Piety as social capital: masculinity, moral policing, and Islamic religious education in a vocational high school

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Abstract
This study examines how male identity and piety are constructed within school culture through Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at SMK Doa Bangsa Palabuhanratu. It explores how the "ideal male" is shaped in daily school life, how piety is negotiated within peer relationships, and how IRE may both redirect and reinforce certain forms of masculinity. Employing a qualitative approach, the research involved 18 participants, including IRE teachers, homeroom or student affairs staff, and male students from grades X–XII. Data were collected between January and February 2026 through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Thematic analysis focused on masculinity as a performative and relational practice, piety as social capital, and IRE as a mediating space for moral formation. The findings reveal that male identity is shaped through continuous negotiation between toughness, vocational discipline, peer recognition, and religious values. Piety functions both as a moral ethic that strengthens responsibility and adab and as a status marker that may encourage moral policing. Teacher role modelling and consistent school norms play an important role in fostering ethical and collaborative masculinities.

Keywords: adolescent masculinity, Islamic religious education, piety, school culture

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in vocational secondary schools is often underestimated, even though during adolescence it significantly shapes how students evaluate themselves, regulate emotions, and choose responses when facing peer conflict (Fadli, 2024; Watts et al., 2018). In this sense, the IRE classroom is not merely a site for religious knowledge transmission but a lived space of identity formation mediated through teachers' language, role modelling, and the norms that are treated as "normal" within the school.

In this study, identity formation is conceptually understood as a social and educational process through which students come to define who they are, how they should behave, and what forms of conduct are recognized as appropriate within the school community. It is not treated as a fixed personal attribute, but as an ongoing process shaped by classroom interaction, teacher authority, peer recognition, school rules, religious routines, and vocational culture. Within this process, male students learn to interpret what counts as being responsible, respectable, strong, pious, or morally disciplined. Therefore, identity formation in this article refers to the everyday construction of male self-understanding through the interaction between Islamic moral values, peer expectations, and institutional norms.

This study is situated at SMK Doa Bangsa Palabuhanratu, a private vocational secondary school located in the Palabuhanratu area of Sukabumi Regency, West Java. The vocational context matters because its learning culture is closely tied to work discipline, skills-based practice, and the cultivation of professional ethos (Aquila, 2020; Mulyani, 2025; Stubley & Papen, 2025), so "being a man" is frequently interpreted through responsibility, firmness, and endurance. As a coastal community, Palabuhanratu also provides a distinctive social milieu that influences how adolescents build reputation and command respect.

In social scholarship, masculinity is not treated as a single innate trait but as a construction that is learned, performed, and evaluated within a given environment (Hidayat, 2021; Stanaland et al., 2023). Consequently, some masculinities are recognized as ideal within a school community, while others are deemed less appropriate or less worthy of recognition (Hidayat, 2021; Nicholas, 2003; Pinkett & Roberts, 2019). Schools thus become arenas that produce standards, distribute social rewards, and police the boundaries of what counts as a "proper" male.

This argument is informed by the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which views masculinity as a hierarchical social arrangement in which certain forms of being male become culturally privileged while others are subordinated or marginalized. In the school context, hegemonic masculinity does not appear only as overt domination, but also through everyday practices such as peer recognition, joking, toughness, leadership, emotional restraint, and the ability to avoid shame. At the same time, masculinity is treated in this study as performative, meaning that male identity is continuously enacted, repeated, and evaluated through classroom behaviour, vocational tasks, religious participation, and peer interaction. This framework helps explain why the "proper" male in school is not simply defined by formal rules, but by recurring social performances that gain approval, status, or correction from others.

Adolescence intensifies this process because identity is strongly shaped by peer recognition (Cho Baker & Purtell, 2022; Ramadhan et al., 2025). Social status can emerge from seemingly ordinary elements such as speaking style, willingness to take risks, humour practices, or the ability to manage embarrassment (Mullan & Béal, 2021; Søndergaard, 2018). These patterns often operate implicitly, yet they have tangible effects on how students understand self-worth and locate themselves within group hierarchies.

