

Politics and Policy of Islamic Education during the Old Order Era: A Study of the Role of the Ministry of Religion, Islamic Religious Colleges (PTKI), and the Implementation of the National Education System Law

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Abstract:

Islamic education during the Old Order era is a crucial issue in the history of Indonesian education because it developed amidst the country's unstable political dynamics, the ideological struggles of nationalism, Islam, and communism, and the initial efforts to establish a national education system after independence. This topic is relevant to study because Islamic education policies during the 1945–1966 period not only determined the position of madrasahs, religious studies, and Islamic Religious Colleges (PTKI) within the national system, but also laid the foundations that have been influential to this day. This study aims to analyze the politics and policies of Islamic education during the Old Order era by highlighting the influence of national political dynamics, the strategic role of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the process of establishing and developing PTKIs, the regulation of religious studies in the National Education System Law, and the challenges and opportunities faced by Islamic education during that period. This study uses a qualitative, field-study design combined with historical studies. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, documentation studies, and literature reviews of archives, regulations, and institutional records. Then, they were analyzed interactively and thematically through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions using source and method triangulation. The results of this study indicate that Islamic education policy during the Old Order era was heavily influenced by the country's political configuration and tended to be compromising. The Ministry of Religious Affairs proved to be a key actor in maintaining the existence of madrasahs, expanding religious instruction in public schools, and building the foundation of Islamic higher education through PTKI (Islamic Higher Education Institutions). This study also found that the regulation of religious instruction in Law No. 4 of 1950 in conjunction with Law No. 12 of 1954 reflected a form of state accommodation to Islamic aspirations, but did not fully guarantee substantive equality in its implementation. This finding contributes to the study of the politics of Islamic education by demonstrating that the development of Islamic education was the result of negotiations between the state, religion, and society, not merely a pedagogical process. Thus, this study concludes that the Old Order era was a crucial phase that shaped the institutional and political foundations of Islamic education in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Old Order; Islamic education policy; educational politics*

Abstrak:

Pendidikan Islam pada masa Orde Lama merupakan isu penting dalam sejarah pendidikan Indonesia karena berkembang di tengah dinamika politik negara yang belum stabil, pertarungan ideologi nasionalisme, Islam, dan komunisme, serta upaya awal pembentukan sistem pendidikan nasional pascakemerdekaan. Topik ini relevan dikaji

karena kebijakan pendidikan Islam pada periode 1945–1966 tidak hanya menentukan posisi madrasah, pelajaran agama, dan Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam (PTKI) dalam sistem nasional, tetapi juga meletakkan fondasi yang berpengaruh hingga masa kini. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis politik dan kebijakan pendidikan Islam pada masa Orde Lama dengan menyoroti pengaruh dinamika politik nasional, peran strategis Kementerian Agama, proses pendirian dan perkembangan PTKI, pengaturan pelajaran agama dalam Undang-Undang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional, serta tantangan dan peluang yang dihadapi pendidikan Islam pada masa tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi lapangan yang dipadukan dengan kajian historis. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, studi dokumentasi, dan telaah literatur terhadap arsip, regulasi, serta catatan kelembagaan, kemudian dianalisis secara interaktif dan tematik melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan dengan triangulasi sumber dan metode. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kebijakan pendidikan Islam pada masa Orde Lama sangat dipengaruhi oleh konfigurasi politik negara dan cenderung bersifat kompromistis. Kementerian Agama terbukti berperan sebagai aktor kunci dalam mempertahankan eksistensi madrasah, memperluas pelajaran agama di sekolah umum, serta membangun fondasi pendidikan tinggi Islam melalui PTKI. Penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa pengaturan pelajaran agama dalam UU No. 4 Tahun 1950 jo. UU No. 12 Tahun 1954 mencerminkan bentuk akomodasi negara terhadap aspirasi Islam, tetapi belum sepenuhnya menjamin kesetaraan substantif dalam implementasinya. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi bagi kajian politik pendidikan Islam dengan menunjukkan bahwa perkembangan pendidikan Islam merupakan hasil negosiasi antara negara, agama, dan masyarakat, bukan semata proses pedagogis. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa masa Orde Lama merupakan fase krusial yang membentuk fondasi kelembagaan dan politik pendidikan Islam di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: *Orde Lama; kebijakan pendidikan Islam; politik pendidikan*

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in Indonesia has been a crucial component in shaping national identity, religious beliefs, and the direction of the country's Development since the early days of independence. In the midst of efforts to build a postcolonial national education system, Islamic education served not only as a means of transmitting religious knowledge but also as an instrument of social mobility, the formation of a Muslim elite, and political negotiations between the state and Islamic groups. Therefore, discussing Islamic education during the Old Order (1945–1966) means examining the earliest phase, when the foundations of the relationship among state, religion, and education were intensively formulated and shaped the direction of its long-term Development. (Azra, 2019);(Steenbrink, 1986);(Fadli & Kumalasari, 2019).

