Strategies of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Managing Administrative Burden to Sustain Teaching Effectiveness

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the various administrative burdens faced by Islamic Religious Education teachers and the strategic efforts taken to maintain the effectiveness of the learning process. This study employed a qualitative approach, utilizing a case study method, with five Islamic Religious Education teachers at the elementary school level in Karangpandan District as the research subjects. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation reviews over a period of three months. Data were then analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The research is conceptually grounded in the theories of teacher professionalism and workload management, which provide a framework for understanding how teachers adapt to administrative pressures while maintaining instructional quality. The findings indicate that Islamic Religious Education teachers experience a variety of administrative pressures, including developing teaching materials, completing various administrative systems and performance reports, managing school documents, and carrying out additional administrative tasks. This burden has the potential to divert teachers' attention away from developing creative and innovative learning. Nevertheless, Islamic Religious Education teachers implement adaptive strategies such as efficient time management, utilizing digital technology, collaborating with colleagues, and simplifying administrative activities in accordance with school policies. These adaptive strategies help teachers maintain the quality of their teaching while fulfilling their primary function as educators and character builders of students.

INTRODUCTION | مقدمة

In In the era of globalisation, characterised by rapid technological advancement and the accelerated flow of information, the field of education is undergoing a profound transformation. These changes encompass not only curriculum renewal and learning models but also the expansion of teachers' administrative responsibilities. In Indonesia, teachers are no longer confined to their pedagogical duties as instructors and educators; they are increasingly required to perform extensive administrative work—such as preparing lesson plans, compiling reports, inputting data into digital systems, and managing electronic school documents. While these tasks are intended to ensure accountability and data accuracy, they often have limited direct impact on the quality of classroom learning. Instead, they consume teachers' time, attention, and energy that could otherwise be invested in creating meaningful learning experiences. Cross-national

studies have consistently shown that excessive administrative workloads contribute to declining teacher well-being, reduced job satisfaction, and even higher turnover intentions (Mota et al., 2023; Jamaludin & You, 2019).

Within Indonesia's educational landscape, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers face a dual responsibility: to transmit religious knowledge and to nurture moral character rooted in Islamic values. Supartini, Nashir, and Sulistyowati (2022:391) emphasise that teachers serve as the central agents in guiding students' potential toward holistic educational goals. However, the expanding scope of administrative work—such as e-report cards, performance appraisals, and data entry—has increasingly limited IRE teachers' ability to plan creative and contextual learning experiences. To remain effective, they must harmonise pedagogy, content, and technology, as underscored by the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework (Hidayat et al., 2023; Matsania et al., 2023). Yet, administrative overload often restricts opportunities for pedagogical reflection and innovation, both of which are critical to high-quality learning in the digital era.

Furthermore, the success of Islamic education is deeply influenced by cultural and social contexts. Studies by Zumzianah et al. (2024) and Ilmi et al. (2024) highlight the need for IRE teachers to align instructional practices with students' cultural realities. Excessive administrative responsibilities, however, tend to diminish teachers' capacity to develop culturally responsive pedagogies—approaches that, according to Pamuji and Mulyadi (2024) as well as Sari and Abidin (2023), form the basis of meaningful teacher–student interactions and effective moral education.

From an Islamic perspective, education serves not only to develop intellectual capacities but also to cultivate faith and moral integrity. The Qur'an (QS. Al-Jumu'ah: 2) describes the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as being sent to recite God's verses, purify hearts, and teach the Book and wisdom—illustrating the dual mission of IRE teachers: intellectual formation and spiritual development. However, contemporary bureaucratic pressures often divert teachers' attention from this sacred mission, creating an imbalance between pedagogical and administrative duties. When teachers become preoccupied with documentation rather than meaningful engagement with students, the spiritual essence of Islamic education risks being eroded. Indeed, QS. Al-Qasas: 77 reminds believers to maintain balance between worldly and spiritual pursuits—a principle increasingly challenged by today's bureaucratic demands.

In this context, school leadership also plays a pivotal role in regulating and distributing teacher workloads. Research by Özdemir (2020), Alev (2024), and Dilbaz (2023) reveals that supportive and communicative leadership can alleviate stress and enhance teacher motivation, while weak organisational structures exacerbate burnout and diminish teaching quality. Although prior research has documented the psychological consequences of administrative overload (Mota et al., 2023; Jamaludin & You, 2019), there remains limited empirical understanding of how IRE teachers—particularly at the elementary level—strategically adapt to these challenges.

Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap by analysing the adaptive strategies employed by Islamic Religious Education teachers in elementary schools within Karangpandan District to balance administrative demands with their core educational and spiritual mission. This investigation seeks to contribute to the discourse on teacher professionalism in Islamic education by offering contextual insights into how administrative burden can be managed without undermining the moral and pedagogical essence of teaching.

