

The Strategic Role of AGPAII in Enhancing Islamic Religious Education Teacher Professionalism during WFH: A SWOT-Based Qualitative Study in Three Indonesian Provinces

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Submitted: 15-01-2026

Revised: 22-04-2026

Accepted: 26-04-2026

ABSTRACT. This research investigates the strategic role of the Indonesian Islamic Religious Education Teachers Association (AGPAII) in maintaining and enhancing teacher professionalism during the COVID-19 pandemic. The implementation of Work From Home (WFH) policies created a significant gap in educational continuity, particularly for Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers, who were traditionally perceived as having limited mastery of information technology (IT). Using a qualitative descriptive approach integrated with SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), this study explores AGPAII's strategic interventions in three Indonesian provinces: Banten, South Sumatra (Palembang), and West Sumatra (Padang). Data were gathered through interviews, documentation studies, and observations. The results demonstrate that AGPAII acted as a vital bridge between government policy and classroom practice through digital literacy workshops, professional advocacy, and the revitalization of Subject Teacher Forums. While structural constraints such as uneven infrastructure and limited hardware availability persist, the association's transformational leadership successfully shifted IRE teachers' paradigm toward becoming digitally adaptive educators. This study implies that professional organizations serve as essential meso-level actors in driving digital transformation and maintaining educational quality during global crises.

Keywords: *AGPAII (Islamic Religious Education Teachers Association); Effectiveness; Teacher Professionalism*

 <https://doi.org/10.32678/tarbawi.v12i01.12588>

How to Cite Muslihah, E., Subhan, E., Wasehudin, W., Safrudin, E., & Mubarok, M.G.A. (2026). The Strategic Role of AGPAII in Enhancing Islamic Religious Education Teacher Professionalism during WFH: A SWOT-Based Qualitative Study in Three Indonesian Provinces. *Tarbawi: Jurnal Keilmuan Manajemen Pendidikan*, 12(01), 143–156. <https://doi.org/10.32678/tarbawi.v12i01.12588>

INTRODUCTION

One of the objectives of the issuance of the *Teacher and Lecturer Law Number 14 of 2005* is to provide evidence of the government's seriousness in building reliable Indonesian human resources through education. In the dictum of the Law, it is stated that national development in the field of education is an effort to educate the nation's life while still prioritizing the values of faith, piety, and noble character both as a cast and a shield for the direction of education for the Indonesian nation itself (Annava et al., 2023; Neumann, 2022). Polarization of educational development, while still referring to the 1945 Constitution and *Pancasila* as the State Philosophy of the Republic of Indonesia,

as well as in the National Education System Act. Indonesians are expected to develop the ability and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to enrich the nation's life.

As frontline educators, teachers are inevitably required to be true human beings, as mandated by the *Law on Teachers and Lecturers*. Teachers are considered true professionals if they are competent in their field (Antera, 2021; Seidel et al., 2021). There are three indicators for professional teachers: first, teachers must have reliable capabilities (Tatto, 2021); second, they must be innovators; and third, they must be developers (Gore & Rosser, 2022). The first trait of a teacher is having extensive knowledge as the main capital, because the teacher's job is not only as an educator but also as a person who transfers knowledge to their students. The second trait is that teachers must have an innovative nature, with a commitment to continually making changes across all aspects. The third trait the teacher must possess is that of a developer, enabling the teacher to understand and translate the vision and mission into the real world. Professional teachers must be able to look further ahead to anticipate various problems in the world of education.

In improving the quality of education, the basic component is the teacher with all his professionalism. Teachers play a very important role, both in implementing the learning process in the classroom and in implementing the implementation of the curriculum itself, where both the process and implementation of the curriculum are a form of embodiment that requires a lot of expertise from a teacher (Madondo, 2021; Timm & Barth, 2021). The classroom learning process as a learning activity is part of the application of educational values itself (Pettersson, 2021; Saphira et al., 2023). Social interaction among teachers, students, and other school communities is an activity that cannot be separated from improving students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes, in which all forms of reciprocal relationships between the two must be pedagogically valuable (Prahani et al., 2022). The polarization of creating an atmosphere with educational value will not be separated from the role of a teacher as a human figure to be obeyed and imitated.

The Governor of Banten hopes that development in the education sector will be at the forefront of building and improving the quality of Banten's human resources, one of which is the provision of Regional School Operational Assistance and increasing the number of teachers through the provision of scholarships to continue to higher levels of undergraduate and postgraduate education. There are three focuses of education development planned by the Banten Provincial Government: First, physical development. The Banten Provincial Government has prioritized the education sector as the primary catalyst for enhancing regional human resources. This commitment is manifested through integrated policies that focus on three strategic areas: expanding school infrastructure, enhancing teachers' academic qualifications, and promoting a literacy culture. Rather than merely expanding physical facilities, the government's infrastructure initiatives, including the massive construction of classrooms and libraries, are designed to create a conducive environment for 21st-century learning.

