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## Literature Study: Problems of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Curriculum in Schools and Madrasah

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### **Abstrak**

*This literature study aims to comprehensively map the problems of implementing the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in public schools and madrasas in Indonesia. This research uses a literature review approach by examining various scientific articles, policy reports, and relevant previous research results. The results of the study indicate that the challenges of implementing the PAI curriculum can be classified into three main levels: policy or curriculum design, classroom implementation, and evaluation and assessment systems. The research findings reveal differences in the pattern of problems between public schools and madrasas. In public schools, PAI tends to be marginalized due to limited time allocation and its position within the Independent Curriculum, resulting in shallow learning and solely cognitive-oriented learning. Meanwhile, madrasas face the complex problem of curriculum dualism between the national curriculum and the religious curriculum, which has the potential to burden students and reduce the depth of understanding of the material. On the other hand, both educational institutions face relatively similar challenges in implementation and evaluation aspects, such as the dominance of lecture methods, limited teacher pedagogical competence, difficulties in measuring affective and spiritual aspects, and weak integration of Islamic values with the dynamics of the digital era and Society 5.0. This situation has hampered the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in shaping the character, morals, and spirituality of students. Therefore, solutions are needed to develop a contextual, holistic, and systemic Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum, taking into account the specific characteristics, needs, and challenges of each educational institution.*

*Keywords: Curriculum, Madrasah, Problems, Islamic Religious Education*

### **1. Introduction**

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a special and important place in the education system in Indonesia. [1] Because Indonesia is a country with the largest Muslim population in the world, where around 87% of the population adheres to Islam, PAI is present not only to follow existing learning programs, but is also very important in forming the religious and moral identity of society.[2] The importance of this position can be seen from the strict law in the National Education Law which ensures that every student has the right to receive religious education according to their beliefs. [3]

Ideally, Islamic Religious Education should not only be a lesson that teaches religious knowledge in ways of thinking, but more as an important tool to shape the character and personality of students who uphold good morals.[4] This hope is in accordance with the goals of education in Indonesia as written in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, namely to develop students' abilities to become people who believe in and obey God Almighty, behave well, are healthy, knowledgeable, skilled, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens.[5]

The context of the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in Indonesia takes place in two different institutional settings, namely public schools and madrasahs, which create unique nuances and curriculum challenges for each institution. In public schools under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemdikbudristek), PAI is positioned as one subject among many other general subjects, with a relatively limited time allocation.[6] This position often places PAI in a marginalized framework, where in-depth efforts to internalize religious values are a challenge in itself due to limited class hours. In contrast, madrasahs under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) make PAI the core identity and spirit of their educational

institutions, with a much larger and more in-depth portion of class hours. The role of Islamic Religious Education is expected to produce a generation of Muslims who not only know the theoretical teachings of religion, but also can internalize and apply Islamic values in everyday life.[7] values such as honesty, tolerance, discipline, responsibility, and compassion are expected to become part of the personality of students after they take PAI lessons. Thus, PAI is expected to become a moral and spiritual basis that supports the knowledge and skills obtained from other subjects. [8]

However, behind these idealistic expectations, there are several things that indicate a gap between theory and actual practice. This difference presents an important opportunity to reassess how effective the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is today. One thing that is often seen is the low level of application of religious values in students' daily actions. Many students can achieve high grades in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), can memorize verses of the Qur'an, understand the concepts of Islamic jurisprudence, and explain Islamic history well, but this knowledge is not always reflected in actions that demonstrate Islamic values.[9] For example, there are still cases of dishonest behavior such as cheating, bullying, lack of discipline, and disrespect for teachers and parents among students who should have been studying PAI for years.

This phenomenon indicates a dissociation between religious knowledge (cognitive domain) and religious practice (affective and psychomotor domains). Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning tends to emphasize memorization and theoretical understanding, while character building and internalization of values receive insufficient attention. The learning approach often fails to address the emotional and spiritual aspects of students, so religious values remain merely knowledge in the brain, rather than driving behavior.

