

Influence of Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Competence on the Formation of Students' Religious Character

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Abstract

This study is motivated by the limited research examining the comprehensive role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher competence, covering pedagogical, personal, social, and professional dimensions in shaping students' religious character in Islamic school settings, despite its importance for realizing the objectives of *Kurikulum Merdeka* and the *Pelajar Pancasila* (Pancasila Student Profile). The study aims to test the effect of PAI teacher competence on the formation of students' religious character. Using a quantitative explanatory method with a correlational survey design, the sample comprised 34 students from class XI.9 at SMA Al-Islam 1 Surakarta selected through total sampling. Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire with a 4-point Likert scale supported by documentation, and were analyzed descriptively and inferentially using SPSS (validity and reliability tests, classical assumption tests, and simple linear regression). The results show that PAI teacher competence has a positive and significant effect on the formation of students' religious character ($b = 0.292$; $t = 2.484$; $p = 0.018 < 0.05$), with a coefficient of determination $R^2 = 16.2\%$, indicating that 16.2% of the variance in religious character is explained by teacher competence, while the mean levels of teacher competence and students' religious character fall within the moderate category (mean $X = 32.21$; mean $Y = 35.15$). These findings reinforce social learning theory (Bandura) and character education literature, which emphasize teachers as role models who play a central role in the internalization of religious values, while also indicating the presence of other contextual factors that account for the remaining variance.

The study implies the need for ongoing professional development for PAI teachers and recommends further research with larger samples, longitudinal or mixed-methods designs, and the inclusion of family and school climate variables to enrich empirical understanding of the determinants of students' religious character.

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education Teacher Competence; Religious Character; Character Education; *Kurikulum Merdeka*; *Pelajar Pancasila*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in Indonesia are required to possess competencies that cover pedagogical, personal, social, and professional aspects. Government Regulation No. 74 of 2008 states that teacher competence consists of these four dimensions. This means PAI teachers must not only master religious content and teaching techniques (professional and pedagogical competence), but also be stable, morally upright people who can serve as role models (personal competence), and have good social skills in communicating with students and the community. Various scholars and studies such as López-Martín et al. (2023), Fauth et al. (2019), and Praetorius et al. (2020) emphasize that teacher competence is a key factor in education quality; competent teachers play an important role in improving learning outcomes.

Students' religious character refers to attitudes and behaviors that reflect obedience to religious teachings. According to Rulianto (2018) and Intaniasari & Utami (2022), religious character is defined as "an attitude or behavior of obedience in practicing the adherent's religious teachings, tolerance toward worship practices, and living harmoniously with others." This character is very important to cultivate from an early age because religion forms the moral foundation of Indonesian society. Islamic Religious Education not only transfers religious knowledge but also aims to shape students' morals and religious attitudes in daily life (Juanda et al., 2025).

PAI teacher competence and students' religious character are interrelated. A competent PAI teacher should be able to serve as a role model who nurtures students' religious character. Shodiq & Kuswanto (2024) assert that teachers who are disciplined, behave well, and consistently perform worship activities with students create an educational

environment that is conducive to the moral and spiritual development of students. The general focus of this research topic is the influence of PAI teacher competence on the development of students' religious attitudes, since both are fundamental pillars of Islamic education objectives in schools.

In Indonesia, PAI teacher competence is often a critical issue in education. Several studies in Indonesia point to problems faced by PAI teachers in their role in shaping students' character. Reviews by Maullidina et al. (2023) and Oktoberia (2025) note that low professionalism and teacher quality, especially in competency aspects, are current issues affecting education quality. Rahmawati (2025) found that a lack of empathy and interactive approaches by PAI teachers hinder the formation of students' ethical and religious attitudes. Additionally, Warassati et al. (2025) emphasize the need for innovation in PAI teaching strategies because traditional methods can impede effective character development. These phenomena identify problems in religious instruction that may weaken students' character formation.

Curriculum developments in Indonesia are also part of this problem's chronology. The launch of the Kurikulum Merdeka (Independent Curriculum) in 2023 emphasizes forming the Pancasila Student Profile, students who are faithful, pious, and morally upright. This goal aligns with the focus of religious education, but its implementation demands improved teacher competence. Kurikulum Merdeka gives teachers great freedom in designing religious instruction, and without clear guidance this can lead to inconsistencies in conveying religious values. Moreover, external factors such as social environment influences and technological advancement affect students' mindsets and values. Exposure to outside cultures through digital media causes some students to neglect religious teachings and experience moral shifts. In such a situation, PAI teachers must be adaptive and highly competent so that religious values remain firmly instilled in students.

Specifically at SMA Al Islam 1 Surakarta, an Islamic-based school whose educational vision prioritizes the development of Islamic morals, there is still no documented study showing how variations in PAI teacher competence at the school affect students' religious character. Based on initial observations and the general context above, this study's problem is to determine to what extent PAI teacher competence at SMA Al

Islam 1 Surakarta influences the formation of students' religious character, given the challenges of a modern curriculum and globalization that teachers face.

This research is important for exploring the relationship between PAI teacher competence and the formation of students' religious character from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Theoretically, Pane et al. (2025) assert that teacher competence is a key factor in improving education quality. Hapsari et al. (2025) and Salisah et al. (2024) emphasize that PAI contributes significantly to shaping student character, particularly religious values. By examining the relationship between these two aspects, this study enriches theoretical understanding of the teacher's role in character education.

