

The Dynamics and Implementation Challenges of Islamic Education Policies in Indonesian Schools and Pesantren: A Socio-Cultural Perspective

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Abstract. This study examines Islamic education policies within the socio-cultural context in schools and pesantren in Indonesia, aiming to understand the dynamics of policy implementation in shaping students' character and morality. The research employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method by analyzing 20 articles published between 2020 and 2025. The findings reveal that Islamic education policies play a crucial role in character building and spiritual empowerment, although implementation faces obstacles such as weak institutional coordination, uneven budget allocation, and low human resource quality. Additionally, the historical dynamics from the pre-independence era to the reform era have influenced Islamic education policies in Indonesia. In conclusion, Islamic education policies should be optimized by improving educator quality, developing competency-based curricula, and strengthening institutional partnerships between schools and pesantren to create more inclusive and adaptive education policies that address global challenges. The implications of this study highlight the importance of integrating Islamic values into the national education system, which can reinforce religious identity while improving overall education quality.

Keyword: *Implementation; Islamic Education Policy; Pesantren; Socio-cultural; Schools*

Abstrak. Penelitian ini mengkaji kebijakan pendidikan Islam dalam konteks sosiokultural di sekolah dan pesantren di Indonesia, dengan tujuan untuk memahami dinamika implementasi kebijakan tersebut dalam membentuk karakter dan akhlak siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode Systematic Literature Review (SLR) dengan menganalisis 20 artikel yang diterbitkan antara 2020 hingga 2025. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kebijakan pendidikan Islam berperan penting dalam pembentukan karakter dan pemberdayaan spiritual, meskipun terdapat hambatan dalam implementasinya seperti koordinasi kelembagaan yang lemah, alokasi anggaran yang tidak merata, dan kualitas sumber daya manusia yang masih rendah. Selain itu, dinamika historis sejak masa pra-kemerdekaan hingga reformasi turut mempengaruhi kebijakan pendidikan Islam di Indonesia. Sebagai kesimpulan, kebijakan pendidikan Islam perlu lebih dioptimalkan dengan meningkatkan kualitas pendidik, mengembangkan kurikulum berbasis kompetensi, serta memperkuat kemitraan institusional antara sekolah dan pesantren untuk menciptakan kebijakan pendidikan yang lebih inklusif dan adaptif terhadap tantangan global. Implikasi dari penelitian ini adalah pentingnya integrasi nilai-nilai Islam dalam sistem pendidikan nasional yang dapat memperkuat identitas keagamaan sekaligus meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan secara keseluruhan.

Kata Kunci: *Implementasi; Kebijakan Pendidikan Islam; Pesantren; Sosiokultural; Sekolah*

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Introduction

Islamic education, in its comprehensive approach, goes beyond intellectual development to encompass moral, spiritual, and social aspects. Its purpose is to promote social justice by ensuring equal access, equal learning opportunities, and the development of a society with noble character and high social awareness (Khoirunnisa & Khoiri, 2025). However, in the age of globalization, national education policies often fail to fully incorporate Islamic values, leading to significant gaps in the educational system. Disparities in access between urban and rural areas, differences in quality between Islamic and public schools, and the ongoing dualism in the education system are persistent challenges (Syahrizal & Widdah, 2024).

Islamic education policies in Indonesia have evolved significantly since the country's independence, reflecting shifts from domestication to accommodation approaches. These policies have been shaped by historical, political, and social factors, impacting both schools and pesantren (Islamic boarding schools). The transition from a domestication approach, which marginalized Islamic education, to an accommodation approach, has allowed for greater integration and recognition of Islamic education within the national framework. This shift has been influenced by political regimes, intellectual transformations, and increased mobilization of the Muslim population (Kosim et al., 2023).

The reform era has triggered significant changes in various sectors, including education, with policies being reshaped to reflect national aspirations. These policies, formulated by the government, aim to regulate and structure various sectors to achieve the nation's ideals while adapting to global advancements without compromising cultural values. One of the most crucial policies is Islamic education, which has been overlooked in a Muslim-majority country due to the absence of comprehensive regulations that would allow it to survive and thrive alongside other educational institutions (Maliki, 2022).