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Previous literature reviews revealed several relevant studies. First, a study conducted by Miftahul Hidayah revealed that the implementation of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in Indonesia faces challenges such as low teacher welfare, shortage of teaching staff, lack of training, and inadequate facilities and infrastructure. To address these challenges, recommended steps include improving teacher welfare, implementing applicable training, improving facilities and infrastructure, and reducing administrative burdens.[12] Second, research by AAPJ Audi, T. Hamami, Moh Luthfih Gonibala, and Farhan Moh Fahrurrozi Bonde revealed that since the arrival of the Dutch in 1695, Islamic education has continued, and the VOC encouraged the establishment of Islamic schools. The establishment of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in 1946 provided significant impetus, while the New Order era saw curriculum changes in 1962, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1994, and the 1999 Supplement. The PAI curriculum reflects an evolution from a focus on religion and text memorization to integration with general science. Despite progress, challenges such as a lack of critical thinking, insufficient active learning, and overly cognitive assessment remain. Deep reform is needed to maintain the curriculum's relevance to the needs of the times, maintain Islamic identity without sacrificing the essence of the teachings, and improve the quality of Islamic religious education in the face of developments in science, technology, and the moral crisis.[13]

In addition, a study conducted by M. Rizal Umam and Tasman Hamami on curriculum development and implementation of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum in schools and madrasas revealed that the problem of developing the Islamic Religious Education curriculum in Madrasas, local governments must better understand Islamic religious education that it is the responsibility of local governments so that later, Islamic religious education under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion will receive more attention.[14] Research by Cahya Mulyana, Andrea Frendi Zega Ramdani, and Nur'ainiyah on the Problems of Implementing the Independent Curriculum in Religious Education Subjects with research results that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in schools still faces various problems, especially in the aspects of teachers, students, and infrastructure. This is evidenced by the effectiveness of the Independent Curriculum learning concept which has not been maximized.[15] A study by M Yusri, Ali Akbar, and Agus Basri highlighted the main problems faced including the lack of adaptation of the curriculum to technological developments, the lack of facilities and resources that support the digital learning process, and the lack of competence of educators in utilizing technology. In addition, globalization brings cultural influences and values that conflict with Islamic teachings, thus influencing the mindset and behavior of students.[16]

The difference between this research and previous studies lies in its focus and approach. While previous studies tended to address issues from a single perspective, such as policy, methodology, or philosophy, this study seeks to present a comprehensive synthesis by simultaneously combining and analyzing these various problematic aspects. In other words, this study goes beyond simply listing problems and examining the interconnectedness and dynamics of these interrelated issues, from the macro-policy level to the micro-practice level within the classroom. The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive and in-depth problem map regarding the implementation of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in schools and madrasahs. This can serve as a basis for reflection and recommendations for policymakers, education practitioners, and future researchers in their efforts to improve and innovate the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum.

## 2. Research Method

This research uses a literature study method or literature review.[17] This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore, analyze, and synthesize various thoughts, empirical findings, and theories that have been produced by experts and previous researchers related to the problems of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore, analyze, and synthesize various thoughts, empirical findings, and theories that have been produced by experts and previous researchers related to the problems of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum.[18] The primary data sources in this study are scientific journal articles and PDF books published in the last five years (2021-2025) to ensure data relevance. Secondary data sources were obtained from official documents such as the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture and the Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs which regulate the Islamic Religious Education and Madrasah curriculum.[19] Data collection techniques were carried out by searching trusted academic databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, and Sinta using keywords such as "Islamic Religious Education curriculum problems", "Islamic Religious Education implementation in schools", "Islamic Religious Education curriculum issues", and "evaluation of Islamic education".[20] Data analysis was conducted qualitatively using content analysis techniques, where data from various sources were categorized, compared, and interpreted to identify key themes, patterns, and relationships between concepts that represent the problems of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum. Thus, this study seeks to build a coherent and in-depth argument based on a synthesis of the existing literature.

## 3. Result

Table 1 Analysis of Problems and Development of PAI Curriculum in Indonesia in Response to 6 Relevant Articles