Practically, the findings are expected to be beneficial for improving the quality of religious education in schools. For example, Rosyid et al. (2024) show that disciplined teachers who involve students in habituating worship can create an educational environment conducive to the development of students' morals, as PAI teachers apply regular worship practices that encourage behavioral change toward noble character (akhlaq al-karimah). In other words, strengthening PAI teacher competence can directly enhance students' religious habits. Conversely, if this issue is ignored, students may become less anchored to religious values. As Zuhri (2024) argues, exposure to global culture without religious guidance can blur students' moral and ethical values; therefore, Islamic religious education must be able to counterbalance globalization's influence so that students' morals are not negatively affected. For these reasons, this research is relevant to preventing negative outcomes such as a weakening of worship discipline and rudeness among students, which in turn can affect the broader social environment. Religious character, as the moral foundation of society, must be preserved and developed through appropriate educational strategies, including improving PAI teacher competence.

The literature review shows that several studies have examined the influence of PAI teacher competence on student character, but their contexts remain limited. For example, the undergraduate thesis by Amalia (2025) investigated the influence of PAI teachers' personal competence on the formation of religious character among seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Gunung Jati, Cirebon, and found a significant effect. However, previous studies generally focus on one or two competency dimensions (such as personal competence) and are often conducted in public schools or specific regions. To date, there

has been no comprehensive study examining the influence of PAI teacher competence (including pedagogical, personal, social, and professional dimensions) on students' religious character in the SMA Al Islam 1 Surakarta environment. This gap indicates the need for research that situates the study in the Islamic school context in Surakarta and considers all aspects of PAI teacher competence in its analysis.

This study offers novelty in several respects. First, the study location (SMA Al Islam 1 Surakarta in the 2025/2026 academic year) has not been investigated in the literature, thus providing new local context. Second, the research considers all competency dimensions of PAI teachers, not just the personal aspect often studied, giving a more complete picture of teachers' influence. Third, the study is conducted in the era of Kurikulum Merdeka, which emphasizes religious values in the student profile, making the results relevant to current education policy. Therefore, this research not only fills an empirical gap in the study of Islamic religious education in Surakarta but also contributes new insights for developing faith-based character education practices in schools.

METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach aimed at empirically testing the effect of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher competence on the formation of students' religious character. A quantitative approach was chosen because it enables objective measurement of variables, hypothesis testing, and drawing conclusions based on inferential statistical analysis. Creswell & Creswell (2017) state that quantitative research focuses on testing theories by measuring variables expressed as numbers and analyzing them with statistical procedures. This approach is appropriate for the study's aim, which emphasizes the cause-effect relationship between independent and dependent variables in an educational context.

This research is descriptive-explanatory in nature. The descriptive aspect is used to portray the level of PAI teacher competence and the level of students' religious character based on instrument measurements, while the explanatory aspect seeks to explain the influence of teacher competence on students' religious character through hypothesis testing. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2017), explanatory research in

education aims to clarify patterns of relationships among variables and to provide an empirical basis for making statistically supported causal inferences.

The study design is non-experimental, using a correlational survey method. The research does not administer any special treatment to subjects but observes phenomena as they naturally occur within the school environment. The survey method was chosen because it is effective for collecting data from respondents in formal educational settings using structured instruments, while the correlational approach allows the researcher to identify relationships and influences between variables. Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2019) explain that a correlational design is suitable when researchers want to know the extent to which one variable predicts or affects another variable without experimental manipulation. This design is also consistent with previous studies that examined teacher competence and student character using simple linear regression.

The study was conducted at SMA Al-Islam 1 Surakarta during the odd semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The population consisted of all students in class XI.9, totaling 34 students. Given the relatively small population size, the sampling technique used was total sampling (i.e., the entire population was used as the sample). This technique was chosen to increase data representativeness and avoid sampling bias. Sugiyono (2019) affirms that total sampling is appropriate when the population is fewer than 100, allowing the entire population to serve as research respondents.

The primary data collection instrument was a closed-ended questionnaire constructed using a four-point Likert scale. This scale was used to systematically measure students' perceptions and assessments of teacher competence and the religious character formed. Likert (1932) suggested that graded scales are effective for quantitatively measuring respondents' attitudes and tendencies. The teacher competence instrument was developed based on four competency dimensions (pedagogical, personal, social, and professional) while the students' religious character instrument included indicators such as worship adherence, honesty, discipline, responsibility, social care, and noble character consistent with Islamic educational values.

Before being used for data collection, the instruments were tested for validity and reliability. Item validity was examined using the Pearson Product-Moment correlation to

ensure each item measured the intended construct. An item was considered valid if its correlation coefficient exceeded the critical r value. Arikunto (2019) notes that instrument validity indicates the extent to which a measuring instrument accurately reflects the concept being measured. Reliability was then tested using Cronbach's alpha, with a criterion of $\alpha \geq 0.70$ indicating good internal consistency. According to Tavakol & Dennick (2011), Cronbach's alpha is the most commonly used reliability indicator in educational and social research.

Data were collected by distributing the questionnaire directly to respondents via WhatsApp in the form of a Google Form, with supervision maintained to preserve objectivity and minimize bias. In addition, documentation techniques were used to obtain supporting data such as the school profile, student numbers, and records of religious activities. The use of documentation aimed to strengthen and complement the primary data obtained from the questionnaire, as recommended by Creswell (2017) in educational research.

Collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the assistance of SPSS software. Descriptive analysis was used to determine means, percentages, and categories for each research variable. Inferential analysis was performed using simple linear regression to test the influence of PAI teacher competence on the formation of students' religious character. The choice of simple linear regression aligns with the study's focus on a single independent variable and a single dependent variable. According to Field (2018), simple linear regression is used to determine the extent to which a predictor variable explains variation in a criterion variable.

