise when teachers must balance the need for innovative methods with limited lesson time and wide variations in student abilities(Rijal et al., 2025).

Classroom management points to a vibrant learning environment infused with religious values(Bahar, 2022). Classroom rules are collaboratively established with students, prayers or Quran recitation at the beginning of lessons are routine, and classroom arrangement is used as a strategy to create a conducive learning atmosphere(Amiruddin et al., 2025). These strategies reflect teachers' competence in fostering a learning environment that nurtures character. However, critically, the variety of classroom management strategies could be further developed, for instance, by maximizing cross-class collaborative learning or student-led peer learning. This is relevant because literature shows that pedagogical competence also includes the ability to facilitate and manage social and emotional interactions in the classroom, not just the flow of activities(Nazaruddin, 2024). Therefore, teachers at this school are already at a good management phase, but to achieve a truly "ideal class" that is active and independent, further development of student-centered classroom management is necessary(Siregar et al., 2023).

The planning of Islamic Education (PAI) learning indicates that teachers possess a mature level of pedagogical competence. Teachers prepare lesson plans (RPP), syllabi, annual programs, and semester programs in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum, adjusting learning outcome indicators and student characteristics(Razali et al., 2024). Differentiated learning strategies are applied so that students with varying abilities can still learn optimally, while digital media is used to support contextual understanding of the material(Adibah et al., 2025). This shows that although digital media is already being used, its application remains supplementary and has not yet become the core of an active learning strategy, indicating opportunities to enhance pedagogical competence in the realm of digital teaching readiness. These findings align with Rohana's assertion that PAI teachers' pedagogical competence should encompass mastery of student characteristics and the development of effective learning(M. A. Idris & Suroto, 2023).

The implementation of learning follows a student-centered approach, combining prayers and apperception as an opening, group discussions, problem-based learning, and practical worship simulations. This demonstrates teachers' competence in encouraging active student engagement and fostering Islamic character. However, while active methods are applied, most classes still rely on lectures and Q&A as the primary strategy, so the potential for higher-order critical thinking development and the use of technological media has not yet been fully optimized. Studies by Nurrozaq et al. support the importance of teachers' pedagogical competence in implementing learning methods that promote both character and cognitive development in students(Akbar et al., 2025).

3.2 The Work Culture of Islamic Education Teachers Contributes to the Character Formation of Students at the State Senior High School in Rantau Selamat District

The work culture of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat emphasizes that the formation of students' character cannot be separated from the internal quality of teachers as educators. The professionalism of PAI teachers is not merely mastery of subject matter and lesson plan preparation (RPP), but also consistency in demonstrating noble character that can be observed and emulated by students. Teachers' sincerity, patience, and steadfastness in dealing with differing student perspectives show how Islamic values are applied in real practice. This approach aligns with character education theory, which emphasizes modeling and observation as the primary mechanisms for moral internalization(Suharman, 2024).

Collaboration between PAI teachers and colleagues, school principals, guidance counselors, and homeroom teachers forms a coherent character education network. This collaboration not only supports the management of religious activities and cross-curricular projects but also extends the impact of Islamic values into every subject. (Emmy Feriyati. 2024). Through synergistic cooperation, PAI teachers ensure that values such as tolerance, responsibility, and teamwork are not only taught normatively but are consistently practiced across all school activities. This demonstrates that a collaborative work culture strengthens a religious and character-driven climate, facilitating systematic internalization of values.

The discipline of PAI teachers emerges as an important indicator that reinforces student character formation. Punctuality, administrative consistency, and the enforcement of classroom rules are not only forms of administrative professionalism but also tools of moral education. Students observe and emulate teachers' disciplined behavior, making discipline part of character internalization. Therefore, teacher discipline is not merely a formal requirement but an effective character education strategy.(Feriyati, 2024).

