
STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF THE LEADERSHIP OF PRINCIPALS AND ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS IN CREATING A RELIGIOUS CULTURE TO IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT IN STATE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

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Submitted: 23/04/2026

Revised: 22/05/2026

Accepted: 28/05/2026

Published: 08/06/2026

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the strategic management of school leadership and Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in fostering a religious culture to enhance students' learning achievement at SMAN 2, SMAN 5, and SMAN 10 Bandar Lampung. It uses a qualitative multisite field study design, with school principals as key informants, supported by vice principals, PAI teachers, subject teachers, and students selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, then analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Validity was ensured through triangulation and member checking. The findings indicate that principals implement strategic management through vision-based planning, integration of religious values into school programs, and ongoing evaluation of both academic learning and character development. Each school applies distinct strategies: SMAN 2 integrates religious values into classroom instruction, SMAN 5 emphasizes consistent religious habituation, and SMAN 10 promotes student engagement through religious extracurricular activities. Collaboration between principals and PAI teachers strengthens character building, improves discipline, and increases student motivation and academic performance. Supporting factors include strong leadership commitment, effective teacher collaboration, and a supportive school environment. However, challenges such as limited facilities and diverse student backgrounds remain. Overall, strategic leadership integrated with religious culture development significantly contributes to improving student achievement in senior high schools.

Keywords

CharReligious Culture, Leadership, Learning Achievement, PAI Teachers, Strategic Management.



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INTRODUCTION

Strategic leadership management of principals and Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in realizing a religious culture in State Senior High Schools (SMAN) in Bandar Lampung City requires visionary, adaptive, and collaborative leadership skills. Principals play a role not only as administrators but also as strategic leaders capable of formulating the school's religious vision, integrating it into educational policies and programs, and ensuring its sustainable implementation through the active involvement of teachers, particularly PAI teachers (Shobri, 2025). In this context, religious culture is not only interpreted as a religious routine, but as a value system internalized in behavior, social interactions, and the school's academic climate, which has a direct impact on improving student learning achievement.

At SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung, SMAN 5 Bandar Lampung, and SMAN 10 Bandar Lampung, the implementation of strategic management shows diverse but complementary characteristics. At SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung, strengthening religious culture is seen through the integration of Islamic values in learning and character building based on role models. At SMAN 5 Bandar Lampung, the strategy is more focused on habituating religious activities such as dhuha prayer, Quranic recitation, and communal prayer that are implemented consistently and structured. Meanwhile, at SMAN 10 Bandar Lampung, strengthening religious culture is developed through extracurricular religious activities such as Islamic Spirituality (Rohis), religious mentoring, and Islamic activities based on active student participation. In addition, Islamic Religious Education teachers at all three schools play an active role in fostering students' religious character through a contextual and reflective learning approach, thereby improving not only cognitive understanding but also students' spiritual and social attitudes. These programs demonstrate that strategically managed religious culture can create a conducive learning environment and contribute to improving students' academic and non-academic achievements.

An effective leadership strategy in this context is transformational leadership combined with a collaborative approach between the principal and Islamic Education teachers (Hadi et al., 2025). Transformational leadership enables the principal to become an agent of change who is able to inspire, motivate, and build collective commitment among all school members in realizing a religious culture (Nuryana & Nugraha, 2025). At SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung, the principal's leadership is evident in

strengthening a religious academic culture through the integration of values into learning. At SMAN 5 Bandar Lampung, leadership is manifested through strengthening discipline and consistent religious habits. Meanwhile, at SMAN 10 Bandar Lampung, leadership emphasizes student empowerment through participatory religious activities. Islamic Religious Education teachers play a key role in internalizing religious values through the learning process and character development (Rahim, 2024). Synergy between the principal and Islamic Religious Education teachers is the key to the successful implementation of the strategy, especially in creating a balance between academic achievement and the formation of students' religious character (Safiqo & Ghofur, 2025). Thus, an effective strategy is not a single strategy, but rather an integrative strategy that combines transformational leadership, strengthening religious culture, and continuously improving the quality of learning.