Furthermore, the provincial scholarship program—which targets thousands of teachers for undergraduate and postgraduate studies—addresses a critical professional gap. By incentivizing teachers to earn master's degrees, the policy aims to elevate pedagogical standards and subject-matter expertise across all educational levels, from early childhood to vocational education. However, the efficacy of such top-down investments in infrastructure and formal qualifications often depends on how they translate into actual classroom quality. While the government provides the "hardware" and formal credentials, the sustainability of educational quality requires a shift from quantitative targets to qualitative outcomes. Previous research suggests that academic upgrades alone are insufficient without continuous professional support and an environment that fosters innovation (Madondo, 2021; Rahmi & Rasanjani, 2025). In this context, the Banten Provincial Government's initiatives provide a vital macro-level foundation that requires synergy with professional organizations to ensure that improved teacher competencies effectively enhance student learning outcomes and literacy levels.

The Indonesian Islamic Religious Education Teachers Association (AGPAII), established in 2012 following the national congress in Pekanbaru, emerged as a strategic response to the systemic stagnation in the development of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers. Despite the legal mandates for professionalism, many IRE teachers operate in a state of professional isolation, characterized by limited access to contemporary pedagogical training and a significant lag in digital literacy (Rahmi & Rasanjani, 2025). Formal government-led training often fails to reach the grassroots effectively, leaving a critical gap in teachers' continuous professional development (CPD) in remote or regional areas such as Banten, Palembang, and Padang. Furthermore, scholarly literature has largely overlooked the influence of peer-led professional associations in the Indonesian Islamic context, creating a theoretical gap regarding how non-state actors can drive teacher professionalism (Tuna, 2022). AGPAII fills this void by functioning not merely as an administrative forum but as a community of practice that facilitates knowledge enrichment and the realization of professional identity. By initiating localized workshops and digital literacy training, AGPAII addresses the specific "IT-shock" and pedagogical rigidities that state initiatives often ignore. Therefore, exploring the role of AGPAII is essential to understanding a more decentralized and resilient model of teacher empowerment that complements official government policies.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative design with a descriptive-analytical approach to generate an in-depth and contextual understanding of the strategic role of professional associations in addressing educational disruption (Burdine et al., 2021; Tomaszewski et al., 2020). This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to comprehensively explore social phenomena by interpreting experiences, policies, and organizational dynamics that develop in real-world contexts.

Research Location

The research was conducted through a purposive multi-site approach in three provinces in Indonesia: Banten, South Sumatra (Palembang), and West Sumatra (Padang). These three regions were selected because they represent diverse regional contexts and varying levels of organizational success and implementation of digital transformation within the Indonesian Islamic Religious Education Teachers Association (AGPAII). These locations were selected to obtain a comparative overview of organizational strategies in addressing educational change during the disruption.

Participants

A purposive sampling technique was used to select informants with relevant, in-depth information (information-rich cases). The total number of participants in this study was 24, comprising 15 primary informants and 9 supporting informants. The primary informants included three provincial heads, six regional administrators, and six Islamic Religious Education teachers who met the inclusion criteria: having at least 5 years of teaching experience and being actively involved in association activities during the 2020–2025 period. Supporting informants included school supervisors, education experts, and community leaders who provided external evaluative perspectives on organizational dynamics.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews and documentation studies. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and via virtual platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet, with each session lasting 45-90 minutes. All interviews were recorded with the participants' consent and transcribed verbatim to ensure data accuracy. Furthermore, a systematic documentation study was conducted on organizational documents, including the Articles of Association and Bylaws (AD/ART), the 2020–2025 annual strategic plan, digital training modules, and policy circulars from

the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. This documentation serves as supporting data and a means of triangulation.