The commitment of teachers reflects high moral and spiritual dedication. Teachers do not merely teach but actively provide spiritual guidance, relate learning material to students' life contexts, and participate in school religious activities. This commitment shows that character education is effective when teachers consistently align their words, actions, and taught values. It also reinforces students' perception that moral and religious values are relevant and applicable in daily life.The work culture of teachers reflects a strong integration of professionalism, discipline, collaboration, commitment, and internalization of religious values, which directly contributes to students' character formation. PAI teachers not only function as instructors delivering religious content but also as moral role models shaping students' behavior and attitudes through example, discipline, and responsibility. Their professionalism is evident in the systematic design of learning, mastery of teaching materials, and adaptive use of educational technology. This professional attitude has a significant impact on students' character, particularly in fostering discipline, responsibility, and work ethic. Strong pedagogical and professional competence among teachers can cultivate a character-driven learning environment oriented toward moral values. At SMA Negeri 2 Rantau Selamat, PAI teachers consistently arrive on time, prepare learning materials, and demonstrate polite and communicative behavior inside and outside the classroom, providing concrete examples for students to emulate professional attitudes and work ethics.

In addition to professionalism, the collaborative work culture of PAI teachers also plays a significant role in shaping students' social character. PAI teachers cooperate with other subject teachers, homeroom teachers, and guidance counselors in religious development activities such as short-term Islamic boarding schools (pesantren kilat), the Prophet Muhammad's birthday (Maulid Nabi), and Islamic holidays (PHBI). This collaboration not only enhances the effectiveness of activities but also instills values of togetherness, empathy, and social responsibility in students. The collaboration of PAI teachers reflects the principle of ukhuwah islamiyah (Islamic brotherhood), which concretely fosters students' character to respect and cooperate with one another despite differences. Mindani et al. emphasize that collaboration among educators in religion-based moderation education can instill social character and tolerance in students. Thus, PAI teachers' cooperation becomes a powerful instrument of character education through habituation and meaningful social participation.

Discipline is another important dimension of the work culture of PAI teachers that directly influences the development of students' responsibility and orderliness. Teachers' discipline is reflected in adherence to teaching schedules, punctuality in grading assignments, and regularity in preparing learning materials. Teacher discipline serves as a model for students in valuing time and complying with school rules. (Nurrozaq, et al. 2019) explain that the consistency of PAI teachers in implementing learning activities becomes an effective means to foster students' sense of responsibility and order. At SMA Negeri 2 Rantau Selamat, students exhibit positive behavioral changes, such as punctuality in attending class, neatness in dress, and regularity in worship outcomes resulting from the disciplined habits instilled by PAI teachers through concrete modeling and continuous guidance.

3.3 Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Pedagogical Competence and Work Culture of Islamic Education Teachers at the State Senior High School in Rantau Selamat District

The implementation of pedagogical competence and work culture of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat demonstrates the complexity of interactions between teachers' internal factors, institutional support, and student characteristics. Supporting factors, such as teachers' commitment and professionalism, the principal's support, a religious school

environment, and the availability of learning facilities and resources, strengthen the effectiveness of pedagogical competence implementation. Conversely, obstacles such as limited time, challenges in mastering technology, and variations in students' motivation and discipline present significant challenges that require mitigation strategies.

1. Supporting Factors

a) Teacher Commitment and Professionalism

The commitment and professionalism of PAI teachers are primary factors influencing the success of learning. Teachers who demonstrate high dedication not only arrive on time and prepare lesson plans (RPP) but also consistently guide students in religious activities. Professionalism is reflected in teachers' mastery of the subject matter, the application of effective teaching methods, and the adjustment of media and learning strategies according to student characteristics. The combination of commitment and professionalism positions teachers as moral role models, directly impacting the formation of students' religious character. This is reinforced by interview results showing that PAI teachers attend classes punctually, prepare teaching materials thoroughly, and integrate moral values in daily interactions.

b) Principal Support and Academic Supervision

Principal support plays a strategic role in enhancing teacher motivation and work effectiveness. Dialogical academic supervision, conducted through classroom observation and evaluation of teaching materials, provides constructive feedback for teachers to improve teaching strategies and enhance pedagogical competence. This support also creates a conducive work climate, where teachers feel valued and motivated to innovate. Collaborative supervision practices underscore the importance of leadership that supports a professional and religious work culture.(Hasanah, & Fitri. 2021).

