

The Influence of Strengthening Islamic Religious Education through a Religious Culture on Students' Religious Behavior at Private Junior High School Harapan 3 Medan

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Abstract

Addressing the gap between cognitive understanding and practice in Islamic Education (PAI) caused by theoretical-rote methods, this study analyzes the impact of PAI reinforcement based on religious culture on student behavior at SMP Swasta Harapan 3 Medan. Using a quantitative associative method with simple random sampling on 100 eighth-grade students and linear regression analysis, the results indicate that, while both PAI reinforcement and student religious behavior are currently in the moderate category, there is a positive and significant influence with a 43.6% contribution (R Square) and a regression model of $Y = 63.596 + 0.572X$. The study concludes that engineering the school ecosystem based on behavioristic theory is effective for shaping daily Islamic character, recommending further research into external factors like family and community, as 56.4% of the variance lies outside this model.

Keywords

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Instruction; Religious Culture; Religious Behavior



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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a strategic role in shaping students' morality, personality, and ethical foundations, as well as optimizing the internalization of Islamic values (Alyana et al., 2025; Rofi et al., 2026; Nento et al., 2025). However, current PAI learning is still dominated by theoretical and memorization approaches, thus suboptimally developing students' attitudes and practical skills in the field (Ivansyah et al., 2025; Hidayat et al., 2025). Ideally, PAI should be able to integrate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects comprehensively (Ramadhan et al., 2025). As a solution, schools implement religious culture through programmed habits such as congregational prayer and Al-Quran literacy to instill noble values of character (Hafiz et al., 2025; Sofannah et al., 2023; Lusi et al., 2025).

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a strategic role in shaping students' morality,

personality, and ethical foundations, as well as optimizing the internalization of Islamic values. However, current PAI learning is still dominated by theoretical approaches and memorization, thus suboptimally practicing religious values in daily life. Ideally, PAI should be able to comprehensively integrate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. As a solution, schools implement religious culture such as habituating congregational prayer and Quranic literacy to shape students' morality and behavior. However, observations at Harapan 3 Private Middle School in Medan indicate that students' religious discipline still needs to be improved in school and home activities.

This attitude ignores the essence of Islamic teachings regarding the continuity of worship, which is basically stated in QS. Al-Baqarah verse 43 regarding the obligation to perform congregational prayers.

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ ٤٣

Meaning: Firmly pray, pay zakat, and bow with those who bow. (Al-Baqarah: 43) (Indonesian Ministry of Religion, 2019) .

Several previous studies have shown that school religious programs are not yet aligned with students' religious discipline due to weak monitoring management in the field [Fithrah & Suniarti, 2025]. Ali Syamsudin's (2021) study examined religious culture and Islamic high school students' academic achievement; Sandi Pratama et al. (2019) elaborated on religious culture with the self-regulated variable of junior high school students; while Oga Sugianto et al. (2022) examined its impact on elementary school students' spiritual attitudes. The research gap in the literature demonstrates a limited focus on purely cognitive aspects and a lack of integrative studies at the junior high school level. The novelty of this study lies in testing an applied Islamic Religious Education curriculum reinforcement model directly mediated by a structured religious cultural ecosystem without other supporting variables at the locus of general institutions (not madrasahs). Through Skinner's behaviorist framework, the religious cultural atmosphere is operationalized as a periodic stimulus to trigger students' comprehensive religious behavioral responses, as measured by Glock and Stark's five dimensions of religiosity.