Before running the regression analysis, the data were tested for classical assumptions, including normality, heteroscedasticity, and multicollinearity. These assumption tests are necessary to ensure the regression model meets statistical requirements so that hypothesis test results can be validly interpreted. Ghozali (2021) emphasizes that violations of classical assumptions can cause regression coefficient estimates to be biased and inefficient. When these assumptions are satisfied, regression results can be used to interpret regression coefficients, significance values, and the coefficient of determination (R^2), as presented in the results and discussion sections of the study.

The regression analysis results were used to determine the direction and magnitude of the independent variable's effect on the dependent variable through the regression coefficient and the coefficient of determination (R^2). With these analytical procedures, this study is expected to produce a valid empirical portrayal that is scientifically accountable.

RESULTS

Description of Variable X – Competence of Islamic Religious Education Teachers

The level of competence of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers (Variable X) was measured through four indicators, operationalized into 10 questionnaire items. Each item offered four response options: Always, Often, Sometimes, and Never. The validity of each questionnaire item was analyzed using the corrected item-to-total correlation technique. The validity criteria in this study were:

- An item is considered valid if the correlation value $>$ r table (0.339).
- An item is considered not valid if the correlation value $<$ r table (0.339).

Validity testing was performed for all statement items using Microsoft Excel and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 31. The validity test results are presented in Table 1 Results of the Validity Test for the Variable X Instrument.

Table 1. Results of the Validity Test for the Variable X Instrument

No. Question Item	Correlation Value	R Table	Description
1	0.746	0.339	Valid
2	0.801	0.339	Valid
3	0.730	0.339	Valid
4	0.772	0.339	Valid
5	0.855	0.339	Valid
6	0.756	0.339	Valid
7	0.865	0.339	Valid
8	0.876	0.339	Valid
9	0.484	0.339	Valid
10	0.808	0.339	Valid

Based on the table 1 Results of the Validity Test for the Variable X Instrument, all items were declared valid because their correlation values were above the r table (0.339). Next, the instrument's reliability was tested using SPSS version 31 by applying Cronbach's Alpha (α). The reliability criteria for this study were:

- The instrument is considered reliable if Cronbach's Alpha (α) > 0.60.
- The instrument is considered not reliable if Cronbach's Alpha (α) < 0.60.

The reliability test results are shown in Table 2 Results of the Reliability Test.

Table 2. Results of the Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.919	10

Based on the table 2 Results of the Reliability Test, the obtained Cronbach's Alpha exceeded the 0.60 threshold (0.919 > 0.60), so the instrument was declared reliable. The validity results indicated that all statement items numbered 1 through 10 met the validity criteria. Therefore, each item was scored according to the respondent's selected answer option. Scores for all items were then summed to obtain a total score. The total scores were analyzed using SPSS version 31 to obtain minimum, maximum, mean, and mode values via descriptive analysis, as presented in Table 3 Data Analysis for Variable X.

Table 3. Data Analysis for Variable X

Statistics		
Coimpetencies oif Islamic Educatioin Teachers (X)		
N	Valid	34
	Missing	0
Mean		32.21
Median		32.50
Moide		29a
Std. Deviatioin		5.432
Variance		29.502
Range		20
Minimum		20
Maximum		40
a. Multiple moides exist. The smallest value is shoiwn		

After analysis in table 3 Data Analysis for Variable X above, the results were classified into three levels (low, moderate, and high) using the performance categorization guidelines proposed by Azwar, as shown in Table 4 Guidelines for Categorizing Variable X.

Table 4. Guidelines for Categorizing Variable X

Category	Provisions
Low	$X < 27$
Medium	$27 \leq X < 38$
High	$X > 38$

In the table 4 Guidelines for Categorizing Variable X, the mean score for Variable X was 32.21. Referring to the criteria in Table 4 above, this indicates that PAI teacher competence falls into the moderate category. A detailed categorization of respondents' total scores is presented in Table 5 Categorization of Total Scores for Variable X.

Table 5. Categorization of Total Scores for Variable X

		CATEGORY			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low	5	14.7	14.7	14.7
	Medium	23	67.6	67.6	82.4
	High	6	17.6	17.6	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Table 5 Categorization of Total Scores for Variable X is visualized in Figures 1 Frequency Distribution of Variable X and Figure 2 Percentage Distribution of Variable X below:

