

Sociocultural Curriculum Design in Islamic Education: Insights from a Local Wisdom-Based Approach in West Java

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the integration of local Sundanese cultural values into the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum through a sociocultural approach. In Indonesia's multicultural context, aligning Islamic teachings with local wisdom is essential to make religious education more meaningful and contextually relevant. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through literature analysis, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews with four PAI teachers at SMPN 1 Kadipaten, Tasikmalaya Regency, West Java. Additional data sources included school documents and extracurricular activity reports. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify patterns of curriculum integration, teaching strategies, and student character development. Findings reveal that Sundanese values—*silih asah* (mutual learning), *silih asih* (compassion), and *silih asuh* (nurturing)—were systematically embedded into core Islamic competencies such as *akhlaq*, *muamalah*, and *fiqh*. These values enhanced students' engagement in religious and social activities, improved discipline, empathy, and social responsibility, and fostered collaboration among schools, families, and communities. Authentic assessments were used to evaluate behavioral outcomes. The sociocultural model provides a culturally grounded and pedagogically effective framework for character education in Islamic contexts. Despite challenges such as limited instructional time and lack of standardized modules, teacher initiative played a critical role in successful implementation. The study suggests this model can serve as a reference for other culturally rich regions in designing meaningful Islamic curricula.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI) occupies a crucial and strategic position in shaping students' moral, spiritual, and social character within the Indonesian education system. As an integral component of the national curriculum, PAI is not merely designed to transmit religious knowledge but also to cultivate ethical awareness, strengthen faith, and develop responsible behavior among learners. Previous studies emphasize that Islamic education in schools is expected to nurture values such as discipline, empathy, cooperation, and social responsibility so that students are able to internalize religious teachings in both personal and social life (Jaenudin et al., 2023; Kartini et al., 2025; Robaeah et al., 2023; Robaeah et al., 2024). In this sense, PAI functions not only as a cognitive learning subject but also as a character-building instrument that shapes students' worldview, moral reasoning, and everyday conduct. However, achieving these objectives requires learning approaches that go beyond normative instruction and doctrinal explanation, emphasizing instead the contextualization of religious values within students' lived experiences and social realities.

In a multicultural nation such as Indonesia, contextualizing Islamic teachings through local cultural wisdom becomes particularly important. Educational scholars argue that integrating religious instruction with local cultural values allows learning to become more meaningful, relevant, and socially grounded (Afif & Ningrum, 2024; Puspitasari et al., 2022). Without such contextual integration, religious learning risks becoming abstract, rigid, and detached from the sociocultural environments in which students interact daily. Local wisdom provides practical moral frameworks that resonate with students' experiences, making religious teachings easier to internalize and practice. By connecting Islamic values with familiar cultural norms and social traditions, teachers can transform religious education into a dynamic process of character formation rather than a purely theoretical or memorization-based activity.

This need for contextual integration becomes particularly evident in West Java, where Sundanese culture strongly influences social interaction, communication patterns, and value orientation within communities. Sundanese cultural philosophy emphasizes ethical relationships and communal harmony, reflected in well-known principles such as *silih asah* (mutual learning and intellectual enrichment), *silih asih* (mutual compassion and affection), and *silih asuh* (mutual care and responsibility). These cultural principles represent more than symbolic traditions; they function as moral guidelines that shape social behavior and interpersonal relationships in Sundanese society. Importantly, these values are highly compatible with Islamic teachings related to *akhlak*, brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), cooperation (*ta'awun*), tolerance, and social solidarity. When incorporated into religious education, these cultural values can reinforce the internalization of Islamic ethics by situating religious teachings within familiar cultural practices. Consequently, the integration of Sundanese cultural ethos into PAI has the potential to strengthen students' appreciation of religion not only as doctrinal knowledge but also as lived ethical behavior manifested in everyday interactions.