Based on the conceptual synthesis, the research hypothesis is formulated as follows: Ha (There is a significant influence of strengthening PAI learning through religious culture on students' religious behavior at Harapan 3 Private Middle School, Medan) and H₀ (No significant influence was found from strengthening PAI learning through religious culture on students' religious behavior at Harapan 3 Private Middle School, Medan). The purpose of this research is to determine the implementation of strengthening Islamic Religious Education learning based on religious culture, describe the portrait of students' religious behavior from the dimensions of worship, morality, and communication ethics, and analyze the real contribution of strengthening Islamic Religious Education learning through religious culture in influencing students' religious behavior patterns. All of these scientific arguments culminate in the research title: " The Influence of Strengthening Islamic Religious Education through a Religious Culture on Students' Religious Behavior at Private Junior High School

Harapan 3 Medan"

METHODS

This quantitative research with an associative approach was conducted at Harapan 3 Private Junior High School, Medan, in the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year to test the causal impact of strengthening Islamic Religious Education through religious culture on students' religious behavior [Muin, 2023]. The study population included all 158 8th grade students [Zulfikar et al., 2024]. Using the Slovin Formula calculation with a 6% error rate, a definitive sample size of 100 respondents was obtained to ensure data representativeness. The sampling technique applied simple random sampling through a lottery mechanism to reduce bias [Abigail et al., 2023: 46]. Primary data were collected efficiently using a closed-ended Likert-scale questionnaire, where subjects provided a check mark on the answer sheet provided. All of this time planning was systematically designed to produce valid and accurate statistical conclusions.

Through this quantitative approach, each statement item in the questionnaire was constructed by providing five alternative structured answer choices, each with a different score weight, distributed hierarchically from the highest to the lowest score. The results for this study can be seen in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1Measurement Scores with Likert Scale

No	Alternative Answers		Score
1.	Strongly Agree (SS)	Always (SL)	5
2.	Agree (S)	Frequently (SR)	4
3.	Doubt (RR)	Sometimes (KD)	3
4.	Disagree (TS)	Rare (JR)	2
5.	Strongly Disagree (STS)	Never (TP)	1

This study employed observation and documentation techniques at Harapan 3 Private Junior High School in Medan through four systematic stages: preparation, implementation, data processing, and reporting. The research instrument consisted of two variables: Strengthening Islamic Education (PAI) based on Religious Culture (Variable X), which includes indicators of worship habits, teacher role models, and religious atmosphere (Sutarto, 2022), and Student Religious Behavior (Variable Y), based on the Glock & Stark dimensions, which measure worship practices and morals. The Likert-scale questionnaire items were structured based on these indicator grids to ensure valid and accurate data.

Table 2Grid of Instrument Variables for Strengthening Islamic Education Learning through Religious Culture

Variables	Indicator	No Item
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Strengthening Islamic Education Learning through Religious Culture (X)	Habit of Worship	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
	Teacher's Exemplary Behavior	6, 7, 8, 9, 10
	Islamic Moral Culture	10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15
	School Religious Activities	16, 17, 18, 19, 20
	Social Religious Culture	21, 22, 23, 24, 25
	Religious Atmosphere of School	26, 27, 28, 29, 30
Amount		30

Table 3 Instrument Grid for Religious Behavior Variables

Variables	Indicator	No Item
Religious Behavior (Y)	Faith in Allah and Islamic Teachings	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
	Implementation of Worship	7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
	Religious Feelings and Experience	13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18
	Understanding Religious Teachings	19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24
	Social Behavior According to Religious Teachings	25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30
Amount		30

Instrument standardization was conducted to ensure the validity and consistency of the measuring instrument. Validity testing used the Pearson Product Moment formula assisted by SPSS version 24 with a significance level of 5%. Questionnaire items were declared valid if the calculated r value was greater than the table r or the correlation index exceeded 0.30 [Sanaky, 2021; Sugiyono, 2023b]. Meanwhile, a reliability test was applied to measure the stability of the measuring instrument using the Cronbach's Alpha formula. This Likert-scale questionnaire instrument was categorized as reliable and consistent if the reliability coefficient value of r_{11} was greater than the table r or exceeded the minimum standard threshold of 0.60. Furthermore, before entering the hypothesis testing stage, the collected primary data must pass the analysis prerequisite test, one of the main focuses of which is the normality test. This prerequisite test is absolutely conducted to detect whether the distribution of research data variance is normally distributed, thus fulfilling the requirements for using parametric statistics in linear regression analysis. Hypothesis testing is carried out through simple linear regression analysis with an equation model.