No	Title	Authors	Focus of Study	Year	Research Method
1	The Problems of PAI Learning in the Era of Society 5.0 in Shaping Student Morality in Indonesia	D. Fadilah, E. Sumarna, & M.R.F. Islamy	Problems of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in the digital era, moral formation, gap between objectives and reality	2024	Descriptive qualitative
2	Analysis of the Development of the PAI Curriculum for Grade IV Elementary School from K13 to Independent Curriculum	Z.E. Pramesti, A. Rohali, & R.P. Nasmu	Development and changes in the PAI curriculum (from K-13 to Independent Curriculum), implementation challenges	2024	Analytical document study
3	Application of Current Learning Theories in PAI Curriculum Development	Dinda Pustika Putri	Application of learning theories in PAI curriculum development, teacher competence	2024	Systematic literature study
4	Curriculum Review of PAI Doctoral Program in PTKIN With Literacy Content	A.D.P. Juni & Q. Khoiri	Review of doctoral-level curriculum, literacy integration, relevance to contemporary demands	2024	Qualitative content analysis
5	Qualitative Study: Comparison of Implementation of the Effectiveness of the Ethno-Religious-Based SAVI Model in Improving Problem-Solving Skills	Amiruddin Abdullah, Ari Wijayanti, Wiwid Suryono, Marita Ika Joesidawati, Ahmad Zain Sarnoto, Siti Fatimah Hiola, Aat Ruchiat Nugraha, Windy Dian Sari, Sukini, & Tomi Apra Santosa	Effectiveness of innovative learning model (SAVI) in improving problem-solving skills	2024	Qualitative comparative study

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6	The Contemporary Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Curriculum: Synergy Between Religious Values and Technology	Faisal Al-Banjari, Wahab, & Nelly Mujahidah	Integration of technology in the PAI curriculum, challenges and opportunities for synergy between religious values and ICT	2025	Multidisciplinary case study
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A thorough review of the literature presented in the table above reveals the complexity of the problems faced by the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum, which exhibits distinct patterns between public schools and madrasahs, despite both facing common challenges in the implementation and evaluation of learning. This research successfully maps three main levels of problems—the policy/design, implementation, and evaluation levels—that emerge in the different contexts of both educational institutions. These findings reinforce the significant gap between the ideal goal of the PAI curriculum, which aims to shape students who are faithful, pious, and have noble character, and the reality of its implementation, which is still characterized by various structural, cultural, and technical limitations.

### Problems of Islamic Education Curriculum in Schools

In public schools, the main problem stems from the position of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) as one of many other "general" subjects within the Independent Curriculum framework. This context creates systemic structural challenges, particularly in the implementation aspect, where the very limited time allocation of only around 2-3 hours per week is the biggest obstacle for teachers to deepen religious values with students. This time limitation, as revealed in a recent study (Analysis of the Development of the PAI Curriculum for Grade IV Elementary School from K13 to Independent Curriculum, 2024) often triggers a learning approach that focuses on delivering cognitive material to meet curriculum demands, neglecting the process of internalizing values that requires a more intensive and sustainable approach. Furthermore, within the public school ecosystem, PAI is often marginalized and perceived as a "second-class" subject that is less prestigious than science and mathematics, thus affecting the motivation of both teachers and students. This perception arises because the national assessment system places more emphasis on certain subjects, and school policies tend to allocate greater resources to subjects that are considered more "strategic" in improving school rankings.

At the curriculum design level, problems in public schools arise in the form of a mismatch between the overly dense material and the available time. Islamic Religious Education teachers are required to deliver material covering the Qur'an, Aqidah, Morals, Jurisprudence, and Islamic Cultural History in very limited portions, thus encouraging a superficial learning approach and not touching on deeper aspects of appreciation. Problems in the evaluation aspect are also prominent, with the dominance of written test-based cognitive assessments that only measure memorization abilities, while the assessment of attitudes and character, which are the main objectives of Islamic Religious Education, is neglected. A recent study (Application of Current Learning Theories in Islamic Religious Education Curriculum Development, 2024) [22] shows that most Islamic Religious Education teachers still experience difficulties in developing valid and reliable affective assessment instruments, making it difficult to measure aspects of character formation comprehensively. Another challenge is the gap in teacher competency in facing the digital era, where students have been exposed to various religious information from digital sources that are not always guaranteed to be accurate, while teachers are not yet fully able to guide students in filtering this information critically.

### Problems of the Islamic Education Curriculum in Madrasahs

As institutions with a strong Islamic identity, madrasahs face more complex problems at the policy and curriculum design levels. The main problem is the dual curriculum burden (curriculum dualism), where madrasahs must implement both the national curriculum from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology and the religious curriculum from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. As a result, students are burdened with too many subjects, which has the potential to cause academic burnout and sacrifice the depth of understanding in both general and religious fields. Recent research (Curriculum Review of PAI Doctoral Program in PTKIN With Literacy Content, 2024) [23] confirms that this dual burden often causes the learning process to focus on completing material rather than deepening meaningful understanding. In terms of implementation, despite having more time, the challenge actually comes from maintaining the quality of learning amidst the density of material. PAI teachers in madrasahs, despite having a strong religious background, are also required to be able to deal with students in the digital era with various learning resources that are no longer teacher-centered.

