The Influence of Arab Pegon Orthographic Mastery in the *Doa Maghfur* Text on Students' Religious Literacy at MI Al Huda Gorontalo City: A Quantitative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to empirically analyze the influence of mastery of the Arab Pegon orthography on students' religious literacy at MI Al Huda, Gorontalo City. This inquiry is grounded in the urgency of revitalizing Pegon as a medium of Islamic Nusantara literacy within contemporary primary education. Employing a quantitative approach with an ex post facto design, the study involved the entire student population of MI Al Huda, from which 60 students were selected through proportional random sampling. Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire and an objective test to measure two principal variables: Pegon orthographic mastery (X), which includes reading, writing, and text comprehension skills; and religious literacy (Y), encompassing comprehension, application, and reflection of Islamic values. The data were analyzed using simple linear regression after satisfying the classical assumptions. The findings indicate that Pegon orthographic mastery has a positive and significant influence on students' religious literacy, with a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.673 and a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.453. These results demonstrate that nearly half of the variance in religious literacy is explained by students' mastery of the Pegon orthography. Theoretically, the findings reinforce the conceptual link between orthographic competence and text comprehension, underscoring Pegon's role as a pedagogical instrument that facilitates Islamic learning grounded in local cultural values. In practice, the study recommends integrating Pegon into the madrasah curriculum as a strategic effort to strengthen religious literacy while preserving the cultural heritage of Islamic Nusantara literacy.

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Introduction

The Arab Pegon script is a concrete manifestation of the cultural and linguistic adaptation between Arabic and local languages in the Indonesian archipelago. Historically, Pegon has served as a medium for transmitting knowledge, particularly within pesantren and traditional religious institutions in Java since the fifteenth century.[1] Pegon is not merely a writing system, but also a symbol of the synthesis between Islamic scholarly tradition and the local wisdom of Javanese society. As stated by Ningsih et al. (2025), Pegon literacy constitutes an effort to preserve local culture while simultaneously serving an educational function and

reinforcing Islamic identity.[2] Through an adapted graphemic system, Arabic letters undergo a creative process so that they can represent the distinctive sounds of local languages, such as ڤ (pa), ڮ (ga), ڠ (nga), ڎ (dha), and ث (nya) [3]. This process of adaptation reflects a high level of linguistic intelligence, whereby the people of the Nusantara successfully adapted Arabic phonology and morphology to suit local phonemes without compromising the religious and aesthetic values inherent in the Arabic script.[4], [5]

In the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, Pegon occupies a strategic position, serving as a bridge between Arabic religious texts and the understanding of communities that use local languages. Through Pegon, communities can read religious texts in a vernacular familiar to them. In pesantren settings, for instance, Pegon serves as a crucial medium for the teaching of classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), tafsir, and fiqh. [6], [7] This process not only develops religious literacy skills but also reinforces local Islamic identity. At the madrasah ibtidaiyah (Islamic elementary school) level, basic Pegon instruction has been shown to help pupils understand Arabic texts containing moral and religious teachings more contextually. Thus, orthographic competence in Pegon can be regarded as an integral component of students' religious literacy.

However, the dynamics of contemporary development and globalization have led to a decline in the presence of the Pegon script. The dominance of the Latin script in the modern educational system, along with the declining prevalence of traditional learning based on kitab kuning, has led to the marginalization of the ability to read and write Pegon.[8], [9] Yet, in several Islamic educational institutions with a conventional orientation, such as MI Al Huda in Gorontalo City, the use of Pegon remains part of religious literacy practices. MI Al Huda, a madrasah ibtidaiyah that integrates formal schooling with pesantren values, employs Pegon as an instructional aid for teaching local religious texts, such as supplications, brief exegetical notes, and moral advice, written in Pegon script. This reality is scientifically noteworthy, as there remains a lack of empirical research on the extent to which mastery of the Pegon orthography affects religious literacy among Islamic elementary school students.