The urgency of this study is further heightened by the fact that the Old Order era was a transitional period from a colonial system to an unestablished national system, resulting in education policy being heavily influenced by the ideological tug-of-war of nationalism, socialism, and Islam. In this context, Islamic education did not develop in a vacuum, but rather within a political arena rife with debates over the role of religion in the state, the form of citizenship, and the intended character of national education. Consequently, Islamic education policy

during this period often emerged as the result of political compromise rather than a technocratic educational decision. This explains why the institutional, curriculum, and financing policies of Islamic education have, from the outset, demonstrated a dynamic yet problematic character. (Handoko, 2022);(Tanjung, 2022);(Ni'mah & Rifa'i, 2022).

Historically, the Ministry of Religious Affairs played a central role in maintaining the existence and expanding the legitimacy of Islamic education amidst the consolidation process of the new state. Through this ministry, madrasahs, Islamic boarding schools, and especially Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions (PTKI) gained formal channels for recognition, Development, and integration into the national education framework. The establishment and Development of PTKI were strategic steps because they presented a model of Islamic higher education that no longer relied solely on the transmission of classical scholarly traditions but instead adopted modern institutional patterns, state administration, and a more standardized academic system. Thus, Islamic education policy during the Old Order era effectively laid the foundation for the transformation of Islamic education from a traditional model to an increasingly modern and bureaucratic one. (Kosim, Muqoddam, Mubarak, & Laila, 2023);(Mubadilah, 2024);(Azra, 2015).

This topic is also relevant to recent developments in Islamic education in Indonesia. In recent years, literature has shown a strengthening agenda for integrating religious and general knowledge (Munajah, 2022), the institutional transformation of IAIN/STAIN into UIN (Arifin, 2021), the expansion of PTKIN's functions, and demands for digitalization, religious moderation, and more accountable educational governance (Salahuddin, 2014). At the same time, the dominance of madrasahs and private Islamic educational institutions remains a key feature of Indonesia's Islamic education ecosystem, making the relationship between the state and Muslim civil society a strategic issue to this day. This trend demonstrates that many contemporary issues, from institutional recognition and curriculum standardization to the distribution of state support, are rooted in the political configuration of education established during the Old Order.

The primary issue underlying this study is the unresolved tension between the ideal of national educational justice and policy practices that often place Islamic education in a subordinate position, or at least not fully equal to general education. During the Old Order, this issue manifested as the dualism of educational governance, inconsistent policies regarding madrasahs and public schools, limited financial support, and instability in curriculum orientation due to changes in the country's political configuration. As the state strives to establish a uniform national education system, Islamic educational institutions must continually negotiate to maintain their Islamic identity while still gaining formal recognition. This is where the politics of Islamic education policy becomes a core issue, as it concerns the distribution of authority, the legitimacy of knowledge, and the direction of the formation of Muslim citizens within the Indonesian nation-state. (Fauzan, 2026);(Chairudin & Widodo, 2024);(Nofrizal & Hartati, 2026).

Several previous studies have provided an important foundation for understanding this issue. Azra (Azra, 2019) emphasized Islamic education as an arena for modernization and the reproduction of Muslim intellectuals; Steenbrink (Steenbrink, 1986) mapped the changes in Islamic boarding schools, madrasas, and schools in the modern era; Hefner (Hefner, 2008) showed that Islamic education in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, has always been linked to the political projects of citizenship and modernity; Lukens-Bull (Lukens-Bull, 2001) and Nilan (Nilan, 2009) highlighted the ability of Islamic educational institutions to maintain tradition while responding to social change. However, most of these studies examine Islamic education within a general historical horizon, cultural transformation, or the dynamics of modernization, without specifically analyzing the politics of Islamic education policy during the Old Order through the direct relationship among state actors, PTKI, and the implementation of national education policy.