$$Y = a + bX$$

SPSS-assisted to map the direction of the relationship between the PAI/religious culture reinforcement variable X and the religious behavior of students Y [Elfrianto et al.,

2025]. The significance of the partial effect is proven through a t-test at a 5% significance level $\alpha = 5\%$ by comparing the calculated t-value and the t-table or by looking at the significance value $\text{sig} < \alpha = 0.05$ [Sugiyono, 2023a]. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination R^2 is used to calculate the percentage contribution of the independent variable in stimulating the variance of the dependent variable. This series of inferential tests statistically tests the Statistical Hypothesis between $H_0: \beta = 0$ (no effect) against $H_a: \beta \neq 0$ (there is a significant influence) in order to draw valid research conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION (Palatino Linotype 11, Space 1.15, Justify)

Results

Strengthening Islamic Religious Education Learning through Religious Culture at Harapan 3 Private Middle School, Medan

After conducting descriptive statistical analysis and categorization on each indicator of variable X, a summary of the analysis results was compiled to provide an overview of the dominant categories for each indicator. A summary of the frequency distribution of categories for each indicator of variable X is presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Summary of Frequency Distribution of Indicator Categories for Variable X

Indicator	Low (f/%)	Medium (f/%)	Height (f/%)	Dominant Category
Habit of Worship	21 (21%)	79 (79%)	0 (0%)	Currently
Teacher's Exemplary Behavior	11 (11%)	65 (65%)	24 (24%)	Currently
Islamic Moral Culture	15 (15%)	69 (69%)	16 (16%)	Currently
School Religious Activities	14 (14%)	70 (70%)	16 (16%)	Currently
Social Religious Culture	13 (13%)	66 (66%)	21 (21%)	Currently
Religious Atmosphere of School	14 (14%)	71 (71%)	15 (15%)	Currently

Source: Data processed by researchers, 2026

Based on Table 4, it can be seen that all indicators in the variable Strengthening Islamic Religious Education Learning through Religious Culture have a dominant medium category. The percentage of the medium category for each indicator ranges from 65% to 79%. The highest percentage of the medium category is found in the Worship Habits indicator, at 79%, while the lowest percentage of the medium category is found in the Teacher Exemplary Behavior indicator, at 65%. However, several indicators showed that respondents were in the high category, namely Teacher Exemplary Behavior (24%), Socio-Religious Culture (21%), Islamic Moral Culture (16%), School Religious Activities (16%), and School Religious Atmosphere (15%). Meanwhile, for the Worship Habits indicator, there were no respondents

in the high category.

Based on the overall accumulation of generalized data, these results indicate that the implementation of strengthening Islamic Religious Education through religious culture at Harapan 3 Private Middle School, Medan, has been quite successful. However, these findings indicate an urgent need for consistent and sustainable improvement efforts to ensure each indicator reaches a high level more evenly, in order to achieve standardized quality of students' religious character.

Religious Behavior of Students at Harapan 3 Private Middle School, Medan

After conducting descriptive statistical analysis and categorization on each indicator of the Y variable, a summary of the analysis results was compiled to provide an overview of the dominant categories in each indicator. A summary of the frequency distribution of categories for each indicator of the Student Religious Behavior variable is presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Summary of Frequency Distribution of Indicator Categories for Variable Y

Indicator	Low (f/%)	Medium (f/%)	Height (f/%)	Dominant Category
Faith in Allah and Islamic Teachings	5 (5%)	95 (95%)	0 (0%)	Currently
Implementation of Worship	15 (15%)	65 (65%)	20 (20%)	Currently
Religious Feelings and Experience	12 (12%)	88 (88%)	0 (0%)	Currently
Understanding Religious Teachings	10 (10%)	90 (90%)	0 (0%)	Currently
Social Behavior According to Religious Teachings	18 (18%)	82 (82%)	0 (0%)	Currently