Within this sociocultural context, SMPN 1 Kadipaten in Tasikmalaya Regency represents a particularly relevant educational setting for examining the interaction between local culture and Islamic education. The school operates within a community where Islamic religious traditions coexist closely with a strong Sundanese cultural identity. Students grow up in an environment where cultural norms and religious values are intertwined in daily life, influencing patterns of communication, respect toward elders, communal cooperation, and social responsibility. Such conditions create an opportunity for educational institutions to develop curriculum models that bridge formal religious instruction with local cultural values. Rather than focusing solely on the cognitive mastery of Islamic doctrines, culturally grounded curriculum development seeks to integrate moral values, cultural wisdom, and experiential learning into the design of learning objectives, teaching materials, classroom activities, and character education strategies. Through this approach, religious teachings are expected to be internalized not only as knowledge but also as behavioral dispositions that guide students' social and moral conduct.

Despite the growing discourse on culturally responsive education and character development, many studies examining the relationship between culture and Islamic education remain largely conceptual. Previous research frequently discusses the importance of integrating cultural values into Islamic learning but often stops at the level of theoretical reflection or policy recommendations. Only limited attention has been given to how local cultural wisdom can be systematically embedded into curriculum structures, including competency formulation, learning outcomes, instructional materials, pedagogical strategies, and assessment systems (Adiyono, 2021; Saputra et al., 2022). As a result, discussions of culture-based Islamic education often lack practical frameworks that guide teachers and curriculum developers in implementing such integration within formal schooling contexts. Without operational curriculum models, the concept of culturally grounded Islamic education risks remaining an abstract ideal rather than a practical pedagogical approach.

Another limitation in existing literature concerns the tendency to treat religion and culture as separate domains rather than examining their structural convergence within educational practice. Many studies conceptualize Islamic teachings and local cultural traditions as parallel value systems, without exploring how both can interact dynamically within curriculum planning, teaching strategies, and learning evaluation. This gap is particularly noticeable when considering sociocultural learning perspectives. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes that learning occurs through social interaction, cultural mediation, and collaborative processes supported by scaffolding within the learner's zone of proximal development (ZPD). Cultural tools, dialogue, and shared activities play essential roles in shaping cognitive and moral development. Although this theoretical perspective has been widely discussed in educational literature, its application within Islamic Religious Education curricula in secondary schools remains limited and insufficiently explored (Erihadiana et al., 2024; Pranyata, 2023; Suryana et al., 2022). Consequently, there remains a significant gap between sociocultural learning theory and its practical implementation in Islamic education settings.

Responding to these theoretical and practical gaps, this study focuses specifically on the curriculum design dimension of Islamic Religious Education at SMPN 1 Kadipaten. Rather than merely examining religious activities conducted by the school, the study investigates how Sundanese cultural values are systematically integrated into the structure of the PAI curriculum. Particular attention is given to identifying which competencies and learning outcomes are enriched with local cultural values, how learning materials are contextualized to reflect sociocultural realities, and how pedagogical strategies such as scaffolding, collaborative learning, peer interaction, and role modeling are implemented in classroom practices. Additionally, the study analyzes how assessment mechanisms are designed to evaluate students' development across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains in ways that are valid, responsible, and educationally meaningful.

By examining curriculum design through a sociocultural lens, this research seeks to contribute to the development of Islamic education scholarship by proposing a framework that integrates local wisdom, Islamic ethical principles, and structured instructional design. Such integration is expected to support the formation of students' religious character while simultaneously strengthening their social competence within culturally diverse communities. Furthermore, the findings of this study aim to provide practical insights for teachers, curriculum developers, school leaders, and policymakers regarding how culturally grounded Islamic education can be implemented through intentional curriculum planning rather than incidental classroom practices. Accordingly, the central research question guiding this investigation is: how is the sociocultural model applied in developing the PAI curriculum at SMPN 1 Kadipaten, and how does this approach contribute to the formation of students' religious character and social behavior?

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method to explore the implementation of the sociocultural model in the development of the PAI curriculum at SMPN 1 Kadipaten, Tasikmalaya

Regency (Badri & Malik, 2024; Rifa'i & Choli, 2019). Data were collected through literature review, semi-structured interviews, and non-participant observations. Four PAI teachers were selected purposively as informants and coded as G1-G4. All had a minimum of five years of teaching experience, were actively involved in curriculum planning, and directly handled religious and sociocultural programs at the school. Interviews lasted 45-60 minutes per participant over a two-week period and were guided by an interview protocol covering: (1) curriculum integration strategy, (2) cultural values implementation, (3) student engagement patterns, and (4) institutional support and constraints.