Research gaps include: First, there are still limited studies that empirically explore how Islamic education policies during the Old Order era were produced, negotiated, and implemented by key actors at the institutional level. Second, studies on Islamic Education Institutions (PTKI) are often discussed as part of the history of Islamic education in general, even though these institutions are crucial for understanding the formation of educated Muslim elites and the state's strategy in managing religion. Third, there are few studies that simultaneously examine the role of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the dynamics of PTKI development, and the implementation of the national education system within a single socio-political analytical framework. Therefore, an empirical approach through interviews, observation, and archival review is crucial for connecting policy narratives with the historical experiences of actors and the institutional traces they leave behind. (Raihani, 2012);(Salim, 2020);(Woodward, Rohmaniyah, Amin, & Coleman, 2010).

Based on this background, this article aims to analyze the politics and policies of Islamic education during the Old Order era, focusing on the role of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the dynamics of PTKI Development, and the implementation of national education policy within Indonesia's socio-political context. Theoretically, this article is expected to enrich the study of the relationship between the state, power, and Islamic education by demonstrating that education policy is never neutral from ideological contestation. In practice, this article is expected to provide a reflective foundation for the formulation of a more just, inclusive, and historically conscious Islamic education policy today, particularly by strengthening institutional equality, governance, and the orientation of Islamic education Development in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach because it aims to deeply understand the meaning, experiences, and interpretations of historical actors and witnesses regarding the dynamics of Islamic education politics and policies during the Old Order era, rather than statistically testing relationships between variables.

Within this framework, field studies allow researchers to obtain empirical data directly from relevant social and institutional contexts, while historical studies trace the policy, institutional changes, and political contexts that shaped Islamic education during the 1945–1966 period. The combination of these two approaches is relevant to explaining the relationship between past events, policy actors, and their influence on the formation of the foundations of Islamic education in Indonesia. The research was conducted in several locations with historical and institutional significance, namely the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in Jakarta, PTKI (Islamic Higher Education Institutions) with roots in the Old Order era such as UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta and UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, as well as several madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) with historical continuity with that period. In qualitative research, the researcher acts as the primary instrument, directly present in the field to observe, interview, interpret, and relate empirical findings to their socio-historical context. (Creswell & Poth, 2016); (Tisdell, Merriam, & Stuckey-Peyrot, 2025).

The data sources in this study are classified as primary and secondary (Hafizah, Sari, Winanda, Hidayatullah, & Harmonedi, 2025). Primary data were obtained from informants deemed to have knowledge, experience, or direct involvement with Islamic education policy during the Old Order era, namely retired Ministry of Religious Affairs officials, senior lecturers at PTKI (Islamic Higher Education Institutions), historians of Islamic education, managers of Islamic educational institutions, and alumni of madrasahs or Islamic boarding schools from the 1950s–1960s. Subjects were selected using purposive sampling, which involves deliberately selecting informants based on criteria such as relevance, competence, historical experience, and the ability to provide in-depth information aligned with the research focus. This technique is considered appropriate in qualitative research because its primary goal is to obtain in-depth data rather than a statistical representation of the population. Meanwhile, secondary data comes from institutional archives, policy documents, laws and regulations, minutes, annual reports, speeches, books, and scholarly articles related to Islamic education policy and the history of national education. Thus, the structure of this research data source allows researchers to conduct layered readings: from the perspective of the subjects' experiences, the traces of policy documents, and previously developed academic interpretations (Patton, 2002); (Sugiyono, 2017).

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, observations, document analyses, and literature reviews. In-depth interviews were used to explore informants' narratives, interpretations, and experiences regarding the process of formulating and implementing Islamic education policies; observations were conducted to understand the institutional context, academic culture, and historical traces of the institutions studied; while documentation was used to examine archives, regulations, decrees, and institutional records related to the role of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the development of PTKI. The data were then analyzed interactively and thematically through the stages of data reduction,