Source: Data processed by researchers, 2026

Based on Table 5, it can be seen that all indicators in the Student Religious Behavior variable are predominantly in the moderate category. The percentage of respondents in the moderate category for each indicator ranges from 65% to 95%. The highest moderate category percentage is found in the Faith in Allah and Islamic Teachings indicator, at 95%, while the lowest moderate category percentage is found in the Implementation of Worship indicator, at 65%. Furthermore, only the Implementation of Worship indicator had respondents in the high category, with 20 respondents (20%). Meanwhile, the indicators for Faith in Allah and Islamic Teachings, Religious Feelings and Experience, Understanding of Religious Teachings, and Social Behavior in Accordance with Religious Teachings did not have respondents in the high category.

In general, these factual findings provide scientific justification in the field that the

manifestation of religiosity of students at Harapan 3 Private Junior High School is in the middle cluster. This score achievement reflects that the majority of students have actualized religious actions at an adequate level. This condition is simultaneously proven by the integration of various measurement aspects, which include aspects of faith, worship, religious experience and feelings, understanding of religious teachings, and social behavior in accordance with religious teachings as a unified indicator in constructing students' religious personality. However, ongoing coaching and habituation efforts are still needed as an educational intervention step so that all aspects of students' religious behavior can develop to reach a high category as a whole.

The Influence of Strengthening Islamic Religious Education Learning through Religious Culture on Students' Religious Behavior at Harapan 3 Private Middle School, Medan

The implementation of the research agenda in this study specifically aims to determine the magnitude and direction of the influence of Strengthening Islamic Education Learning through Religious Culture on Students' Religious Behavior at Harapan 3 Private Middle School, Medan, while also functioning as an answer to the third problem formulation. A series of testing procedures were carried out through a simple linear regression analysis approach, which includes the preparation of a regression equation formulation, model feasibility testing, hypothesis testing, and calculation of the coefficient of determination test value. In the next stage, the overall data findings from the analysis results are presented as follows:

Simple Linear Regression Test

Table 6 Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)
(Constant)	63,596	8,644	
Strengthening Islamic Education Learning through Religious Culture	0.572	0.066	0.660

Source: Processed Primary Data (2026)

Based on Table 6 above, a simple linear regression analysis was used to see the form of the relationship between the variables Strengthening PAI Learning through Religious Culture (X) and Religious Behavior (Y).

the Unstandardized Coefficients value in column B, the simple linear regression equation formula is obtained as follows:

$$Y = 63.596 + 0.572X$$

The regression equation can be explained in detail as follows:

1. The constant value (a) of 63.596 indicates that if the value of the variable Strengthening PAI Learning through Religious Culture (X) is assumed to be equal to zero (0) or does not change, then the value of the variable Religious Behavior (Y) is 63.596.
2. The regression coefficient of variable X (b) is 0.572, which is positive. This indicates a unidirectional relationship between the two variables, where every one unit increase in the value of the variable Strengthening Islamic Education Learning through Religious Culture, the value of the variable Religious Behavior is predicted to increase by 0.572.

This positive coefficient value indicates that the more intensive the strengthening of Islamic Religious Education learning implemented through religious culture, the higher the level of religious behavior formed.

Model Adequacy Test (ANOVA)

The mathematical construction of the directed linear relationship model continues with the stage of estimating the model's fit parameters through a quadratic analysis of variance. This step serves as a methodological control instrument to minimize prediction deviations in the field. Through inferential statistical testing, the evidence is directed at testing the validity of the constructed estimation structure, so that its accuracy can be accounted for when used to elaborate on the degree of impact between the dimensions studied. Strengthening Islamic Religious Education Learning through Religious Culture (X) on the existence of Religious Behavior (Y) within the scope of the object studied. Technically, the model's suitability parameters are determined based on the significance value (Sig.) and the calculated *F* value obtained from the results of the regression analysis using statistical software to confirm the accuracy of the model's predictions. The results of the model's suitability test (ANOVA) are presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7 Results of Model Feasibility Test (ANOVA)