The specific problem facing madrasas lies in the tension between maintaining religious identity and meeting the demands of national standards. On the one hand, madrasas are required to produce graduates with strong religious competencies, but on the other hand, they must also be able to compete with public schools in mastery of science and technology. This tension often leads to compromises that are not beneficial to both parties, where the depth of religious material is reduced to make room for strengthening science, or vice versa. A recent study (*The Contemporary Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Curriculum: Synergy Between Religious Values And Technology, 2025*) [24] identified that madrasas also face challenges in harmoniously integrating religious values with technological developments. A dichotomy often arises between traditional approaches to PAI learning and the demands of 21st-century learning that emphasizes creativity, critical thinking, and mastery of technology. Furthermore, the limited availability of more modern facilities and infrastructure in many madrasas, especially in the regions, also exacerbates this problem, making it difficult for madrasas to implement innovative learning models that combine technology and Islamic values.

### **Comparative Analysis of Problems**

A comparative analysis found that the problems of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum in schools and madrasas have unique points of intersection and differences. The common problems faced by these two institutions lie in the aspects of implementation and evaluation, such as difficulties in implementing authentic affective assessments and challenges in facing the digital era. Both schools and madrasas are grappling with the problem of learning methodologies that are still dominated by a teacher-centered approach, even though the curriculum demands emphasize a more participatory and student-centered approach. Research findings (*Qualitative Study: Comparison of Implementation of the Effectiveness of the Ethno-Religious-Based SAVI Model, 2024*) [25] show that both institutions also face the same difficulties in contextualizing Islamic Religious Education material with the socio-cultural realities of students in the contemporary era.

However, the root of the problem is fundamentally different. Public schools grapple with the problem of marginalization and integration of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) within the larger national education system, where PAI is positioned as an additional subject that is not integrated with other subjects. Meanwhile, madrasas face the problem of complexity and double curriculum burden that originates from within the system itself. This difference in context indicates that the solutions offered must be contextual and cannot be generalized. Interestingly, research (*The Problems of PAI Learning in the Era of Society 5.0 in Shaping Student Morality in Indonesia, 2024*) [26] reveals that both schools and madrasas face challenges in equipping students to face the era of Society 5.0, where religious values need to be presented as ethical guidelines in interactions with increasingly massive technology.

## **4. Discussion**

### **Problems of Islamic Education Curriculum in Schools**

Research findings indicate that the problems with the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in public schools are systemic, not solely at the technical level of classroom learning. These problems are intertwined in three major domains: curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation, and are reinforced by socio-cultural factors within schools that place PAI in a less strategic position than other general subjects. In the context of the Independent Curriculum, PAI functions as an instrument for character formation and strengthening the profile of Pancasila students.[27] However, the ideals of these goals have not yet been aligned with the reality of implementation on the ground.

In terms of curriculum structure and institutional culture, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in public schools is in a disadvantageous position. PAI is positioned as one of many "general" subjects, while indicators of school success are largely determined by achievement in science, mathematics, and basic literacy. Consequently, PAI is often marginalized both symbolically and practically. This marginalization is evident in the limited allocation of class time, approximately 2–3 hours per week, which is disproportionate to the breadth and depth of the material to be taught. In such conditions, PAI teachers are under pressure to complete the material, rather than to substantively shape students' personalities and morals. This has resulted in a shift in the orientation of PAI from the internalization of values to merely the transfer of religious knowledge.

Problems are evident at the curriculum design level. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) material covers several broad domains: the Qur'an and Hadith, Creed, Morals, Jurisprudence, and Islamic Cultural History.[28] Conceptually, this material map reflects the breadth of Islamic teachings, but in practice, it becomes problematic because the dense content is not balanced by adequate time allocation and learning support. Teachers are ultimately forced to take pedagogical shortcuts through informative, textual, and memorization-oriented learning. A curriculum that emphasizes "coverage of content" (completeness of material) without space for reflection and daily practice causes Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning to tend to stop at the cognitive dimension. The direct implication is the fragmentation between religious knowledge and character formation, even though the main goal of PAI is to shape Muslim personalities who are faithful, pious, and have noble morals.