Theoretically, the relationship between orthographic ability and literacy comprehension has been discussed within the framework of cognitive language processing. Taha and Saiegh-Haddad (2015) argue that the ability to recognize and write letters systematically is correlated with readers' semantic comprehension of texts.[10] In other words, the higher an individual's orthographic skills, the greater their capacity to understand the meanings contained in complex texts. In the context of Arabic language learning using the Pegon script, students' ability to recognize Pegon letters, diacritics, and word structure is a prerequisite for developing the capacity to read religious texts comprehensively. This concept aligns with Pairin's (2022) view, which emphasizes that mastery of the Pegon script strengthens understanding of the concepts of creed (*'aqīdah*), ethics (*akhlāq*), and worship (*'ibādah*) in integrated Islamic education.[11]

Several previous studies have highlighted the importance of Pegon in preserving Islamic Nusantara literacy. Mahfudh and Tiganiy (2024) underscore Pegon's role in the intergenerational transmission of Islamic knowledge in Javanese pesantren.[5] Hula and Mariana (2024) found that Pegon instruction can be integrated into a local-wisdom-based curriculum in Gorontalo to strengthen students' religious identity.[12] Nevertheless, these studies are primarily descriptive and qualitative and have yet to incorporate empirical analyses that measure the relationship between Pegon mastery and students' religious literacy outcomes. Consequently, there is a research gap in quantitatively confirming the effectiveness of Pegon as an educational tool at the primary level.

Religious literacy among madrasah ibtidaiyah students encompasses not only the ability to read Arabic texts but also the capacity to understand their meanings and apply them in everyday life. This literacy is multidimensional, involving linguistic, cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects.[13] Therefore, the ability to read and write in Pegon can serve as a relevant pedagogical tool to foster religious awareness and moral values among students. Through Pegon texts, Islamic teachings such as honesty, patience, and trust in God (*tawakkul*) can be internalized through a culturally proximate language. The findings of Wahyuni and Handriani (2025) also highlight the importance of repetition-based and auditory learning strategies in teaching Pegon to beginning learners. [14]

Based on the above discussion, this study is essential because it empirically investigates the relationship between mastery of the Pegon orthography and students' religious literacy. A quantitative approach is employed to obtain objective evidence on the extent to which Pegon orthographic competence influences students' religious understanding at MI Al Huda in Gorontalo City. In practice, the findings of this study are expected to provide recommendations for developing Islamic education curricula grounded in local literacy and to encourage the revitalization of Pegon instruction within the modern education system.[15], [16], [17]

Accordingly, this study seeks to address two main research questions: (1) Is there a significant effect of mastery of Arab Pegon orthography on the religious literacy of students at MI Al Huda, Gorontalo City? and (2) To what extent can Pegon's orthographic competence explain the variance in students' religious literacy levels at the madrasah? Through this research, it is hoped that a scholarly contribution will emerge to strengthen

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Islamic literacy grounded in local traditions and to preserve the written cultural heritage of the Arab Pegon within contemporary Islamic education.[18], [19], [20]
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Method

This study employed a quantitative, ex post facto design, namely, an approach aimed at examining the effects of variables without administering direct treatment to subjects. This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for analyzing the empirical relationship between mastery of Arab Pegon orthography (independent variable) and religious literacy (dependent variable), using data already available in natural learning settings. The research was conducted at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) Al Huda, Gorontalo City, an Islamic educational institution that continues to use the Pegon script in the teaching of religious texts. A similar model was implemented by Chalim and Suryani (2023) in a multi-ethnic pesantren context, demonstrating Pegon's flexibility for non-Javanese learners. [21]

The study population comprised all students of MI Al Huda in the 2024/2025 academic year. According to school records, the total number of active students was 180, distributed across six grade levels. From this population, 60 students were selected as the research sample using proportional random sampling, ensuring that each grade level was represented in a balanced and proportional manner. The sample size was determined using the finite-population sample size table (Cohen, 1988) at the 95% confidence level, indicating that the chosen sample size was adequate for conducting basic parametric statistical tests.[18], [22]