The success of strategic leadership management is influenced by various internal and external factors. Internal factors include the competence of Islamic Religious Education teachers, the commitment of the principal, the school's organizational culture, and the availability of facilities and infrastructure to support religious activities (Kalsum, 2023). Based on the results of observations at SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung, SMAN 5 Bandar Lampung and SMAN 10 Bandar Lampung, it was found that at SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung, the main strength lies in the quality of teachers and a strong academic culture, although the challenge is maintaining the consistency of the integration of religious values in all subjects. Meanwhile, at SMAN 5 Bandar Lampung, the main strength lies in the consistency of the religious habituation program, but innovation in learning methods is still needed to make it more contextual. At SMAN 10 Bandar Lampung, the strength lies in the active participation of students in religious activities, although it needs to be strengthened in the aspects of program supervision and evaluation. External factors include parental support, government policies, and the social environment of the community. The high level of public trust in these three schools presents an opportunity to develop a religious culture, but also presents a challenge in maintaining the quality and relevance of the program. Therefore, strategic management based on needs analysis, continuous evaluation, and strengthening partnerships with various parties is needed so that religious culture can continue to develop and have an impact on improving student learning achievement optimally.

Study (Riyadi, 2025) shows that the principal's strategic management through transformational leadership is able to build a positive religious school culture, but has not yet measured its direct impact on improving student learning achievement. (Saputra et al., 2025) found that the application of strategic management in digital-based learning innovations can support the formation of an adaptive religious culture, but has not been comprehensively linked to improved learning achievement. (Asra, 2025) concluded that school-based management contributes to strengthening religious culture through the participation of school residents, but has not yet placed learning achievement as the main outcome analyzed. (Sjaifulloh, 2022) confirms that school program strategies such as full-day school are capable of shaping students' religious culture, but have not been analyzed within a systematic strategic management framework, and their relationship to academic achievement. (Amalia & Subiyantoro, 2025) shows that strengthening religious culture through school management policies has an impact on teacher behavior and loyalty, but has not yet linked it directly to improving student learning achievement.

Based on these five studies, the main gap lies in the lack of a comprehensive and hierarchical conceptual framework that systematically and measurably connects "strategic management > religious culture > academic achievement." Most studies are still partial, only examining the direct relationship between strategic management and school culture, or religious culture and behavioral aspects, without exploring how these strategic processes are designed (planning), executed (implementation), and evaluated continuously to impact student academic achievement. Furthermore, the dimensions of religious culture are often positioned as descriptive normative variables, not yet operationalized as mediating variables with measurable indicators in influencing academic achievement. Another limitation is seen in the minimal analysis of the involvement of key actors in schools, especially Islamic Religious Education teachers, in integrating religious values into learning, which has a direct impact on improving the quality of student learning outcomes.

The novelty of this research lies in the development of an integrative model that not only connects these three main variables but also explains the causal relationship mechanism more comprehensively. This research places the principal's strategic management as a foundation that includes religious vision-based planning, integrated program implementation in intracurricular and

extracurricular activities, and continuous evaluation of religious culture and student learning outcomes. Religious culture in this study is positioned as a mediating variable operationalized through concrete indicators such as habitual worship, internalization of moral values, and a conducive school environment. Furthermore, this research emphasizes the strategic role of Islamic Religious Education teachers as the main agents of value internalization, who function not only as teachers but also as role models and facilitators in building student character. Thus, this research offers a new contribution in the form of an integrated strategic management model that can improve student learning achievement holistically, encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects.

In addition, the strengthening of policies and other relevant theoretical discourses can be referred to national education policies that emphasize the importance of strengthening character education as part of the learning process in schools. From the perspective of quality management theory, the idea of Total Quality Management (TQM) from (Madhakomala et al., 2025). It is relevant to explain that improving student achievement requires continuous improvement, data-based quality control, and the involvement of all school members, including the principal and Islamic Religious Education teachers. This discourse reinforces the argument that strategic leadership management cannot be incidental but must be planned, measurable, and oriented toward improving the quality of learning and developing students' religious character.