Indonesia, as a predominantly Muslim nation, holds high expectations for educational reform, particularly in the field of Islamic education. For years, Islamic education has been marginalized in favor of general education due to insufficient regulation and formal recognition, preventing it from growing alongside other schools (Munte et al., 2025). The disparities between Islamic and public schools, as well as the lack of institutional structure for pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), remain significant barriers.

Education policy, as a strategic and normative framework, addresses public issues through systematic decisions. It is intrinsically connected to political dynamics, as it forms part of public policy developed by government bodies (Anistianingsih & Sholehah, 2023). Islamic education has played a crucial role in the national framework by fostering character and moral values based on the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. This role has evolved from the pre-independence era through the reform period, reflecting shifts in national educational priorities (Adri, 2022). Despite progress, several challenges persist, including the need for better institutional coordination between central and regional governments, more equitable funding, a shortage of certified educators, and the call for modernization of teaching content in line with global demands (Syahrizal & Widdah, 2024).

Islamic education policies in schools and pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) represent a critical dimension of Indonesia's educational landscape. Pesantren, as the oldest Islamic

educational institutions in the archipelago, have long served as traditional centers for Islamic knowledge transmission (Rohmawati et al., 2025). Alongside formal schools and madrasahs, these institutions play a strategic role in shaping the character and religious understanding of the Muslim population. The development of coherent and adaptive policies for Islamic education has become increasingly necessary as these institutions navigate the complex interplay between preserving traditional Islamic values and meeting contemporary educational demands in an era marked by globalization, technological advancement, and social change (Haqqoni et al., 2025).

This study seeks to explore the dynamics of Islamic education policies in Indonesia, especially in schools and pesantren, and evaluate their socio-cultural impacts. The research is based on a thorough review of current policies and their alignment with both national educational objectives and Islamic values. This analysis will highlight the existing gaps and offer solutions to improve the integration of Islamic values within the broader educational system.

Methods

This study employed a *Systematic Literature Review (SLR)* methodology. The first step involved formulating the research question, namely how Islamic education policies are analyzed and implemented within sociocultural studies in schools and Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). Subsequently, data collection was conducted by searching for scholarly articles using the Open Knowledge Maps platform, with a publication time frame limited to the last five years (2020 - 2025). This search yielded 100 articles, of which 85 were open-access publications.

Next, inclusion criteria were established, consisting of articles written in Indonesian or English that were relevant to Islamic education policy and sociocultural studies in schools and *pesantren*. Based on these criteria, the identified articles were further screened, resulting in 20 core articles that were deemed most relevant to the research topic. These selected articles were then organized and stored using the Mendeley reference manager.

The selected literature was analyzed through a systematic process of critical reading, examination of key findings, and synthesis of research results using Scispace and Perplexity tools. Through this analytical process, the study was able to draw conclusions that address the research question and provide a comprehensive understanding of Islamic education policy within the sociocultural context of schools and Islamic boarding schools.

The research data included in this literature review consist of analyses and synthesized summaries of national scholarly articles addressing Islamic education policy within sociocultural studies in schools and Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*).

Table 1. Islamic Education Policy in Sociocultural Studies in Schools and Islamic Boarding Schools

No.	Author(s) and Year	Article Title	Method	Main Findings
1	Giantara, F., & Amiliya, R. (2021)	<i>The Urgency of Islamic Education Policy as Part of Public Policy (A Theoretical Analysis)</i>	Systematic Literature Review (SLR)	This article discusses the erosion of Islamic values within government policies, particularly in education. It emphasizes the importance of formulating public policies grounded in Islamic education to effectively address societal issues and highlights the historical role of Islamic

