

**LIMITATIONS OF ISLAMIC  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN  
MUSLIM MINORITY SETTINGS:  
A CASE STUDY OF NAGORI  
TONGAH VILLAGE,  
SIMALUNGUN REGENCY**

**Muhammad Iqbal<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad  
Fajar<sup>2</sup>, Minanda Ndrey Faza Brata<sup>3</sup>,  
Muhammad Aziz<sup>4</sup>, Muhammad  
Luthfi Ma'sum<sup>5</sup>, Muhammad Abror  
Firdaus<sup>6</sup>, M. Syavriaji Aqila Batu  
Bara<sup>7</sup>**

<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>Pendidikan Agama Islam, STAI  
As-Sunnah Deli Serdang

<sup>6</sup>Bimbingan Penyuluhan Islam, STAI  
As-Sunnah Deli Serdang

<sup>7</sup>Hukum Ekonomi Syariah (Muamalah),  
STAI As-Sunnah Deli Serdang

**Corresponding author**

Email: iqbalmpi08@gmail.com

**Abstract**

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a vital role in shaping students' moral values and Islamic identity. However, its implementation in Muslim minority contexts is constrained by structural, social, and cultural challenges. This qualitative case study explores the limitations of IRE and identifies adaptive strategies in Nagori Tongah Village, Simalungun Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis involving IRE teachers, school principals, Muslim community leaders, and parents, and were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model with triangulation. The findings indicate that IRE in Muslim minority settings faces limitations including a shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate facilities, weak institutional and policy support, and strong socio-cultural influences from non-Muslim environments. These constraints hinder the effective internalization of Islamic values, which remains largely cognitive rather than practical. The study highlights the urgency of contextual and collaborative educational approaches grounded in multicultural principles to strengthen IRE in Muslim minority areas. This research contributes to the development of inclusive and sustainable Islamic Religious Education policies and practices in minority contexts.

*Keywords:* Islamic Religious Education, Muslim Minority, Contextual Education, Multiculturalism, Case Study.

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## Introduction

Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/IRE) constitutes an integral component of the national education system, aimed at developing students who are faithful, pious, and possess noble character. In contexts where Muslims constitute the majority, the implementation of IRE generally receives strong support from both society and educational institutions. However, a different situation exists in Muslim minority environments—regions or areas where Muslim communities live alongside a dominant non-Muslim majority. Under such conditions, the implementation of IRE frequently encounters complex, multidimensional constraints.

Limitations on the number and competence of religious teachers, the scarcity of Islamic educational facilities such as prayer rooms (mushola) and Islamic libraries, and the restricted religious learning time in formal schools constitute tangible challenges faced by Muslim students in such environments.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, social pressures and insufficient local policy support further compound the challenges for developing inclusive and meaningful Islamic education. This issue warrants in-depth examination, given that IRE plays a crucial role in maintaining religious identity and forming the character of resilient Muslim generations amid diversity.

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a central role in shaping students' character, moral values, and Islamic identity. In Indonesia, as a Muslim-majority nation, IRE represents an important component of the national education system. However, the reality of IRE implementation does not always proceed uniformly across all regions. In certain areas, particularly those dominated by non-Muslim populations, such as Desa Nagori Tengah, Kabupaten Simalungun, in the Province of Sumatera Utara, the provision of IRE frequently faces various limitations.<sup>2</sup>

Based on field findings in Desa Nagori Tengah, Kabupaten Simalungun, the Muslim population constitutes a minority relative to adherents of other religions. Of the total village population, only a small proportion practices Islam and is dispersed across several hamlets, thus not forming a concentrated Muslim community. This demographic condition directly implicates the provision of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in formal educational institutions existing within that region.

Empirically, at the primary and secondary school levels in Desa Nagori Tengah, there exists only one Islamic Religious Education teacher serving all Muslim students across multiple schools simultaneously. This IRE teacher does not always possess an educational background aligned with the IRE field and must divide teaching time with other schools in different sub-districts. Consequently, IRE learning hours are frequently not fully met; in practice, Islamic religious learning occurs only when the IRE teacher is present or when students are assigned independent work.