METHOD | منهج

This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design, aiming to deeply understand the administrative burden of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers and their strategies for maintaining teaching effectiveness. The research was conducted in Karangpandan District, Karanganyar Regency, from Juni to Agustus 2025. The primary subjects were five Islamic Religious Education teachers at elementary schools selected using a purposive sampling method. These teachers met certain criteria: having at least five years of teaching experience, being active in administrative duties, and being willing to serve as sources of information.

Three methods were used to collect data: semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, lasting approximately 45–60 minutes per participant, and were recorded using a digital voice recorder with prior consent. The recorded data were then transcribed verbatim for analysis. The interviews aimed to obtain in-depth information about the teachers' experiences in dealing with the burden of administrative tasks. Observations were conducted to examine both teaching and administrative practices in schools, while documentation included collecting learning materials, administrative archives, and related school documents. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and techniques, as well as member checking with participants. The data analysis process was carried out interactively, referring to the model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

RESULT | نتائج

Administrative Burdens Faced by Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Schools

In daily practice, Islamic Religious Education teachers in schools are faced with a variety of complex administrative burdens. These duties coexist with their primary responsibility as educators, which is to transfer religious knowledge and instil noble moral values. However, in reality, administrative work often takes up more time than core learning activities. One prominent administrative burden is the preparation of learning materials. Islamic Religious Education teachers are required to prepare comprehensive documents, including Lesson Plans, teaching modules, annual programs, and analyses of learning objectives. These documents are crucial for maintaining the direction of the educational process, but in practice, they are often treated simply as a formality to fulfil reporting obligations. Many teachers end up focusing more on document formatting than on developing creative, contextual teaching strategies (Mustofa, 2022: 119).

In addition to learning materials, Islamic Religious Education teachers are also burdened with the obligation to report student learning outcomes through digital systems. Completing e-report cards, collecting data from Dapodik (Education Data Collection), and various other administrative platforms are time-consuming routines. Not all teachers have adequate technological skills, so completing applications is often considered difficult and confusing. Time that could be used to prepare learning materials or improve teaching methods is ultimately spent ensuring data is entered correctly (Pratiwi, 2021: 88). The administrative burden is also evident in the assessment and evaluation aspects. Islamic Religious Education teachers assess not only knowledge but also student attitudes and skills, requiring multiple observations and documentation. The results of these assessments must be processed in detail according to curriculum indicators and then reported in formal written form. This process demands high

precision and is often considered one of the most challenging parts of school administration (Nurhayati & Widodo, 2023: 54).

Furthermore, Islamic Religious Education teachers are often given additional responsibilities beyond teaching. They are appointed as homeroom teachers, religious activity managers, organisers of short-term Islamic boarding schools (pesantren kilat), and coordinators of Islamic-based extracurricular activities. Substantially, these duties align with the religious competencies of Islamic Religious Education teachers. However, each activity requires reporting, documentation, and administrative accountability, further increasing their workload. This situation positions Islamic Religious Education teachers as multi-tasking individuals who must be prepared to handle various school matters beyond their teaching duties (Hidayat & Fauzan, 2022: 77).

The accumulation of these various forms of administrative work directly impacts teachers' reduced opportunities to focus on learning. Teachers lose the reflective time needed to design technology-based media, develop creative pedagogical approaches, and strengthen emotional connections with students. International research even reveals that administrative burdens are associated with increased stress levels, decreased job satisfaction, and even impaired teacher-student interactions (Mota et al., 2023: 215). In the Indonesian context, Islamic Religious Education teachers face even greater challenges because, in addition to fulfilling bureaucratic obligations, they are also required to serve as moral and spiritual role models for their students. As emphasised by Supartini, Nashir, & Sulistyowati (2022: 391), Islamic Religious Education teachers often face a dual burden that demands a balance between their educational and administrative roles.

These findings demonstrate that the administrative burden on Islamic Religious Education teachers extends beyond the preparation of formal learning documents, including digital reporting, academic evaluations, and additional assignments outside of class. This complexity demonstrates an imbalance between pedagogical tasks and bureaucratic demands. This situation represents a fundamental issue in Islamic education in schools, requiring attention so that teachers can refocus their energies on their core duties as educators and moral builders of the younger generation.

Table 1. Forms of administrative burden for Islamic Religious Education teachers

Administrative Form	Information
Preparation of Learning Tools	Islamic Religious Education teachers are required to prepare lesson plans, syllabi, annual and semester programs, as well as other administrative documents that consume considerable time and limit opportunities for innovation in teaching and learning.
System Filling and Performance Report	Includes input of grades, absences, e-reports, DAPODIK, as well as SKP/PKG reports, which are often complicated and time-consuming.
School Documentation and Archives	Teachers must prepare administrative documents such as attendance lists, religious activity reports, and other learning archives.
Additional Administrative Duties	Islamic Religious Education teachers with additional duties (for example, school treasurer, school operator or extracurricular instructor) are burdened with double administrative work, so that focus on teaching is reduced.