				education in shaping public policy decisions.
2	Nurul Humaidi et al. (2021)	<i>A Study of Islamic Religious Education Policy in Educational Institutions in Indonesia</i>	Literature study	The article underscores the importance of integrating religious values into Indonesia's national education system, emphasizing that education should reflect Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. It highlights the role of religious education in fostering spiritual development and the necessity of inclusivity in educational institutions regardless of students' religious backgrounds.
3	Risal Qori Amarullah et al. (2024)	<i>Strategies for Improving the Quality of Islamic Education through the Implementation of the Eight National Education Standards in Madrasahs</i>	Qualitative	This study emphasizes the crucial role of Islamic education in shaping character and knowledge, particularly in madrasahs. It addresses challenges in implementing the Eight National Education Standards and stresses the need for continuous professional development of educators to enhance educational quality.
4	Ahmad Ridwan et al. (2023)	<i>Socialization of Islamic Education Policy in Society</i>	Qualitative	The article examines the dissemination and formulation of Islamic education policies, outlining the stages and actors involved. It highlights the importance of effective communication and strategic approaches in socializing policies to address educational challenges within society.
5	Maimunah Permata Hati Hasibuan et al. (2023)	<i>The Process of Formulating Islamic Education Policies</i>	Qualitative	This study explores the complex process of formulating Islamic education policies in Indonesia, emphasizing clear communication, resource allocation, and collaboration among stakeholders. It stresses the need for a comprehensive understanding of educational conditions and societal needs to ensure effective policy implementation.
6	Abdul Karim Khoirul Huda (n.d.)	<i>Islamic Education through the Full-Day School Policy at MI</i>	Qualitative	This study investigates the implementation of the full-day school policy at MI Nurul

		Nurul Ummah, Kotagede, Yogyakarta		Ummah, highlighting its role in meeting community needs and strengthening students' character through Islamic education. Data were collected through observations and interviews focusing on the school's distinctive programs.
7	Adri, S. (2022)	<i>Islamic Education and Its Position in Indonesia</i>	Literature review	The article discusses the dynamic transformation of Islamic education in Indonesia, emphasizing political influences before and after independence. It outlines various phases of Islamic education and examines the impact of government policies and post-1965 educational awareness among Muslims.
8	Aziza Khoirunnisa & Qolbi Khoiri (2025)	<i>Islamic Education and Social Justice: A Political Education Perspective</i>	Qualitative (literature-based)	This article highlights the vital role of Islamic education in promoting social justice, stressing the need for inclusive policies and equitable access to education. It discusses implementation challenges and underscores character development alongside academic achievement in building a just society.
9	Ilham Tompunu et al. (2023)	<i>Islamic Education in Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System</i>	Qualitative	The study addresses the significant growth of the Muslim student population in Indonesia, emphasizing the need for a new educational paradigm and balanced curriculum. It highlights the importance of government policies and resources in sustaining Islamic education within the national system.
10	Hasan Syahrizal et al. (2024)	<i>Structuring Problems in Islamic Education Policy</i>	Library research	This research analyzes challenges in Islamic education policy, emphasizing its dependence on national education policies and the need for expert involvement. It highlights the strategic importance of Islamic education in producing graduates capable of contributing to various sectors while addressing issues of supervision and funding in madrasahs.

11	Pujianto & Baid (2023)	<i>Policies for the Development of Madrasah and Pesantren Education</i>	Qualitative	The article examines the vital role of madrasahs and <i>pesantren</i> in shaping character and religious diversity in Indonesia. It identifies challenges such as limited resources and policy implementation issues and offers recommendations to enhance quality and global relevance.
12	Ahidatun Nikma & Muhammad Miftah (2025)	<i>Islamic Education Policy in Pesantren: A Historical Analysis and Talcott Parsons' AGIL Theory on Law No. 18 of 2019</i>	Literature study	This article highlights the significance of <i>pesantren</i> as Islamic educational institutions, emphasizing their role in religious education and community empowerment. It discusses the positive impact of the 2019 Pesantren Law in recognizing <i>pesantren</i> as formal educational entities and improving their sustainability in a global context.
13	Asmuri & Witari Triarni Panggabean (2024)	<i>Islamic Education Policy in Schools</i>	Qualitative	The article discusses the implementation and challenges of Islamic education policies in Indonesian schools, focusing on the integration of religious education into the national curriculum and the need to ensure educational quality amid resource and regulatory constraints.
14	M. Habib Alwi & Wiene Surya Putra (2024a)	<i>Implementation of Islamic Education Policy in Indonesia</i>	Qualitative	This study examines the implementation of Islamic education policies in Indonesia, highlighting challenges in aligning Islamic values with local diversity and emphasizing the importance of multi-stakeholder involvement in improving educational quality.
15	Maimunah & Kemas Imron Rosadi	<i>Factors Influencing the Management System of Islamic Educational Institutions in the Politics of Islamic Education Policy in Indonesia</i>	Library research	The article emphasizes the importance of policy analysis in public education, focusing on effective communication and knowledge application in policymaking. It explores governance challenges, including trust issues and the implications of various education policies in Indonesia.