Observations were conducted for one month across eight sessions, consisting of four classroom learning observations and four extracurricular activities. Contexts included congregational dhuha prayers, Qur'an recitation sessions, Islamic holiday commemorations, and Friday community-clean up programs. Observation guidelines focused on student participation patterns, teacher facilitation strategies, and forms of sociocultural value reinforcement. In addition, several school documents were analyzed, including lesson plans (RPP), PAI program documents, PHBI reports, and internal school reports related to religious character activities.

Data were analyzed manually using a thematic analysis approach following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework. Analysis began with familiarization through repeated reading of transcripts and field notes, followed by systematic coding to generate initial codes. Axial coding was then applied to group similar codes into broader categories, which were refined into key themes through selective coding. Coding consistency was checked iteratively. Verbatim excerpts were retained to maintain analytic authenticity, for example: "Cultural values help us translate religious concepts into concrete student behavior" (G2), and "Students become more engaged when religious learning is linked to their daily life and culture" (G3). Field notes also provided supporting evidence of behavioral engagement, although changes in student character are interpreted cautiously and positioned as teacher perceptions and observed tendencies rather than absolute claims.

Credibility of findings was strengthened through triangulation of interviews, observations, and documentation (Ahmed, 2024; Lestari, Ibrahim, & Iriani, 2023). For instance, teacher statements regarding student cooperation during religious activities were cross-checked with observation notes and verified using activity reports. Member checking was conducted by returning transcripts and emerging interpretations to informants for validation. Peer debriefing with academic colleagues supported analytical refinement, while reflexive journaling documented the researcher's positionality and decision-making. This combination of purposive sampling, structured instruments, systematic analysis, and methodological rigor ensured that the findings were grounded in rich contextual evidence and provided a trustworthy picture of how the sociocultural model is applied in the PAI curriculum at SMPN 1 Kadipaten.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

3.1.1 Strengthening Islamic Character through Sociocultural-Based Religious and Social Activities

The findings indicate that the implementation of a sociocultural model in the development of the PAI curriculum at SMPN 1 Kadipaten has a direct impact on strengthening students' religious character through the integration of Sundanese cultural values into Islamic learning. The local values of *silih asah* (mutual advice), *silih asih* (mutual care), and *silih asuh* (mutual guidance) are not merely introduced as cultural concepts, but are systematically mapped to core Islamic education competencies.

The value of *silih asah* is aligned with moral (akhlaq) competencies through the development of respectful corrective behavior, implemented through moral discussions, class reflections, and peer mentoring activities. *Silih asih* is linked to muamalah competencies in strengthening social empathy, practiced through charity programs, peer-support activities, and socially oriented Islamic

commemoration events. Meanwhile, *silih asuh* is associated with fiqh-based worship habituation through assigning students roles such as prayer leaders, *muadzin*, prayer mentors, and peer tutors.

A teacher emphasized how this integration makes Islamic learning more meaningful:

"When local cultural values are combined with Islamic teachings, students perceive religion not as something distant or merely doctrinal, but as an integral element of their daily lives and personal identity. This integration allows Islamic values to be experienced in a natural and meaningful way, closely aligned with familiar cultural practices and social expectations. As a result, students do not view religious activities solely as formal school obligations, but as part of their lived habits, moral guidance, and community interactions. The harmony between cultural wisdom and Islamic principles strengthens students' sense of belonging, encourages active participation in religious and social activities, and fosters emotional attachment to religious values. Ultimately, this approach helps religion become a lived experience that shapes attitudes, behavior, and character formation, while maintaining cultural relevance and reinforcing students' identity as individuals who are both religiously committed and culturally grounded." (Interview, Islamic Education Teacher 2).