The data collection instruments consisted of two main types: a Likert-scale questionnaire and an objective test. The first questionnaire was used to assess mastery of Arab Pegon orthography (variable X) across three dimensions: reading, writing, and comprehension of Arabic texts. Each indicator was represented by six items, with five response options (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The second questionnaire was used to measure religious literacy (variable Y), which includes the dimensions of understanding religious teachings, applying values, and moral reflection on the content of religious texts written in Pegon. Each indicator was likewise represented by six items using the same response scale.[17], [19]

To enhance objectivity, both questionnaires were complemented by performance-based tasks: short reading and writing exercises in the Pegon script, as well as a comprehension test of a simple religious text comprising ten multiple-choice items. These instruments were constructed based on theoretical indicators drawn from Taha and Saiegh-Haddad (2015) concerning the relationship between orthographic skills and text comprehension [10], as well as the concept of religious literacy proposed by Pairin (2022) and Rofi'i (2024). Before use, all instruments were validated by three experts, namely, a Pegon linguistics expert, an Islamic education expert, and an educational evaluation expert, through content validity testing using Aiken's V. The results of the validation showed Aiken's V coefficients greater than 0.80 for each item, indicating a very high level of validity.

Subsequently, the instruments were pilot-tested with 30 students at another madrasah with characteristics similar to those of the target madrasah to obtain reliability data. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding $\alpha = 0.86$ for the Pegon mastery instrument and $\alpha = 0.88$ for the religious literacy instrument; both instruments were deemed reliable. Research data were collected through in-class administration of questionnaires and tests, and were then coded and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 2016.[22], [23], [24]

Data analysis was conducted in several stages, beginning with a descriptive study to determine the mean, standard deviation, and general tendencies of each variable. This was followed by classical assumption tests, including normality testing using the Shapiro–Wilk test, linearity assessment using scatterplots, and homoscedasticity checks via residual plots. After the data were confirmed to meet the assumptions of normality and linearity, simple linear regression was used to examine the effect of Pegon orthographic mastery on students' religious literacy. The general regression equation used was:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \varepsilon$$

where Y represents the religious literacy score, X denotes the Pegon mastery score, β_0 is the intercept, β_1 is the regression coefficient, and ε is the residual error term. The hypotheses tested were:

H_0: There is no significant effect of mastery of Arab Pegon orthography on students' religious literacy.
H_1: There is a positive and significant effect of mastery of the Arabic Pegon orthography on students' religious literacy.

The decision criterion was based on a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. If $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis was rejected; conversely, if $p \ge 0.05$, the null hypothesis was accepted. The results of this analysis were then interpreted by linking the empirical findings to the theoretical framework of orthography and religious literacy outlined in the literature review. In this way, the research

method was expected to yield valid, reliable, and relevant findings that address the research questions and contribute to the study of Islamic literacy in primary education settings using the Pegon script.

Results and Discussions

This study aimed to empirically examine the relationship between mastery of Arab Pegon orthography and religious literacy among students at MI Al Huda, Gorontalo City. The findings were obtained by administering questionnaires and objective tests to 60 students, proportionally selected from all grade levels. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression to determine the extent to which Pegon orthographic mastery influences students' ability to understand and internalize Islamic values through texts.