data presentation, and drawing/verifying conclusions, so that patterns, themes, and relationships between categories could be systematically developed from the beginning to the end of the study. To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the study applied source and method triangulation, comparing interview results with documents and observation results, and conducting gradual verification of meanings to ensure that the researcher's interpretations were not separated from the historical context of the data. With this methodological design, this study is considered capable of producing valid and reliable findings in explaining how the dynamics of state politics shaped the direction of Islamic education policies during the Old Order. (Lincoln & Guba, 1988); (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Based on field data analysis, in-depth interviews, institutional observations, and archival and regulatory reviews, this study shows that state politics during the Old Order era greatly determined the direction of Islamic education policy. The main findings of this article can be grouped into five areas, namely: (1) the influence of national political dynamics on education policy, (2) the strategic role of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, (3) the process of establishing and developing PTKI, (4) the form of regulation of religious education in the national education system, and (5) the challenges and opportunities for Islamic education in the context of state policy. In general, the results of the study show that Islamic education during the Old Order era was not outside the state but rather was in a position to be accommodated and negotiated, but not yet fully equalized within the national education system.

The dynamics of national politics during the Old Order era influenced education policy

The first finding shows that education policy during the Old Order era was heavily influenced by national political instability. Rapid cabinet changes, shifts in the country's political orientation, and ideological competition between nationalism, Islam, and communism had direct implications for the direction of national education. A review of historical documents and narratives reveals that education was not positioned solely as a pedagogical matter, but rather as an instrument for shaping a new national identity. Therefore, the content of the curriculum, the position of religious education, and the relationship between public schools and Islamic educational institutions became areas of ideological struggle for influence.

This research finds that the Nasakom concept developed by President Sukarno led to a compromised education policy. In practice, the state attempted to accommodate the interests of Islamic groups without fully dominating the religious agenda in national education. This is evident in the recognition of religious instruction in public schools, although this was not universally mandated across all contexts. Field data and archival studies demonstrate that the resulting policies often represented political compromises, rather than decisions based

solely on pedagogical necessity. In other words, this research confirms that education during the Old Order era was an arena of active ideological contestation rather than a politically neutral sector.

These findings also demonstrate inconsistencies in the implementation of religious education policies across regions. Information from interviews and document reviews suggests that regions with a strong Islamic social base tended to more readily implement religious instruction, while regions more secular or influenced by left-wing forces exhibited more limited implementation. Thus, this research supports the view that Islamic education policies during the Old Order era cannot be understood solely from the text of laws but must be read within the context of the accompanying local and national politics.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs plays a strategic role in developing Islamic education.

The second finding indicates that the Ministry of Religious Affairs was the most strategic state actor in maintaining and developing Islamic education during the Old Order era. Based on institutional archives and interviews with informants familiar with the history of Islamic education policy, the Ministry of Religious Affairs' role was not limited to religious administration, but also encompassed the development of madrasahs, the placement of religious teachers, the Development of teaching materials, and the Development of Islamic higher education institutions. This demonstrates that Islamic education survived not only because of public support but also because of formal bureaucratic channels that continuously championed it within the state.

At the primary and secondary education levels, this study found that the Ministry of Religious Affairs attempted to organize madrasahs through curriculum standardization and institutional development. Field findings indicate that madrasahs flourished widely during the early years of independence, but varied greatly in quality, curriculum, and institutional status. In this context, the Ministry of Religious Affairs served as a liaison between community-based Islamic education and the state's formal education system. The research findings indicate that these efforts have not completely eliminated inequalities, but they are quite important in providing institutional recognition and direction for madrasahs.

At the same time, the research data also demonstrates the structural limitations faced by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, particularly in terms of budget, political support, and the institutional status of Islamic education, which is not yet equal to that of public schools. This finding is important because it emphasizes that the Ministry of Religious Affairs' strategic role operates amidst a less-than-stable bargaining position within the governmental configuration. Therefore, the research findings do not portray the Ministry of Religious Affairs as a completely dominant actor, but rather as an institution continually negotiating to expand the space for Islamic education amidst the country's ideological competition.

The establishment and development of Islamic Higher Education Institutions

(PTKI) demonstrate the institutionalization of Islamic higher education.

The third finding demonstrates that the establishment of PTKI was a crucial step in integrating Islamic education into the national education system. The historical data reviewed demonstrates a gradual process: from the establishment of the Islamic College (STI) at the beginning of independence, to the establishment of PTAIN in Yogyakarta and ADIA in Jakarta, and finally, the merger of the two into IAIN in 1960. This finding demonstrates that the state not only recognized Islamic education at the primary and secondary levels but also established a formal framework for Islamic higher education to develop Muslim intellectuals (Azra, 2012; Steenbrink, 1993).