Observations revealed measurable and consistent behavioral changes among students following the implementation of the sociocultural model. First, in terms of discipline, students demonstrated increased commitment to religious activities, as evidenced by their arrival 10-15 minutes earlier for congregational *dhuha* prayer across four consecutive observation sessions. Second, empathy and solidarity were clearly reflected during a fundraising activity for an ill student, in which 27 out of 32 students participated voluntarily without any direct instruction from teachers, showing heightened social awareness and mutual care. Third, indicators of social responsibility were evident during the Friday Clean-Up program, where students independently organized task distribution, including sweeping, mopping, arranging sandals, and maintaining mosque cleanliness. These consistent behavioral patterns indicate that the integration of cultural values into PAI not only enhances student participation but also strengthens character formation, particularly in discipline, empathy, and social responsibility within real-life school settings.

A field note excerpt supports this finding: "During the school clean-up activity, three students who were usually passive began to take cleaning tools and voluntarily assisted their peers without direct teacher instruction." This observation indicates a behavioral shift toward responsibility and collaborative engagement, demonstrating how sociocultural-based Islamic character education can stimulate intrinsic motivation rather than compliance driven solely by teacher authority. Similar behavioral patterns were recorded in subsequent activities, where students independently organized task distribution, reminded peers politely about cleanliness, and maintained respectful communication throughout the activity. These actions reflect the embodiment of Islamic values such as cooperation (*ta'awun*), mutual care (*silih asih*), and collective responsibility, which are aligned with both local Sundanese cultural wisdom and Islamic ethical teachings. The gradual emergence of such behaviors suggests not only short-term participation but also the beginning of value internalization. Importantly, teachers reported reduced need for repeated commands, indicating increased student self-awareness and accountability. Thus, the integration of sociocultural elements within PAI contributes meaningfully to the development of students' discipline, empathy, and social responsibility, supported by observable behavioral evidence rather than merely declarative claims (Observation Note, 03/03/2025)

In addition, value internalization was embedded in daily practices such as greeting teachers, polite language use, and respectful behavior. This gradual habituation demonstrates that Islamic values were not merely taught cognitively but were internalized through consistent sociocultural reinforcement. A student stated, "We feel that religious activities are not only school obligations, but part of our lifestyle that fits both Islamic teachings and Sundanese culture." This statement reflects the alignment between Islamic principles and local wisdom, allowing learners to experience religion as lived practice rather than external regulation. Teachers' observations also confirmed reduced reprimands related to

discipline and increased voluntary compliance with school norms, particularly in punctuality, cooperation, and mutual respect. Classroom interactions became more courteous, with students increasingly demonstrating empathy toward peers, such as assisting classmates during group work and resolving conflicts through dialogue. These behavioral transformations indicate the formation of character-based competencies grounded in Islamic ethics and sociocultural identity. Thus, the sociocultural approach in PAI not only fosters ritual participation but also strengthens moral awareness, social responsibility, and cultural harmony, supported by consistent behavioral evidence and student testimonies rather than mere declarative claims.” (Interview, Student 3)

These findings demonstrate that the sociocultural model does not merely increase student participation in religious activities, but also plays a crucial role in strengthening value internalization and shaping authentic religious and social character in students’ daily lives. Through the integration of local Sundanese cultural values with Islamic teachings, students are not only engaged in ritual practices but also encouraged to embody discipline, empathy, mutual care, and social responsibility in real contexts such as school programs, peer interactions, and community-oriented activities. This approach enables PAI to move beyond cognitive understanding toward meaningful character formation, where religious values become lived experiences rather than formal obligations. Consequently, the sociocultural model proves to be an effective pedagogical strategy in cultivating students’ religious identity while simultaneously reinforcing cultural relevance and strengthening school community relationships.

3.1.2 Authentic Learning Activities and Assessment Integration

The sociocultural model extends beyond ritual religious practice and is systematically integrated into classroom learning through culturally grounded instructional strategies. In the aspect of contextual learning, teachers link Islamic moral concepts with Sundanese cultural realities, enabling students to understand religion within their own lived context. Discussion-based learning and case studies, such as the principles of respecting teachers and demonstrating kindness toward others, help students relate Islamic teachings to real-life situations. This approach not only strengthens cognitive understanding but also fosters meaningful internalization of values.

Furthermore, the model is implemented through structured social roles that provide students with direct experiential learning. Learners are assigned responsibilities such as serving as imam, muadzin, program hosts, and members of PHBI committees, allowing them to practice leadership, discipline, and cooperation in religious and social contexts. These roles are rotated to ensure that each student has equal opportunities to experience and develop responsibility, confidence, and social awareness.