Data Validity

Data validity was maintained through source and method triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from various informant groups, while method triangulation was conducted by confirming interview results with official organizational documents and government policies. This step aims to increase the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research results.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted iteratively through the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, as proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. After key themes were identified through thematic analysis, the research results were synthesized using the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) framework to diagnostically evaluate how professional associations responded to external crises, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic. The use of SWOT analysis enables the identification of the organization's strategic position in addressing challenges and the formulation of future directions for institutional strengthening.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The COVID-19 outbreak can make life plans go awry, from political elites to small- and large-scale entrepreneurs. This is from various forms of life, ranging from the world of industry, locomotives, banking, agriculture, and plantations, to the world of education. All of them are suddenly stressed, but on the other hand, there are benefits to be drawn from this outbreak; at least, medical experts are required to be even more active in conducting research to find an antidote, so that this virus can be controlled. Likewise, in the world of education, when social distancing is enforced, work from home is enforced, then is the continuity of the world of education eliminated in harmony and in line with social distancing and work from home; of course not? Therefore, teachers starting from elementary school, junior high school, senior high school to university, education actors, especially teachers and lecturers are demanded and even half forced to be able to familiarize themselves with the name cyberspace, where the internet with its gadgets and lap-tops must be able to replace the role of a teacher and lecturer in educational spaces (Maheshwari, 2021; Muzammil et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2020). Thus, the teacher becomes a determining factor and plays an important role in the distance learning model; therefore, he must master science, technology, and literacy, even though it was previously considered mediocre and was primarily used as a means of communication and entertainment.

In the face of the COVID-19 outbreak, inevitably the professionalism of teachers in using information technology media in learning will always be tested, even though in the beginning, especially Islamic religious education teachers from Banten, Palembang to Padang initially experienced shock; almost certainly at first there were only a few handfuls of Islamic Religious Education teachers who did not feel the impact when facing online learning, but most of them felt confused when demanded that all teachers continue to carry out activities when work from home was implemented. Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted by the research team, a red thread can be drawn related to the policies of the Indonesian Islamic Religious Education Teachers Association (AGPAII) in Banten, Palembang, and Padang, because all forms of policies must be in line with the provisions of the Articles of Association and Bylaws. In the Articles of Association and Bylaws of AGPAII, as a result of the decision of the third congress held on December 02, 2017, in Surabaya, AGPAII policy will direct all Islamic religious education teachers, both within the Ministry of Religion and in other public education institutions, in all

regions of Indonesia. Among the policies that all AGPAII administrators must implement are at least ten items. Among them are:

Increase faith and devotion to Allah SWT.

In this context, where faith and piety are made the basis of AGPAII's program policies, in Banten, Palembang, and Padang, the three AGPAII administrators (Banten, Palembang, and Padang AGPAII administrators) are each represented by the chairman of the association because faith and piety in Islam are part of the first and main pillars that must be used as a foundation in the lives of Muslims. Faith and piety are not just slogans; they must become the identity of every Islamic religious teacher, in the family, school, and community environment. Furthermore, for Mustahdi (Chairperson of AGPAII Banten), Maruyah (Chairperson of AGPAII Palembang South Sumatra), and Rimelfi (Chairperson of AGPAII Padang West Sumatra), faith and piety should not be ruled out; the greater and higher the value of one's faith and devotion, the more active and caring they will be in carrying out their main duties as religious teachers. Vice versa, if teachers lack the values of faith and piety, they will be lazier and more reluctant in carrying out their duties. In other words, the values of faith and devotion of a person will be proportional to his/her responsibility both among fellow human beings and even more so with God. Responsibility in carrying out duties both as servants of the state and as representatives of God on earth; if faith and piety are used as an umbrella in organizing plans for all aspects of life, of course, blessings will come by themselves; it could be that the COVID-19 outbreak is part of a small reprimand from God for his servants who are always negligent in carrying out their duties as a form of service

Increasing GPAT Kinship, Togetherness, and Solidarity

The intertwining of silaturahmi with religious commands and the solidarity built on kinship among religious teachers should be a necessity. The pattern developed to follow up on the mandate for consideration, as stated in the organization's rules and bylaws, involved creating a WhatsApp group and conducting online seminars. In the beginning, continued the Head of Religious Education and Islamic Religious Affairs, Encep Syarifudin and Rinelfi, the development pattern in an effort to build kinship and togetherness (solidarity) between Islamic religious education teachers was carried out through the Islamic religious education teacher deliberation which was held once a month, where in the subject teacher organization activities various kinds and matters related to what, how, we can offer so that the students produced can really bring the future of the nation into a solid nation in carrying Pancasila as the only basis for the Indonesian nation.

Increasing the Motivation and Ability of GPAT in Carrying Out Their Professional Duties

The Association of Indonesian Islamic Religious Education Teachers (AGPAII) builds motivation among Islamic religious education teachers through supervisors, who serve as the spearhead for teachers in their areas. This coaching pattern is considered capable of encouraging teachers to build and address the shortcomings that have been stigmatized among Islamic Religious Knowledge teachers (Mahfud & Nuryana, 2023; Sulaiman et al., 2022). Furthermore, it is said that religious teachers must always have strong motivation to build future discourse, because, in addition to being personal coaches themselves, they will also serve as role models for children and students, as well as for the surrounding community. Thus, the motivation to build professionalism as the main task of religious teachers must be a comprehensive unit, in which the level of discipline and the addition of knowledge content will be carried out at any time by religious teachers in Banten Province, Palembang, and Padang.