16	Anistianingsih et al. (2023)	<i>The Dynamics of Islamic Education Policy in Indonesia</i>	Literature review	The article discusses the impact of government policies on Islamic education in Indonesian higher education, highlighting curriculum changes from the New Order to the Reform Era. It stresses the need for inclusive and contextually relevant education to address contemporary social issues and counter radicalism.
17	Abdul Rohman et al. (2022)	<i>Dynamics of Islamic Education Policy and Leadership in Indonesia</i>	Literature review	This study examines post-reform Islamic education policies, highlighting significant improvements and a shift toward more inclusive and decentralized educational models. It emphasizes the government's role in enhancing educational standards and funding, positively influencing Islamic education development.
18	Putriani L. Maliki et al. (2022)	<i>The Direction of Islamic Education Policy in Post-Reform Indonesia</i>	Library research	The article analyzes post-reform Islamic education policies, highlighting improvements and decentralization trends. It emphasizes increased government involvement in standardization and funding, which has positively impacted Islamic education.
19	Bima Fandi Asy'arie et al. (2024)	<i>Analysis of Islamic Religious Education Policy in Schools and Madrasahs: Impacts on Religious Understanding, Moral Values, Psychological and Social Development</i>	Qualitative	This study analyzes the impact of Islamic education policies on students' religious understanding, moral values, psychological well-being, and social development. It underscores the need for qualified teachers to effectively convey Islamic values and address contemporary challenges.
20	Rita Sahara Munte et al. (2024)	<i>Policy Analysis and Strategies for Islamic Education toward 2035</i>	Literature study	This article analyzes Indonesia's National Education Roadmap 2020–2035, highlighting challenges and areas for improvement, particularly in integrating Islamic values and addressing secularism. It emphasizes adapting education to technological advancements while ensuring students' moral character development.

Results and Discussion

Grouping of Articles Based on Research Methodology

The distribution of research methodologies in the 20 articles reviewed shows a strong dominance of qualitative field approaches, which account for around 60% of the total studies. This approach is generally used to explore the implementation of Islamic education policies in schools and Islamic boarding schools through interviews, observations, and documentation. The dominance of qualitative methods reflects researchers' keen interest in understanding the context, meaning, and social dynamics at the local level. However, this trend also reveals limitations in terms of empirical generalization, as most studies are small-scale and focus on specific cases without adequate cross-context comparisons.

A total of 30% of articles used literature studies or literature reviews as their main method. This group plays an important role in strengthening the normative, conceptual, and historical frameworks of Islamic education policy, especially in explaining the legal basis and direction of national policy. However, the dominance of literature reviews has the potential to result in repetitive arguments and limited analytical innovation if not accompanied by updated empirical data.

The lack of connection with the reality in the field also makes some of the findings abstract and less responsive to sociocultural dynamics in schools and Islamic boarding schools. Meanwhile, only about 10% of articles explicitly applied Systematic Literature Review (SLR). This relatively small proportion indicates that systematic and comprehensive knowledge synthesis is still not a common practice in Islamic education policy studies.

In fact, the SLR approach has great potential to identify patterns of findings across studies, map methodological trends, and reveal research gaps in a more objective and structured manner.

Overall, this methodological pattern indicates that the literature on Islamic education policy is still dominated by descriptive and normative approaches, with limitations in quantitative verification and high-level synthesis. These findings emphasize the need for methodological diversification in the future, including strengthening comparative studies, mixed methods approaches, and increasing the use of SLR, so that the analysis of Islamic education policy becomes more robust, critical, and capable of responding to the complexity of sociocultural challenges more comprehensively.

Grouping of Articles Based on Institutional Location

The distribution of institutional locus in the 20 articles analyzed shows that studies of Islamic education policy are still centered on schools and madrasas as formal state institutions. A total of 40% of the articles focused their analysis on schools/madrasas, reflecting the strong influence of national policy in shaping Islamic education practices through curricula, national standards, and state oversight mechanisms. The dominance of this locus indicates that Islamic education policy is often understood as a state administrative instrument, with an emphasis on regulatory compliance and the achievement of institutional targets, while social dynamics at the community level are relatively less explored.