From the perspective of facilities and infrastructure, observational results indicate that not all schools possess a mushala or dedicated worship space for Muslim students. Worship practice activities, such as prayer or Qur'anic reading instruction, are often conducted in classrooms with highly limited facilities. Furthermore, schools do not yet possess Islamic libraries or adequate IRE teaching materials, causing teachers to rely predominantly on standard textbooks without adaptation to the life context of Muslim students as minorities.

Institutional and social support for IRE implementation also remains relatively limited. Based on interviews with teachers and parents of students, no specific programs exist at the village or regional levels to strengthen Islamic religious education in minority areas. Non-formal religious activities such as Qur'anic learning centers (TPA) or madrasah diniyah have not operated sustainably due to limited teaching personnel and minimal participation from the Muslim community, which is limited

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<sup>1</sup> Rizkika Agustin, Kasuwi Saiban, and Mufarrihul Hazin, "Problematika Pendidikan Agama Islam Di Daerah Minoritas Muslim," *Islamika: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 21, no. 2 (2021): 153–60.

<sup>2</sup> Nurdalipah Hasugian, Yusnaili Budianti, and Junaidi Arsyad, "Penerapan Pendidikan Islam Dalam Masyarakat Minoritas Muslim Di Kecamatan Sirandorung Kabupaten Tapanuli Tengah," *Al-ArkhabiiL: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* 1, no. 1 (2023): 45–58.

in number and dispersed. These empirical conditions impact the process of internalizing Islamic values among Muslim students. Students tend to receive IRE material only in theory and are limited to cognitive aspects, whereas the habituation to values and religious practices in daily life has not progressed optimally. In the long term, this situation potentially affects the formation of Muslim students' religious identity, particularly in maintaining faith, worship practices, and morality amid a predominantly non-Muslim social environment.

Several previous studies have examined the dynamics of Islamic Religious Education in Muslim minority regions, highlighting the structural and social limitations encountered.<sup>3</sup> Research by Abuddin Nata on Islamic education in plural societies demonstrates that the implementation of IRE in minority areas often faces significant constraints in policy and institutional support.<sup>4</sup> In contexts of societies dominated by non-Muslims, Islamic education is often positioned merely as supplementary, such that resource allocation, learning time, and curriculum strengthening do not receive adequate attention. This finding affirms that local social and political factors significantly influence the quality of IRE implementation.<sup>5</sup>

Other research conducted by Zubaedi, focusing on Islamic education in multicultural societies, found that IRE limitations in minority environments are not only technical in nature, such as a lack of teachers and facilities, but also cultural.<sup>6</sup> In heterogeneous societies, Muslim students often experience identity dilemmas due to minimal space for religious expression at school. The research results demonstrate that weak internalization of Islamic values among minority students relates closely to the lack of contextual learning approaches sensitive to multicultural realities.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, empirical research by Nurul Huda examining IRE in Muslim minority regions in western Indonesia demonstrates that local community and family support play a strategic role in addressing limitations in formal education.<sup>8</sup> Research findings indicate that non-formal religious activities, such as Qur'anic study sessions, madrasah diniyah, and mosque-based learning, serve as important alternatives for maintaining continuity in Islamic education.<sup>9</sup> However, their effectiveness depends heavily on the internal solidarity of the existing Muslim community.

Other relevant research conducted by Baidhawiy highlights Islamic education from a multicultural perspective. He found that IRE in minority environments often fails to accommodate interfaith dialogue constructively.<sup>10</sup> In fact, a multicultural approach could serve as an adaptive strategy to strengthen students' Islamic identity without causing social conflict. This research recommends an inclusive, dialogical IRE model grounded in local wisdom to ensure that Islamic education remains relevant amid plurality.<sup>11</sup>

Based on these studies, it can be concluded that the limitations of Islamic Religious Education in Muslim minority contexts constitute a multidimensional issue involving policy, human resources, culture, and social support.<sup>12</sup> Previous studies provide an important foundation for this study by

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<sup>3</sup> Ahmad Safi'i, "Penguatan Pendidikan Islam Bagi Muslim Minoritas Di Lingkungan Non-Muslim: Studi Kasus Di Sengkan Condongcatur Depok Sleman," *Jurnal Tarbiyatuna* 10, no. 1 (2019): 43–67.