In this study, piety is understood analytically as a multidimensional practice that combines spiritual commitment, ethical self-regulation, and social recognition. It is not limited to individual ritual observance, such as prayer or participation in religious activities, but also includes how students translate Islamic values into everyday conduct through adab, responsibility, care for others, emotional restraint, and fairness in peer interaction. Piety is therefore examined both as an internal moral orientation and as an outward social performance that may be recognized, negotiated, or contested within school culture. This analytical understanding is important because piety in the school context can function in two different directions: as an ethical resource that strengthens self-discipline and social care, or as symbolic capital that gives students status and authority to judge others.

When piety enters masculine dynamics, it creates a field of negotiation that is both productive and precarious (Murray, 2022). On the productive side, piety may support self-discipline, adab, responsibility, and care (Fauzan & Asrori, 2025; Hayati et al., 2019).

However, in everyday peer interaction, piety may also shift into a symbolic marker of status or a tool for measuring and judging others. In this context, the "pious male" may be understood as calm, exemplary, and reliable, but it may also be narrowed into an image of hardness, rigidity, and domination when religious correctness is performed as authority over peers.

IRE occupies a decisive intersection because it provides an institutional moral language while still confronting a school culture that operates through daily routines. What teachers articulate about morality and adab is continually tested by peer realities, classroom humour, and the school's modes of rule enforcement. Therefore, analysing male identity through IRE requires attention not only to curricular content but also to practice, power relations, and informal norms.

Digital influence further complicates the landscape, as adolescents now learn religion from multiple sources that do not always align (Domoff et al., 2020; Golan, 2023). Hijrah narratives, short-form preaching content, and popular religious figures offer new references for propriety, social boundaries, and even displays of authority (Fitria, 2025). Rahman, Ilyas, Zulfahmi Alwi, and Zailani highlight a shift in young people's religious authority that is increasingly shaped by social media figures, which is pertinent for understanding how adolescent standards of piety are formed beyond the school's direct control (Rahman et al., 2024).

Within school settings, the formation of piety is also frequently shaped by student religious activities and the friendship networks attached to them. Achmad Habibullah reports that student religious activism in schools can be associated with particular social outlooks, including tendencies to position women in subordinate roles (Habibullah, 2014). Such findings suggest that pious practices in schools are not always neutral, as they may intersect with masculine constructions and adolescents' evaluations of gender relations.

Nevertheless, much discussion of adolescent religiosity in schools remains at the level of general character education or focuses primarily on religious organizations in general secondary schools. Studies that explicitly connect IRE to the formation of male identity within vocational school culture remain less visible, especially when the setting is outside major urban centres. As a result, vocational contexts such as SMK Doa Bangsa Palabuhanratu risk being underrepresented in academic mapping, despite their capacity to illuminate the relationship among work ethos, male reputation, and the language of piety.

In parallel, masculinity research within the sociology of education underscores the importance of tracing identity negotiation through everyday practice (Johansson & Andreasson, 2017; OBrien, 2019). Emma Renold in the *British Journal of Sociology of Education* shows how boys may perceive academic achievement and sustained effort as conflicting with dominant masculine standards in school environments (Charles & Allan, 2022; Luepker, 2022; Renold, 2001). The key insight is not to transplant an external context, but to reaffirm that masculinity must be read through the details of actions, interactions, and the rules that structure school life.

The most evident gap, therefore, lies in the limited empirical understanding of how IRE interacts with school culture and peer culture in producing particular patterns of masculinity. Many studies separate classroom life from peer life, or separate piety from negotiations of male social status. Yet it is precisely their convergence that determines whether IRE strengthens an ethical and responsible masculinity or, conversely, allows a harsher, more exclusive masculinity to grow and normalize practices of belittling others.

Against this backdrop, the novelty of the present study lies in mapping "pious masculinity" as a social practice at SMK Doa Bangsa Palabuhanratu rather than as a moral label. The focus is on everyday patterns such as how students display piety, how they negotiate authority and solidarity, and how the moral language of IRE legitimizes or corrects prevailing masculine standards. In this way, the contribution is not only conceptual but also pedagogical, as it identifies realistic intervention points for IRE teachers.