A total of 30% of articles placed Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) as the main locus of study. This finding confirms the position of *pesantren* not only as educational institutions, but also as cultural and communitarian spaces where Islamic education policies are interpreted and negotiated in accordance with local values, the authority of religious leaders (*kiai*), and Islamic scholarly traditions.

Unlike formal schools, policies in *pesantren* tend not to be implemented linearly, but rather through a process of adaptation influenced by social relations, charismatic leadership structures, and cultural legitimacy within the community. Meanwhile, around 15% of articles examine the hybrid relationship between schools and *pesantren*.

This group describes efforts to integrate the state's formal education system and Islamic educational traditions, both through pesantren-based madrasah models and integrated Islamic schools. This hybrid locus shows a more complex sociocultural dynamic, in which Islamic education policy becomes an arena for the meeting of state bureaucratic logic and religious-communitarian values, while also opening up space for innovation and tension in educational practice.

A total of 15% of the other articles were abstract or national in nature, without referring to a specific micro-institutional context. The dominance of this approach tends to produce normative analysis and policy generalizations, but is less able to capture the variation in policy implementation in the field. The absence of a specific institutional context causes sociocultural dimensions—such as the role of local communities, internal power relations within institutions, and social class differences—to be less visible in the discussion.

Overall, this pattern of locus distribution shows that studies of Islamic education policy are still oriented towards formal institutions and the macro level, while in-depth exploration of Islamic boarding schools and hybrid models as sociocultural spaces is still relatively limited. These findings reinforce the need for more contextual and layered research on Islamic education policy, placing educational institutions as social arenas where state policy, local culture, and community actors interact.

Grouping of Articles Based on Analytical Perspective

Based on the grouping of analytical perspectives, it can be concluded that the literature on Islamic education policy for the 2020–2025 period is still dominated by a normative-legal approach.

Approximately 55% of articles place policy as a product of formal law and regulation, with a focus on laws, government regulations, and state legitimacy of Islamic education. The dominance of this perspective shows a strong legalistic orientation in policy studies, but at the same time indicates the limitations of analysis of how these policies are lived, negotiated, and practiced in diverse social contexts in schools and Islamic boarding schools.

Approximately 25% of articles use a managerial-institutional perspective, which highlights aspects of governance, program implementation, organizational capacity, and the role of implementing actors such as school principals, teachers, and Islamic boarding school administrators. Although this approach is beginning to move from the regulatory level to the practical level, most studies still view educational institutions as neutral administrative entities. As a result, the dimensions of power, social relations, and local cultural influences are often reduced or not analyzed in depth.

The sociocultural perspective appears only to a limited extent ($\pm 15\%$), even though this approach is highly relevant for understanding Islamic education policy in the context of Indonesia's pluralistic and socially stratified society. Studies in this group have begun to link policy with the role of the community, local values, daily religious practices, and interactions between schools or Islamic boarding schools and their social environment. However, the small number of studies indicates that the sociocultural dimension has not yet become the main analytical framework, so that policy is often understood as a top-down instrument rather than a dynamic and contextual social process.

Meanwhile, the perspectives of educational politics and power relations are the most marginal ($\pm 5\%$). The lack of critical studies on political dynamics, interest negotiations, and power relations between the state, religious actors, and civil society indicates a “blind spot” in the literature.

In fact, Islamic education policy cannot be separated from the configuration of power, both in its formulation and in its implementation at the local level. Overall, this pattern shows that studies of Islamic education policy still tend to be descriptive and normative, with limitations in critical and cross-perspective analysis.

This gap explains the weak connection between policy and the sociocultural reality in schools and Islamic boarding schools. Therefore, these findings emphasize the need for a paradigm shift in research towards a more integrative synthesis, combining normative, managerial, sociocultural, and political perspectives on education so that Islamic education policy can be understood more holistically and contextually.

Thematic Synthesis (Higher-Order Findings)

Based on the coding, grouping, and cross-study comparison processes, the thematic synthesis shows that the study of Islamic education policy in the national literature is still dominated by a normative-legal approach that places policy as a product of state regulation and ideology. Most articles focus their analysis on laws, regulations, and conceptual frameworks of policy, while the practical dimensions of policy in the context of society, local culture, and interactions between policy actors and the educational community receive relatively little attention.