Overall, the descriptive analysis indicates that MI Al Huda students exhibit a high level of Pegon orthographic mastery, with a mean score of 78.48 and a standard deviation of 6.43. This implies that most students are already familiar with characteristic modified Pegon letters such as ڬ (ga), ݢ (nga), ڤ (pa), ڎ (dha), and ث (nya) and can read Pegon texts with a satisfactory level of fluency. Meanwhile, religious literacy, measured by understanding, application, and reflection on Islamic teachings, also demonstrates a high level, with a mean of 80.90 and a standard deviation of 6.57. The descriptive data are presented in the following table.[15]

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables (n = 60)

Variable	Theoretical Range	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Pegon Orthographic Mastery (X)	18–90	78.48	6.43	62	90
Religious Literacy (Y)	18–90	80.90	6.57	64	92

The distribution of the mean values for both variables is shown in Figure 1.
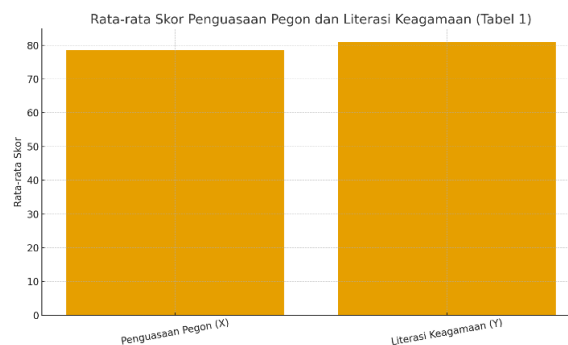
Figure 1. Mean scores of Pegon orthographic mastery and students' religious literacy

Figure 1 shows that the mean score of students' religious literacy (80.90) is slightly higher than the mean score of Pegon orthographic mastery (78.48). Nevertheless, both scores fall within a relatively high range, indicating that Pegon's orthographic ability and religious literacy among MI Al Huda students are at a fairly good level.

If we view it by score categories, 41,7% of students have Pegon mastery in the "high" category, while 53,3% of students demonstrate high religious literacy. The complete distribution is shown in the following table.

Table 2. Score Category Distribution (Tertile-Normatif)

Variable	Category	Operational Criteria	f	%
X	Low	≤ 70	8	13,3
	Medium	71–80	27	45.0
	High	≥ 81	25	41,7
Y	Low	≤ 70	4	6,7
	Medium	71–80	24	40,0

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Variable Category	Operational Criteria	f	%
High	≥ 81	32	53,3
Total		**60**	**100**

The distribution of Pegon orthographic mastery categories is presented visually in Figure 2.
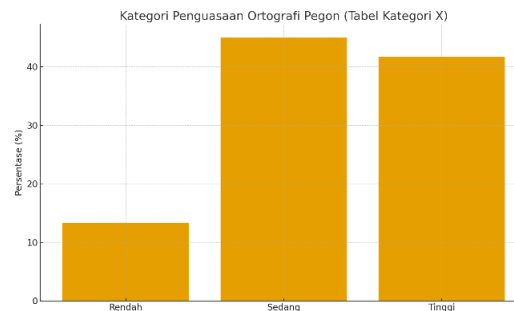

Figure 2. Distribution of students' Pegon orthographic mastery categories (based on the Pegon mastery category table / Category X).

To illustrate the distribution of students' religious literacy categories, as shown in the previous table, see Figure 3.
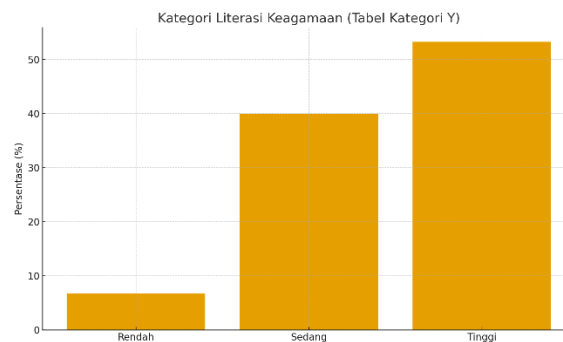

Figure 3. Distribution of students' religious literacy categories (based on the religious literacy category table / Category Y).

