



Implementation of Religious Programs at Al-Azhar University in Medan

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Abstract: This study aims to: 1) analyze the planning of religious programs at Al-Azhar Medan College, Ar-Rahman Percut Middle School. 2) Analyze the implementation of religious programs at Al-Azhar Medan College, Ar-Rahman Percut Middle School. 3) Analyze the evaluation of religious programs at Al-Azhar Medan College, Ar-Rahman Percut Middle School. This study uses a qualitative research method with a narrative approach. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document studies. Data analysis techniques include data reduction, data presentation and conclusion. The results of this study indicate that: (1) The planning of religious programs at Ar-Rahman Percut Middle School is based on the students' need for good religious education to get them used to worship and have good morals. The religious program is compiled and developed by the LPIA Al-Azhar Medan College. (2) The implementation of the religious program at Ar-Rahman Percut Middle School is structured and routine; some religious programs are implemented daily, weekly, monthly, and annually. (3) Evaluation of the religious program at Ar-Rahman Percut Middle School is carried out in five ways, namely daily evaluation, semester evaluation, annual program evaluation, student coaching and remedial.

Keyword: Implementation, Religious Program, Al-Azhar Medan University

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk: 1) menganalisis perencanaan program keagamaan di Perguruan Al-Azhar Medan unit SMP Ar-Rahman Percut. 2) menganalisis pelaksanaan program keagamaan di Perguruan Al-Azhar Medan unit SMP Ar-Rahman Percut. 3) menganalisis evaluasi program keagamaan di Perguruan Al-Azhar Medan unit SMP Ar-Rahman Percut. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan naratif, pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan wawancara yang mendalam, observasi partisipatif dan studi dokumen. Teknik analisis data meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa: (1) Perencanaan program keagamaan di SMP Ar-Rahman Percut didasari dari kebutuhan siswa akan pendidikan agama yang baik untuk membiasakan dalam beribadah dan berakhlakul karimah. Program keagamaan disusun dan dikembangkan oleh LPIA Perguruan Al-Azhar Medan. (2) Pelaksanaan program keagamaan di SMP Ar-Rahman Percut terstruktur dan rutin, program keagamaan ada yang dilaksanakan harian, mingguan, bulanan, dan tahunan. (3) Evaluasi program keagamaan di SMP Ar-Rahman Percut dilakukan dengan lima cara yaitu evaluasi harian, evaluasi semester, evaluasi program tahunan, pembinaan siswa dan remedial.

Kata kunci : Implementasi, Program Keagamaan, Perguruan Al-Azhar Medan

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Introduction

The development of information technology, particularly social media, has had a significant impact on students' mindsets and behavior. While social media has positive potential in supporting learning and communication, much of its content is uneducational and even corrupts morality, such as hate speech, bullying, and hedonistic behavior (Madyan & Baidawi, 2024; arsuki et al., 2025; Mahfudi & Rifa'i, 2025). This condition has the potential to weaken students' moral, ethical, and religious values, which should be the foundation of their daily lives (Annisa & Jumari, 2024; Arif et al., 2025).

This phenomenon of moral decline is increasingly evident in the increasing number of cases of violations of social norms among adolescents. For example, a bullying incident at a madrasah in Medan City on November 23, 2023, resulted in physical injuries to the victim, and a brawl between students in Deli Serdang Regency on November 25, 2022, resulted in one death (Kompas Medan, 2022; 2023). These cases reflect a crisis of role models and weak social control within the student community.

Various studies have revealed that an environment that does not support religious values is one of the causes of the weakening of students' morals (Basri, 2023; Abdullah & Lasri, 2024; Azizah et al., 2023). Academic pressure, neglect of spiritual values, and a lack of role models from family and society further alienate students from practicing noble values. As a result, awareness of the importance of religion in daily life is fading, and deviant behavior is becoming increasingly difficult to control (Nazmi & Irsyad, 2024; Rahayu & Syukri, 2025).

In the context of education, this challenge demands a character-building strategy that is not only theoretical but also practical. Religious education plays a strategic role in strengthening morals, developing noble character, and fostering social sensitivity in students. A proven effective approach is the implementation of a structured, consistent, and contextualized religious program tailored to the needs of the students. Such programs not only transfer religious knowledge but also foster positive worship habits and social behavior.