In the context of learning innovation, strengthening the theory of constructivism from (Vygotsky & Cole, 2018) provides the foundation that effective learning is learning that encourages active participation and meaning-making by students. This aligns with the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes learning differentiation and strengthening the Pancasila-based student profile. Therefore, learning innovation in the context of this research is not only oriented towards the use of technology but also on the integration of religious values into the learning process as a strategy to holistically improve student achievement.

Meanwhile, in human resource development, the theory of capacity building and organizational learning from (Haryono et al., 2012) Through the concept of a learning organization, it is emphasized that an effective school is one that is capable of collective learning, adapts to change, and encourages continuous reflection. This is reinforced by Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers,

which demands teacher professionalism in pedagogical, professional, social, and personality aspects. (UUD RI No. 14 of 2005, 2005). Thus, developing teacher competencies, particularly Islamic Religious Education teachers, is an important part of the principal's leadership strategy to build a religious culture and improve student learning achievement sustainably.

Based on this background, the purpose of this study is to gain a deep understanding of the strategic leadership management of principals and Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in realizing a religious culture to improve student learning achievement at SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung, SMAN 5 Bandar Lampung, and SMAN 10 Bandar Lampung. This study is directed to analyze how strategies are formulated, implemented, and evaluated in each school, as well as how the synergy between principals and PAI teachers in creating a religious, conducive, and oriented educational environment improves student learning achievement. This study also aims to identify similarities, differences, and best practices in managing religious culture in the three schools as part of a strategy to improve the quality of education. The results of this study are expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions in the development of an effective, contextual, and sustainable strategic leadership management model in secondary education environments, particularly in integrating religious values with improving student learning achievement.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a multi-site study design conducted at SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung, SMAN 5 Bandar Lampung, and SMAN 10 Bandar Lampung. The type of research is descriptive-analytical with the aim of understanding in depth the strategic leadership management of school principals and Islamic Religious Education teachers in building a religious culture and its implications for student learning achievement. Data sources consisted of primary informants, namely the principal and Islamic Religious Education teachers, and supporting informants, including vice principals, subject teachers, education staff, school committees, and parents of students. Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement in strategic programs and religious culture, and developed through snowball sampling to enrich the data.

Data collection techniques were conducted through in-depth interviews with the principal, vice principal for curriculum and student affairs, Islamic Religious Education teachers, subject teachers, education staff, students, and parents/guardians of students, limited participatory observation, namely from January 16, 2025, to June 16, 2025, and documentation studies of school programs, policies, and student achievement data. Data analysis used an interactive model that includes data reduction, data presentation, and continuous conclusion drawing. The analysis focused on the principal's strategic management patterns, the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in building a religious culture, and its relationship to improving student achievement, resulting in a contextual and applicable model.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This research is based on the academic awareness that improving student learning achievement is not only determined by academic aspects alone, but is greatly influenced by the quality of strategic leadership management of the principal, the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, and the strength of religious culture that is built systematically and sustainably. In the context of senior high school education in Bandar Lampung City, which is increasingly dynamic and competitive, schools are not only required to achieve national education standards but also to be able to create a religious, conducive, and character-based learning environment as a foundation for improving student learning achievement. Therefore, the presentation of this research data is systematically arranged based on field findings at SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung, SMAN 5 Bandar Lampung, and SMAN 10 Bandar Lampung with direct reference to the research objectives, namely to understand in depth the strategic leadership management of the principal and PAI teachers in formulating, implementing, and evaluating strategies for forming a religious culture that has an impact on improving student learning achievement. The presentation of data is focused on the process of formulating strategies based on the school's religious vision, the implementation of religious culture programs integrated into learning and habituation activities, and the management of the role of PAI teachers in fostering the character and spirituality of students. Furthermore, the internal and external factors influencing the success of the strategy in creating a religious and achievement-oriented educational environment are outlined. The data obtained

not only describes empirical conditions but is also analyzed in depth to identify patterns, relationships between strategic variables, and best practices, which are then formulated into a contextual, applicable, and sustainable strategic leadership management model.