These descriptive data show that Pegon instruction at MI Al Huda remains effective. As explained by Hami (2025) and Suryani et al. (2022) [6], [17], Pegon teaching, which is directly linked to religious content, helps students understand Islamic texts without having to master Classical Arabic fully. This is consistent with the theory of Taha and Saiegh-Haddad (2015) [10], who argue that orthographic ability is positively correlated with phonological and morphological processing, which supports text comprehension.[25]

To ensure the adequacy of the data, tests of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity were conducted. The Shapiro–Wilk test yielded $p_x = 0.615$ for the Pegon orthographic mastery variable and $p_\gamma = 0.144$ for the religious literacy variable, indicating that the data are normally distributed because both p-values exceed 0.05. The scatterplot test showed a linear relationship between X and Y, and the Breusch–Pagan test produced a p-value of 0.326, indicating the absence of heteroscedasticity.

Table 3. Regression Assumption Tests

Assumption	Test	Statistic	p	Decision
Normality of X and Y	Shapiro–Wilk	$W_x = 0.984$; $W_\gamma = 0.970$	$p_x = 0.615$; $p_\gamma = 0.144$	Normal
Linearity	Scatterplot (visual inspection)	—	—	Linear
Homoscedasticity	Breusch–Pagan / residual scatterplot	$\chi^2 = 0.96$	0.326	Homoscedastic

After the assumptions were met, a simple linear regression test was conducted. The analysis showed that Pegon orthographic mastery significantly influences students' religious literacy. The correlation coefficient (r) of 0.673 indicates a strong positive relationship. In contrast, the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.453 indicates that 45.3% of the variance in religious literacy is explained by Pegon orthographic ability.

Table 4. Simple Linear Regression Coefficients (Y ~ X)

Parameter	B	SE(B)	t(58)	p
(Constant)	26.919	7.815	3.444	0.001
Pegon Orthographic Mastery (X)	0.688	0.099	6.930	<0.001

The regression equation obtained is:

$\hat{Y} = 26.919 + 0.688X$

　　　This means that for every one-point increase in Pegon orthographic mastery, the religious literacy score increases by 0.688 points. The ANOVA results show an $F_{(1,58)}$ statistic of 48.023 ($p < 0.001$), indicating a statistically significant effect.

Table 5. Model Summary and Regression ANOVA

Model-Fit Statistic	Value
r	0.673
R²	0.453
Adjusted R²	0.444
Standard Error of Estimate	4.904
ANOVA F(1,58)	48.023
p	<0.001
Effect size (Cohen's f²)	0.828 (large)

　　　These results indicate that Pegon orthography functions not only as a linguistic communication tool but also as a means of fostering students' understanding and internalization of religious values. The findings are consistent with Iryani et al. (2024), who demonstrated the effectiveness of integrating local scripts into the curriculum to strengthen religious literacy [18]. They also support Pairin's (2022) view that the ability to read and write in Pegon helps students comprehend Islamic teachings through a more contextual local language [19]. In addition, Mahfudh and Tiganiy (2024) and Abdullah et al. (2024) emphasize that the use of Pegon in pesantren contributes to the effective intergenerational transmission of the Islamic scholarly tradition in the Nusantara [12], [20].

　　　From a linguistic perspective, these results align with the studies by Melinda and Suyanto (2024) and Irakusuma and Hendrokumoro (2024) [4], which show that the Pegon orthographic system is the result of complex phonological adaptation between Arabic letters and Javanese. Graphemic modifications such as ﭪ, ﻚﮒ, and ﻎ not only reflect phonetic needs but also symbolize the cultural creativity of Javanese Muslim communities in "Islamizing" their local language. In the Gorontalo context, a similar pattern of adaptation persists, as local Islamic education systems, such as MI Al Huda, continue to employ Pegon as a medium for teaching traditional texts and exegetical works.