Several previous studies have shown that schools that successfully integrate religious programs into students' daily lives tend to be able to produce graduates who have a religious character and a high level of social concern (Rusdi et al., 2019; Sunardi & Nurwanto, 2024). However, many studies still focus on general descriptions of the program's benefits, without delving deeply into the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes. This research gap presents an

opportunity to examine best practices from educational institutions that have systematically implemented religious programs.

Al-Azhar Medan is an Islamic educational institution with a strong commitment to developing religious programs through the Institute for the Development of Religious Studies (LPIA). Programs include Duha prayer, Quran memorization, Friday prayers, prayer nights, Islamic study tours, and social activities such as joint donations. All programs are designed to internalize Islamic values in students' lives, while also involving teachers and educational staff as role models. This approach aligns with the institution's vision as "A Forum for Muslim Intellectuals and Muslim Intellectuals (Dalimunthe & Sumanti, 2024).

Based on this background, this study aims to: (1) analyze the planning of religious programs at Al-Azhar Medan Private Middle School Unit Ar-Rahman Percut; (2) analyze the implementation of religious programs at the school; and (3) analyze the evaluation of the ongoing religious programs. The results of this study are expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the practice of strengthening religious education in Islamic-based schools, while also offering relevant development recommendations for other educational institutions.

Methods

This type of research uses a descriptive qualitative method, namely an approach used to understand and interpret the meaning of social phenomena based on the views or experiences of research subjects in a natural context (Sugiyono, 2020). This method was chosen because it is suitable for describing and analyzing in depth the experiences of participants in planning, implementing, and evaluating religious programs at Ar-Rahman Percut Private Middle School, Al-Azhar Medan University. The research location was determined at Ar-Rahman Percut Private Junior High School, Al-Azhar Medan University, located on Jl. Kangkungan Dusun II, Percut Village, Percut Sei Tuan District, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra. This location was chosen purposively because the school has a structured religious program integrated into teaching and learning activities.

Research participants were selected using purposive sampling techniques based on the following criteria: (1) having direct experience in planning, implementing, or participating in religious programs; (2) being willing to provide accurate information; and (3) being actively involved in these activities for at least the past year. Participants consisted of: Head of LPIA (1 person), Principal (1 person), Deputy Head of Curriculum (1 person), Deputy Head of Student Affairs (1 person), Religious Affairs Coordinator (1 person), Islamic religious education teachers (3 people), and students (10 people). The number of students was determined until data saturation was reached (no new information emerged).

Data sources are divided into two, namely: 1. Primary data was obtained from in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation of religious program activities at school. 2. Secondary data was obtained from official school documents, activity reports, photos, videos, and internal institutional archives. These secondary data sources were selected for relevance, eliminating the involvement of external parties not directly involved, such as the general public or political observers.

Data collection techniques include: (1) in-depth interviews with the principal, teachers, and students to understand their experiences and perceptions; (2) direct observation of activities such as congregational prayer, tadarus, Islamic studies, and joint donations; and (3) collection of supporting documents in the form of program reports, meeting minutes, photos, and videos of activities. Data analysis used the Miles and Huberman model, which includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was performed by grouping information according to research themes; data presentation was organized in descriptive narrative and tabular form; and conclusions were drawn after triangulating sources, techniques, and time to ensure the validity of the findings. Ethical considerations were implemented by obtaining official permission from the school, obtaining informed consent from adult participants, and obtaining written consent from the parents/guardians of the participating students. Participants' identities were disguised to maintain confidentiality, and the entire research process was conducted without disrupting teaching and learning activities.

Results And Discussion

Research

Planning of religious programs at Ar-Rahman Percut Middle School

The religious program planning at Ar-Rahman Percut Middle School is the result of a systematic coordination mechanism between the Medan Institute for Religious Studies Development (LPIA), the principal, and the religious affairs coordinators in each unit. Interviews with the LPIA Chair and the Religious Affairs Coordinator at Ar-Rahman Percut Middle School revealed that the planning process took into account the aspirations of the community, who sought to strengthen religious education and develop student character. Researchers' observations of coordination meetings showed that decision-making involved all stakeholders, ensuring that the programs designed not only followed central policies but were also contextualized to school and environmental conditions. This finding aligns with participatory planning theory, which emphasizes the importance of multi-stakeholder involvement to increase program relevance and acceptance.