Table 1. Strategic Management of Principal and Islamic Religious Education Teacher Leadership in Realizing a Religious Culture to Improve Student Learning Achievement in State Senior High Schools in Bandar Lampung City

No.	Location	Principal Leadership Strategy	Islamic Education Teacher Strategy	Strategy for Forming Religious Culture	Student Learning Achievement
1.	Senior High School 2 Bandar Lampung	Religious vision-based planning, integration of values into the curriculum, and ongoing academic supervision	Integration of religious values in learning models, character building in the classroom	Habituation of daily worship, joint prayer, and integration of religious values in teaching and learning activities	Improved cognitive, affective, and learning discipline aspects
2.	Senior High School 5 Bandar Lampung	Strengthening school culture through routine programs, consistent control, and evaluation	Continuous religious habituation, personal approach to students	Routine religious activities (tadarus, congregational prayer), culture of religious discipline	Increased learning motivation and stability of academic results
3.	State Senior High School 10 Bandar Lampung	Developing student participation, supporting religious extracurricular activities	Guidance through extracurricular activities and religious mentoring	Active religious extracurricular activities, student involvement in religious activities	Improving non-academic and academic achievements and student activity

Source: SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung, State Senior High School 5 Bandar Lampung, SMAN 10 Bandar Lampung, 2025

Principal Leadership Strategy

Based on research results at SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung, the leadership strategy of the principal and Islamic Religious Education teachers in realizing a religious culture is characterized by the formulation of strategies based on needs analysis and the integration of religious values into the school's vision and academic culture. The principal plays a role in directing policies so that religious values are integrated into all educational activities, while Islamic Religious Education teachers play a role in

internalizing these values through the classroom learning process. The implementation of the strategy is evident in the strengthening of religious values inherent in academic activities, so that learning is not only oriented towards cognitive aspects, but also the formation of student attitudes and character. Evaluation is carried out through observations of the learning process and the development of student character, which shows a link between strengthening religious values and student discipline and learning outcomes.

At SMAN 5 Bandar Lampung, the management strategy emphasizes the habituation of religious activities, which are carried out routinely and consistently as part of the school culture. The strategy formulation is directed at establishing a habituation system that involves the entire school community in daily religious activities. The principal directs the implementation of programs such as the Dhuha prayer, tadarus (recitation of the Koran), and communal prayer, while the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher ensures the coaching process runs smoothly through mentoring and strengthening the values within these activities. The strategy is implemented through structured routine activities that become school habits. Evaluation is carried out through monitoring the implementation of activities and regular reflections to assess consistency and their impact on student attitudes and discipline within the school environment.

Meanwhile, at SMAN 10 Bandar Lampung, the leadership strategy of the principal and Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers is more directed at strengthening student participation in religious activities and school organizations. The strategy formulation focuses on student empowerment through Rohis (Islamic outreach) activities and various participatory Islamic activities. The principal provides support in the form of facilitation and space for student activity development, while the PAI teachers act as mentors who accompany the process of strengthening religious values. The strategy implementation is evident in the active involvement of students in religious activities that are not only ritualistic but also foster social responsibility and leadership. Evaluation is carried out through observing the level of student participation and its impact on character formation and academic achievement, which indicates a more significant increase in student activity and the development of religious attitudes.