In the vocational school context, masculinity is closely shaped by the work-oriented culture that structures students' daily learning experiences. Vocational education emphasizes discipline, punctuality, technical competence, endurance, problem-solving, and readiness for industrial work; these values do not only function as professional competencies but also become social standards through which male students evaluate themselves and one another. Within workshops, practical assignments, and team-based technical tasks, the "ideal male" is often associated with being firm, physically and mentally resilient, able to take initiative, capable of handling tools or machines, and prepared to assume responsibility under pressure. Consequently, vocational culture provides a specific arena in which masculinity is performed, recognized, and contested. While these expectations can encourage responsibility,

professionalism, and self-control, they may also reinforce peer hierarchies when technical competence, toughness, or dominance is used to measure male worth.

Building on this background, the research questions address how IRE contributes to the formation of male identity at SMK Doa Bangsa Palabuhanratu through classroom practices and everyday school life; how students define "ideal" masculinity in relation to piety; which factors most strongly shape these standards, including peer relations, teacher authority, school rules, student religious activities, vocational work culture, and digital influence; and how these dynamics affect the cultivation of adab, empathy, and gender relations. Accordingly, the main objectives are to describe patterns of male identity formation linked to piety in this setting, explain the social mechanisms through which such patterns are accepted or contested, and formulate implications for IRE pedagogy that are more responsive to adolescent masculine dynamics and aligned with moral formation, responsibility, and social care.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design to develop an in-depth understanding of how male identity is formed in relation to piety within everyday school life (Creswell & Creswell, 2022), particularly through Islamic Religious Education (IRE), vocational learning culture, and daily peer interaction. The approach was selected because the study did not aim to quantify behavioural frequencies, but to interpret meanings, processes, and social mechanisms through which students construct the notion of the "ideal male" and through which IRE values are enacted, negotiated, or resisted in routine school practice (Heino et al., 2021). This design was considered appropriate because the issues examined in this study, including toughness, peer reputation, religious symbolism, moral policing, emotional regulation, and adab, are embedded in everyday interaction and therefore require close attention to context.

The research was conducted at SMK Doa Bangsa Palabuhanratu over a two-month period, from January to February 2026. Fieldwork was carried out through repeated school visits, with observations conducted two to three times per week in spaces directly related to the formation of masculinity and piety. These spaces included IRE classrooms, vocational

practice areas or workshops, corridors, the canteen, the schoolyard, and religious activity settings. The researcher's involvement was non-participatory but sustained, focusing on how male students displayed toughness, negotiated peer status, responded to school rules, participated in religious routines, used humour, and interpreted values such as amanah, responsibility, self-control, and adab in daily school life. This level of involvement enabled the researcher to identify recurring patterns across formal learning, vocational activities, and informal peer interaction.

Participants were recruited purposively to ensure rich and varied perspectives. The study involved 18 participants, consisting of two IRE teachers, two homeroom teachers or student affairs staff responsible for student development, and fourteen male students from grades X to XII, aged approximately 15 to 18 years. Student participants were selected to represent diverse levels of religious engagement and peer-group positioning. Religious engagement was identified through students' participation in congregational prayer, school religious activities, willingness to lead prayers or religious events, consistency in following religious routines, and teachers' observations of everyday conduct. Peer-group positioning was identified through preliminary observation and teacher consultation, including whether students were perceived as group leaders, technically competent actors in vocational tasks, active members of peer groups, quieter students, or students who often mediated conflict and interaction among peers.

Data were collected through direct observation of IRE instructional practices, vocational learning activities, and students' everyday social interactions. Observations were supported by detailed fieldnotes on language use, joking patterns, task distribution in practical work, responses to mistakes, displays of firmness or dominance, forms of peer recognition, participation in religious routines, and responses to school rules. In total, the study included 12 observation sessions and 18 semi-structured interview sessions. Interviews were conducted with IRE teachers, student affairs staff, and male students to explore participants' experiences, interpretations, and rationales for action. The interview topics included students' understanding of the “ideal male,” the relationship between piety and masculinity, experiences of peer pressure, perceptions of adab and responsibility, teacher role modelling, religious activities, moral judgment among peers, and the influence of digital

religious content or masculine ideals. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes, depending on the participant's role and the depth of information provided.