The implemented religious programs are divided into four categories – daily, weekly, monthly, and annual – with a broad range of activities. Observational data shows that daily programs such as Dhuha prayer, Quran memorization, and prayer recitation have become routines embedded in the school culture. However, interviews with teachers indicate that the program's success has not been fully measured through quantitative indicators, making it difficult to ensure the sustainability of student development. This analysis indicates a gap between the comprehensiveness of activities and their evaluation mechanisms, potentially reducing the accuracy of program effectiveness assessments.

Stakeholder involvement is a key factor in the success of the program. Triangulation of data from interviews, observations, and documentation shows that the role of religious coordinators in each unit is crucial to its smooth implementation. Observations of Dhuha prayer and tahfidz activities revealed a relatively high level of student participation, but it varied across classes. Interviews with students revealed that their motivation to participate was influenced by teacher role models, which aligns with the concept of role model learning in religious education. These findings suggest that strengthening teacher competency and role models may be a more effective strategy than simply increasing the number of activities.

However, challenges remain to be addressed. Based on teacher interviews and documentation, frequently encountered obstacles include variations in student discipline, limited prayer facilities during mass activities, and the lack of an evaluation system that combines quantitative indicators (such as attendance percentage and memorization rate) with qualitative indicators (such as religious motivation and behavior). A critical analysis of these findings suggests that without a measurable and integrated evaluation mechanism, claims of program effectiveness will be difficult to objectively verify.

In general, the implementation of the religious program at Ar-Rahman Percut Middle School has succeeded in fostering a strong religious culture, marked by the high level of teacher and student participation in routine worship activities. However, from an analytical perspective, this success remains process-oriented and not fully outcome-oriented. To improve accountability and sustainability, a strengthened monitoring and evaluation system based on triangulated data is needed so that results can be measured, analyzed, and compared periodically.

Implementation of religious programs at Ar-Rahman Percut Middle School

All religious activities conducted at Ar-Rahman Percut Middle School are formally part of a religious program that runs structurally under the supervision of the Religious Studies Development Institute (LPIA) of Al-Azhar Medan University. LPIA plays the role of the primary developer of religious programs at Ar-Rahman

Percut Middle School. The religious program is implemented by a religious coordinator in each unit, including at Ar-Rahman Middle School. The religious coordinator is responsible for running all religious activities at the school, with support from religious teachers and other subject teachers.

According to the Head of LPIA, Ustadz Samsudin, religious programs at the school are implemented routinely with structured time allocations. The principal of Ar-Rahman Middle School also stated that religious programs are held periodically, with some held daily, weekly, monthly, and some annually.

Ideally, the implementation of religious programs in schools should run effectively, efficiently, and smoothly according to carefully prepared plans. However, in reality, it cannot be denied that every program, even if systematically and structuredly designed, still has the potential to face various challenges and obstacles in the field.

This also applies to the implementation of religious programs at Ar-Rahman Percut Middle School, where a number of challenges and obstacles frequently arise during implementation. These obstacles can be technical, administrative, or stem from internal and external factors. Nevertheless, the school consistently strives to find appropriate solutions to ensure that the religious program continues to run according to its objectives and has a positive impact on character development and the spiritual development of students. Some of the challenges faced in implementing religious programs at Ar-Rahman Percut Middle School include:

1. Lack of interest and seriousness of students

Student involvement in religious programs is a key factor in their success. Students who do not participate in religious programs present a challenge. Farina Amalia, a religious education teacher and ninth-grade homeroom teacher, revealed that one of the challenges in implementing religious programs at Ar-Rahman Percut Middle School is the lack of awareness among some students about participating in certain aspects of the program, such as congregational Dhuhur prayer. Some students even choose to hide behind the school or in the bathroom to avoid praying, and are sometimes discovered by the on-duty teacher. This demonstrates the need for strengthened guidance and a more effective approach to foster students' awareness and willingness to perform their religious duties properly.