<sup>4</sup> Abuddin Nata, "Pendidikan Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 1 (2018): 45–62.

<sup>5</sup> Nata.

<sup>6</sup> Zubaedi Zubaedi, "Pendidikan Berbasis Masyarakat Dalam Perspektif Islam," *Tadris: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 1 (2014): 1–15.

<sup>7</sup> Zubaedi.

<sup>8</sup> Ahmad Fauzi Saragih and Zulfiana Henri, "Strategies and Challenges in Strengthening Islamic Religious Education for Minority Muslim Students at SD Negeri 091332 Raya Bayu," *Al-Arkhabii: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* 1, no. 2 (2023): 89–102.

<sup>9</sup> Saragih and Henri.

<sup>10</sup> Rustam Ibrahim, "Pendidikan Multikultural: Pengertian, Prinsip, Dan Relevansinya Dengan Tujuan Pendidikan Islam," *Addin: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 1 (2015): 129–54.

<sup>11</sup> Ibrahim.

<sup>12</sup> Umul Hidayati, "Penyelenggaraan Madrasah Di Daerah Minoritas Muslim," *Edukasi: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan* 13, no. 2 (2015): 294–312.

clarifying the context of Desa Nagori Tongah, Kabupaten Simalungun, and underscoring the urgency of developing collaborative, contextual strategies for IRE in Muslim minority regions.

The novelty of this research lies in its specific focus on integrating the analysis of limitations in Islamic Religious Education with the multicultural social context of the local community in Desa Nagori Tongah. Unlike previous research, which generally emphasized teacher or infrastructure shortages separately, this study highlights IRE limitations as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by interfaith social relations, local policies, and adaptive strategies of minority Muslim communities. Additionally, this research offers solution approaches grounded in collaboration among schools, the government, and local Muslim communities, while considering local wisdom, thereby providing conceptual and practical contributions to the development of inclusive and relevant Islamic Religious Education in Muslim minority regions.

This article aims to critically explore the limitations of Islamic Religious Education in Muslim minority environments through a case study in Desa Nagori Tongah, Kabupaten Simalungun, and to provide recommendations based on collaborative approaches and multicultural values.

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design to understand in depth the implementation of Islamic Religious Education in Muslim minority environments. The research object comprises the provision of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) encompassing aspects of teaching personnel, facilities and infrastructure, curriculum, and social and institutional support in Desa Nagori Tongah, Kabupaten Simalungun, Province of Sumatera Utara.

Research informants were purposively sampled based on their relevance and involvement in IRE provision at the research location. Primary informants include Islamic Religious Education teachers, school principals, and local Muslim community leaders who understand the conditions of religious education in Desa Nagori Tongah. Additionally, supporting informants include parents of students and administrators of local religious institutions, who provide more comprehensive perspectives on environmental support and social constraints encountered during IRE implementation.

Data were collected through several techniques: in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore informants' experiences, perspectives, and strategies for confronting IRE limitations. Observation was conducted to directly observe IRE learning processes, infrastructure conditions, and social interactions in school and community environments. Meanwhile, documentation comprises syllabi, teaching materials, learning schedules, and school policy documents related to the provision of Islamic Religious Education.

Data analysis in this research employs the interactive analysis model of Miles and Huberman, encompassing stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data obtained from the field were first selected and categorized by research focus, then presented in a systematic, descriptive narrative. The final stage involved synthesizing emerging findings, particularly regarding IRE limitations and potential solution strategies applicable to Muslim minority contexts.

To ensure data validity, this research employs triangulation techniques, both source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from multiple informants, including teachers, school principals, and community leaders. Triangulation of techniques was conducted by comparing results from interviews, observations, and documentation. Additionally, researchers conducted member checks, namely, reconfirming research findings with informants to ensure correspondence between the data obtained and field reality, thereby enhancing the credibility of the results.

This research has obtained approval from the Research and Community Service Center (P3M) of STAI As-Sunnah Medan, as well as formal permission from the Government of Desa Nagori

Tongah and the Education Office of Kabupaten Simalungun. All research participants, including Islamic Religious Education teachers, school principals, community leaders, and parents of students, have provided written informed consent after receiving a comprehensive explanation regarding research purposes, procedures, and benefits. For informants who are minors, permission has been obtained from parents or legal guardians, with the explanation that participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without consequences. To maintain confidentiality and protect the privacy of all participants, all individual identities, including names of teachers, students, and families, have been anonymized throughout all research stages and report writing. Personal data and sensitive information obtained during the research process are kept strictly confidential and used solely for academic purposes, in accordance with research ethics codes.