Islamic Education Teacher Strategy

Based on research findings at SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung, Islamic Religious Education teachers' strategies are demonstrated through the integration of religious values into the learning process, role models, and character development of students in the classroom. Islamic Religious Education teachers not only convey religious material theoretically, but also relate it to students' real-life experiences so that values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, and hard work can be internalized in learning activities. This strategy is reinforced by teacher role models in daily attitudes and behaviors at school, as well as character development carried out directly in the classroom. This condition aligns with the strategy of forming a religious culture that focuses on integrating values in cross-subject learning through a contextual and reflective approach, so that learning becomes more meaningful and has an impact on improving students' understanding, religious attitudes, and academic achievement.

At SMAN 5 Bandar Lampung, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher's strategy emphasizes ongoing religious habits and a personalized approach to students. PAI teachers consistently guide students in daily religious activities and provide individual attention to strengthen the internalization of religious values according to each student's character. This strategy supports the formation of a religious culture that focuses on habits such as the Dhuha prayer, Quran recitation, and communal prayer that are carried out routinely and structured. These habits create order in school activities, increase discipline, and strengthen students' motivation and readiness to learn, which ultimately has an impact on sustainable learning outcomes.

Meanwhile, at SMAN 10 Bandar Lampung, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers' strategies are implemented through student guidance in extracurricular activities and religious mentoring. PAI teachers act as instructors in Islamic Spiritual (Rohis) activities, Islamic studies, and various religious activities that involve active student participation. This approach provides space for students to develop their spiritual and social potential more broadly outside of formal learning. This strategy aligns with strengthening religious culture through participatory extracurricular activities, enabling students to actively participate in various religious activities. The impact is seen in improving students' character, leadership, and non-academic achievements, demonstrating holistic development within the students.

Strategy for Forming Religious Culture

Based on the research results, the Strategy for Forming a Religious Culture at SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung is carried out through the habituation of daily worship, which is an integral part of school activities. Activities such as group prayers before and after learning are carried out consistently and involve the entire school community, thus forming a structured routine. In addition, religious values are not only carried out in special religious activities, but are also integrated into teaching and learning activities (KBM). This integration makes the learning process not only oriented towards cognitive achievement, but also directed at the formation of student attitudes and character through instilling the values of honesty, responsibility, and discipline in every learning activity.

Furthermore, at SMAN 5 Bandar Lampung, the formation of a religious culture is emphasized through routine and repetitive religious activities as part of the habituation process within the school environment. Activities such as Quran recitation and congregational prayer are carried out on a scheduled basis and become ingrained in students' daily lives. These activities are not merely ceremonial but are carried out consistently, thus fostering a culture of religious discipline within the school environment. Through continuous habituation, students become accustomed to an orderly, religious, and focused atmosphere, which ultimately supports the creation of a conducive learning environment.

Meanwhile, at SMAN 10 Bandar Lampung, the strategy for fostering a religious culture is implemented through strengthening active and participatory extracurricular religious activities. Students are directly involved in various activities such as the Islamic Spiritual Organization (Rohis), Islamic studies, and other religious activities based on developing interests and talents. This involvement provides space for students to play a role in shaping the school's religious culture. Through these activities, students not only gain religious experiences but also develop social skills, leadership skills, and responsibility, which support more comprehensive character formation within the educational environment.

Student Learning Achievement

Based on the results of research at SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung, it shows that student learning achievement shows visible improvements in three main aspects, namely cognitive, affective, and

learning discipline. Improvements in the cognitive aspect are reflected in students' increasing understanding of the subject matter given in class. In the affective aspect, students show a more positive attitude in participating in the learning process, such as honesty, responsibility, and concern for school assignments. Meanwhile, in the aspect of discipline, students appear more orderly in following school rules, arriving on time, and are more organized in carrying out learning activities. These three aspects indicate a balanced development as a result of a learning process integrated with religious values.

At SMAN 5 Bandar Lampung, student achievement has improved, particularly in terms of learning motivation and academic stability. Student motivation has increased, as evidenced by their commitment to learning and active involvement in classroom activities. Furthermore, student academic performance has tended to be stable and consistent, without significant fluctuations, indicating a focused and sustainable learning process. This is further supported by a conducive school environment, fostering the inculcation of religious values, enabling students to be better prepared mentally and emotionally for the learning process.