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	3303,456	1	3303,456	75,784	<0.001
Residual	4271,854	98	43,590		
Total	7575,310	99			

Source: Processed Primary Data (2026)

Based on Table 7 above, it is known that the calculated *F* value obtained is 75.784 with a significance level (*Sig.*) of <0.001. The decision making of the model's feasibility is based on the significance value, if the *Sig. value* <0.05, then the model is declared feasible. Because the significance value is much smaller than 0.05 (<0.001 < 0.05), this regression model is declared significant and suitable (*fit*) to predict the level of students' Religious Behavior based on the variable Strengthening PAI Learning through Religious Culture.

t-Test (Partial Significance)

Inferential testing through the t-test procedure (partial significance) is basically

intentionally carried out to determine the magnitude and direction of the influence of each independent variable on the dependent variable individually or independently within the scope of the object being studied. In the context of operationalizing the data in this study, t-test analysis is used to mathematically test whether the variable Strengthening Islamic Education Learning through Religious Culture (X) has a significant effect on the variability of the Religious Behavior variable (Y) in real terms in the field. Furthermore, the decision-making mechanism is carried out by comparing the significance value (Sig.) of the output results with an alpha significance level of 0.05, or it can also be done by comparing the calculated t-value with the t-table value to confirm the validity of the parameters of the data processing results. The results of the partial significance test (t-test) are presented in Table 8 below.

Table 8 Results of Partial Significance Test (t-Test)

Model	t	Sig.	Information
1 (Constant)	7,357	<0.001	
Strengthening Islamic Education Learning through Religious Culture	8,705	<0.001	Significant

Source: Processed Primary Data (2026)

Based on Table 8 above, it is known that the variable Strengthening Islamic Education Learning through Religious Culture obtained a t-value of 8.705 with a significance value (Sig.) < 0.001. At a significance level of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$) with degrees of freedom (df) = $n - 2 = 100 - 2 = 98$, a t-table value of 1.984 was obtained. The test results show that t count (8.705) > t table (1.984) and the significance value < 0.05. Based on the statistical decision calculation, the position of H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted as the basis for the validity of the hypothesis. In a deeper explanatory meaning, the variable Strengthening PAI Learning through Religious Culture has a linear contribution and has a positive and significant effect on students' Religious Behavior, thus justifying the direction of positive regression between these variables empirically.

"The articulation of these findings indicates a positive causal relationship where the more effective and consistent the implementation of Strengthening Islamic Religious Education Learning through Religious Culture, the more this condition automatically triggers stimulation that leads to a higher internalization of Religious Behavior in students. This regression direction also confirms the reverse law, namely if Strengthening Islamic Religious Education Learning through Religious Culture is identified as less than optimal, then the contextual engineering of the formation of Religious Behavior in students tends to decrease.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

In processing the data instruments in this study, determination analysis was applied to calculate the percentage of the actual contribution of the PAI learning reinforcement

variables integrated by the institution. The computational results provide a valid scientific foundation for measuring the proportion of the linear relationship between aspects of religious culture (X) and the value dimension in students' religious behavior (Y). Based on the interpretation of these mathematical parameters, the increase in the coefficient of determination directly reflects the strengthening of the estimation power and the accuracy of the independent variables in explaining the direction and shift in values of the dependent variable in the modeling scheme. This situation strengthens the credibility of the theoretical conclusions drawn on all measured variables. The results of the calculation of the coefficient of determination (R^2) can be seen in Table 9 below.