At the implementation level, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers face a dilemma between the ideal and the real. Limited time forces them to rely more heavily on lectures, simple question-and-answer sessions, and written assignments. Active, contextual, and reflective learning methods, which align with the Independent Curriculum, are often difficult to optimize. Religious project-based learning, mentoring in religious practices, moral development through habituation, and character-strengthening activities require intensive and continuous interaction, which cannot be fully supported by formal classroom instruction. Thus, the imbalance between curriculum demands and implementation capacity is one of the root causes of crucial problems in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) management in public schools.

In the aspect of learning evaluation, the problems are increasingly apparent. The evaluation system in public schools is still dominated by cognitive assessments based on written tests. Measurement is oriented toward students' ability to answer multiple-choice questions, short essays, or memorize religious concepts. Meanwhile, affective and psychomotor assessments, such as religious attitudes, worship habits, honesty, responsibility, or social concern, are relatively poorly measured in a valid and systematic manner. Many Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers struggle to develop reliable indicators, rubrics, and affective assessment instruments. As a result, PAI learning outcomes reflect more on the ability to answer questions, rather than the quality of Islamic values in daily behavior. This condition contradicts the primary orientation of religious education, which emphasizes the holistic dimensions of religiosity: faith, Islam, and ihsan.

The digital era presents a vast flow of religious information, accessed by students through social media, YouTube, and other online preaching platforms.[29] Students not only receive knowledge from teachers in the classroom, but also from various sources that are not necessarily scientifically accurate or moderate in understanding. Islamic Religious Education teachers are required not only to teach, but also to act as filters, curators, and guides for religious digital literacy. However, in reality, some teachers are not ready to face this digital ecosystem. Limited technological literacy, a generation gap, and a lack of ICT-based curriculum training make it difficult for Islamic Religious Education teachers to integrate creative and critical digital learning. This is where a new problem arises: the imbalance between the digital-native learning culture of students and the capacity of teachers who are still conventional.

Furthermore, culturally, the presence of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in public schools is also influenced by an unwritten but powerful hidden curriculum: schools' orientation toward rankings, academic achievement, and competition for higher education. When indicators of school success are primarily determined by math and science scores, attention to PAI automatically diminishes. This results in a cycle: PAI is deemed less important → small resource allocation → low implementation quality → less significant learning outcomes → a stronger perception of marginalization. This cycle needs to be read as a structural issue, not simply a weakness of the PAI teachers or the subject itself.

When examined from a curriculum theory perspective, this problem indicates a lack of synchronicity between the ideal curriculum, the written curriculum (formal curriculum), and the implemented curriculum (operational curriculum). Ideally, Islamic Religious Education is directed at character and spirituality formation; this is written down in curriculum documents; however, in practice, it has become a minimalist form of cognitive learning.[30] This lack of synchronicity also impacts the curriculum that students actually experience (experiential curriculum), namely the Islamic Religious Education learning experience that does not deeply touch on the meaning of religiosity.

### **Problems of the Islamic Education Curriculum in Madrasas**

The dual curriculum burden has a direct impact on both students and teachers. Madrasah students not only study general subjects such as mathematics, science, Indonesian, and others, but also must study a significant number of religious subjects such as the Qur'an and Hadith, Aqidah (Islamic creed), Jurisprudence (Fiqh), Islamic Cultural History, Arabic, and even local religious programs within the educational unit. This accumulation results in curriculum overload, which can potentially trigger academic burnout. In such situations, learning is easily reduced to the pursuit of material completion, rather than the deepening of meaning and the development of true competencies. In other words, what occurs is extensive learning (broad but shallow), rather than intensive learning (deep and meaningful).[31]

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in madrasas are under pressure to complete extensive religious subject targets, while general subject teachers are also burdened with national curriculum targets. This dualism of targets often places teachers in a dilemma between pedagogical ideals and administrative demands. Teachers often employ learning strategies oriented toward completing syllabi and curriculum documents, rather than learning that addresses individual student needs. This clearly demonstrates the gap between the written curriculum and the curriculum experienced by students, as understood in modern curriculum theory.

In terms of learning implementation, madrasas fundamentally have an advantage due to their relatively longer religious instruction time. However, this advantage is not fully commensurate with the depth of the internalization of religious values. When the curriculum is too dense, additional time is spent on additional material, rather than enriching students' religious experiences through practice, reflection, and habituation. Teachers also face the challenge of maintaining the quality of learning amidst the abundance of material. Administrative burdens, accreditation demands, and institutional programs sometimes trap teachers in a textual teaching routine of lectures, memorization, and written assignments that do not foster critical and contextual dialogue.