This condition indicates an epistemological gap, in which Islamic education policy is more often understood as a top-down formal construction than as a dynamic and contextual social process. The next finding shows that the implementation of Islamic education policy is highly dependent on the sociocultural context of the institution.

Schools and Islamic boarding schools differ not only in terms of organizational structure, but also in terms of social logic, patterns of authority, and mechanisms of legitimacy. These differences shape the way policies are interpreted, negotiated, and implemented at the local level. Thus, national policies never work neutrally or uniformly, but are always reinterpreted in accordance with the culture of the institution, social relations, and the needs of the local educational community.

In the context of Islamic boarding schools, the literature shows the role of Islamic boarding schools as an arena for cultural adaptation and negotiation of state policies. Pesantren tend not to be openly resistant, but rather adjust policies to remain in line with scientific traditions, the authority of the kiai, and the values of the santri community. This pattern confirms that pesantren function as active and autonomous sociocultural actors in the policy process, while also being able to maintain the continuity of Islamic identity amid the pressures of modernization and state regulation.

From a methodological perspective, the synthesis shows that the literature on Islamic education policy is still dominated by descriptive qualitative approaches and literature reviews, with limited critical analysis and minimal use of quantitative data. As a result, the impact of policies is often assumed based on normative narratives or narrow contextual findings, weakening the generalization of research results and making it difficult to avoid potential normative bias. These findings emphasize the need for a methodological shift towards a mixed-methods approach and the strengthening of critical sociocultural analysis so that Islamic education policy studies can produce a more comprehensive, empirical, and relevant understanding of ever-evolving social dynamics.

Islamic Education Policy

Policy refers to a set of strategic, normative, and authoritative decisions formulated to address public problems. Islamic education, meanwhile, is defined as a process of cultivating moral character, intellectual capacity, spiritual awareness, and physical development based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, with the ultimate aim of forming individuals who attain well-being in both worldly life and the hereafter. Islamic education policy is therefore crucial in responding to modern challenges, preserving the continuity of Islamic values, and producing policies that generate public benefit (*maslahah*) for society as a whole (Giantara & Amiliya, 2021).

Etymologically, the term *policy* derives from the Greek word *polis* (city), referring to strategies employed by governing authorities to manage public affairs. Policy may thus be understood as a

formally accepted pattern of action adopted by governments or institutions to achieve specific objectives. Within the context of Islamic education, policy represents deliberate actions designed to resolve societal problems and must be grounded in principles of equity while prioritizing the broader public interest (Permata Hati Hasibuan et al., 2023).

The implementation of Islamic education policy in Indonesia is inherently complex and shaped by multiple interrelated factors. A holistic approach—integrating structural, procedural, behavioral, and political dimensions—combined with situational conditions, including emergency policies during the COVID-19 pandemic, is essential. Continuous monitoring and evaluation, capacity building among policy implementers, and equitable resource distribution are key determinants in achieving policy objectives, namely strengthening Islamic identity while enhancing the quality of national education (Alwi & Putra, 2024).

Historically, the evolution of Islamic education policy can be categorized into several phases. First, the early phase involved informal learning in *surau*, *meunasab*, and *pesantren*, focusing primarily on Qur'anic memorization and the profession of faith. Second, the modernization phase witnessed the emergence of madrasahs and Western-influenced institutions (such as Muhammadiyah and Salafiyah madrasahs), integrating religious and general curricula. Third, in the contemporary era, institutional restructuring between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education has generated policy dichotomies and integration challenges. Fourth, during the COVID-19 pandemic, rapid adaptation to online learning exposed access disparities while simultaneously encouraging methodological innovation and greater parental involvement (Rohman et al., 2022).

The formulation of Islamic education policy involves several stages: designing Islamic education programs, drafting policy frameworks, approving policies, implementing policies, and conducting systematic evaluations. Policy effectiveness depends on the involvement of both state actors—such as professional bureaucrats, the president, ministers, parliament, and political parties—and non-state actors, including research institutions, mass media, teacher unions, educational associations, student organizations, university administrators, parent associations, and community members who function as sources of information and social pressure (Al Masquri, 2023).