Table 9 Results of the Determination Coefficient (R^2)

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
0.660	0.436	0.430	6,602

Source: Processed Primary Data (2026)

Based on Table 9 above, the correlation or relationship value (R) was obtained as 0.660 which indicates a fairly strong relationship between the two variables. In addition, the coefficient of determination (R Square) was obtained at 0.436. This value indicates that the variable Strengthening Islamic Religious Education Learning through Religious Culture is able to explain the variable of students' Religious Behavior by 43.6%. In other words, the contribution of the variable Strengthening Islamic Religious Education Learning through Religious Culture to students' Religious Behavior is 43.6%. Meanwhile, 56.4% (100% - 43.6%) indicated that the level of variability in students' Religious Behavior essentially stems from and is influenced by the intervention of various other factors outside the context of the variables studied in this comprehensive research agenda scheme. These factors were not included in the research model and therefore require further study in subsequent research..

Discussion

An analysis of strengthening Islamic Religious Education learning through religious culture at Harapan 3 Private Middle School in Medan shows a dominance of the moderate category (65%–79%) across six indicators, with the habituation of worship occupying the highest proportion [Suputra, 2023]. This finding reinforces Skinner's behaviorist theory, where the consistency of habituation operates as a stimulus to shape students' religious behavior [Murniyati & Suyadi, 2021; Mokodanga, 2022]. Meanwhile, the teacher role model indicator shows a variation in perception (65% moderate, 24% high), confirming the central role of teachers as role models in stimulating students' imitative awareness [Rifki et al., 2022]. The importance of this role model is also emphasized by Allah SWT in the following Surah Al-Ahzab verse 21 of the Qur'an:

﴿لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا﴾

Meaning: Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have a good example to follow

(that is) for those who hope in (the mercy of) Allah and (the coming of) the Last Day and remember Allah often (Al-Ahzab: 21) (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

Al-Misbah's interpretation of QS. Al-Ahzab verse 21 affirms the position of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a good example encompassing spiritual, leadership, and social ethical aspects in the public sphere [Shihab, 2002]. Epistemologically, this verse legitimizes that role modeling methodology is a crucial instructional instrument in the treasury of Islamic education. In the school environment, the integration of verbal and nonverbal morality of teachers functions as a sociocultural stimulus that encourages imitative habituation and internalization of sharia values in students. Empirically, descriptive analysis of the variables of religious behavior of students at Harapan 3 Private Middle School Medan shows a dominance of the medium category (65%–95%). The faith indicator recorded the highest medium proportion (95%), while the indicator of worship implementation was at the lowest level (65%), despite being the only dimension that captured the high category (20%). This gap aligns with Glock and Stark's religiosity paradigm, which states that the depth of the ideological dimension (belief) does not necessarily guarantee the stability of the ritualistic dimension (worship practices) without continuous ecosystem conditioning [Khomairoh et al., 2024; Yusuf et al., 2024]. This objective reality emphasizes the urgency of strengthening adaptive and sustainable spiritual habits in schools.

The importance of consistent performance of worship, especially prayer, as a concrete manifestation of faith was emphasized by Allah SWT. in the Al-Qur'an Surah Al-'Ankabut verse 45 follows:

{ أَتْلُ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تُنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ ٤٥ }

Meaning: Read (Prophet Muhammad) the Book (Al-Qur'an) that has been revealed to you and maintain prayer. Indeed, prayer prevents evil and evil (actions). Indeed, remembering Allah (salat) is greater (its priority than other acts of worship). Allah knows what you do (Al-'Ankabut: 45) (Indonesian Ministry of Religion, 2019).

According to Tafsir al-Misbah, this verse contains two main commands, namely reading and internalizing the Qur'an and establishing prayer properly. Quraish Shihab explains that prayer performed with full reverence, fulfilling its requirements and pillars, and accompanied by appreciation of its meaning will shape a person's personality so that they are able to control themselves from vile (*fahsyah*) and unjust acts. Thus, the function of prayer is not only to fulfill obligations, but also as a means of spiritual education and moral development. Furthermore, Quraish Shihab explains that the phrase "indeed, the remembrance of Allah is greater" shows that remembrance of Allah is the core of worship and a source of spiritual strength for a believer. The more a person remembers Allah, the stronger his or her drive to behave in accordance with Islamic teachings and avoid sin

(Shihab, 2002) .