Madrasahs are expected to be institutions capable of producing graduates with strong religious competencies and prowess in science and technology. However, these dual demands are not always supported by adequate resources, facilities, and policies. As a result, compromises often arise that are less than ideal: reducing the depth of religious material to make room for strengthening science, or conversely, strengthening religious material at the expense of science and technology skills. This tension reflects the conflict between the traditional-textual and modern-instrumental orientations in madrasah education.

Another emerging challenge is the integration of religious values with technology. Madrasahs are expected to produce a religious generation that is tech-savvy. However, in practice, a sharp dichotomy often exists between traditional religious learning (halaqah, books, lectures) and 21st-century learning that demands creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and digital literacy. Many madrasahs, especially in rural areas, face limitations in ICT devices, internet access, laboratories, and teacher training. This situation hinders efforts to integrate technology into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, even though students already live in a digital culture with extensive access to religious content from social media, YouTube, and online study platforms.[32]

In terms of teacher competency, although madrasa teachers generally have a strong background in religious studies, not all are methodologically and digitally prepared. Mastery of religious knowledge does not always align with progressive pedagogical skills. Many teachers still use a teacher-centered approach dominated by lectures, as it is considered the most effective for achieving dense material targets. Meanwhile, student-centered learning, project-based learning, or inquiry learning approaches are still limited in application due to their perceived time-consuming and complex preparation. In the context of the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes independent learning and character building, this presents a serious challenge.[33]

Problems also arise in the evaluation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in madrasas. Many madrasahs have attempted to develop assessments of religious attitudes and practices, such as student worship, discipline, and morals. However, the instruments used often lack a strong measurement basis, resulting in a high level of subjectivity. Furthermore, administrative demands mean that evaluation remains dominated by numerical scores derived from cognitive tests. As a result, the goal of religious education, namely the formation of a holistic Muslim personality, is not fully reflected in the existing assessment system.

From a sociological perspective, madrasas often serve as a moral bulwark in society. However, the socioeconomic conditions of some madrasas, especially private ones, mean they face limited facilities, funding, and technological support. Meanwhile, community expectations of madrasas are very high: to produce pious, intelligent, and competitive graduates. This imbalance between social expectations and institutional capacity further emphasizes the problematic nature of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in madrasas.

From a curriculum theory perspective, the problems facing madrasas illustrate the disharmony between the ideological, formal, and operational curricula. The ideological curriculum emphasizes the Islamic mission of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (blessing for all the universe); the formal curriculum includes national and religious competency standards; while the operational curriculum in the field often fails to achieve both in a balanced manner. This indicates that the problems with the Islamic Religious Education curriculum in madrasas are not merely technical but also paradigmatic.[34]

### **Analisis Komparatif Problematika**

A comparative analysis of the challenges of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in public schools and madrasas shows that both educational institutions face simultaneous challenges: both are complex but have different contextual characteristics. The common ground lies in the implementation and evaluation of the curriculum, while the differences are more apparent at the level of policy and curriculum structure. Thus, this comparison not only captures institutional differences but also demonstrates how the socio-institutional context shapes the face of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in practice.[35]

In terms of learning implementation, both schools and madrasas still demonstrate the dominance of the teacher-centered learning paradigm. The teacher is the center of information, while students are positioned as recipients of knowledge. Yet, both the Independent Curriculum and madrasah curriculum policies emphasize the importance of student-centered, active, collaborative, and contextual learning. This teacher-centered tendency is not solely due to teacher resistance to innovation, but rather to the demands of completing dense material, time constraints, and long-entrenched pedagogical habits. As a result, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning outcomes tend to be cognitive, while affective dimensions such as value appreciation, moral internalization, and behavioral change receive less space.