At SMAN 10 Bandar Lampung, student achievement has improved not only in academic aspects but also in non-academic aspects, including student involvement in various school activities. The improvement in academic achievement is evident in increasingly better learning outcomes, while in non-academic aspects, students demonstrate achievements in various extracurricular and religious activities. Furthermore, student activeness has also increased, particularly in their involvement in organizational and religious activities at school. This demonstrates that the educational process not only results in improved academic grades but also encourages character development, social skills, and active student participation in the school environment.

In general, the results of research at SMAN 2, SMAN 5, and SMAN 10 Bandar Lampung show similarities in that all three experienced an increase in student learning achievement that was not only limited to academic aspects, but also included aspects of attitude, character, and student involvement in school activities, all of which were inseparable from the strengthening of religious culture built through habituation strategies, integration of values in learning, and religious activities at school. The three schools also showed that religious culture functions as a foundation that strengthens student motivation, discipline, and regularity in learning, thus impacting on improving the quality of the

learning process and outcomes as a whole. However, there are differences in the focus and emphasis of implementation in each school, where SMAN 2 emphasizes more on the integration of religious values in learning and its impact on cognitive, affective, and discipline aspects; SMAN 5 focuses more on sustainable religious habits resulting in increased motivation and stability of academic results; while SMAN 10 emphasizes more on active student participation through religious extracurricular activities that have an impact on improving academic and non-academic achievements, as well as student activeness more broadly.

Discussion

The discussion of the results of this study shows that the leadership strategies of the principal, the strategies of Islamic Religious Education teachers, and the formation of a religious culture at SMAN 2, SMAN 5, and SMAN 10 Bandar Lampung have a mutually reinforcing relationship in improving student learning achievement, which when compared with transformational leadership theory and various relevant studies, shows conformity and strengthening of the findings. In the leadership aspect, religious vision-based planning, strengthening routine programs, and developing student participation reflect a transformational leadership pattern that emphasizes vision, inspiration, and changes in organizational culture, as also found in the study (Alwi, 2025). This is also in line with the theory (Sunaengsih et al., 2025) which confirms that transformational leadership is able to increase organizational commitment and member performance through a clear vision and strong values.

In the aspect of Islamic Religious Education teachers, the findings show a role not only as teachers, but also as character builders through the integration of religious values in learning, role models, habits, personal approaches, and religious mentoring, which is in line with the view of teachers as agents of internalization of values and supports the findings (Safiqo & Ghofur, 2025) related to the importance of strengthening teacher competency, but in this study it is expanded to the context of forming a religious culture directly in schools. In terms of religious culture, the habituation of daily worship, routine religious activities, integration of values in learning, and student involvement in extracurricular activities indicate that religious culture is formed through a systematic, repetitive, and comprehensive process, which is in line with (Fauziah, 2026) which emphasizes the importance of habituation in strengthening school culture, but in this study it was found that the combination of

habituation, curriculum integration, and extracurricular activities provided a more comprehensive impact. Meanwhile, in terms of learning achievement, improvements occurred not only in the cognitive aspect, but also in affective, motivational, discipline, stability of academic results, as well as non-academic achievements and student activeness, which strengthens the view that learning achievement is multidimensional and is in line with research (Abubakar et al., 2023) and (Al Firdaus et al., 2026). While previous studies have focused on improving learning outcomes through strengthening the school environment, this study found a more direct relationship between strategically managed religious culture and improved student learning quality. Therefore, it can be concluded that the strategic management synergy between principals and Islamic Religious Education teachers in building a religious culture provides a significant and more holistic contribution to improving student achievement at State Senior High Schools in Bandar Lampung City.