To address students' reluctance to attend congregational Dhuhr prayers, Farina Amalia explained that the school implements a multi-layered supervision system. The sixth-period teacher is tasked with ensuring all students leave the classroom and head to the ablution area. Afterward, the on-duty teacher continues the supervision by checking to see if any students have

yet to go to the mosque. This step is taken to minimize student disengagement from congregational prayers and foster discipline in worship.

According to researchers' observations, control and supervision are strategies implemented by Ar-Rahman Percut Middle School to address the challenges of implementing religious programs, particularly regarding student discipline in performing congregational prayers. Through strict oversight mechanisms, the school ensures that all students truly participate in congregational prayers, which are an integral part of the school's religious program.

Researchers also observed that the implementation of supervision, any student who does not attend congregational prayer will be immediately reprimanded and given guidance. For example, during the Quran reading activity at the mosque before prayer, if there are students who do not bring a copy of the Quran, then as a form of guidance, the student is asked to stand until the time for congregational prayer begins. This action aims to instill discipline and increase student awareness of the importance of following the rules and etiquette in religious activities. With the method of direct supervision and the application of educational sanctions, the school hopes to shape the character of students who are responsible, disciplined, and have a high religious awareness.

2. Lack of support from students' parents

Lily Nur Indah Sari, a social studies teacher and ninth-grade homeroom teacher, stated that parental support is crucial. However, some parents often fail to sign the religious service reports, which are designed to communicate and monitor students' religious practices at home. The implementation of religious programs in schools cannot be fully successful if they are carried out only within the school environment. This is because after school, students return to their homes, where teacher supervision is no longer available. Therefore, synergistic cooperation is needed between schools and parents in overseeing the continuity of the implementation of religious programs outside school hours, especially at home.

Parents play a strategic role as the school's primary partners in ensuring that students continue to implement established religious programs, such as congregational prayer and other daily worship activities. To support home supervision, researchers observed that Ar-Rahman Percut Middle School implemented a daily worship report book system that serves as a communication and monitoring tool between teachers and parents. Through this book, parents can record their children's religious practices at home, while teachers can monitor and follow up on these reports as part of evaluating

students' religious character development. With active parental involvement, it is hoped that the school's religious program will continue to be consistent and integrated between the school and home environments.

3. Lack of support from the surrounding environment

Students' families and homes play a crucial role in supporting the successful implementation of religious programs designed by schools. However, in practice, not all students live in homes that support the development of religious values. One major challenge is the lack of role models for religious practice at home. For example, the absence of parents or family members who consistently practice their faith leaves students without role models to emulate in their daily lives.

This situation hinders the comprehensive development of students' religious character, as religious programs implemented in schools require continuity and reinforcement at home. The absence of a religious environment at home can create a gap between the religious habits developed at school and students' behavior outside of school.

Religious Affairs Coordinator Ustadz Abdullah stated that one of the challenges in implementing religious programs is the lack of support and supervision from parents at home. Although students are accustomed to praying and reading the Quran every day at school, these habits don't always continue at home. Some students admitted to missing the morning prayer because they woke up late and had no one to wake them. This demonstrates the importance of synergy between schools and parents in fostering consistent religious habits in students.

4. Excessive use of mobile phones and social media

Mathematics teacher who is also the homeroom teacher for class VIII, Chairunnisa, explained that a common complaint from parents of students is that their children are often late in submitting memorization or do not reach the target because they are too busy playing with their cellphones and do not help enough at home. To address this issue, the school collaborated with parents to temporarily take over students' cell phones until they reached their assigned memorization targets. This measure was taken to foster discipline and responsibility in students toward their learning obligations.

The implementation of religious programs in schools ideally should not stop at the school environment but also extend into the home environment. Programs such as the five daily prayers, reading the Quran, and memorizing verses from the Quran are expected to become part of students' daily routines, both at school and at home. However, the reality on the ground shows that not all of these hopes can be optimally realized. One of the main obstacles faced is

the high level of smartphone and social media use by students at home. Time that should be used for religious services or completing schoolwork is often spent on less productive and purely entertainment activities.

This trend poses a serious challenge to ensuring the sustainability of religious character development established in schools. Therefore, synergy between schools and parents is needed to monitor and limit digital media use at home, ensuring that religious programs can continue and maximize their impact on students' spiritual development.