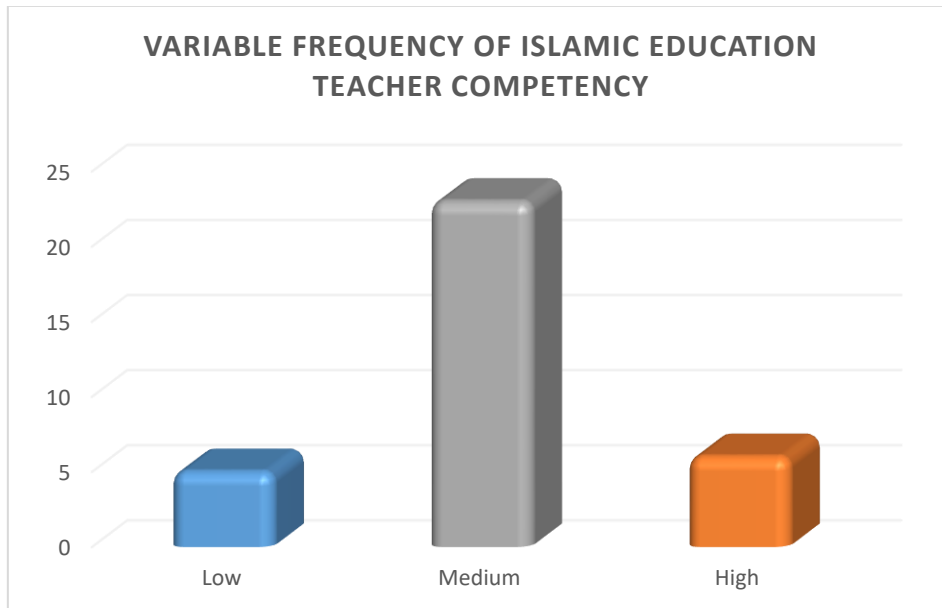


Figure 1. Frequency Distribution of Variable X

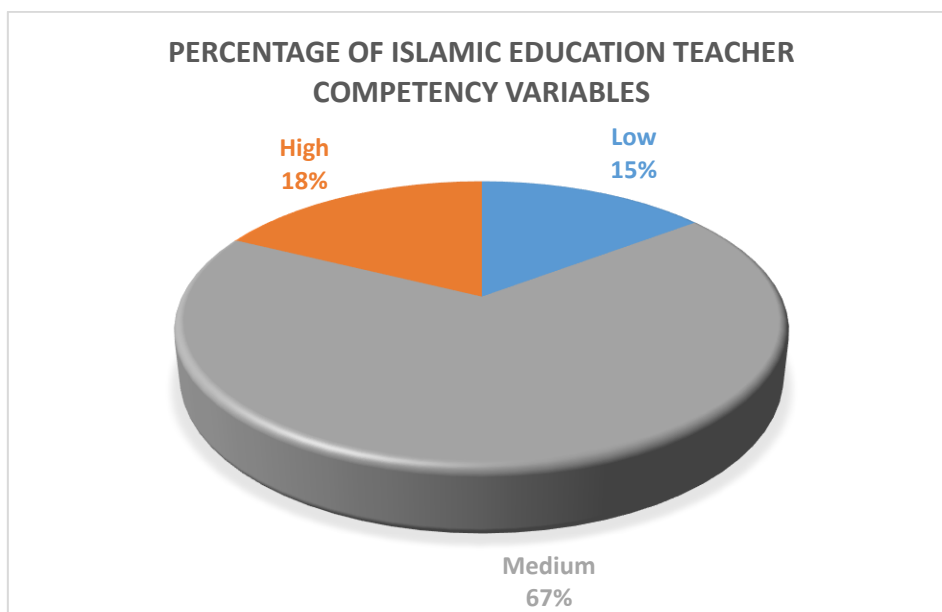


Figure 2. Percentage Distribution of Variable X

Description of Variable Y – Formation of Students' Religious Character

The level of formation of students' religious character (Variable Y) was measured through four indicators, operationalized into 10 questionnaire items. Each item offered four response options: Always, Often, Sometimes, and Never. The validity of each questionnaire item was analyzed using the corrected item-to-total correlation technique. The validity criteria in this study were:

- An item is considered valid if the correlation value $>$ r table (0.339).
- An item is considered not valid if the correlation value $<$ r table (0.339).

Validity testing was performed for all statement items using Microsoft Excel and SPSS version 31. The validity test results are presented in Table 6 Results of the Validity Test for the Variable Y Instrument.

Table 6. Results of the Validity Test for the Variable Y Instrument

No. Question Item	Correlation Value	R Table	Description
1	0.664	0.339	Valid
2	0.675	0.339	Valid
3	0.739	0.339	Valid
4	0.753	0.339	Valid
5	0.784	0.339	Valid
6	0.608	0.339	Valid
7	0.361	0.339	Valid
8	0.790	0.339	Valid
9	0.631	0.339	Valid
10	0.670	0.339	Valid

Based on the table 6 Results of the Validity Test for the Variable Y Instrument, all items were declared valid because their correlation values were above the r table (0.339). Next, the instrument's reliability was tested using SPSS version 31 by applying Cronbach's Alpha (α). The reliability criteria for this study were:

- The instrument is considered reliable if Cronbach's Alpha (α) $>$ 0.60.
- The instrument is considered not reliable if Cronbach's Alpha (α) $<$ 0.60.

The reliability test results are shown in Table 7 Results of the Reliability Test.

Table 7. Results of the Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.859	10

Based on the reliability test in table 7 Results of the Reliability Test above, the obtained Cronbach's Alpha exceeded the 0.60 threshold ($0.859 > 0.60$), so the instrument was declared reliable. The validity results indicated that all statement items numbered 1 through 10 met the validity criteria. Therefore, each item was scored according to the respondent's selected answer option. Scores for all items were then summed to obtain a total score. The total scores were analyzed using SPSS version 31 to obtain minimum, maximum, mean, and mode values via descriptive analysis, as presented in Table 8 Data Analysis for Variable Y.

Table 8. Data Analysis for Variable Y

Statistics		
Formation of Students' Religious Character (Y)		
N	Valid	34
	Missing	0
Mean		35.15
Median		35.00
Mode		40
Std. Deviation		3.940
Variance		15.523
Range		12
Minimum		28
Maximum		40

After analysis in table 8 Data Analysis for Variable Y above, the results were classified into three levels (low, moderate, and high) using the performance categorization guidelines proposed by Azwar, as shown in Table 9 Guidelines for Categorizing Variable Y.