Growing the Enthusiasm of Islamic Religious Knowledge Teachers to Improve Their Ability to Prepare, Implement, and Evaluate the Learning Process of Islamic Religious Education

Learning for teachers is like farming: how to plow the land quickly and precisely without sacrificing the desired results is part of a teacher's methodology in the classroom. Therefore, finding a breakthrough for Islamic Religious Knowledge teachers in delivering learning materials in this

COVID-19 era is done online. The pattern followed by PAI teachers in Banten, Palembang, and Padang is the same: mastery of technological knowledge is a necessity for Islamic Religious Knowledge teachers in all three Provinces. The pattern, initiated by the Management of the Association of Indonesian Islamic Religious Education Teachers (AGPAII), Banten Province, Palembang, and Padang, is implemented by holding learning workshops for all PAI teachers in the three provinces.

The pattern-building initiated by AGPAII Padang, for example, is very intense, even though it is slightly coercive: PAI teachers in West Sumatra must, within two weeks, be skilled and familiar with using information technology as a medium for Islamic Religious Knowledge learning in the pandemic era. The pattern of cooperation built by related agencies, for example by the local education office to the Heads of Religious Education and Islamic Religious Affairs in various City Districts, will certainly make it easier for the Provincial AGPAII administrators led by Rimelfi where mastery of online learning is immediately transmitted and truly mastered by users, namely Islamic religion teachers in the West Sumatra hemisphere, both those who work within the ministry of religion and the ministry of national education. All of them are required to be able to share so that, in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is no stop to learning (Djidu et al., 2021), although there are many obstacles that these teachers must carefully and wisely consider. For example, signal constraints in remote areas, and the inability of some parents to buy Android media tablets as tools for carrying out learning tasks.

Improve The Ability of Islamic Religious Knowledge Teachers in Choosing, Using, Finding, and Developing Appropriate Teaching Strategies and Methods to Improve The Quality of Islamic Religious Education

As mandated by Law Number 14 of 2005, the main task of teachers is to educate. In the educational process, of course, there will be teaching, guidance, direction, training, and formation, leading to evaluation of all of them. This can only be done by teachers who have adequate competence and work with full sincerity, because the main task of the teacher as an educator cannot be separated from his mastery of the material and methodology, as a means of sowing the seeds of education in his students' hearts. According to Rimelfi (AGPAII of West Sumatra), Mustahdi (AGMPAII of Banten), and Maruyah (AGPAII of South Sumatra) in a separate interview from the three, one conclusion can be drawn that the main task for a teacher is not limited to delivering material in a small space (classroom) but how the process carried out in a small space (classroom) can become a virus of goodness in a large space (community life). This can be done if Islamic Religious Knowledge teachers can place themselves not just as teachers but as educators (Tuna, 2022). The behavior of an educator will be a prototype and locomotive that can be staked out by various forms of detector eyes, ranging from students, education personnel, school principals, community leaders, and the wider community, who will always lurk and supervise the actions of the teacher as someone who must be dignified and imitated in various forms of goodness.

Working meetings with the leadership of the Banten Province Ministry of Religion are still being held to anticipate the spread of COVID-19. Nevertheless, education issues do not necessarily receive less attention, especially in the era of work-from-home (WFH). The results of the work meeting were finally followed up by the Banten Provincial Ministry of Religion through the Head of Religious Education and Islamic Religious Affairs by collaborating with the Association of Indonesian Islamic Religious Education Teachers (AGPAII) Banten Province with the form and pattern of Provincial Instructor Training of Trainers activities from Wednesday to Saturday, to be precise on February 26-28, 2021 with an online pattern. In this activity, at least 429 teachers from various districts and cities in Banten Province participated.

Furthermore, all of them agreed that the improvement program must always be carried out routinely, not just implementing a training program which is carried out only because of the budget, but the development pattern that has been scheduled should be further improved, both self-taught and with a pattern of seminars, webinars, and so on. Thus, the routine pattern that has been built

so far should be nurtured, and patterns should be sought to make teachers more professional, for example, through a professional teacher performance pattern. This is based on the main task of the teacher is not only limited to merely providing knowledge to students but how the form of knowledge that has been adjusted into values that can lead to a goal; both the goals that have been mandated in the Law and Pancasila as the State Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia as well as religion and culture as sacred values that can help and direct to a better life.