School documents were examined as supplementary data to connect lived practice with institutional expectations. These documents included codes of conduct, character development programs, IRE lesson plans, learning materials or modules, and records of religious activities. Document analysis was used to understand how the school formally communicates values such as discipline, responsibility, religious observance, and proper student conduct. These documents were then compared with observational and interview data to examine whether institutional messages were reinforced, negotiated, or contradicted in everyday student interaction.

Data analysis proceeded iteratively and concurrently with data collection using thematic analysis (Nurhayati et al., 2024; Peel, 2020). Observation, interview, and documentary data were transcribed and organized (Cypress, 2018), then coded to identify meaning units related to expressions of masculinity, forms of piety, power relations, peer norms, vocational discipline, teacher authority, moral policing, and the role of IRE in shaping or correcting conduct. Codes were subsequently consolidated into higher-order categories, including toughness as reputation, group solidarity, humour as power, substantive piety, symbolic piety, controlling piety, value habituation, teacher exemplarity, and digital influence. These categories were synthesized into themes explaining the interconnected mechanisms through which male identity was produced, accepted, contested, and redirected within the school context. Credibility was strengthened through methodological and source triangulation, member checking with key participants, and adherence to educational research ethics, including informed consent, confidentiality, and careful representation to avoid stigmatizing individuals or groups at SMK Doa Bangsa Palabuhanratu.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Patterns of Masculinity in School and Vocational Activities

The findings indicate that male identity at SMK Doa Bangsa Palabuhanratu is formed at the intersection of vocational competency demands and social expectations to appear strong in front of peers. Within the school environment, the “ideal male” is not assessed solely through compliance with formal rules, but also through the capacity to take control of

situations, protect group reputation, and display firmness when minor frictions arise. This account repeatedly emerged from observations of everyday school life and students' informal conversations, suggesting that masculinity is treated as a performative and relational practice rather than a status that is automatically granted. In line with hegemonic masculinity theory, the "ideal male" is produced through repeated acts that gain peer recognition, such as displaying toughness, speaking firmly, controlling emotions, taking responsibility, and avoiding shame in public situations (Donaldson, 1993; Reddy et al., 2019; Yang, 2020). Masculinity in this context is therefore not merely possessed by male students, but continuously enacted, evaluated, and ranked within everyday school interaction.

In practical workshops and other spaces central to vocational activity, masculinity becomes visible in how students distribute tasks, decide who leads, and use humour to reinforce social hierarchies. Within work groups, students who are willing to make decisions, speak assertively, and respond quickly to technical problems are often positioned as the group's focal actors. However, this leadership pattern is not always socially neutral, because in certain situations firmness shifts into dominance, for instance when quieter students' contributions are dismissed, or when technical mistakes become the target of repeated ridicule that produces collective embarrassment and social shame.

Table 1 Masculinity Patterns in Everyday School Life

Finding theme	Primary setting	Field indicators	Identity meaning
Toughness as reputation	Workshop, corridors	Decisive action-taking; firm voice	Social status
Group solidarity	Practical teams	Protecting peers; distributing roles	Loyalty
Emotional regulation	Classroom, schoolyard	Resisting provocation; avoiding outbursts	Authority through emotional restraint
Humour as power	Hangout spaces	Teasing; nicknames; "dare" tests	Hierarchy

Pressure to maintain an image of toughness shaped both students' learning behaviours and their relationships with school authority. Several students tended to avoid

Asking questions when they did not understand, because doing so risked being perceived as incompetent in front of peers. In this context, masculinity operated as an "unwritten rule" that regulated when a student was allowed to appear in need of help. As one male student explained, "If we ask too much during practice, friends may think we cannot handle the task, so sometimes it is better to stay silent and try to solve it ourselves." As a result, learning processes were determined not only by academic readiness but also by social calculations regarding the risk of losing authority, particularly among students who occupied visible positions within peer groups.