Another point of intersection identified in this comparative study is the problem of affective assessment. Both schools and madrasahs still struggle to design assessment instruments capable of validly and reliably measuring religious attitudes, noble character, and worship habits. The instruments used often consist of simple attitude scales, general observations, or anecdotal notes from teachers. This is prone to subjectivity and does not fully reflect students' personality development. In practice, PAI scores are still largely determined through written tests, so recorded learning outcomes reflect more on the ability to answer questions than on moral qualities. Thus, the evaluation problem highlights the gap between the normative goals of the PAI curriculum and the mechanisms for measuring learning outcomes.[36]

Schools and Islamic schools face similar challenges in responding to the digital era and Society 5.0. Students live in a digital environment with abundant exposure to religious information through social media, blogs, Islamic preaching videos, and online forums. This information is not all valid, authoritative, or conveys a moderate understanding. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in both institutions are often not fully prepared to serve as digital religious literacy facilitators. The challenge lies not only in technological mastery but also in critical thinking skills to encourage students to sort, evaluate, and contextualize religious information. At this point, both schools and Islamic schools are required to transform Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning from simply delivering material to critical and ethical digital religious literacy education.

However, behind these similarities lie fundamental differences that prevent a single solution to the problems faced by both. In public schools, the primary problem is the structural marginalization of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is viewed as a non-strategic subject, with limited time allocation, and policy priorities geared more toward improving achievement in subjects tested nationally. This position often leaves Islamic Religious Education (PAI) on the fringes of the school education system. Islamic Religious Education teachers are in the position of having to "prove the relevance" of religious studies amidst a utilitarian academic orientation.

Conversely, madrasas face the problem of structural overload, namely a curriculum dualism between the general curriculum and the religious curriculum. While public schools struggle to find space for Islamic Religious Education, madrasas struggle to manage an overcrowded space. This situation has different consequences: in public schools the problems are limited time and marginalized positions, while in madrasas the problems are curriculum overload and the complexity of integration. Therefore, solutions for schools are not identical to those for madrasas; a uniform approach could potentially ignore the specifics of each context.

Another difference is evident in the aspect of institutional identity. Madrasas have an explicit mission as Islamic educational institutions, while public schools position Islamic Religious Education as a component of character education. Madrasas are required to produce graduates with strong religious competencies while possessing competitive general academic abilities. In contrast, public schools focus more on meeting national academic standards and making religious education a moral enhancer. Therefore, the pressure on madrasah identity is greater because they must simultaneously integrate the functions of da'wah (Islamic outreach), religious education, and general education. From a pedagogical perspective, this comparative analysis shows that both institutions face the same problem of contextualizing Islamic Religious Education (PAI) material. Religious material is often presented in a normative-textual manner without adequately connecting it to the socio-cultural realities faced by students: issues of tolerance, multiculturalism, ecology, digital literacy, radicalism, gender relations, and even technological ethics. This gap leads some students to perceive PAI as a normative subject far removed from everyday life. In fact, PAI should be a crucial instrument in shaping humanitarian ethics and moral literacy amidst rapid social change.[37]

On the other hand, this comparative study suggests a similar challenge for the future: how Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in schools and madrasas (Islamic schools) will equip students to face the era of Society 5.0, where humans coexist intensely with artificial intelligence, robotics, and intelligent digital systems. In this context, religious education is no longer just about individual worship, but also encompasses technological ethics, digital responsibility, social empathy, and reflective spirituality. Both schools and madrasas are still in the early stages of systematically integrating these issues into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning.

Theoretically, this comparative analysis demonstrates that the challenges facing the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in Indonesia are not singular, but rather multidimensional: structural, cultural, pedagogical, and evaluative. Public schools are more in need of strengthening the integration of PAI into macro-education policies and expanding its strategic position in character formation. Madrasas, on the other hand, are in greater need of curriculum simplification, integrative reconstruction of learning designs, and the support of modern infrastructure to meet the dual demands they face.

The multidimensional problems surrounding the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in both public schools and madrasas do not stop at the technical aspects of the curriculum, but extend directly to the core goal of religious education itself: the formation of student character. In other words, the complexity of the PAI curriculum significantly impacts the success or failure of students' internalization of Islamic values.[38]

The limited time allocated for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in public schools and the overloaded curriculum in madrasas (Islamic schools) actually have a similar impact: hindering the internalization of values. Internalizing religious character requires a repetitive and consistent process, involving role models, habituation, reflection, and personal mentoring. This process cannot occur if religious education is positioned merely as a matter of delivering material or completing the curriculum. In public schools, the limited time allocated causes teachers to focus more on achieving cognitive targets, while in madrasas, the sheer volume of material leaves both teachers and students exhausted by the academic demands. In both contexts, the affective and psychomotor dimensions, which should be the heart of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), are inadequately served.