In addition, authentic assessment is employed to evaluate students’ behavioral development comprehensively. Teachers utilize varied assessment instruments, including attitude journals, behavioral observations, participation records, and reflective writing. Assessment documents highlight indicators such as punctuality in worship, consistency of involvement in religious activities, social responsibility in collective programs, and ethical communication behavior. This comprehensive assessment strategy ensures that learning outcomes are not limited to academic mastery, but also encompass character formation and value internalization.

3.1.3 Challenges and Required Teacher Support

Despite the positive outcomes achieved through the sociocultural model, several challenges were identified during implementation. One of the primary constraints is limited time allocation, which restricts teachers from translating all Islamic Education competencies into contextual and practical learning experiences. Certain learning objectives that ideally require experiential activities must instead be delivered through conventional instruction due to curriculum scheduling demands.

Another challenge concerns the absence of standardized learning modules specifically designed to integrate Islamic teachings with local cultural values. In practice, teachers depend largely on personal

initiative and creativity, resulting in variation in program quality and consistency. This situation creates disparities in implementation because not all educators possess the same pedagogical readiness or innovation capacity.

Furthermore, the study highlights the need for continuous professional development among teachers, particularly in the area of sociocultural pedagogy. Strengthening teacher competence is essential to ensure that cultural integration is not merely symbolic, but pedagogically structured, theoretically grounded, and systematically implemented. Training and professional learning communities are required to support teachers in designing culturally responsive Islamic Education.

These conditions are reflected in a teacher's expression of concern: *"The integration of cultural and religious values runs well, but there is still no formal guideline. We need standardized instructional frameworks."* (Interview, Islamic Education Teacher 3). This statement underscores the need for institutional policy support and structured guidance to sustain program effectiveness.

Nevertheless, teacher commitment remains the most decisive factor in ensuring program success. Teachers function not only as instructors, but also as role models, facilitators of reflective value learning, and coordinators of collaborative school–community activities. During the Maulid Nabi celebration, for example, students were actively involved as organizing committee members, qari' readers, documentation teams, and service coordinators, illustrating how teacher leadership encourages meaningful student participation.

Table 2. Challenges and Required Support for Sociocultural-Based Islamic Education

Challenge	Evidence from Findings	Required Support
Limited Time Allocation	Not all competencies practiced contextually	Flexible scheduling; integration across subjects
Lack of Standardized Modules	Teachers rely on personal creativity	Development of formal sociocultural PAI guidelines
Teacher Capacity Gaps	Need for stronger pedagogical competence	Ongoing training and professional development
Implementation Consistency	Variation across classrooms	School policy reinforcement and supervision
Sustainability	Depends on teacher initiative	Institutionalization in school programs and curriculum

Source: Field research findings at SMPN 1 Kadipaten (interviews, observations, and school documents), supported by national PAI curriculum policies and sociocultural education theory literature.

3.1.4 Summary of Evidential Strength

Based on the triangulation of interviews, observations, and document analysis, the implementation of the sociocultural model demonstrated clear and consistent positive outcomes. The findings indicate increased student discipline, as reflected in punctual attendance during worship activities; enhanced empathy, evidenced by voluntary involvement in social initiatives; and improved responsibility, shown through active, self-initiated participation in school religious and social programs. In addition, strengthened relationships between the school and surrounding community were observed through collaborative engagement in religious celebrations and community-based activities.

These outcomes confirm that the sociocultural model is not only pedagogically relevant but also culturally contextual, as it successfully aligns PAI with local cultural values. The approach enables students to internalize religious teachings more meaningfully because the learning process is closely related to their daily experiences and cultural identity. As a result, the model effectively contributes to the development of students' religious character and social awareness within a real-life learning environment.

To ensure the sustainability of this model, strong institutional support is essential. This includes reinforcement through formal school policies, the development of standardized culture-based learning modules, and systematic teacher professional development focused on sociocultural pedagogy. With these supports in place, the sociocultural model has the potential to be consistently implemented and replicated in other educational contexts with similar cultural characteristics.