Table 9. Guidelines for Categorizing Variable Y

Category	Provisions
Low	$X < 31$
Medium	$31 \leq X < 39$
High	$X > 39$

In the table 9 Guidelines for Categorizing Variable Y, the mean score for Variable Y was 35.15. Referring to the criteria in Table 9 above, this indicates that the formation of respondents' religious character falls into the moderate category. A detailed categorization of respondents' total scores is presented in Table 10 Categorization of Total Scores for Variable Y.

Table 10. Categorization of Total Scores for Variable Y

		CATEGORY			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low	6	17.6	17.6	17.6
	Medium	18	52.9	52.9	70.6
	High	10	29.4	29.4	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Table 10 Categorization of Total Scores for Variable Y is visualized in Figures 3 Frequency Distribution of Variable Y and Figure 4 Percentage Distribution of Variable Y below:

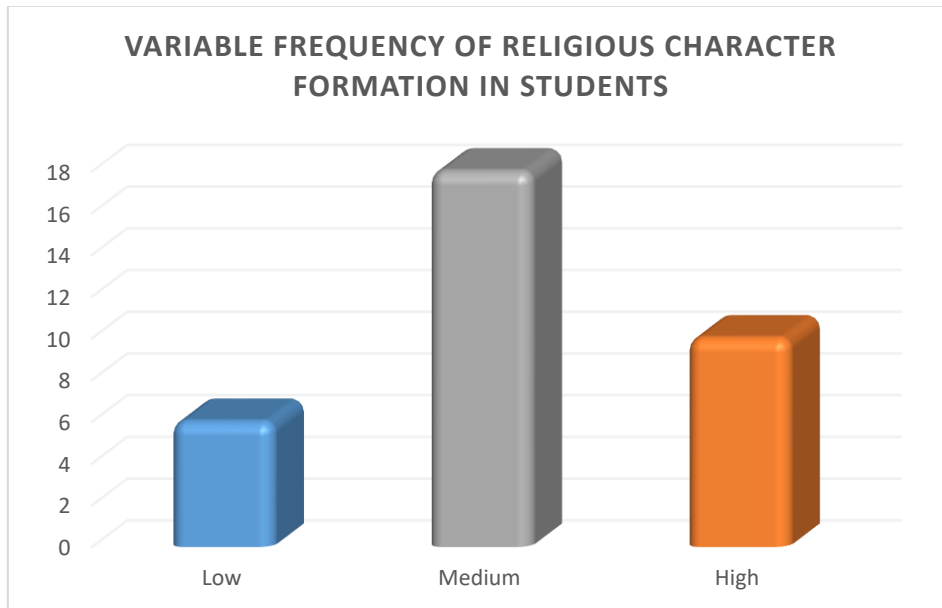


Figure 3. Frequency Distribution of Variable Y

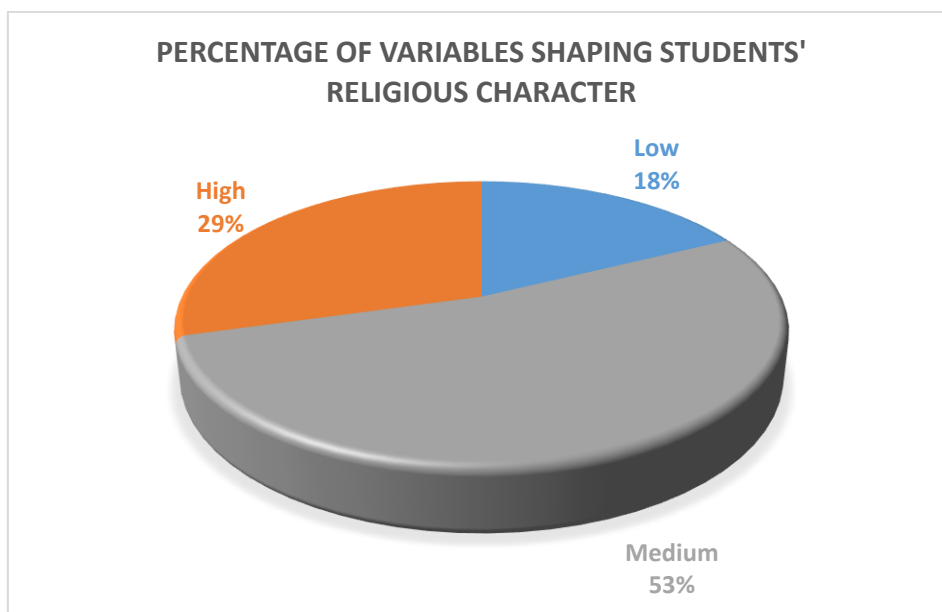


Figure 4. Percentage Distribution of Variable Y

Classical Assumption Tests

Normality Test

According to Ghozali, the normality test is conducted to determine whether the research data for each variable are normally distributed. The decision criteria are:

- If the significance value > 0.05 , the residuals are normally distributed.
- If the significance value < 0.05 , the residuals are not normally distributed.

Table 11. Normality Test**One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test**

		Unstandardized Residual	
N		34	
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	.0000000	
	Std. Deviation	4.97308387	
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.103	
	Positive	.064	
	Negative	-.103	
Test Statistic		.103	
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) ^c		.200 ^d	
Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed) ^e	Sig.	.466	
	99% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	.453
		Upper Bound	.479

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

d. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

e. Lilliefors' method based on 10000 Monte Carlo samples with starting seed 2000000.

Based on the analysis in Table 11 Normality Test above, the two-tailed significance value (sig (2-tailed)) is $0.200 > 0.05$, so it can be concluded that the data are normally distributed.