## Results and Discussion

### *Discussion Framework and Theoretical Foundation*

Discussion of these research results begins with the understanding that the limitations of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Muslim minority contexts cannot be reduced to technical issues. Research findings in Desa Nagori Tongah indicate that these limitations reflect social, cultural, and structural conditions that shape the local educational ecosystem. The plural community environment with non-Muslim dominance positions IRE in a less strategic position in institutional priorities. This condition affects how IRE is planned, implemented, and evaluated.

Based on these findings, a theoretical framework that both explains and offers learning approaches relevant to the conditions of Muslim minorities is required. Contextual Education Theory is appropriate because it emphasizes connections between learning materials and students' real-world experiences.<sup>13</sup> In the context of Desa Nagori Tongah, Muslim students live and interact in a predominantly non-Muslim environment, such that their social experiences are highly diverse. The contextual approach enables IRE teachers to relate Islamic teachings to students' daily realities, such as attitudes of tolerance, social ethics, and moral strengthening amid differences.<sup>14</sup> Thus, IRE becomes not merely a means of knowledge transfer but also a means of shaping attitudes and character.

In addition to the contextual approach, this research adopts principles of Inclusive Education in Religion that encourage the strengthening of tolerance and religious moderation in the implementation of IRE within a heterogeneous society.<sup>15</sup> This approach ensures that IRE becomes not only a doctrinal means but also a strengthener of social cohesion and harmony among religious communities.

### *Real Conditions of Islamic Religious Education in Desa Nagori Tongah*

Observational and interview results indicate that the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Desa Nagori Tongah, Kabupaten Simalungun, continues to face several significant challenges that affect the quality and effectiveness of religious education delivery for Muslim students in this minority context.

IRE teacher limitations constitute the primary finding in this research. In Desa Nagori Tongah, the number of IRE teachers is not proportional to the needs of Muslim students dispersed across several schools. In several schools, one IRE teacher must handle more than one level, or even across schools, due to human resource constraints. Beyond limited numbers, teacher competence also poses a challenge, particularly in developing learning strategies that are adaptive to minority

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<sup>13</sup> Teguh Purwanto Ahmad, "Perencanaan Pembelajaran Bermakna Dan Asesmen Kurikulum Merdeka," *Jurnal Ilmiah Pedagogi* 20, no. 1 (2024): 75–94.

<sup>14</sup> Ahmad.

<sup>15</sup> Idham Cholid Syazili and Muhammad Arif Syihabuddin, "Strategi Pembelajaran Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam Dalam Penguatan Nilai Tasamuh Di Lembaga Pendidikan," *WARAQAT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 7, no. 2 (2023): 273–98.

conditions. IRE teachers are not only required to deliver teaching materials but also to function as strengtheners of students' Islamic identity. This role burden becomes increasingly heavy when institutional support and learning facilities are inadequate, thereby making optimal IRE learning effectiveness difficult to achieve. This IRE teacher does not always possess an educational background aligned with the IRE field and must divide teaching time with other schools in different sub-districts. Consequently, IRE learning hours are frequently not fully met; in practice, Islamic religious learning occurs only when the IRE teacher is present or when students are assigned independent work.

In addition to human resource limitations, the lack of facilities and infrastructure for Islamic religious learning further compounds obstacles to IRE implementation. The unavailability of mushalas in school environments and the limited availability of Islamic teaching materials lead to religious learning that is more theoretical and less practical. Some schools lack worship spaces or supporting facilities for religious activities, such as Islamic libraries or technology-based learning aids. Consequently, IRE learning processes tend to be more theoretical and less contextual in relation to students' daily lives. Muslim students rarely obtain learning experiences enabling them to practice Islamic values directly. Worship practice activities, such as prayer or Qur'anic reading instruction, are often conducted in classrooms with highly limited facilities. Yet, internalization of religious values depends heavily on habituation and real experience. This condition demonstrates that IRE learning in minority regions requires approaches that connect teaching materials with students' lived realities.