Accommodating The Aspirations and Problems of Islamic Religious Knowledge Teachers and Providing Advocacy Faced by Them in Carrying Out Their Duties as Well as Exchanging Ideas/Information and Finding Solutions

Lately, teachers have faced problems that sometimes deter them from carrying out their duties; for example, they are not allowed to make physical contact (hitting) with their students because this is considered an offense. Since print and electronic media are in our hands, it seems that we often read news related to cases of violence, both between students (fights) and psychological violence (bullying), and some of them died because of desperation over the taunts made by their friends. Acts of violence committed both between students and students, teachers and students seem to be increasing day by day, although the cases and problems are diverse (Antera, 2021). This kind of incident seems to be a mandatory work program, as proposed by the results of the leadership meeting, to be resolved together.

Acts of violence committed by unscrupulous teachers often make or even stimulate the Islamic Religious teachers to be reluctant, although what they do is not based on hatred but to instill ways that are considered to foster the values of goodness for the learners who are considered naughty. This has happened to an Islamic Religious Knowledge teacher in Cilegon City who was reported by a student's parent, just because of a trivial matter that led to court proceedings. The parents' actions were eventually resolved through a compromise, in which AGPAII Banten immediately formed an Advocacy team, because, no matter what, a teacher's actions towards students are part of educating, not based on hatred. Educational institutions, in this case, schools/madrasas, should be homes that reassure students' bodies and souls, not the other way around, where schools become "prisons" for students, providing security, comfort, and peace, both physical and non-physical. However, in some schools, unscrupulous teachers still take actions, such as throwing erasers and rulers, even though they are not subject to physical punishment by students. This can make students feel threatened and uncomfortable in the classroom. This is an issue that we should not take lightly. Schools/madrasas, as places of study, should be educational institutions that can lead students to become socially pious human beings as well as individually pious.

Increasing Friendship Activities and Information Exchange Among Fellow Administrators, And AGPAII Members

The pattern of friendship in the context of exchanging information among AGPAII administrators is consistently maintained; for example, in every online workshop conducted by AGPAII, participants include all Islamic religious education teachers throughout Indonesia, with information disseminated through WAG and workshop activities among the administrators. The virusization of *silaturrahmi* building patterns, which have a positive impact on AGPAII administrators in West Sumatra, South Sumatra, and Banten, is carried out through religious practices and ways. However, in essence, it will lead to improved quality for PAI teachers, especially those in the three regions.

The Association of Indonesian Islamic Religious Education Teachers (AGPAII) of West Sumatra, led by Rimelfi, has made AGPAII West Sumatra one of the most active provinces in building the AGPAII organization in the unitary state of the Republic of Indonesia when compared to the Association of Indonesian Islamic Religious Education Teachers (AGPAII) in other provinces. AGPAII of West Sumatra, long before the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in all parts of the earth, had conducted a Workshop on Improving the Competence of Teachers, especially in

the field of Science Technology, namely a workshop on the use of digital and Google Drive as learning media with an online format for 32 Subject Hours.

In the workshop, the participants who attended were equipped with various forms of technological knowledge where Islamic Religious Knowledge teachers throughout West Sumatra are expected to be able to take advantage of information technology designed by the West Sumatra AGPAII board as a material that can support the learning process in the era of disruption, such as digitizing the making of membership cards for religious teachers, digitizing lesson plans to digital-based assessments. Apart from that, the participants, who numbered no less than 400 and came from several regions, especially PAI teachers in West Sumatra, were also equipped with how to utilize Google Drive features to build information technology-based Islamic Religious Knowledge learning. The activity was attended by speakers considered experts in the field, such as Habiburrahman, Ulfatul Husna, Rimelfi (Chairperson of AGPAII) from West Sumatra, and Asfar Amir. The activity was carried out online, and the event was opened by the chairman of the National AGPAII, Mr. Mahnan Marbawi.

No different from AGPAII of West Sumatra, the Association of Indonesian Islamic Religious Education Teachers (AGPAII) of South Sumatra also did the same thing, welcoming learning in the era of the COVID-19 Pandemic and carrying out various activities. Among the activities is a digitalization workshop for Islamic Religious Knowledge teachers throughout South Sumatra. The pattern of these activities, according to Maruyah (Chairperson of AGPAII South Sumatra), was carried out thanks to the collaboration between related parties, for example, involving the Ministry of Religion of the South Sumatra Religious Education and Islamic Religious Affairs Division, the South Sumatra Provincial Education Office, and the school supervisory working group, both at the Provincial and Regency / City levels throughout South Sumatra.