Heteroskedasticity Test

According to Ghozali, the heteroskedasticity test aims to determine whether the regression model exhibits unequal variances among its variables. A good regression model does not show heteroskedasticity. The decision criteria are:

- If the scatterplot shows points forming a particular pattern, this indicates heteroskedasticity.

- If the scatterplot does not show a clear pattern i.e., points are spread above and below the zero line on the Y-axis then heteroskedasticity is not present.

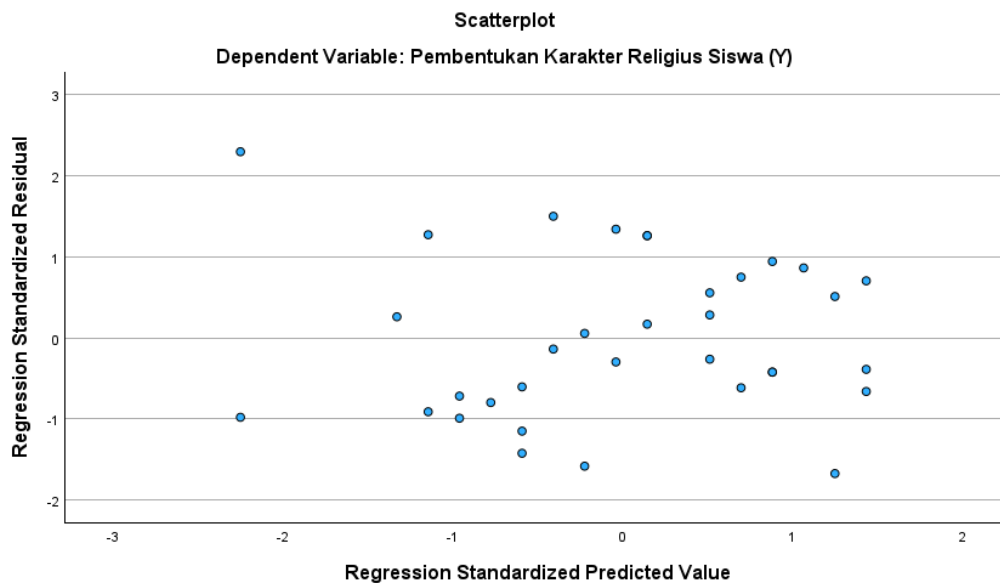


Figure 5. Heteroskedasticity Test Plot

Based on the scatterplot analysis in figure 5 Heteroskedasticity Test Plot above, there is no clear pattern; the points are spread above and below the zero line on the Y-axis, indicating that heteroskedasticity is not present. This graphical result is reinforced by the analysis in Table 12 Heteroskedasticity Test below:

Table 12. Heteroskedasticity Test

Model	Coefficients ^a				
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	6.817	1.896		3.595	.001
Competencies of Islamic Education Teachers (X)	-.118	.058	-.337	-2.028	.051

a. Dependent Variable: abs_Res

From the analysis in Table 12 Heteroskedasticity Test, the significance value for Variable X is $0.051 > 0.05$; therefore, it is concluded that heteroskedasticity does not occur.

Multicollinearity Test

According to Ghozali, the multicollinearity test aims to determine whether the regression model detects correlation among the independent variables. The decision rule is: According to Imam Ghozali, multicollinearity is not present if tolerance > 0.100 and $VIF < 10.00$.

Table 13. Multicollinearity Test

Model	Coefficients ^a					Collinearity Statistics	
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
1 (Constant)	25.753	3.833		6.719	<,001		
Competencies of Islamic Education Teachers (X)	.292	.117	.402	2.484	.018	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Building Students' Religious Character (Y)

Based on the analysis in Table 13 Multicollinearity Test, the tolerance value for Variable X is $1.000 > 0.100$ and the VIF value for Variable X is $1.000 < 10.00$; therefore, it is concluded that there are no symptoms of multicollinearity.

Hypothesis Testing

Coefficient of Determination Test

According to Ghozali, this coefficient shows the percentage of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variable(s) used in the model.

- If R is close to 0, the contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable is weak and the model is considered less adequate.
- If R is close to 1, the contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable is strong and the model is considered strong.

Table 14. Coefficient of Determination Test

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.402 ^a	.162	.135	3.663
a. Predictors: (Constant), Competencies of Islamic Education Teachers (X)				

Based on the analysis in Table 14 Coefficient of Determination Test, the percentage of variance in students' religious character formation (Y) that can be explained by PAI teacher competence (X) is 16.2%, while the remaining 83.8% is explained by other variables outside the regression model.

Simple Linear Regression Test

According to Ghozali, simple linear regression analysis investigates whether there is an effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The regression model used in this study is presented in Table 15 Simple Linear Regression Test.

Table 15. Simple Linear Regression Test

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	25.753	3.833		6.719	<,001
	Competencies of Islamic Education Teachers (X)	.292	.117	.402	2.484	.018
a. Dependent Variable: Building Students' Religious Character (Y)						

The regression equation in Table 15 Simple Linear Regression Test, $Y = 25.753 + 0.292X$. The constant (intercept) is 25.753. This indicates that if X equals 0, Y would still be 25.753. For Variable X, the regression test shows that X has a positive regression coefficient $b = 0.292$. This means that an increase of 1 point in Variable X is associated with an increase of 0.292 points in Variable Y.