　　　This study also reinforces the views of Fadal (2020) and Rosyid (2019), who argue that Pegon is a concrete form of local-tradition-based religious literacy with both pedagogical and spiritual functions [21], [8]. Through Pegon mastery, students not only learn how to write but also internalize moral values, as highlighted by Rahmawati (2020) and Aini et al. (2024) [22], [23], who regard Pegon as a vehicle for shaping religious character.

　　　The present findings further enrich the discourse on Islamic Nusantara literacy as discussed by Munawir et al. (2023) and Hula and Mariana (2024) [9], [24], who emphasize the necessity of digitalizing and integrating Pegon into modern curricula. Digitalization is not merely a matter of preserving the written form but also part of a pedagogical transformation aimed at preventing younger generations from becoming detached from their cultural roots. In this regard, the work of Pairin (2022) and Rahmah et al. (2025) is highly relevant: both argue that revitalizing Pegon in modern education can connect religious learning with students' local identities [11], [25].

　　　From the standpoint of literacy theory, these results confirm the concept of cultural literacy proposed by Abdullah et al. (2024) [20], which states that literacy is not only about reading texts but also about understanding the cultural contexts that underlie them. Pegon thus becomes a symbol of religious literacy that fuses spiritual, artistic, and linguistic values. Consequently, students' ability to read Pegon enhances not only their cognitive dimension but also deepens their religious and spiritual awareness. The educational implications of these findings are summarized in Table 6.

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Table 6. Implementation Recommendations (Based on Findings)

Focus of Strengthening	Weakest Indicator	Instructional Action	Expected Output
Pegon Orthography (X)	Writing: accuracy of dots/diacritics	Guided practice in writing modified letters (پ, ۫غ, ڤ, ڎ, ۫ن) with teacher feedback	Increased writing accuracy; reduced graphemic errors
Religious Literacy (Y)	Application of values	Reflective discussions and role-play using Pegon texts containing moral narratives	Strengthened religious behavior and context-based moral conduct
Curriculum Integration	Integration of Islamic Education and Arabic	Transliteration projects of texts into Pegon and local exegesis projects	Interdisciplinary learning and contextualization of local Islam

Based on the above results and discussion, it can be concluded that this study provides empirical evidence that Pegon orthography significantly influences students' religious literacy. This extends previous findings, largely qualitative in nature [8], [12], [17], into measurable, replicable quantitative data. Conceptually, the results also offer a fresh contribution to understanding Pegon as a semiotic system that functions not only phonetically but also as a mediator in the internalization of Islamic values within the context of primary education.

Accordingly, Pegon should be positioned within a national strategy to strengthen culture-based Islamic literacy. The findings of this study may serve as a basis for Islamic educational policy at the madrasah level to foster awareness that language and script are integral to religious identity. Pegon is not merely a historical relic, but constitutes a pedagogical strategy capable of cultivating a generation that is morally upright, knowledgeable, and rooted in the heritage of Islamic Nusantara literacy [14], [26], [27].

In addition to the empirical findings, this study also examined a Pegon manuscript used in teaching at MI Al Huda. The manuscript is a supplicatory text themed *maghfūr* (forgiveness) written in classical Javanese.
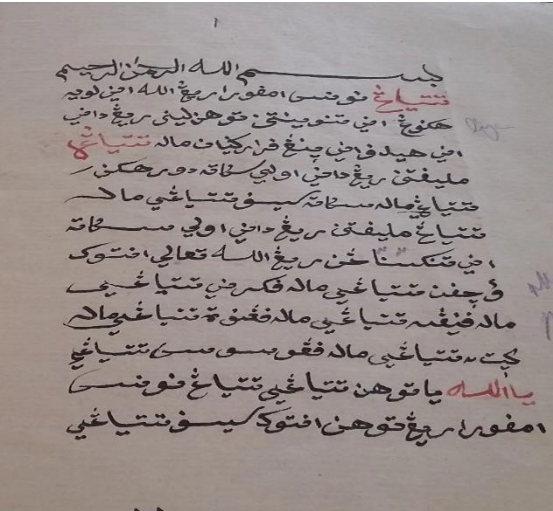

Figure 1. Arab Pegon Manuscript in Javanese Containing a Supplication of Forgiveness (Maghfūr)

Table 7. Transliteration and Translation

No.	Transliteration	Translation
1	بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم	In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

Bismillāh ar-Raḥmān ar-Raḥīm.