Research results also demonstrate that social and institutional support for IRE in Desa Nagori Tongah remains relatively weak. Village government and educational institutions do not yet possess specific programs oriented toward strengthening Islamic religious education for minority Muslim communities. Consequently, IRE is often positioned as a formal subject oriented solely toward curriculum fulfillment. Lack of synergy between schools, families, and society weakens IRE's function as a means of character formation and religious identity for Muslim students amid heterogeneous social environments. The plural society's social condition influences the implementation of Islamic Religious Education in Desa Nagori Tongah. As a minority Muslim community, social support for religious activities is relatively limited, both from the surrounding environment and from local policies. Non-formal religious activities, such as madrasah diniyah or Qur'anic learning centers, have not operated optimally or sustainably. Consequently, the strengthening of Islamic values outside school still depends on individual family initiatives. This condition potentially affects the process of forming Muslim students' religious identity amid heterogeneous social environments.

The previously described limitations directly affect the process of internalizing Islamic values among students. Muslim students tend to understand Islamic teachings cognitively but have not fully been able to appreciate and practice them in daily life. Minimal space for religious expression and limited non-formal Islamic activities make IRE learning less grounded. In the context of a plural society, this situation potentially generates confusion of religious identity among Muslim students, particularly when they do not receive consistent value strengthening from school and social environments.

#### *Social and Cultural Factors that Influence*

The most prominent social factor in the limitations of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Desa Nagori Tongah is the demographic condition of a plural society with non-Muslim population dominance. Community life in Desa Nagori Tongah, which is pluralistic and predominantly non-Muslim, influences the implementation of IRE. In several cases, Islamic religious activities must be conducted with adjustments to time and location to avoid generating social sensitivity. This demonstrates that socio-cultural context holds a major role in shaping Muslim students' space for religious expression. Muslims' position as a minority group impacts the limited social space for

openly expressing Islamic practices and values, particularly in school environments. This situation makes Islamic religious activities less visible and more private. Although social relations in Desa Nagori Tengah are relatively harmonious and tolerant, there exists a tendency to avoid religious activities considered too prominent for maintaining harmony. This cautious attitude impacts the minimization of Islamic activities at school and in public spaces. Teachers and Muslim students often adjust to majority social norms, such that IRE learning focuses more on cognitive aspects and less on worship practices and the habituation to values.

Local cultural factors also play important roles in shaping the dynamics of Islamic religious education. Community culture, upholding values of togetherness and social harmony, encourages Muslim residents to adapt to local traditions. However, in practice, this adaptation process sometimes implicates reduced intensity of Islamic identity strengthening. Islamic values that should be instilled consistently through formal and non-formal education are often adjusted to avoid conflicting with the majority cultural customs, such that religious messages become less assertive.

Other social factors affecting IRE limitations are the minimal role of Muslim communities in supporting religious education. The small and dispersed Muslim population has not yet formed strong community solidarity. Religious activities such as Qur'anic study sessions, madrasah diniyah, or Qur'anic learning centers have not operated sustainably. This condition leads Islamic religious education to depend heavily on formal schools, which, in practice, also face resource constraints. Consequently, the process of students' religious guidance becomes discontinuous.

A lack of support from surrounding environments and a limited understanding of the importance of religious education also become inhibiting factors. In interviews with several parents, some reported lacking sufficient information or not prioritizing formal religious education for their children. In minority environments, IRE is often viewed as a supplementary subject, with lower urgency than general subjects. This view is reinforced by an educational orientation that emphasizes academic achievement and practical skills. Consequently, attention to strengthening religious values is less prioritized at the family, school, and community levels.

#### *Adaptive Strategies and Contextual Solutions*

Despite numerous limitations, IRE teachers in Desa Nagori Tengah demonstrate creative approaches to delivering religious materials. Among these are the use of simple digital media, the integration of Islamic values into general subjects, and the adoption of more narrative and dialogical learning approaches.<sup>16</sup> Adaptive strategies in overcoming Islamic Religious Education (IRE) limitations in the Muslim minority environment of Desa Nagori Tengah need to begin with strengthening human resource capacity. IRE teachers are required to possess pedagogical abilities that are flexible and sensitive to the social context of a plural society.<sup>17</sup> Teacher training should focus not only on mastery of Islamic materials but also on cross-cultural communication skills, contextual learning development, and inclusive classroom management. With such competence improvement, IRE teachers can deliver Islamic values more relevantly, moderately, and acceptably to students living in plural social environments.