Based on the table above, Islamic Religious Education teachers encounter various administrative burdens, including the development of learning materials, the completion of performance systems and reports, documentation and archiving activities, as well as additional administrative tasks beyond their teaching responsibilities. This complexity consumes a significant amount of time and energy, potentially reducing teachers' focus on implementing effective and innovative learning processes.

| DISCUSSION | مناقشة |

Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Strategies for Managing Administrative Burdens to Maintain Teaching Effectiveness

Islamic Religious Education teachers face various forms of complex administrative burdens. These tasks include developing lesson plans, inputting data into the Dapodik and e-Kinerja systems, reporting activities, and even participating in various school programs outside of teaching. This often consumes teachers' time and energy, potentially reducing their focus on their primary task, teaching. However, Islamic Religious Education teachers are not passive in facing these challenges. They develop various strategies to manage their administrative burdens to maintain effective teaching.

One strategy employed is effective time management. Teachers strive to prioritise administrative work and lesson preparation. Administrative work is typically completed outside of teaching hours, while the primary focus remains on preparing materials and teaching methods in class. This aligns with Mulyasa's (2013:45) view that good time management determines the quality of teacher performance, as they must be able to balance their administrative and instructional roles. Furthermore, the use of technology is also a crucial solution. Islamic Religious Education teachers have begun using digital templates, classroom management applications, and data processing tools to expedite administrative work. This step has been proven to help reduce workloads, as evidenced by research by Suryani (2020:88), which emphasises that teacher digital literacy can accelerate the management of learning administration and performance reporting. Thus, digital transformation has become a strategic tool for easing teachers' administrative burdens.

Collaboration with colleagues is also a frequently implemented strategy. Islamic Education teachers form joint working forums, share teaching materials, and collaborate on preparing reports or adapting new administrative formats. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012:65) emphasise that this type of collaboration can increase efficiency and reduce administrative stress, as teachers no longer work individually but collectively. In addition to collaborating with fellow teachers, some Islamic Education teachers also coordinate with educational staff. School administrative staff are often involved in technical tasks such as filing, data entry, or typing formal documents. Supardi (2014:102) states that a clear division of tasks between teachers and administrative staff can increase efficiency and reduce the double burden on teachers. This strategy allows teachers to focus more on student learning.

Islamic Religious Education teachers also simplified administrative documents. They adapted to the latest policies from the Ministry of Education and Culture, such as the implementation of one-page lesson plans in accordance with Circular Letter Number 14 of 2019. This simplification was considered a practical solution to reduce administrative pressure while still fulfilling formal obligations. Furthermore, Islamic Religious Education teachers' strategies for dealing with administrative burdens were not only technical but also spiritual. They instilled the values of sincerity and religious motivation in carrying out every task, including administrative ones. Abdullah (2021:55) emphasised that Islamic Religious Education teachers view administrative tasks as part of their professional mandate and as part of their religious obligations, enabling them to maintain motivation and avoid work stress. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education teachers' strategies for managing administrative burdens include effective

time management, utilisation of technology, collaboration with colleagues, delegation of tasks to educational staff, document simplification, and strengthening spiritual motivation. All of these strategies are key for Islamic Religious Education teachers to maintain teaching effectiveness amidst the increasing administrative burden they face.

Table 2. Main Strategies of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Managing Administrative Load

Islamic Religious Education Teacher Strategy	Information
Effective Time Management	Teachers set priorities and work schedules so that administrative tasks do not interfere with the preparation and implementation of learning.
Utilisation of Digital Technology	Use of applications, templates, and digital devices to speed up the completion of reports and administrative documents.
Collaboration and Peer Support	Teachers share tasks with colleagues or administrative staff to lighten the administrative workload.

The strategies implemented by Islamic Religious Education teachers can maintain teaching effectiveness despite the burden of administrative duties. These include effective time management, the use of digital technology, collaboration with colleagues and educational staff, and administrative simplification in accordance with policy. These strategies provide an adaptive approach that balances administrative demands with primary responsibilities as educators, thus maintaining professionalism and the quality of learning.

CONCLUSSION | خاتمة

This study concludes that Islamic Religious Education teachers in elementary schools face a significant administrative burden, including developing learning materials, completing performance systems and reports, managing school documents and archives, and performing additional tasks outside of teaching. This administrative burden often consumes time and reduces teachers' opportunities for innovation in the learning process. This situation has the potential to shift teachers' primary focus as educators and fosterers of student morality.

Nevertheless, Islamic Religious Education teachers demonstrate adaptive capabilities by implementing various strategies to maintain the effectiveness of their duties. These strategies include planned time management, the use of digital technology, collaboration with colleagues, and administrative simplification in accordance with educational policy. Through these strategies, Islamic Religious Education teachers can balance administrative and pedagogical responsibilities, thereby maintaining the quality of learning and fostering student character amidst the complexity of administrative demands.

However, this study has certain limitations, such as the small number of participants and its focus on a single district, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to broader contexts. Therefore, future research is recommended to conduct comparative studies across different educational levels or regions, or to design and test training modules on administrative load management to strengthen teachers' adaptive strategies.

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