2 تنياغ مغفور نغسا مغفور امغفو الله امغفو نغيه

Tiniyang maghfūr ngasa, maghfūr ampun, Allāh ampuné.

> Forgive this sinful servant, O Allah, and bestow upon me Your mercy and forgiveness.

3 هكنيه انين متويني تنوهنيني مرغيه

Hakiné anin metu iki tanuh nini marangé.

> My heart has withdrawn from error and turned towards Your path, O Lord.

4 انين هيدو انين يبغ فريكين مالد

Anin urip, anin yebang farikan maled.

> My life and my whole being depend solely upon You, O Most Generous.

5 مليفغ مرغ واهن اوليه مساحات دهر حكين

Melifang marang wahan, oléh masahāt dahr hakīn.

> I turn and surrender myself to You, obtaining gentleness and wisdom from You.

6 متياحي مالساحات كيسو متيا نغيه مالا

Matiyah i malasahāt kisu, metiyā ngiy mala.

> In Your tenderness, I surrender, and in Your love, I implore forgiveness.

7 تنياي مغفور نغيه واحن اوليه مساحات

Tiniyai maghfūr ngiy wahan, oléh masahāt.

> Forgive Your servant, O Lord, and bestow upon me Your vast mercy.

8 انين مساحات دهر مساحات

Anin masahāt dahr masahāt.

> I seek refuge in Your mercy and gentle kindness that knows no bounds.

9 دين فكسن رنغ الله تعالي امتوك

Dén faksan rang Allāh Ta'ālā amṭūk.

> Thus, I seek refuge in Allah, the Exalted, and submit to His will.

10 دهنن تنبا نغيه مال فكر نيني تنبا نغيه

Denen tanpa ngiy, mala fikr nini tanpa ngiy.

> There is no strength nor thought except in remembrance of You, O Allah.

11 مال فكر نيني مال غفو نيني مسا مسا تنيا نغيه

Mala fikr nini, mala ghafū nini, masa-masa tiniya ngiy.

> There is no thought other than Your forgiveness; there is no time more beautiful than Your mercy.

12 كيت نغيه تنيا نغيه تنيا نغيه تنيا نغيه

Kit ngiy tiniya ngiy, tiniya ngiy, tiniya ngiy.

> This is the supplication of Your servant who continuously begs for forgiveness and returns to You.

13 يا الله يا مقوه دهن تنيا نغيه امغفور مرغقوه نغين افقو كيسو تنيا نغيه

Yā Allāh yā maqūh, dhahan tiniya ngiy. Ampun marang kuwé nanging afqu kisu tiniya ngiy.

> O Allah, O Most Powerful, hear this servant's supplication; forgive all sins and strengthen me in obedience to You.

Linguistic analysis of the text shows that it is written in classical Javanese using the Arab Pegon script. Modified letters such as ڮ (ga), ڠ (nga), and ۑ (nya) are consistently employed to represent Javanese phonemes that do not exist in Arabic. Morphological structures such as تنياغ (*tiniyang*), مرغ (*marang*), and اوليه (*oléh*) indicate the adaptation of Javanese grammar in a religious context. The word مغفور (*maghfūr*) appears repeatedly, reflecting the function of the text as a penitential supplication (*istighfār*) that is reflective and suffused with Sufi nuance. Repetitive patterns such as "تنيا نغيه" (*tiniya ngiy*) create a liturgical rhythm that reinforces the oral and recitative aspect of the text. The identification of morphological and orthographic structures in this manuscript is consistent with the codicological findings of Fauji et al. (2025) on the Dawuhan manuscripts [28].