These dynamics intersected directly with Islamic Religious Education (IRE), because IRE provides an institutional moral vocabulary for evaluating conduct, including behaviours that emerge from masculine competition. In IRE lessons, teachers who linked values such as *amanah* and responsibility to vocational practice made it easier for students to accept that "being tough" is not synonymous with harshness or the humiliation of others. When *adab* was framed as preserving one's dignity without diminishing another's, some students began to recognize self-control as a more enduring form of strength than victory within teasing and ridicule. In this way, IRE functioned as a bridge that channelled masculine energy toward professionalism and an ethic of work.

Theoretically, these findings confirm that masculinity in school is not a fixed personal trait but a relational and performative construction. In line with hegemonic masculinity theory, the "ideal male" at SMK Doa Bangsa Palabuhanratu is produced through everyday mechanisms of recognition, comparison, and peer evaluation. Students gain masculine legitimacy not only through formal achievement, but also through toughness, technical competence, emotional restraint, and the ability to manage shame in front of others. From the perspective of educational sociology, vocational spaces such as workshops and practical teams operate as hidden curricular arenas where students learn not only occupational skills but also socially approved forms of male conduct. Thus, vocational learning culture becomes a site where professional discipline and masculine reputation are mutually constructed.

Piety as Social Capital and Peer Ethics

In school life, piety appeared in two equally salient forms: as a lived religious habit and as a social symbol that confers position. Routines such as collective prayers, congregational worship moments, and school religious activities created spaces in which students could

display an identity as "good" students. Observations suggest that participation in these routines did not always stem from the same motivation, as some students engaged from personal conviction while others participated as a form of social compliance to avoid appearing out of step with the dominant group.

Piety also operated as social capital shaping reputation, especially when the school required students to appear publicly, lead prayers, or represent the class in particular events. In such situations, students known for religious orderliness and outward propriety gained additional legitimacy in the eyes of teachers and some peers. Yet within peer culture, this legitimacy was sometimes read ambivalently: certain groups treated it as genuine exemplarity, while others interpreted it as a "stage performance" or a strategy for managing image. This ambivalence matters because it indicates that piety is not only spiritual practice but also a socially negotiated identity.

The findings further revealed tendencies toward moral policing when IRE values were treated as instruments for determining who is "most correct." In some moments, piety shifted from an ethic of self-improvement into a means of labelling peers, particularly around issues of language style, social boundaries, or everyday habits. This pattern generated tension because students who were labelled felt cornered and chose to distance themselves from school religious forums. The situation underscores how symbolic piety can reinforce masculine hierarchies, as those who claim superior correctness gain power to evaluate and regulate the social space.

Table 2. Forms of Piety and Their Social Meanings in Peer Interaction

Form of piety	Observable practices	How peers interpret it	Social effects
Substantive piety	Guarding one's speech, acting fairly, helping others	Respected	Healthier relationships
Routine ritual piety	Attending worship, joining scheduled activities	Neutral	Stability
Symbolic piety	Performing as "most correct"	Viewed with suspicion	Social distance
Controlling piety	Reprimanding others in a judgmental manner	Rejected	Conflict

Conversely, when Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers and other adult figures in the school framed piety in terms of *adab* and care, the classroom atmosphere became more effective in tempering aggressive masculine competition. In classroom discussions, approaches that invited reflection rather than judgment encouraged students to connect worship with how they treat peers, how they keep promises, and how they manage anger. At this point, piety functioned as a peer ethic that softened everyday interaction, as students began to view guarding one's speech and refraining from belittling others as forms of moral courage. This shift was evident in a reduced intensity of certain teasing practices within several class groups, although it did not disappear entirely.