F Test

The F test indicates whether the independent variable(s) simultaneously have a significant effect on the dependent variable. Decision criteria:

- If $\text{sig} < 0.05$ or $F_{\text{count}} > F_{\text{table}}$, then Variable X has a simultaneous effect on Variable Y.
- If $\text{sig} > 0.05$ or $F_{\text{count}} < F_{\text{table}}$, then Variable X does not have a simultaneous effect on Variable Y.

Table 16. F Test

ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	82.829	1	82.829	6.172	.018 ^b
Residual	429.435	32	13.420		
Total	512.265	33			

a. Dependent Variable: Building Students' Religious Character (Y)
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Competencies of Islamic Education Teachers (X)

Based on the analysis in Table 16 F Test, $F_{\text{count}} (6.172) > F_{\text{table}} (4.149)$ and $\text{sig} = 0.018 < 0.05$, so it is concluded that Variable X has a positive and significant effect on Variable Y.

T Test

According to Ghozali, the t test (partial t test) is used to determine whether each independent variable has a significant partial effect on the dependent variable. Decision criteria:

- If $t_{\text{count}} > t_{\text{table}}$ with $\text{sig} < 0.05$, then H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted, indicating a significant relationship.
- If $t_{\text{count}} < t_{\text{table}}$ with $\text{sig} > 0.05$, then H_0 is accepted and H_a is rejected, indicating no significant relationship.

Hypotheses:

H₀: The competence of Islamic Religious Education teachers has a positive but not significant effect on the formation of students' religious character at SMA Al Islam 1 Surakarta.

H_a: The competence of Islamic Religious Education teachers has a positive and significant effect on the formation of students' religious character at SMA Al Islam 1 Surakarta.

Table 17. T Test

Model	Coefficients ^a				
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	25.753	3.833		6.719	<,001
Competencies of Islamic Education Teachers (X)	.292	.117	.402	2.484	.018

a. Dependent Variable: Building Students' Religious Character (Y)

Based on the analysis in Table 17 T Test, t count (2.484) > t table (1.694) and sig = 0.018 < 0.05, so it is concluded that the competence of Islamic Religious Education teachers has a positive and significant effect on the formation of students' religious character. Therefore, H₀ is rejected and H_a is accepted.

DISCUSSION

Level of Islamic Religious Education Teacher Competence in Class XI.9 at SMA Al-Islam 1 Surakarta

Based on descriptive analysis, the competence level of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in Class XI.9 at SMA Al-Islam 1 Surakarta for the 2025/2026 academic year falls into the moderate category. This finding indicates that PAI teachers possess adequate ability to perform their professional duties, but their performance is not yet fully optimal. Teacher competence, as mandated by Law No. 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, encompasses pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies, all of which should be integrated into day-to-day teaching practice. The “moderate” category suggests

that many competency aspects have been met, but there remains room for development—particularly in instructional innovation and deeper professional growth.

Theoretically, teacher competence is a primary foundation for instructional quality. According to Mulyasa (2022), a competent teacher not only masters subject matter but can also manage learning effectively, understand student characteristics, and display a personality worthy of emulation. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, these competencies carry broader meaning because PAI teachers serve as educators and moral exemplars for their students (Husna, 2024; Munir, 2025). Therefore, a PAI teacher's competence should be measured not only by cognitive and methodological skills but also by the consistency of moral conduct and spirituality reflected in everyday behavior.

The present findings align with Anggraini et al. (2025) and Mukarromah & Sartika (2024), who report that many PAI teachers at the secondary level fall into the mid-competency range because the increasing complexity of the curriculum is not always matched by ongoing professional development programs. Teachers often meet minimum competency standards but do not fully leverage contextual teaching strategies, educational technology, or reflective approaches that could enhance the internalization of religious values.

The finding that PAI teacher competence is at a moderate level underscores the need for sustained capacity building. Efforts can include values-based pedagogical training, teacher learning communities, and strengthened academic supervision. Enhancing these competencies is critical because the quality of PAI teachers strongly determines the success of religious instruction and the development of students' religious character in school.

Level of Religious Character Formation among Students in Class XI.9 at SMA Al-Islam 1 Surakarta

Analysis results indicate that the level of religious character formation among students in Class XI.9 at SMA Al-Islam 1 Surakarta is categorized as moderate. This suggests that students demonstrate religious behaviors in several areas such as participation in worship activities and adherence to school rules but consistency across all religious-character indicators is uneven. According to Siswanto et al. (2021), religious character refers

to attitudes and behaviors that reflect obedience to the tenets of one's faith, both in ritual and social aspects.

From a character-education perspective, religious character is not formed instantly; it develops through an ongoing process of value internalization. Character builds through the integration of three core components of moral education: moral knowing (knowledge of moral values), moral feeling (emotional engagement with those values), and moral action (the enactment of moral values in real behavior). This framework, developed by Thomas Lickona, underpins many character-education models in Indonesia (Bujang et al., 2023; Fajri et al., 2024). The moderate category found in this study suggests that students' knowledge and habitual religious practices have begun to form, but deeper appreciation and consistent religious behavior in daily life still need reinforcement.

These findings can also be explained by the habituation theory in Islamic education. Regular practice of worship and moral habits in the school environment becomes effective when performed consistently and continuously, accompanied by teacher exemplarity and supported by a religious and conducive school social environment. Consistent habituation and social support strengthen the internalization of moral values into students' daily behavior (Abidin et al., 2024; N. R. Rahmawati et al., 2021; Rosyid et al., 2024). At SMA Al-Islam 1 Surakarta, the school's religious programs have positively contributed to students' religious character, but external factors such as family environment and peer interactions continue to influence variations in students' religiosity.