A hermeneutical review of Surah Al-'Ankabut verse 45 legitimizes that the continuous enforcement of prayer and Quranic recitation serve a preventive function in protecting students from manifestations of evil and unjust behavior. In the Harapan 3 Private Middle School environment in Medan, this structural intervention is operationalized as a sociocultural stimulus that consistently shapes students' religious behavior as an expected response [Lestari & Ain, 2022]. This reinforces B.F. Skinner's behaviorist theory regarding character formation based on a continuous habituation scheme. Empirically, the results of statistical testing through simple linear regression analysis modeling produced an equation ($Y = 63.596 + 0.572X$) with a value (t count) of 8.705 ((Sig. < 0.001) and the feasibility of the ANOVA model ($F = 75.784$; Sig. < 0.001). Through the correlation coefficient ($R = 0.660$) and the coefficient of determination (R^2).

This research produced the core research finding that the strategy of strengthening Islamic Religious Education learning through religious culture provided a positive, significant, and unidirectional contribution of 43.6% in stimulating the escalation of the quality of students' religious behavior. This contribution achievement was proven to be superior to the results of studies by Ali Syamsudin (13.7%), Sandi Pratama et al. (27.2%), and Oga Sugianto et al. (39.3%). Although this causal relationship model was proven valid, the generalization of scientific conclusions in this research is limited by fundamental research limitations. The focus of this study's observations exclusively measured a single independent variable in the form of strengthening Islamic Religious Education learning through religious culture in the formal school environment. The implication is that the statistical model in this study left a fairly dominant proportion of variance in the remaining contribution value, namely 56.4%. This remaining factor is beyond the scope of the associative observation limits of this research, which are theoretically influenced by individual internal determinants (such as intrinsic motivation and stability of inner faith) as well as macro-sociological interventions (such as family domestic parenting patterns and patterns of sociocultural interactions in society) [Syifa et al., 2025; [Hidayati & Rahmaniah, 2021]. Therefore, optimizing the reconstruction of students' religious character cannot rely solely on the school institutional ecosystem, but rather requires cross-sector collaborative synergy involving school policy makers, the household environment, and the social community in an integrated manner.

CONCLUSION

Based on empirical analysis, the implementation of strengthening Islamic Religious Education learning through religious culture and students' religious behavior at Harapan 3 Private Middle School Medan was cumulatively confirmed to be at a moderate level gradation. The indicator of habitual worship recorded the most dominant percentage (79%) because mandatory agendas such as Duha prayer, congregational prayer, and memorization of Juz Amma had been well organized, while the faith indicator reached the highest moderate level of 95%. The results of statistical tests proved a positive and significant

influence of strengthening Islamic Religious Education learning through religious culture on students' religious behavior with a regression model of $Y = 63.596 + 0.572X$. Partial testing produces a calculated t value of 8.705 (above t table = 1.984 and is supported by the feasibility of the F test model of 75.784 (Sig. < 0.001), so that the alternative hypothesis H_a is accepted convincingly. Through the R Square determination coefficient index of 0.436, the independent variable contributes a determinant share of 43.6% in constructing students' religious behavior.

The theoretical implications of this study enrich the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) field of study regarding the effectiveness of Skinner's behaviorist theory in engineering the school ecosystem as a social laboratory for shaping students' daily Islamic character. Practically, these results serve as a reflection medium for school principals and teachers to optimize monitoring of spiritual habits and strengthen moral role models (uswatun hasanah). The main limitation of this study lies in the scope of the independent variables, which only cover aspects of strengthening Islamic Religious Education through religious culture in schools, so that the variance of students' religious behavior of 56.4% remains unexplained in this model. Therefore, recommendations for further researchers are to conduct in-depth investigations into other contributing external stimulants, such as the role of family care, sociocultural interaction patterns in the community, and the intensity of social media use to comprehensively expand the external validity of the study.

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