The next strategy is optimization of learning facilities and infrastructure through creative and community-based approaches. Limitations of formal facilities such as mushalas and Islamic libraries can be overcome by using alternative learning spaces and resources in the surrounding environment. Religious activities can be implemented meaningfully, for example, by learning from moral values in daily life. Additionally, the use of digital media and contextual teaching materials adapted to the realities of minority Muslim students can become effective solutions in enriching

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<sup>16</sup> Rifka Kurnia and Syaiful Hadi, "Strategi Guru PAI Dalam Menanamkan Karakter Disiplin Dan Tanggung Jawab Melalui Pembelajaran Berbasis Nilai Di SMK Muhammadiyah 02 Boja," *NAAFI: Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa* 2, no. 2 (2025): 98–112.

<sup>17</sup> Indrian Saputra, Arif Budiman, and Rinaldi Al, "Strategi Guru PAI Dalam Memotivasi Belajar Siswa Di SMPN 8 Muaro Jambi," *Journal of Islamic Education Research* 1, no. 2 (2024): 110–25.

IRE learning experiences despite physical limitations. The use of Contextual Education theory is also relevant to overcoming limitations in facilities and infrastructure. When religious learning facilities are limited, teachers can utilize social environments as learning sources.<sup>18</sup> Interfaith interactions, moral value practices in community life, and students' social experiences can serve as IRE learning media. This approach helps students understand that Islamic values are practiced not only in worship spaces but also in daily attitudes and behaviors.

Additionally, collaborative approaches with religious figures and local Muslim communities prove effective in supporting IRE learning. For example, religious activities, such as joint Qur'anic study sessions or Qur'anic instruction, are held in houses of worship or in the residences of citizens who provide facilities.<sup>19</sup> Contextual solutions also demand strengthening of collaboration among schools, families, and local Muslim communities. Parental and community leaders' involvement in supporting religious education is particularly important when institutional support remains limited. The formation of non-formal religious activities, such as family Qur'anic study sessions or home-based Islamic learning, can serve as alternatives for strengthening the internalization of Islamic values. This approach not only assists students academically but also fosters a sense of togetherness and solidarity among minority Muslim communities. In the context of limited social support, Contextual Education theory also encourages community and family involvement in educational processes. IRE learning occurs not only at school but also integrates with family and community life. This approach creates opportunities for collaboration among teachers, parents, and Muslim community leaders to create conducive learning environments. Thus, institutional limitations can be balanced through strengthening the social roles of local Muslim communities.

Additionally, policy support from regional and village governments is a strategic element in strengthening the sustainability of Islamic Religious Education in minority regions. The government needs to design policies that are more inclusive and responsive to the needs of the Muslim minority, such as the provision of adequate IRE teachers, support for learning facilities, and religious guidance programs. Efforts to strengthen IRE in minority environments require affirmative policies from regional governments, including increasing religious teacher quotas, providing multicultural education training, and supporting infrastructure. With synergy among policy, educational practices, and local wisdom, adaptive strategies and contextual solutions can encourage IRE in Desa Nagori Tongah to proceed more optimally, relevantly, and sustainably amid a plural society.

Research results demonstrate that the limitations of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Muslim minority communities in Desa Nagori Tongah, Kabupaten Simalungun, constitute complex, interconnected issues. These limitations include lack of competent human resources in understanding Islam, lack of educational facilities and infrastructure supporting Islamic religious education, lack of and minimal community understanding regarding Islam, and limited support from policies and regional government programs. These limitations extend beyond the quantity and quality of IRE teaching personnel to include minimal supporting learning facilities and infrastructure, such as the availability of appropriate worship spaces, teaching materials relevant to local contexts, and learning media that optimally support students' religious understanding. This condition affects the implementation of IRE learning, which tends to be theoretical and not yet fully capable of internalizing Islamic values in students' daily lives.