The moderate level of students' religious character indicates that character formation is underway but not yet optimal. This underscores the importance of synergy between classroom PAI instruction, the school's religious culture, and the family's role in instilling and reinforcing religious values so that those values can be internalized more deeply and sustainably.

The Influence of PAI Teacher Competence on the Formation of Students' Religious Character

Inferential analysis shows that PAI teacher competence has a positive and significant effect on the formation of religious character among students in Class XI.9 at SMA Al-Islam 1 Surakarta. This finding demonstrates that the better the PAI teachers'

competence, the higher the level of students' religious character. Statistically, the simple linear regression and t-test results indicate that the alternative hypothesis is accepted, meaning PAI teacher competence is one important factor in shaping students' religious character.

Theoretically, this result aligns with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986). The theory explains that individuals learn through observation and imitation of models they consider significant. In an educational context, teachers are primary models for students. PAI teachers who demonstrate strong pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies become role models whose behaviors and attitudes are observed, imitated, and internalized by students, thus directly influencing the formation of their religious character.

However, the magnitude of PAI teacher competence's influence on students' religious character in this study is partial. This indicates that religious character formation is not determined solely by teacher competence but is also affected by other factors such as family environment, school culture, peer groups, and social media. This view is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which posits that individual development is shaped not only by personal factors but also by interacting environmental systems—family, school, peers, and broader societal values and norms (Syifa' Fauziyah et al., 2025; Yuliawan & Taryatman, 2020).

Nevertheless, the significant effect of PAI teacher competence highlights the teacher's strategic role in character education. A competent PAI teacher does more than deliver religious content; the teacher enlivens Islamic values through instruction and daily interactions. Therefore, strengthening PAI teacher competence is a strategic step to reinforce students' religious character formation, especially when integrated with habituation programs and a supportive school environment.

Implications of the Study

The results of this study have both theoretical and practical implications for education, particularly Islamic religious education and the strengthening of students' religious character. Theoretically, the finding that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher competence has a positive and significant effect on the formation of students'

religious character reinforces character-education theory and social learning theory, which emphasize the teacher's role as a model in the internalization of religious values. This finding supports the view that a teacher's pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies are important factors in the process of forming student character in school settings. Practically, the results imply that schools and education policymakers should strengthen PAI teacher competence through ongoing training, academic supervision, and the reinforcement of a school culture rooted in religious values. Thus, developing teacher competence will not only improve instructional quality but also more effectively and sustainably contribute to the formation of students' religious character.

Limitations of the Study

Although this study produces meaningful findings, it has several limitations that should be noted. First, the research involved only a single class with a relatively small number of respondents, so generalizing the results to a broader population should be done cautiously. Second, the independent variable studied focused solely on PAI teacher competence, while the formation of students' religious character is influenced by many other factors such as family environment, school culture, and peer influence that were not analyzed in this study. Third, using a questionnaire as the sole data-collection instrument may introduce respondent subjectivity bias. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve a larger sample, include additional relevant variables, and employ a mixed-methods approach to obtain a more comprehensive picture of how students' religious character is formed.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that Islamic Religious Education teacher competence has a positive and significant effect on the formation of students' religious character. Simple linear regression analysis yielded a regression coefficient of $b = 0.292$ with a t-test result ($t = 2.484$; $p = 0.018 < 0.05$) and an F-test ($F = 6.172$; $p = 0.018$), so the initial hypothesis is accepted. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 16.2\%$) indicates that teacher competence explains 16.2% of the variance in students' religious character formation, while the remaining 83.8% is influenced by other factors outside the model. Descriptively, the

teachers' competence level in the sample falls into the moderate category (mean $X = 32.21$), and the level of students' religious character formation is also moderate (mean $Y = 35.15$). These statistical findings are consistent with field observations suggesting that improving teacher competence still has potential to further enhance the formation of students' religious character.

This study offers several important contributions. First, empirically it strengthens evidence that the dimensions of teacher competence (pedagogical, personal, social, and professional) play a role in the internalization of religious values among students, thereby enriching the literature on mechanisms of character education in Islamic school settings. Second, the study broadens the research context by situating the analysis at SMA Al-Islam Surakarta in the era of the Kurikulum Merdeka, adding empirical documentation in an Islamic-school setting that has been relatively under-researched. Third, methodologically, the study provides validated instruments (all items valid; Cronbach's α for instrument $X = 0.919$; $Y = 0.859$) that can serve as benchmarks for future studies on teacher competence and religious character. These findings not only fill an empirical gap but also facilitate the development of conceptual models that integrate the role of teacher competence in forming students' religious character.

Based on the results and limitations of the study, practical and academic recommendations are offered. Practically, schools and policymakers are advised to strengthen continuous professional development programs for PAI teachers, including values-based pedagogical training, role-modeling programs (*uswah hasanah*) and periodic supervision, and to intensify structured religious habituation programs so that internalization of values occurs consistently. Academically, further studies are recommended to: (1) use longitudinal designs to examine the stability of teacher-competence effects on religious character over time; (2) expand samples geographically and across schools to improve the generalizability of findings; (3) include additional contextual variables (e.g., family support, school climate, peer influence, and media exposure) and adopt mixed methods or quasi-experimental intervention designs to test stronger causal effects; and (4) complement questionnaires with observation and in-depth interview techniques to capture qualitative dimensions of the character-formation process. Implementing these recommendations should enable future research to produce more

comprehensive and applicable evidence for improving the quality of religious education and the formation of students' religious character in schools.

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