The world of education must not stop, even though educational institutions such as schools or *madrassas* are very forced to be vacated, the learning process is still carried out with a pattern of working from home or what is called work from home, so that teachers, especially Islamic Religious Knowledge teachers in South Sumatra through an independent institution led by the board of AGPAII South Sumatra are actively conducting online learning training. It was this pattern that eventually led AGPAII Palembang (South Sumatra), in collaboration with the Head of Religious Education and Islamic Religious Affairs and the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of South Sumatra Province, to hold trainings and workshops to make Islamic religious knowledge teachers proficient in technology, even if only instantly. In the end, the Head of the Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of South Sumatra Province was no less quick to take a stand, immediately addressing conditions that remained poor after COVID-19 ended.

This alertness, both the Head of the Religious and Religious Education Section Muhamad Ali, S.Ag., M.Pd, to be precise, on February 22, 2021, after the webinar which was conducted online and attended by no less than 2000 religious teachers throughout South Sumatra, received a plaque as a form of appreciation given by the Association of Indonesian Islamic Religious Education Teachers (AGPAII) South Sumatra Province. The Banten AGPAII Executive Board conducted the provincial Instructor activity on digitization of learning in the COVID-19 era, held over three consecutive days (Wednesday-Saturday), 28-29 February 2021. In this activity, which seems forced but is hopefully useful, especially for the digital learning process, the participants were 429 PAI teachers from all districts/cities in Banten Province.

In this Training of Trainers activity, it is hoped that Provincial Instructors, after completing this online workshop, will be able to transmit their knowledge to all regional management boards and Islamic Religious Knowledge teachers at various levels. Mustahdi also expressed the same thing that the Islamic Religious Knowledge teachers who participated in this 'TOT' must be at the forefront and become driving teachers, pioneers in order to develop a level of professionalism,

especially in this era of the COVID-19 pandemic, and can transmit knowledge to other teachers, especially Islamic Religious Knowledge teachers in Banten Province.

Socialize Various Educational Policies from The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religion or Other Agencies Related to Education

Under the Law on Teachers and Lecturers Number 14 of 2005, teachers are required to have academic qualifications or at least possess four competencies: pedagogical competence, personality competence, social competence, and professional competence. According to the chairman of AGPAII Padang, these four competencies are inseparable from achieving effective learning. Therefore, teachers in West Sumatra (Padang), especially Islamic Religious Knowledge teachers in both Madrasahs and public schools, should build enthusiasm to address all forms of deficiencies that have been stigmatized among fellow Islamic education teachers. For example, Islamic Religious Knowledge teachers are considered to be lagging in the field of technology and information, yet in the pandemic era of online-based learning, they are inevitably skilled in using technology- and information-based learning models. Moreover, how Islamic Religious Knowledge teachers can design effective online learning models, given that learning during the COVID-19 pandemic is still being conducted properly.

According to Rimelfi, the stigmatization of Islamic religious education teachers' backwardness, especially in West Sumatra, has led him to work hard to build cohesiveness among West Sumatra AGPAII administrators. This pattern is built on the premise that the COVID-19 pandemic should not be an obstacle to the continuity of learning, so that the nation's children can be educated through educational institutions, both public schools and Madrasahs. The administrators of AGPAII West Sumatra recognize that the four abilities (Paedagogic, Personality, Professional, and Social) must be continually improved through workshops, seminars, or forum group discussions for Islamic Religious Knowledge teachers in West Sumatra. The hard work of the AGPAII administrators can ultimately make West Sumatra AGPAII the best Indonesian Islamic Religious Education Teachers Association (AGPAII) among other AGPAIIs. Therefore, teachers in West Sumatra (Padang), especially Islamic Religious Knowledge teachers in both Madrasahs and public schools, should build enthusiasm to address all forms of deficiencies that have been stigmatized among fellow Islamic education teachers.

For example, Islamic Religious Knowledge teachers are considered to be lagging in the field of technology and information during the pandemic-era online learning. PAI teachers are inevitably skilled in the use of learning models connected to technology and information, for example, how Islamic Religious Knowledge teachers can design patterns and models of online learning that can be considered qualified for learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Raman et al., 2022). There are at least two important issues for the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in addressing the existence of Islamic Religious Education teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic: First, teachers who work in public schools that teach religious subjects; Second, Islamic Education teachers who in fact work in religious institutions, for example Islamic Education teachers who work in religious education institutions both in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Tsanawiyah to Madrasah Aliyah, both public and private.

On another occasion, it was said that the role of religious teachers is very important and even serves as the spearhead in caring for the Indonesian nation's pluralism from Sabang to Merauke. Therefore, it is very reasonable for the Ministry of Religious Affairs to allocate trillions of rupiah from the budget to provide teacher certification allowances and welfare benefits for religious teachers in Indonesia. According to Rimelfi, the stigmatization of Islamic religious education teachers' backwardness, especially in West Sumatra, has led him to work hard to build cohesiveness among West Sumatra AGPAII administrators. This pattern is built on the premise that the COVID-19 pandemic, with its various provisions, especially during the work-from-home period, should not be an obstacle to the continuity of learning, in an effort to educate the nation's children

through educational institutions, both public schools and Madrasahs. The administrators of AGPAII West Sumatra recognize that the transition policy from face-to-face to at-home learning must be formulated and implemented immediately to ensure learning continues as it should.