The results of this study strengthen the strategic management theory put forward by (Sudarni et al., 2023), an effective strategy must be based on an analysis of the internal and external environment. All three schools demonstrated a systematic planning process through the identification of student needs, teacher competencies, and community demands. Previous research also shows that the success of values-based education programs is greatly influenced by accurate needs analysis and the formulation of a clear vision, as confirmed in the study (Suryadi et al., 2022) and (Firdiyansyah et al., 2024) who found that needs-based strategic planning can increase the effectiveness of character education implementation. In this context, SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung excels in integrating religious values into learning, which aligns with the concept of "curriculum integration" in character education theory. Meanwhile, SMAN 5 and SMAN 10's approach enriches this practice through habituation and extracurricular activities, demonstrating that strategies can be contextualized according to the characteristics of each school.

At the implementation stage, the findings of this study are in line with the theory of constructivism in learning, which emphasizes the importance of direct experience and active involvement of students (Suryadi et al., 2022). Islamic Religious Education teachers not only transfer knowledge, but also facilitate the process of internalizing values through contextual learning, habituation, and participatory activities. Research (Maulida & Hikmah, 2025) also shows that a

reflective and contextual learning approach is more effective in shaping character than a purely cognitive approach. This is reinforced by the findings (Jailani et al., 2025) and (Wafa et al., 2025), which confirm that participatory and experience-based learning strategies can enhance the deeper internalization of religious values. In this regard, implementation at SMAN 2 through integrated learning, at SMAN 5 through religious habituation, and at SMAN 10 through Rohis activities demonstrates a variety of strategies that still lead to the same goal: developing students' religious character.

Furthermore, the results of this study reinforce the concept of continuous evaluation in educational quality management. Evaluation is conducted not only to measure academic achievement but also to measure changes in student attitudes and behavior as indicators of the success of religious culture. This aligns with the theory of Total Quality Management (TQM) in education, which emphasizes the importance of monitoring, reflection, and continuous improvement (Suprpto et al., 2024). Study (Mahlan et al., 2025) also shows that schools that implement comprehensive evaluations tend to have more significant quality improvements. This finding is also supported by research (Salirawati, 2021) And (Zahroh & Hilmiyati, 2024) which states that evaluation based on cognitive, affective, and psychomotor indicators provides a more comprehensive picture of the success of character education programs. Thus, the evaluations conducted in the three schools are not merely administrative in nature but serve as strategic instruments in decision-making and program development.

From the perspective of the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers, the results of this study strengthen the theory (Fathurokhman, 2024) that teachers have a multidimensional role as educators, role models, and moral agents. Islamic Religious Education teachers in the three schools function not only as instructors but also as guides and role models in students' daily lives. This aligns with the perspective of Al-Ghazali (2014) in Islamic education, which emphasizes the importance of teacher role models in the formation of morals. Research (Widiyangingtiyas et al., 2025) also shows that the success of character education is greatly influenced by the quality of interaction between teachers and students. In addition, research (Judrah et al., 2024) and (Rahman et al., 2024) also emphasized that the role of teachers as role models and spiritual guides significantly contributes to shaping students' religious

character. Therefore, the successful implementation of religious culture in the three schools is inseparable from the active role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in building strong and meaningful pedagogical relationships.

Overall, the synergy between the principal's leadership, the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers, and religious culture in this study is in line with the concept of a holistic education system that emphasizes the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects (El Zaldie & Hanif, 2025). The results of this study also strengthen the findings (Shodiq & Darmawan, 2025) that a religious and conducive learning environment has a positive impact on student motivation and achievement, the similarities between the three schools lie in their commitment to religious values, while the differences lie in the strategic approaches used, which are actually a strength in producing best practices. Thus, this study provides a theoretical contribution by strengthening the concept of values-based strategic management, as well as a practical contribution in the form of an adaptive, contextual, and sustainable implementation model of religious culture to improve student achievement.