These findings are relevant to the sociology of religion because they show that piety in school life is not only a matter of personal belief or ritual compliance, but also a form of social practice that produces recognition, distinction, and authority. Piety becomes social capital when students' religious conduct increases their credibility before teachers and peers. However, this capital is ambivalent: it may support ethical relations when expressed through care, fairness, and self-restraint, but it may also generate moral policing when religious symbols are used to classify others as less proper or less pious. In this sense, the school becomes a religious-social field where piety is continuously interpreted, rewarded, contested, and sometimes converted into peer authority.

The Formation of Male Identity through Islamic Religious Education (IRE)

The formation of male identity through IRE became visible when IRE moved beyond concept delivery and instead processed students' lived experiences as material for moral reflection. In instructional practice, IRE teachers who linked *akhlaq* content to concrete situations in school created space for students to discuss matters that are typically left unspoken, such as status pressure, teasing culture, and the boundary between joking and harm. Such discussions opened opportunities for students to reassess taken-for-granted expectations that "boys should be like this." At the same time, teachers emerged as key actors, because the way they responded to students' views determined whether the IRE classroom operated as a psychologically safe space or merely as a formal institutional requirement.

IRE also shaped identity through the habituation of values embedded in routines and school responsibilities. The values most visibly internalized were discipline, *amanah*, and responsibility, especially when the school connected these values to codes of conduct, group

Assignments, and obligations to maintain practical facilities. The findings suggest that when students were required to account for group work fairly, *amanah* became tangible rather than rhetorical. In the vocational context, responsibility appeared not only as a moral duty but also as a professional demand affecting work outcomes and assessment, giving IRE a strong entry point through the logic that "doing one's work properly is itself an act of worship."

Table 3. Stages of Value Internalization through Islamic Religious Education (IRE) and Identity Outcomes

Process stage	IRE/school practice	Indicators of change	Identity outcome
Value introduction	Contextual *akhlaq* discussions	Able to articulate moral reasoning	Value awareness
Habituation	Disciplined routines and worship practices	Stable discipline	Responsibility
Integration	Embedding values in practical work	Fair task distribution	Professionalism
Internalization	Reflection on peer conflicts	Emotional self-regulation	Ethical masculinity

Adult exemplarity emerged as a decisive reinforcement shaping the direction of value internalization, particularly through Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers and vocational subject teachers who frequently interacted with male students in high-pressure situations. Teachers who corrected students without public humiliation, enforced rules without performing authority, and provided opportunities to repair mistakes without attaching permanent labels offered a model of masculinity that was firm yet grounded in *adab*. Observational data suggest that this form of modelling was more effective in shifting behaviour than extended moral admonition, because students learned that authority is not produced through shouting but through consistency and fairness. Through such modelling, students encountered a concrete understanding that "courage" may involve admitting wrongdoing, apologizing, and protecting peers who are being weakened or marginalized.

Internalization became visible when students were able to articulate the moral reasoning behind their actions rather than merely citing rules. Several students reported that

they began to refrain from jokes targeting a peer's body or family after recognizing the impact on self-worth and classroom climate. Others increasingly interpreted worship as a means of self-regulation that reduces susceptibility to conflict escalation, enabling them to manage emotions more effectively during minor provocations. These shifts indicate that male identity within the school is not monolithic: some students moved toward a reflective masculinity oriented to *adab*, whereas others continued to reproduce a dominant masculinity that relies on social control over peers.

Viewed through adolescent identity formation, these findings indicate that male students construct identity through continuous negotiation between self-understanding and social recognition. Adolescence is a period in which peer approval, emotional regulation, and moral self-definition become particularly significant; therefore, IRE contributes to identity formation when it helps students reinterpret strength, courage, and responsibility in ethical terms. From an educational sociology perspective, the IRE classroom functions as a mediating institution between formal religious values and informal peer culture. Its influence depends not only on curriculum content, but also on teacher authority, classroom dialogue, school discipline, and the consistency of adult role modelling. This explains why identity change appears uneven: students internalize values more deeply when religious instruction is connected to concrete experiences of conflict, shame, friendship, responsibility, and vocational work.