c) Religious School Environment

A religious school environment serves as an effective medium for supporting the implementation of pedagogical competence and student character formation. Routine religious practices, such as Quran recitation (tadarus), Duha prayer, and the commemoration of Islamic holidays, create a spiritual atmosphere that encourages the internalization of moral and ethical values in students. PAI teachers leverage this environment to relate religious teachings to learning materials, allowing Islamic values to be applied contextually. This religious atmosphere also enhances teachers' motivation to implement learning optimally, in line with the principles of character education, which emphasize the interaction among the environment, teachers, and students.

d) Learning Facilities and Resources

The availability of learning media, comfortable classrooms, and educational technology supports teachers in delivering material in an engaging and interactive manner. The use of projectors, Islamic videos, and interactive quizzes increases student participation and facilitates understanding of PAI concepts. These facilities also enable teachers to apply innovative and adaptive teaching methods, making the learning process more effective and engaging.

2. Inhibiting Factors

a) Limited Learning Time

The limited allocation of time for PAI lessons constitutes a significant obstacle. Short class periods restrict opportunities for discussion, practical activities, and individual interactions between teachers and students. Although teachers apply adaptive methods, this limitation still constrains students' mastery of the material and the implementation of innovative pedagogical strategies.

b) Challenges in Technology Mastery

Differences in teachers' technological proficiency pose challenges in implementing digital and interactive learning. Some teachers are still accustomed to conventional methods, so the use of digital media has not been fully optimized. This affects the diversity of teaching methods, the quality of material delivery, and student participation. (Susatya, 2020). Enhancing teachers' digital literacy through training and mentoring is an important strategy to overcome this obstacle.

c) Variations in Student Motivation and Discipline

Differences in students' motivation and discipline affect engagement and learning effectiveness. Teachers must divide their attention between active students and those who need additional guidance. This variation requires the application of adaptive pedagogical strategies, motivational approaches, and consistent classroom rules to ensure that all students can participate optimally.

These supporting and inhibiting factors indicate that the effectiveness of PAI teachers' pedagogical competence and work culture cannot be separated from the complex interaction among teachers, school principals, facilities, the school environment, and student characteristics. Professional and dedicated teachers can maximize learning potential despite limitations in time or technology. Support from the principal and a religious school environment strengthens teachers' ability to implement moral and religious values in instruction. However, technology proficiency and variations in student motivation remain challenges that require specific strategies to ensure that PAI learning remains effective and oriented toward character formation.

4. Conclusions

Based on the research findings, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Pedagogical Competence of PAI Teachers in the Learning Process at State Senior High Schools in Rantau Selamat District Based on the research, Islamic Education (PAI) teachers at SMA Negeri 1 and SMA Negeri 2 Rantau Selamat demonstrate good and effective pedagogical competence in the learning process. Teachers are able to systematically plan and implement lessons using lesson plans (RPP), syllabi, and methods that align with students' characteristics, including lectures, discussions, simulations, worship practices, projects, and the use of digital media. This approach enhances student participation, creativity, and understanding. Effective classroom management and collaborative interactions create a conducive learning environment, motivate students, and support character development.

2. Work Culture of PAI Teachers Contributes to Student Character Formation at State Senior High Schools in Rantau Selamat District, The work culture of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers at SMA Negeri 1 and SMA Negeri 2 Rantau Selamat plays a significant role in shaping students' character. Teachers' professionalism, discipline, commitment, and collaboration are reflected in lesson preparation, classroom management, participation in religious activities, and student mentoring and guidance.

3. Implementation of Pedagogical Competence and Work Culture of PAI Teachers at SMA Negeri 1 and SMA Negeri 2 Rantau Selamat is Influenced by Supporting and Inhibiting Factors. Supporting factors include teachers' commitment and professionalism, principal support through academic supervision, a religious school environment, and adequate learning facilities, including digital media and comfortable classrooms. Inhibiting factors include limited lesson time, variations in student motivation and discipline, challenges in technology mastery, and a lack of specific training.

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