Assisting Islamic Religious Knowledge Teachers to Cooperate in Improving the Quality of Intracurricular and Extra-curricular Activities of Islamic Religious Education in Schools

Re-encouraging the development of activities by school and madrasah educational institutions, both intra- and extracurricular, must receive special and serious attention from Islamic religious education teachers. This is based on the reality that the world our children face today is different. In their daily lives, almost all students hold a phone so they can access all kinds of content quickly, ranging from pornographic content to other activities that have a negative impact, and if this is allowed to pass without guidance from parents and teachers in schools/madrasahs.

To compensate for the rapid development of science and technology, Islamic education teachers both in schools and madrasahs must direct their students in a positive direction, for example, an activity that has been carried out by SMAN (State Senior High School) 1 Padang which the chairperson of AGPAII all coincidentally commanded by as an Islamic education teacher, a lot of activities that can support in a more positive direction; for example, leadership training carried out by the school's student council, sermon training, speeches, hadrah to question and answer religious issues, especially in today's digitalization era. Apart from these activities, the school also conducts extra-curricular activities such as scouting, tutoring, and others. Apart from scouting, SMAN 1 Padang also organizes additional clubs, namely the English Club and Arabic Club, where SMAN 1 students are expected to be proficient in both languages in daily life.

Adding Insight into Various Scientific Developments and The Latest Innovations in Islamic Education Learning

The search for insights into the development of science, especially in learning models, is an inseparable part, because education during the disruption period will belong to those who can master science and technology. Innovation in the context of utilizing technology whose existence cannot be denied will bring about a flow of cultural change, especially in the world of education, where the education community is required to be able to make information technology a tool that can be mastered by stakeholders, so that the pace of education is increasingly directed towards common ideals.

Thus the presence of technology can be used as a vehicle that can help Islamic education teachers to be used as a medium of learning as a form of good innovation and is expected to give birth to innovations in technology-based learning models will always emerge, no longer looking at the positive and negative impacts that are born due to technological advances, but how the presence of technology can help the performance of Islamic education teacher teachers in conveying messages and values of state and divinity in a better direction, where before the teaching patterns that Islamic education teachers have been delivered are still considered classical (less modern) both in methods and in the learning system more broadly. Therefore, to make ICT a medium in PAI learning, a pattern must be found that leads to a realistic, empirical divinity, where technology is not meant to replace divine values but to strengthen and present God in the real world.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the role of AGPAII in Banten, Palembang, and Padang is not merely technical and pedagogical, but also a relatively mature practice of organizational management and leadership within a professional association of Islamic Religious Education teachers. (Annava et al., 2023) AGPAII's programs, such as digital literacy training, faith and piety-strengthening initiatives, networking and collegiality-building, advocacy services, and the management of PAI learning communities, depict AGPAII as a learning organization able to adapt to the disruptions of COVID-19 and the demands of the digital era. These dynamics align with the

objectives formulated in the Introduction, namely, strengthening IRE teachers' professionalism as the frontline for realizing the mandates of the Teacher and Lecturer Law and the National Education System Law.

From the perspective of transformational leadership theory, the leadership patterns displayed by AGPAII boards in the three provinces reflect the four core dimensions of transformational leadership: articulating a clear vision of change (for example, the demand that IRE teachers become digitally literate), providing inspirational motivation (constructing a narrative that links faith and piety to professional ethos), stimulating intellectual growth (through workshops, training of trainers, and webinars), and offering individualized consideration (through advocacy for teachers' problems and concrete responses to cases in the field). (Ali, 2022). This form of leadership encourages teachers to move beyond routine work toward innovation and to become *driving teachers* who influence school and madrasah culture. These findings are consistent with educational leadership studies that show the effectiveness of combining transformational, instructional, digital, and collaborative leadership to enhance teacher performance and organizational effectiveness. In AGPAII's case, this integration is evident in the synergy among religious vision, academic focus (PAI competence), the use of ICT, and collaboration with multiple stakeholders, including ministries, education offices, teacher forums, and local communities. (Posangi et al., 2025)