Enabling and Constraining Conditions in the Formation of Pious Masculinity

The most salient enabling condition was the school's commitment to creating an environment that balances vocational demands with character formation. When the school timetable allocated sufficient space for IRE instruction and habituation activities, religious values were less likely to be experienced as an additional burden and more likely to be integrated into the school's daily rhythm. Institutional support in the form of adequate facilities and orderly governance further strengthened this process by making routines easier to sustain and less dependent on a small number of individuals. In this way, program stability reinforced the consistency of moral messages received by students from multiple sources within the institution.

Peer-group reinforcement also functioned as a supportive factor when the school succeeded in cultivating a climate that rewards fairness, healthy teamwork, and non-

oppressive leadership. Several student groups demonstrated that solidarity can be built without humiliating weaker members, particularly when group leaders were perceived as technically competent while also able to maintain a constructive atmosphere. Within such patterns, "strong masculinity" was defined as the capacity to carry responsibility and protect work processes rather than the ability to pressure or dominate others. This suggests that school culture can shift masculine standards when social recognition is aligned with collaborative ethics.

The principal constraining factors stemmed from influences outside the school and from digital flows that offer alternative models of masculinity and piety. Students imported language, styles, and narrative fragments from media sources that sometimes frame firmness in narrow terms, then applied these standards to school life. When these standards conflicted with institutional norms, students experienced identity tension that produced inconsistent behaviour, for example appearing compliant in formal moments while becoming aggressive in informal spaces. In addition, diverse family backgrounds meant that some students entered school with strong religious habit foundations, while others were only beginning to learn value-based discipline, resulting in uneven trajectories of internalization.

A further constraint was the combination of intensive vocational workloads and social pressure to maintain peer reputation, which often pushed students toward quick strategies for "winning" minor conflicts. In such situations, some students relied on verbal aggression to secure position because it was perceived as more effective than dialogue. This pattern clarifies why IRE requires strategies that are not only normative but also restorative: supporting students in repairing relationships after conflict, understanding the social consequences of their actions, and learning to defend dignity without damaging the dignity of others. Overall, the findings suggest that pious masculinity at SMK Doa Bangsa Palabuhanratu is produced not by a single factor but by the convergence of IRE values, school culture, peer-group dynamics, and digital influence; therefore, the most realistic interventions involve strengthening IRE as a space for experiential reflection, expanding consistent adult role modelling, and reorganizing school recognition systems to privilege *adab*, responsibility, and care.

Taken together, these findings show that pious masculinity is produced through the intersection of gender performance, religious meaning, adolescent identity work, and school

organization. Masculinity theory helps explain why toughness, leadership, and emotional restraint become valued male performances. The sociology of religion explains why piety can operate both as an ethical orientation and as symbolic capital. Adolescent identity theory clarifies why peer recognition and the fear of shame strongly influence students' willingness to display or revise certain behaviours. Educational sociology further demonstrates that schools do not merely transmit values through formal lessons, but also shape identity through routines, rules, teacher modelling, peer hierarchies, and hidden curricula. Therefore, the formation of pious masculinity at SMK Doa Bangsa Palabuhanratu should be understood as a socially organized process rather than as an individual moral achievement alone.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at SMK Doa Bangsa Palabuhanratu shapes male identity through ongoing negotiations among school culture, peer pressure, and vocational competency demands framed within the moral discourse of IRE. The construction of the "ideal male" is organized around two interconnected yet sometimes conflicting dimensions—toughness and piety. IRE becomes most effective when values such as *amanah*, responsibility, self-regulation, and *adab* are linked to students' real experiences in vocational practice and peer interactions, fostering ethical, collaborative, and professional masculinities rather than harsh or oppressive forms. The findings also identify two forms of piety: substantive piety, which functions as a social ethic and vocational ethos supporting healthy relationships, and symbolic piety, which may operate as status capital and encourage moral policing. In this context, teacher role modelling and consistent school governance are crucial in shaping value internalization. Theoretically, the study proposes the concept of "pious masculinity" as a social practice formed through the interaction of dominant masculinity, everyday performance, and the school's hidden curriculum, which can be redirected by IRE through habituation, reflective dialogue, and exemplary conduct.

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