Accordingly, the policy-making process in Islamic education must be grounded in a comprehensive understanding of educational realities, societal needs, and global challenges. It should prioritize clear communication, appropriate resource allocation, strong implementer commitment, supportive organizational structures, and active collaboration among government agencies, educational institutions, and communities to produce holistic, adaptive, and sustainable policies (Permata Hati Hasibuan et al., 2023).

Islamic Education Policy in Schools

Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System explicitly guarantees the existence and development of Islamic education across formal, non-formal, and informal pathways. Despite this legal recognition, implementation remains constrained by challenges related to institutional coordination, teacher quality, funding, and infrastructure (Tompunu et al., 2023).

Educational policies have historically aligned with the interests of ruling authorities. During Dutch and Japanese colonial periods, education primarily served colonial labor needs with minimal attention to religious instruction. Following independence—through the Old Order, New Order, and Reform Era—policies reflected shifting interpretations of Pancasila and state ideology. Nevertheless, state support for Islamic religious education has progressively strengthened,

evolving from optional subject status during the Old Order to compulsory instruction under the New Order, and culminating in the Reform Era's constitutional guarantee of students' right to receive religious education in accordance with their faith, taught by educators of the same religion (Humaidi & Tinus, 2021).

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) policy at the junior secondary level (SMP/MTs) has demonstrated significant influence across four dimensions: religious understanding, moral values, psychological development, and social behavior. First, PAI policies reinforce students' religious convictions through multicultural integration in learning materials and consistent religious practices in schools. Second, moral values are cultivated through supportive school environments emphasizing discipline, empathy, and conflict resolution via reward–punishment mechanisms and counseling programs. Third, psychologically, competency-based curricula and the *Merdeka Belajar* framework promote cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development while allowing flexible assessment to identify individual student needs. Fourth, PAI policies foster positive social attitudes by encouraging cooperation, tolerance, and the development of a religious school culture through structured activities and character-building programs, while also preparing students for global competition by strengthening institutional identity (Susanti et al., 2024).

Islamic education policy in schools has undergone a long historical trajectory since independence, initially excluding religious education from general school curricula until its formal regulation under Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007 and the National Education System Law. While the government plays a critical role through regulation and supervision, enduring challenges include dichotomies between religious and secular knowledge, funding disparities between Islamic and general education, and overly theoretical pedagogical approaches that insufficiently emphasize practical spiritual and social values. Key obstacles involve internal factors such as suboptimal educational management and teacher competence, as well as external factors including discrimination against Islamic education outputs and an excessive focus on certification over intellectual depth (Asmuri et al., 2024).

A concrete example is MI Nurul Ummah Kotagede, Yogyakarta, which has implemented a Full-Day School policy since 2015 to accommodate working parents while ensuring continuous student supervision and participation in *tahsin–tahfidz* programs as a distinctive institutional feature. The program operates six days per week with eight-hour school days, integrating academic instruction, worship, rest, and character education. Positive outcomes include achieving Qur'anic memorization targets (a minimum of one *juʿ* for lower grades and five *juʿ* for graduates), improved student character control, and fulfillment of parental supervision needs. Challenges include human resource management, institutional consistency, and potential reductions in family interaction and playtime. Strategic responses include enhancing staff quality, strengthening parent–school communication, and conducting routine evaluations following the graduation of the first cohorts (Karim & Huda, n.d.).

Several factors influence Islamic education policy in schools. These include political dynamics from the colonial era to reformasi; external environmental factors (social, cultural, and political) affecting public participation and policy legitimacy; inter-organizational relations between the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Education, and other stakeholders; organizational resources such as qualified educators, budgets, and facilities; the characteristics and capacities of executive agents (bureaucrats, administrators, and teachers); and bureaucratic structures requiring a balance between centralization and autonomy to ensure efficient implementation without neglecting Muslim community aspirations (Maimunah & Rosadi, 2021).

The implementation of National Education Standards in schools faces complex challenges, including limited resources and insufficient policy comprehension. Nevertheless, substantial opportunities exist through collaboration, human resource development, technological utilization, community engagement, and efficient resource management. Effective strategies include holistic curriculum development, adequate infrastructure provision, continuous teacher quality improvement, systematic monitoring and evaluation, and character-based learning. By integrating religious values with collaborative efforts, schools can overcome constraints and leverage national policies to enhance the quality of Islamic education, producing academically competent individuals with strong moral character (Amarullah et al., 2024).