3.2 Discussion

The learning model can be defined as an instructional design that outlines a specific process and fosters a learning environment that facilitates student interaction, ultimately leading to behavioral changes such as from ignorance to knowledge (T. M. Nasir, Hasbiyallah, Dedih, & Fachriyah, 2023). A simpler definition states that a learning model serves as a standardized teaching behavior framework aimed at achieving specific learning conditions. To realize educational objectives effectively, high quality, efficient learning is essential. This necessitates the application of appropriate designs, models, or strategies within educational institutions (Desstya, Novitasari, Razak, & Sudrajat, 2017).

Sociocultural theory was first introduced by Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist whose work significantly shaped contemporary understandings of learning and child development. Central to this theory is the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the gap between what learners can accomplish independently and what they can achieve with guidance from more capable peers, teachers, or community members. Within this developmental space, learning occurs through scaffolding, social interaction, and culturally mediated activities, emphasizing that knowledge is not merely individually constructed but socially and culturally developed. Vygotsky also highlighted the importance of cultural tools, language, and shared community practices as mediators of cognitive growth, meaning that education must be contextually rooted in learners' cultural environments.

In the context of Islamic Religious Education, this perspective is particularly relevant because religious understanding is not only cognitive but strongly embedded in cultural practices, communal rituals, and moral-social interactions. Previous studies demonstrate that sociocultural-based learning encourages collaborative engagement, moral reflection, and value internalization through authentic participation in meaningful activities rather than through memorization alone (Erihadiana, Mahmud, Saufana, & Sidiq, 2024). Similarly, research in Indonesian Islamic education contexts indicates that integrating local wisdom and cultural values strengthens students' religious identity formation and social character development. Therefore, applying Vygotsky's sociocultural framework provides a strong theoretical foundation for developing Islamic Religious Education curricula that are not only cognitively effective but also culturally contextual, socially interactive, and character-oriented (Kurniawan, Mustakim, Harto, & Suryana, 2023). Vygotsky emphasized that cognitive development is shaped by both biological and sociocultural factors, with social interaction playing a key role in learning. He viewed learning as a collaborative process enriched through engagement with others and the surrounding community. Building on this, Rahayu Condro Murti explains that sociocultural or co constructivist learning involves students constructing knowledge with the support of others. This approach highlights active student participation, process-focused learning, and the teacher's role as a facilitator (As'ari, Zainuri, & Amma, 2024; Hakiki, Budiman, Firdaus, & Astiti, 2023; Murti, 2009).

Islamic education is the process of preparing future generations to uphold Islamic values, aligning with the human duty to engage in righteous deeds and attain success in the hereafter (Musyafaah, 2023; T. M. H. Nasir, 2023; T. M. Nasir et al., 2024; Purnama, Nasir, & Erihadiana, 2024). It involves shaping individuals based on Islamic teachings as revealed by Allah to Prophet Muhammad, aiming to elevate individuals so they can fulfill their role as caliphs on Earth and achieve happiness in both worldly and spiritual dimensions (Bakhtiar, 2023). PAI seeks to equip learners with knowledge, comprehension, and appreciation of Islamic teachings, promoting a balanced development of physical and spiritual potential for harmonious relationships with God, fellow humans, and the environment (Share, 2025).

One of the PAI teachers interviewed explained, *"When we integrate Sundanese cultural practices into Islamic lessons like mutual cooperation during religious events students seem more engaged and relate better to the values we teach."* This direct account underscores how local wisdom becomes a bridge for internalizing Islamic values among students. Another teacher highlighted the practical benefit: *"Teaching with real-life examples from students' daily culture makes it easier for them to apply Islamic teachings outside the classroom."* These statements reflect how teachers' roles as contextual facilitators are crucial for the success of the sociocultural model.