From a philological perspective, this manuscript illustrates a form of syncretism between Islamic literacy traditions and Javanese cultural expression. The local language serves as a medium for conveying universal theological values, making the Pegon script a bridge among language, religion, and education. The relevance of integrating local script literacy into the curriculum is further strengthened by studies on the digitalization of Pegon manuscripts, which encourage the design of learning based on primary sources [29]. In the learning context at MI Al Huda, Pegon texts such as this are used to train students in reading modified Arabic letters while simultaneously understanding the religious content they convey. Thus, mastery of Pegon orthography not only strengthens linguistic skills but also deepens students' religious literacy and spiritual awareness.

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Conclusions

The findings of this study confirm that mastery of the Arab Pegon orthography has a positive and significant influence on students' religious literacy at MI Al Huda, Gorontalo City. Empirically, the correlation coefficient of 0.673 and the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.453 indicate that nearly half of the variance in students' religious literacy is explained by their level of mastery of Pegon. Students with stronger reading and writing skills in Pegon were shown to have higher levels of understanding of religious texts and a stronger tendency to internalize Islamic moral values.

Theoretically, these results reinforce Taha and Saiegh-Haddad's (2015) view that orthographic competence plays a crucial role in facilitating cognitive and semantic processing during reading. In the context of Islamic scholarship in the Nusantara, Pegon is not merely a writing system but also an epistemic medium linking language, culture, and spirituality. As explained by Mahfudh and Tiganiy (2024) and Abdullah et al. (2024), Pegon functions as a vehicle for the intergenerational transmission of Islamic knowledge while simultaneously preserving the continuity of local Islamic literacy amidst the tides of globalization.

These findings also strengthen the research of Hula and Mariana (2024) and Pairin (2022), who assert that the revitalization of Pegon in modern educational institutions is a strategic step to maintain the literacy identity of Islamic Nusantara. Through mastery of Pegon, students are not only able to read localized Arabic texts but also to comprehend religious values that are contextual to their daily lives. In this respect, Pegon serves a dual function as a linguistic tool and as an instrument for character education.

The practical implications of this study underscore the need to reorient teaching practices in Islamic elementary schools, particularly by integrating Pegon into the Islamic Religious Education and Arabic curricula. Teachers can develop contextual learning models based on Pegon texts, whether in the form of transliterations of supplications, local exegetical notes, or didactic narratives closely tied to students' cultural backgrounds. In this way, students are enabled not only to understand the symbolic language of Pegon but also to grasp the substantive meanings embedded in its teachings.

This study also carries academic implications for the development of theories of religious literacy grounded in local culture. Pegon may be regarded as a model of integrative literacy that encompasses orthographic, cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions. Thus, Pegon should no longer be viewed solely as an object of philological inquiry but also as a pedagogical model highly relevant to Islamic education in the twenty-first century.

The limitations of this research lie in its restricted scope, which is confined to a single educational institution with a sample of 60 students. Future studies are therefore recommended to expand the representation of respondents across regions, particularly in madrasahs with diverse sociocultural characteristics. Subsequent research may also employ comparative quantitative approaches or mixed-methods designs to explore other mediating factors, such as learning motivation, digital Pegon literacy, or the role of teachers in transmitting religious values.

Overall, this study offers both empirical and conceptual contributions to the strengthening of Islamic literacy rooted in Nusantara traditions. Mastery of Pegon orthography has been shown not only to enhance linguistic competence but also to foster religious and cultural awareness. Consequently, Pegon needs to be repositioned as a strategic instrument for shaping a religiously literate generation that is firmly rooted in the scholarly heritage of Islamic Nusantara while remaining adaptable to the challenges of modern education. This reinforces Pairin's (2023) view that Pegon constitutes a bridge between local literacy traditions and modern Islamic education [30].

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