Evaluation of religious programs at Ar-Rahman Percut Middle School

Evaluation is a crucial component in implementing religious programs in schools, as it serves as a tool to assess the program's effectiveness in achieving educational goals and the spiritual development of students. Through evaluation, stakeholders such as teachers, principals, and foundations can measure the extent to which program achievements align with established success indicators.

Furthermore, the evaluation process allows schools to identify weaknesses, obstacles, or inconsistencies in program implementation, including curriculum, teaching methods, and available infrastructure. The results of this evaluation serve as the basis for ongoing program improvement and development, ensuring that the religious program is more relevant, measurable, and has a tangible impact on students' religious character.

The principal of Ar-Rahman Percut Middle School, Zainuddin Hasibuan, explained that evaluation is a crucial part of ensuring the success of the school's religious programs. A comprehensive evaluation is conducted at the end of the semester and includes memorization exams, Quran practice, and worship practices, involving coordinators and religious teachers. Meanwhile, routine religious programs such as congregational prayer, Dhuha prayer, and Quran reading are evaluated daily by the religious teachers and homeroom teachers through student worship report books, which can also be monitored by parents. This creates an integrated monitoring system between the school and families.

Farina Amalia explained that evaluations of students' daily worship, such as Dhuha prayer, congregational prayer, and Quran reading, are conducted routinely every day through a worship report book. This book serves as a means of communication between teachers and parents. Parents are asked to sign the report as proof that their child has performed worship at home. Failure to sign is considered a sign that the student has not performed worship and may be subject to sanctions according to applicable regulations. This system is designed to foster students' spiritual responsibility while encouraging active parental involvement in their children's religious development.

For annual religious programs, such as prayer nights and Hajj pilgrimages, the school records student attendance at each activity. The goal is to identify students who are not participating in the planned activities. This is crucial as part of evaluating student participation in the entire religious program.

Abdullah explained that the memorization exam is held twice a semester, mid-term and at the end of the semester. This exam is for students who have completed the set memorization target. Meanwhile, students who have not yet achieved the target will be given a make-up exam after they have completed their memorization. This system aims to ensure that the evaluation process is fair and follows each student's achievements.

Umami Diana explained that the tahfiz evaluation was carried out by giving exams to students who had completed the target of memorizing and performing murajaah. In the exam process, students are given five memorized questions. Those who were able to answer four questions were declared to have passed with good grades, while those who were able to answer all the questions received excellent grades. Meanwhile, students who cannot answer at least four questions are required to take a remedial exam. This evaluation aims to ensure the quality of students' memorization and encourage them to repeat and strengthen their memorization before being tested.

Zainuddin stated that religious programs implemented monthly or annually are evaluated through evaluation meetings. These meetings aim to identify any shortcomings in the implementation of activities such as Hajj rituals, sacrificial slaughter, prayer nights, the Ramadan Center, and commemorations of Islamic holidays. These evaluations allow for improvements to be made for future implementation, thereby sustainably enhancing the quality of religious programs.

Discussion

The implementation of the religious program at SMP Ar-Rahman Percut has been carried out systematically through the stages of planning, execution, and evaluation. Planning is done collectively by the Institute for the Development of Religious Knowledge (LPIA), the principal, and the religious coordinator. Observations of the planning meetings show that the activity agenda is compiled considering the national education calendar and Islamic religious moments, but input from the implementing teachers is still limited to technical aspects. This finding reinforces the view that (Basri et al., 2024) and (Basri & Rahman, 2025) about the importance of needs-based planning, but also indicates the need to expand the participation space for bottom-up innovation.

Collaboration between school leaders and religious units reflects the principle of participatory management in Islamic education as stated Zakiah et al (2024). However, interviews with several non-religious teachers revealed that they

were often only involved in the implementation phase, not the planning phase. This potentially diminishes their sense of ownership of the program, which in the long term could impact the sustainability of their involvement. This contradiction highlights the gap between the ideal of deliberation and the actual practice of participation on the ground.