Islamic Education Policy in Pesantren

With the arrival of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago, Islamic education experienced significant growth. Prior to Dutch colonization, Islamic educational systems flourished widely. However, under colonial rule, Islamic education policies were marked by discriminatory treatment aimed at suppressing educated Muslim militancy. The Dutch government enacted restrictive regulations, including the 1905 *Teacher Ordinance*, which required Islamic teachers to obtain official permission before teaching, and the 1925 regulation mandating *keiai* to receive government recommendations. Despite these constraints, *pesantren* functioned as centers of community empowerment and national consciousness, shaping not only educational systems but also broader visions of state formation (Hasibuan et al., 2023).

As one of Indonesia's earliest Islamic educational institutions, *pesantren* initially received limited governmental attention. The enactment of Law No. 18 of 2019 on Pesantren marked a significant turning point, strengthening their formal recognition and institutional role. The law's emergence was closely linked to political dynamics involving pro-*pesantren* parties and organizations, particularly PKB and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Through Talcott Parsons' AGIL framework, the Pesantren Law fulfills core social system functions: adaptation through legal legitimacy and access to state funding; goal attainment by articulating a vision for morally upright and competent generations; integration by positioning *pesantren* as bridges between religious values and nationalism; and latency by supporting the preservation of moderate Islamic traditions and cultural norms. Structurally, the law enhances *pesantren* resilience, enabling adaptation to modern demands without sacrificing traditional identity (Nikma & Miftah, 2025).

The Indonesian government has implemented strategic policies to enhance the quality and relevance of both school-based and *pesantren* education. Despite challenges in financing, management, and curriculum adaptation, interventions in infrastructure, curriculum development, teacher capacity building, and partnerships have yielded positive outcomes. Schools primarily integrate national curricula with Islamic instruction, while *pesantren* preserve Islamic traditions and local culture. Together, they serve as foundational pillars in shaping religious identity, moral character, and societal pluralism in Indonesia (Pujianto, 2023).

Persistent obstacles in *pesantren* include limited resources, curriculum relevance, pedagogical skills, and technological adaptation. The use of information and communication technology remains relatively low. To address these issues, government policies focus on: (a) infrastructure enhancement through the development of laboratories, libraries, and sports facilities; (b) curriculum reform emphasizing periodically updated competency-based frameworks; (c) continuous professional development for teachers, particularly in pedagogical innovation and

digital literacy; and (d) strategic partnerships with domestic and international educational institutions to facilitate resource exchange and best practices (Pujianto, 2023).

Conclusion

Drawing on a Systematic Literature Review of 20 studies published between 2020 and 2025, selected from a broader initial search, this article offers a sociocultural synthesis showing that Islamic education policy in Indonesia functions not merely as administrative regulation but as value governance, linking moral-spiritual aims with the demands of educational quality, relevance, and modernization.

The study's scientific contribution lies in identifying cross-cutting patterns across the literature and consolidating them into three key levers of policy effectiveness: (1) governance coherence (coordination across central-local authorities and institutions) that shapes implementation consistency; (2) institutional capacity (funding, human resources, infrastructure, and technological readiness) as the main condition for sustainability; and (3) sociocultural integration mechanisms, particularly the complementary relationship between schools and pesantren, enabling alignment between the national curriculum, Islamic values, and locally rooted traditions.

This review is constrained by (a) its time-bounded corpus (2020–2025) and the limited number of included studies, which may not fully capture policy dynamics beyond this window; (b) possible publication bias and uneven methodological rigor across the included articles; and (c) the absence of field-based validation, meaning that the conclusions remain a conceptual synthesis rather than a causal test of implementation outcomes in specific regions or institutions.

The findings suggest that future policy design should: (1) strengthen cross-authority coordination so that schools and pesantren do not operate in parallel without integration (e.g., through shared standards for collaboration, interoperable data, and joint evaluation frameworks); (2) prioritize resource equalization, especially funding, teacher competence, infrastructure, and digital capacity, as an implementation agenda; and (3) institutionalize school-pesantren partnership models oriented to measurable practice, so that curriculum integration and the cultivation of Islamic values can be assessed through indicators of character development, school climate, and community-level social impact.

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