When compared comprehensively, the results of this study demonstrate a strong integration between strategic management theory and transformational leadership theory with the practice of building a religious culture and the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in improving student achievement. Previous research has tended to examine aspects of leadership, religious culture, or the role of teachers separately, while this study demonstrates the simultaneous interconnectedness of these variables within a unified management system. These findings expand the body of previous research, such as that conducted by (Arifin et al., 2024) And (Rosida et al., 2025) Each of these studies highlights a specific aspect of Islamic education, presenting an integrative model that combines principal leadership, the role of Islamic education teachers, and religious culture within the framework of improving student achievement. Thus, this study not only broadens the theoretical perspective but also provides an empirical overview of how these three components interact in secondary education practices.

Theoretically, this study confirms that improved student achievement is achieved through the integration of strategic leadership, strengthening religious culture, and optimizing the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in the learning process. The principal's visionary leadership serves

as a policy director and shaper of the school climate, while religious culture serves as the foundation of values that shape students' character, and Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers act as the primary agents in internalizing these values. Empirically, the study results show that schools that are able to manage these three aspects synergistically tend to have a more conducive learning environment, higher levels of discipline, and stronger student motivation. This has a direct impact on improving academic and non-academic achievement. Thus, this study strengthens the theoretical construct that educational success is determined not only by cognitive aspects but also by the integration of values, culture, and leadership within a sustainable system.

This study has limitations in scope that only covers SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung, SMAN 5 Bandar Lampung, and SMAN 10 Bandar Lampung so that generalization is still limited, the use of a qualitative approach that depends on the depth of data and the researcher's interpretation, and the absence of quantitative measurements of improvements in learning achievement; however, the research findings confirm the theory of strategic management and transformational leadership with a critical note that the success of the strategy is more determined by the strength of religious culture and internalization of values than the completeness of formal managerial procedures, and does not always depend on digitalization but can be achieved through habituation, role models, and contextual approaches, although there is a potential dependence on the figure of the principal; in addition, this study also shows variations in strategies as contextual strengths of each school learning integration in SMAN 2, religious habituation in SMAN 5, and strengthening extracurricular activities in SMAN 10 which confirms that there is no single most ideal model, but rather flexibility and adjustment of strategies according to school characteristics are needed, so that further research with a mixed methods approach and a wider scope is needed to strengthen the validity and empirical contribution.

The novelty of this research lies in its integrative model, which combines the strategic management of principal leadership, the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers, and the formation of a religious culture within a synergistic framework to improve student achievement. While previous research has tended to examine these aspects partially, this study offers a conceptual synthesis that positions visionary leadership as the primary driver orchestrating the internalization of religious values through continuous learning and habituation. Furthermore, this study emphasizes that religious culture

is not merely an additional program, but rather a value system that serves as the foundation for building student character and achievement. This value-based synergy model is a new theoretical contribution to the development of educational management, particularly in the context of secondary education, which prioritizes a balance between academic achievement and the formation of religious character.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study indicate that the strategic management of the leadership of the principal and Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in realizing a religious culture at SMAN 2 Bandar Lampung, SMAN 5 Bandar Lampung, and SMAN 10 Bandar Lampung is implemented through stages of formulating strategies based on religious vision, contextual program implementation (integration of learning, religious habits, and extracurricular activities), and continuous evaluation that have an impact on improving discipline, motivation, character, and student learning achievement; in conclusion, the success of improving learning achievement is not determined by a single factor, but by the synergy between the transformational leadership of the principal, the strategic role of PAI teachers as agents of internalization of values, and religious culture as a system of values that live in the school environment, with differences in approaches in each school becoming a contextual force that gives birth to adaptive and sustainable best practices; Therefore, it is recommended that schools strengthen the integration of religious values in all aspects of learning and school culture, increase collaboration between school principals, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and all school members, develop a sustainable data-based evaluation system, and encourage innovation in contextual religious programs according to school characteristics, while for further researchers it is recommended to use a mixed methods approach and expand the scope of research in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture and stronger generalizations in developing a strategic management model based on religious culture.

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