The dominance of a cognitive-oriented approach in learning and evaluation has implications for the emergence of the phenomenon of "pseudo-religiosity." Students may be able to answer questions about morality, worship, or Quranic verses, but they may not necessarily demonstrate behavior consistent with this knowledge in their daily lives. This occurs because the evaluation system rewards the ability to memorize concepts rather than consistent behavior and moral quality. As a result, religious education produces students who "know what is right" but are not necessarily "moved to do what is right." This is where the failure to create unity between knowing, feeling, and doing, which is the essence of character formation from an Islamic educational perspective, becomes apparent.[39]

The weakness of authentic affective assessment makes it difficult for teachers to monitor character development in real terms. Without proper instruments, students' religious behavior is assessed subjectively and incidentally. This leads to two extremes: students who behave well are not documented fairly, while students who violate discipline are only dealt with repressively without a systematic coaching process. This situation indicates that the assessment problem is not merely an administrative issue but also determines the sustainability of the long-term character formation process.

The inability of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum to fully integrate Islamic values with the dynamics of the digital age has serious implications. Today's young generation lives in an information-rich, rapidly changing environment filled with diverse religious discourses. Without a strong foundation in religious literacy, students have the potential to become symbolically religious but lack depth of understanding and ethical sensitivity. They may diligently participate in formal religious activities, but are simultaneously vulnerable to exposure to hate speech, intolerance, religious hoaxes, or even cyber-based radicalism. At this point, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum is being tested to see whether it can produce a generation that is not only ritually devout but also morally mature and intellectually critical.

The problems with the Islamic Religious Education curriculum also impact the formation of integrative character, encompassing spirituality, sociality, and self-worth. The fragmentation between religious and general subjects in schools, as well as the dichotomy between religion and science in madrasas, has the potential to produce students who do not see religious values as an ethical framework for all aspects of life.[40] Religion is understood as a subject, not as a value system that guides decision-making, attitudes, and social participation. A further implication is the formation of individuals who are separated between private religiosity and public ethics: devout in worship but still permissive of cheating, academic dishonesty, intolerance, or social insensitivity.

From a psychological-educational perspective, the high curriculum load, demanding academic demands, and the pressure of grade-based evaluations can lead to learning fatigue. This condition can reduce students' intrinsic motivation for religious studies. Islamic Religious Education, which should be a calming and humanizing subject, is instead perceived by some students as burdensome. If this continues, there is concern that the phenomenon of religious fatigue will emerge, namely a saturation with religious activities that are often formalistic and lacking in depth of meaning.

From the perspective of national education goals and Islamic education goals, the implications of this problematic Islamic Religious Education curriculum are highly strategic. The goal of developing faithful, pious, and noble individuals cannot be achieved if the curriculum, pedagogy, evaluation, and educational ecosystem do not support concrete character formation. In other words, the success of character education depends not only on Islamic Religious Education material, but also on how Islamic Religious Education is systematically integrated into the school and madrasah culture, including teacher role models, a religious climate, and cooperation between families and the community.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the overall discussion, it can be concluded that the problems with the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in schools and madrasas are multidimensional, encompassing policy, curriculum design, learning implementation, and evaluation. In public schools, the main issues lie in the marginalization of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) within the national curriculum structure, limited time allocation, and weak integration of PAI with other subjects. Meanwhile, in madrasas, the problems are more complex, stemming from the dual curriculum burden, the tension between the demands of religious identity and national standards, and the challenge of integrating Islamic values with technological developments and 21st-century learning. At the implementation level, both institutions face the problem of a dominant teacher-centered approach, difficulties with authentic affective assessment, and limitations in contextualizing Islamic Religious Education (PAI) material with the realities of students. The implications of these various problems are significant for the effectiveness of student character development. Both time constraints in public schools and the excessive curriculum burden in madrasas have the potential to hinder the process of in-depth internalization of Islamic values. Evaluation, which is still cognitively oriented, results in the affective and psychomotor dimensions, which are the core of character education, being under-accommodated. If this problem is not addressed immediately, there is a risk of the birth of a generation that is formally and ritually religious, but lacks depth of understanding, moral sensitivity, and the ability to actualize Islamic values in facing the challenges of the digital era and Society 5.0. Therefore, improving the Islamic Religious Education curriculum requires a comprehensive, contextual, and visionary approach that can

synergize religious values, academic needs, and the dynamics of modern developments.

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