Viewed through the lens of *learning organization* theory, AGPAII's practices demonstrate several key characteristics: continuous professional learning (for example, sustained digital workshops and AGPAII-based training), a shared vision (to form professional and digitally adaptive IRE teachers), team learning (through WhatsApp groups, online communities of practice, and inter-regional training), and systems thinking (seeing teachers, schools, parents, government policies, and society as one interrelated educational ecosystem) (Supardi & Hakim, 2021). Initiatives such as the digitalization of membership cards, lesson plans, assessments, and learning media have supported IRE teachers' transition from passive technology users to active designers of systematic online and blended learning. Conceptually, these findings resonate with literature emphasizing that IRE teacher professionalism in the digital era must integrate 21st-century skills, digital literacy, and core Islamic values such as tawhid, justice, and trustworthiness, so that Islamic identity becomes a driver rather than a barrier to innovation (Rahmi & Rasanjani, 2025).

From the standpoint of teacher professionalism and TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge), the study shows that AGPAII's interventions support a closer integration of teachers' mastery of Islamic content, pedagogy, and technology. (Munir et al., 2024) Training on the use of digital platforms (such as cloud storage and online applications) for preparing teaching materials, designing interactive tasks, and conducting assessments has expanded teachers' capacity to implement pedagogy appropriate for digitally native students deeply embedded in gadget culture. (Farisia & Syafi'i, 2024) Previous research suggests that teachers with strong digital competencies tend to foster higher student engagement and improved learning outcomes, implying that AGPAII's digitalization programs can be considered an evidence-based strategy for improving PAI teaching quality (Butar et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the study also reveals structural constraints, including uneven digital infrastructure, varied levels of teacher readiness, and limited parental support, highlighting the necessity for more affirmative policies for under-resourced regions and vulnerable teacher groups (Afnan & Maksum, 2025).

Normatively and theologically, the finding that AGPAII places faith and piety at the core of its organizational policies can be interpreted using Islamic work ethic and *faith-based leadership* theories, which view spiritual values as central sources of motivation, service orientation, and moral accountability in organizations. The integration of faith with professional competence reinforces what can be termed *faith-driven digital pedagogy*: a model of PAI pedagogy that uses technology to present divine values more concretely and contextually without diminishing their spiritual depth. This synthesis distinguishes AGPAII from many other professional organizations that typically

operate within a secular paradigm, as AGPAII combines modern management, transformational leadership, and Islamic spirituality within a single organizational framework.

Compared with previous studies on teacher professional development during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the context of Society 5.0, the present findings are consistent in underscoring that religious education teachers must master teacher leadership, digital literacy, effective communication, emotional intelligence, and collaborative capacity in order to become true agents of change in schools. However, the distinctive contribution of this study lies in its emphasis on the role of a religious professional organization (AGPAII) as a *meso-level leadership* actor that bridges national policies (the Teacher and Lecturer Law and Ministry regulations) with classroom practice and community-based initiatives. AGPAII thus emerges not only as an administrative container but as a strategic actor orchestrating digital transformation, character formation, and teacher advocacy at local and national levels. Future research should examine the impact of AGPAII's leadership and programs on students' learning outcomes, school culture, and the development of moderate, inclusive religious literacy amid rapid social and technological change.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Indonesian Islamic Religious Education Teachers Association (AGPAII) in Banten, Palembang, and Padang serves as a critical meso-level leadership actor that successfully bridges the gap between national policy mandates and grassroots classroom practice. Through strategic initiatives such as revitalizing Subject Teacher Forums (MGMP), implementing intensive digital literacy workshops, and proactively collaborating with local governments and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, AGPAII has effectively enhanced IRE teachers' professional and technological adaptive capacity. The high participation rate (97%) in online workshops indicates a strong intrinsic motivation among teachers to evolve despite professional stigmas, positioning AGPAII as a vital learning organization in the digital era. However, the study identifies significant structural barriers, including uneven digital infrastructure, limited hardware availability among teachers, and the lack of a dedicated institutional budget ceiling for professional associations. These findings imply that while teacher-led initiatives are highly effective, their sustainability depends on more integrated affirmative policies and government investments in digital infrastructure. Future efforts should focus on formalizing the synergy between state agencies and professional associations to ensure a standardized digital transformation across the Islamic education sector. At the same time, subsequent research could longitudinally evaluate the impact of these organizational strategies on student learning outcomes and moderate religious literacy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the leadership and staff of the Ministry of Religious Affairs offices in Banten, South Sumatra, and West Sumatra, as well as the Provincial and District/City Boards of the Association of Indonesian Islamic Religious Education Teachers (AGPAII), for their invaluable administrative and technical support during the data collection and coordination processes. The authors also wish to thank all Islamic Religious Education teachers, school supervisors, and community leaders who generously shared their time, experiences, and insights, which greatly enriched the findings of this study.

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