The implementation of religious programs observed by researchers included daily activities such as congregational Dhuha and Dzuhur prayers, memorization (tahfiz), and prayer recitation; weekly activities such as Friday alms and voluntary fasting; and monthly and annual activities such as commemorating Islamic holidays, Ramadan Centers, and Hajj rituals. Observations showed that students who actively participated in daily activities tended to demonstrate increased discipline and politeness. This finding supports the theory of habitual learning proposed by Nantara (2022), where internalization of values occurs through repetition and role modelling.

However, not all students showed the same positive response. Interviews with religious teachers revealed that some students participated in activities simply out of obligation, without any genuine involvement. This phenomenon aligns with social control theory (Suyud Puguh Sunoto et al., 2023), where adherence to norms determines the level of compliance. School strategies of educational sanctions and multi-layered supervision are effective in increasing attendance, but they have not completely changed students' internal motivation. This poses a significant challenge to the sustainability of religious character development.

The involvement of non-religious teachers in implementation, such as helping to organize congregational prayer lines or accompanying tahfiz activities, is a practice that supports the holistic approach as suggested by Tilaar in research conducted by Chairunnisa' dkk (2024). However, interviews revealed that some teachers still view religious activities as the primary responsibility of religion teachers, resulting in a lack of fully integrated roles. This highlights the need to strengthen the integration of religious values across all subjects, not just formal worship activities.

External factors also influence the program's effectiveness. Interviews with homeroom teachers revealed that some parents failed to monitor or follow up on their children's religious practices at home, and some even set a contrary example. This finding supports the theory Epstein & Sheldon (2022) and Hadian et al, (2022) An active partnership between schools and families is key to successful character education. Without continued guidance at home, internalization of values at school is hampered.

Excessive device use emerged as another consistent challenge identified in observations and interviews. Students who frequently use their phones tend to be

less focused on religious activities. The school policy of withholding phones until Quran memorization targets are achieved has been shown to reduce distractions, but some students feel this policy restricts their freedom. This approach aligns with the concept of positive discipline, but requires motivational support to prevent it from being merely repressive.

Program evaluation is conducted through reporting on daily worship, memorization exams, and annual activities. Based on the evaluation documents, the school assesses not only cognitive achievement but also the development of students' attitudes and habits. Parental involvement in this process aligns with the principles of school-based management (Pramita & Nurmawati, 2025). However, parent participation in the evaluation remains low, with some only attending report card distribution. This indicates that the collaborative evaluation mechanism is not yet fully effective and requires strategies to strengthen communication.

Overall, field findings show that the religious program at Ar-Rahman Percut Middle School is effective in shaping religious character, but still faces internal (student motivation, teacher integration) and external (family support, the influence of gadgets) challenges. A limitation of this study is that the data mostly comes from the school, so the perspectives of students and parents have not been explored in depth. Further research is recommended using focus group discussions or participatory surveys. The practical implications are: (1) expanding the participation of non-religious teachers in planning, (2) strengthening school-parent partnerships through religious parenting training, and (3) adapting methods of habituating worship to the character of the digital generation so that the values instilled are more easily internalized.

Conclusion

Based on field data findings and analysis of the implementation of the religious program at Ar-Rahman Percut Middle School, Al-Azhar Medan, it can be concluded that this program encompasses three main aspects: planning, implementation, and evaluation, which are integrated. First, the religious program planning is systematically prepared by the Religious Studies Development Institute team together with the school principal. This planning aims to shape the religious character of students through habituation of worship, improvement of noble morals, and internalization of Islamic values. The success of the planning is marked by active student involvement, parental support, and positive behavioral changes.

Second, the implementation of religious programs is structured through daily, weekly, monthly, and annual activities. All programs are implemented routinely and consistently, including congregational prayer, recitation of the Koran, memorization of the Koran, voluntary fasting, and large-scale religious activities such as Hajj rituals and the Ramadan Center. This implementation has significantly

contributed to shaping the character and instilling religious behavior in students. Third, the evaluation of religious programs is carried out continuously through five forms of evaluation: daily, semester, annual, character development, and remedial evaluations. This evaluation is educational and encourages students to continuously improve their worship and memorization. The evaluation results serve as important indicators for measuring the program's effectiveness and serve as a basis for further development. Overall, the implementation of the religious program at Ar-Rahman Percut Middle School has been effective and can serve as a model for comprehensive and sustainable religious character development within an Islamic educational environment.

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