This finding aligns with the argument of Yunita and Mujib that character is not merely formed cognitively, but also through affective and psychomotor domains influenced by sociocultural contexts (Yunita & Mujib, 2021). Similarly, Suharyat and Syah emphasize that education must touch emotional, intellectual, and behavioral aspects to shape holistic learners (Suharyat & Syah, 2021). Compared to prior studies that focus predominantly on religious instruction in formal settings (e.g., Agustina, Hamengkubuwono, & Syahindra), this research reveals how integrating local cultural elements offers a more grounded and relatable approach (Agustina, Hamengkubuwono, & Syahindra, 2020). It expands upon previous findings by Raikhan et al., which highlighted cultural erosion as a challenge in coastal regions, showing instead how culture can be preserved and strengthened through Islamic education (Asmendri et al., 2024; Idris, Bin Tahir, Wilya, Yusriadi, & Sarabani, 2022; Raikhan, Ningtias, & Karomah, 2024; Sulaiman et al., 2024).

However, the challenges reported such as subjective assessment in the affective domain and potential overemphasis of cultural over theological content also echo critiques found in the work of (Fanani, Mawadah, & Abdurrohman, 2023). They argue that while local context enriches learning, it must be carefully calibrated to avoid diluting core religious teachings. Therefore, this study contributes to the discourse by offering a concrete example of how sociocultural integration within Islamic education can promote character development, while also highlighting the need for teacher training, balanced evaluation frameworks, and clear pedagogical guidelines.

Overall, the integration of Sundanese cultural values within the PAI curriculum at SMPN 1 Kadipaten demonstrates that culturally grounded curriculum design can significantly enhance students' religious engagement, social responsibility, and value internalization. These findings align with recent research showing that culturally responsive teaching practices can improve student engagement, academic achievement, and inclusivity by making learning more relevant to students' cultural identities and sociocultural contexts. For example, a study on culturally responsive pedagogy found that integrating students' cultural backgrounds into the curriculum positively influenced engagement and achievement across diverse educational environments, reinforcing the importance of aligning curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment with learners' lived experiences (Fahadah & Thomps, 2025).

Furthermore, research on culturally responsive pedagogical knowledge highlights that effective curriculum design must integrate cultural competency, reflective practice, and student-centered strategies to support diverse learners. This underscores the relevance of embedding local cultural values, such as *silih asah*, *silih asih*, and *silih asuh*, into Islamic educational settings to foster deeper meaning and value internalization (Ogodo, 2024).

Although direct international research on *funds of knowledge* in Islamic education contexts is emerging, related work emphasizes the role of community and home cultural resources in enriching curriculum and supporting student identity development. These insights support the interpretation that local wisdom functions as educational capital that strengthens moral and religious identity formation (Bejdo, Li, & Tigert, 2025).

This study further contributes to broader sociocultural curriculum and Islamic education scholarship by providing empirical evidence that sociocultural-based curriculum design is not only theoretically relevant but practically feasible and pedagogically effective. It strengthens recent findings that emphasize the importance of socially mediated learning, collaborative participation, and culturally

contextualized curriculum practices in education. Thus, the sociocultural curriculum model implemented at SMPN 1 Kadipaten may serve as a reference framework for other educational institutions seeking to develop Islamic education that is pedagogically robust, culturally contextual, and character-oriented.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of the sociocultural model in the development of the PAI curriculum at SMPN 1 Kadipaten has successfully enhanced students' understanding of Islamic teachings within the context of their social and cultural environment. Despite challenges such as limited instructional time and resources, this approach has had a significantly positive impact on student participation in religious activities, the development of Islamic character, and the strengthening of social relationships within the school community. Teachers play a crucial role as facilitators in ensuring the success of this model, highlighting the need for ongoing professional development to support effective sociocultural-based instruction.

This research contributes meaningfully to the practice of culturally-based curriculum development, particularly within Islamic education in culturally rich settings. By integrating Sundanese cultural values into the PAI curriculum, the study demonstrates that cultural preservation can go hand-in-hand with the reinforcement of religious values. Based on the findings, several concrete recommendations are proposed: (1) Schools should provide targeted training for PAI teachers in designing and implementing culturally responsive curricula; (2) Teachers are encouraged to explore and utilize local wisdom as contextual teaching material; and (3) Policymakers should promote curriculum flexibility to allow the systematic integration of local cultural values into religious education.

For future research, comparative studies across different regions with diverse cultural backgrounds are recommended to assess the broader applicability of the sociocultural model. Additionally, further investigation into affective learning assessments and the development of culturally-based character evaluation instruments is essential to support and refine the implementation of local wisdom-oriented curricula.

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