In addition to internal educational factors, research findings indicate strong influences from the local community's social and cultural environments. As a minority Muslim community living alongside a non-Muslim majority, students and IRE teachers in Desa Nagori Tongah confront limited social space for openly expressing religious practices. This implies low intensity of religious

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<sup>18</sup> Ahmad, "Perencanaan Pembelajaran Bermakna Dan Asesmen Kurikulum Merdeka."

<sup>19</sup> Ratih Kusuma Ningtias and Zaimatul Mahbubah, "Upaya Guru PAI Dalam Meningkatkan Motivasi Belajar Siswa," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 5, no. 1 (2022): 137–44.

activities outside formal lesson hours and limited social support toward strengthening Muslim students' Islamic identity. In several cases, this condition leads to IRE learning being viewed solely as schools' administrative obligations rather than as continuous character-building processes.

This research also finds that policy support and attention from regional governments toward IRE development in minority regions remain relatively limited. The lack of specific guidance programs for IRE teachers, minimal budget allocation for procuring Islamic educational facilities, and weak coordination among schools, religious institutions, and local government are significant inhibiting factors. Consequently, schools and local Muslim communities must often rely on independent initiatives in conducting educational and religious activities with limited resources.

Discussion of these research results affirms that the success of Islamic Religious Education in Muslim minority contexts depends heavily on the education system's capacity for adaptability and contextualization. By utilizing Contextual Education approaches, IRE not only overcomes limitations but also potentially becomes a means of strengthening character and fostering tolerance in a plural society. These findings simultaneously underscore the importance of formulating policies and educational practices that are sensitive to local contexts and students' social realities.

## **Conclusion**

This research demonstrates that the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Muslim minority communities in Desa Nagori Tongah, Kabupaten Simalungun, is constrained by multiple multidimensional limitations. These limitations encompass four main aspects: (1) minimal number and competence of IRE teachers adaptive to minority contexts; (2) limited learning facilities and infrastructure such as mushalas, Islamic libraries, and contextual teaching materials; (3) weak institutional support from regional government and minimal non-formal religious activities; and (4) socio-cultural factors influenced by minority demographic conditions and interfaith relations demanding caution in religious expression.

The impact of these limitations is hindered internalization of Islamic values among Muslim students, who tend to understand Islamic teachings cognitively but have not been able to appreciate and practice them optimally. Nevertheless, this research identifies various adaptive strategies employed by teachers and local Muslim communities, including the use of Contextual Education Approaches, creative learning, and collaboration with religious figures. These findings affirm the importance of collaborative and multicultural approaches to IRE development in Muslim minority regions, with synergy among government policies, school-level educational practices, Muslim community support, and local wisdom.

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed to stakeholders.

First, for the Regional Government. Regional government needs to formulate affirmative policies favoring the strengthening of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Muslim minority regions. Such policies include establishing IRE teacher formations in accordance with educational unit needs, allocating dedicated budgets for the development of IRE learning facilities and infrastructure, and implementing sustainable IRE teacher guidance and competence improvement programs.

Second, for Schools and IRE Teachers. Schools, together with IRE teachers, are expected to develop learning strategies that are adaptive and contextual to students' socio-religious conditions. This effort can be implemented through training in multiculturalism and religious moderation and by leveraging social environments as learning environments. Additionally, the involvement of parents and local Muslim communities needs optimization to strengthen the internalization of Islamic values outside classrooms.

Third, for Local Muslim Communities. Muslim communities in minority regions need to strengthen their roles in providing non-formal educational support, such as conducting family Qur'anic study sessions and madrasah diniyah. Strengthening internal community solidarity and

active collaboration with schools becomes a strategic step for creating conducive educational ecosystems. Additionally, policy advocacy at the local level requires a structured approach to advance the sustainability of IRE services.

Fourth, for Further Research. Follow-up research is suggested to explore various IRE learning models in Muslim minority contexts with different social and cultural characteristics. Additionally, studies regarding the long-term impacts of IRE service limitations on the religious identity formation of minority Muslim generations need to be conducted. International comparative studies on best practices in religious education in minority contexts are also important for enriching scientific knowledge and informing policy recommendations.

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