The research findings indicate that PTKI has a dual function. First, as an academic institution for a more systematic study of Islamic sciences. Second, as a strategic instrument for the state and the Muslim community to produce a modern Muslim elite capable of bridging the traditions of Islamic scholarship with the demands of modern state administration. Interview findings and a review of institutional history indicate that this model of Islamic higher education serves as a meeting point between the pesantren-madrasah heritage and the modern university system. Thus, PTKI (Islamic Higher Education Institutions) emerged not merely as new educational institutions, but as a form of epistemic and institutional transformation in Indonesian Islamic education (Hefner, 2009; Azra, 2012).

Interestingly, this research also shows that the legacy of the Old Order continues to influence the development of PTKI/PTKIN to the present day. Historical traces in successor institutions such as UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta and UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta demonstrate that the transformation from PTAIN/ADIA/IAIN to UIN was not a discontinuous change, but rather a continuation of a long-standing project to integrate religious and general knowledge. In this regard, the research findings provide a clearer historical dimension to the discourse on knowledge integration, which is now often considered a contemporary agenda, even though its institutional roots date back to the Old Order era.

Religious education in the National Education System Law is accommodating but limited.

The fourth finding indicates that the regulation of religious instruction in Law No. 4 of 1950, in conjunction with Law No. 12 of 1954, is compromised. A review of legal documents and policy archives shows that the state recognizes religious instruction as part of the education system, but its teaching in state schools is not formulated in an absolute and uniform manner. In practice, religious instruction is provided under certain conditions, including reliance on parental request and the Ministry of Religious Affairs' readiness to provide teachers. This finding indicates that state recognition of religious education does exist, but remains limited in its administrative capacity (Daulay, 2014; Boland, 1982).

This study found that this regulation is the result of a political compromise between Islamic groups and left-wing secular groups. On the one hand, Islamic groups succeeded in incorporating religion into national education. On the other hand, groups opposing religious domination within the state still succeeded in

limiting the mandatory nature of religious instruction in the public school system. The results of this study, therefore, demonstrate that the education law during the Old Order era is more appropriately read as a document of political negotiation rather than simply a technical educational tool. This aligns with findings on Islamic education politics, which position the state as an arena for ideological bargaining (Sirozi, 2004; Hefner, 2009).

The data also show that the implementation of religious instruction was determined more by bureaucratic capacity and local social conditions than by the law's normative formulation alone. In certain regions, religious instruction could be conducted more formally due to the availability of teachers and community support. In other regions, implementation was weak or even minimal. Thus, the results of this study confirm that the legalization of religious instruction during the Old Order era did not automatically result in equitable implementation. Instead, a pattern of formal recognition emerged without uniform implementation (Steenbrink, 1993; Daulay, 2014).

Islamic education faces significant challenges, but also offers structural opportunities.

The fifth finding indicates that Islamic education during the Old Order era was in an ambivalent situation: facing numerous obstacles, but simultaneously offering significant opportunities for development. Among the main challenges identified by this research were the unequal position of madrasahs relative to public schools, weak budgetary support, limited numbers of trained teachers, and inconsistent policy implementation due to changes in national politics. Field data and documentation indicate that Islamic educational institutions often had to survive through community support, as state support was not yet comprehensive and equitable (Daulay, 2014; Nilan, 2009).

However, this research also identified several strategic opportunities. First, the existence of the Ministry of Religious Affairs provided a formal channel for the state to recognize Islamic education. Second, the recognition of religious instruction in public schools opened up space for the expansion of Islamic education beyond madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools. Third, the establishment of Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTAI) created a new intellectual base for the development of more academic and modern Islamic thought. Fourth, social support for religious education remained strong, giving Islamic educational institutions high social legitimacy. These findings demonstrate that Islamic education is not merely an object of policy, but also a social actor capable of survival and adaptation (Lukens-Bull, 2001; Raihani, 2012).

These findings are important because they demonstrate that the development of Islamic education cannot be explained solely through the categories of "*marginalization*" or "*success*". Rather, what emerges is a continuous process of negotiation: the state provides space, but with limited resources; society supports it, but with limited resources; and Islamic educational institutions adapt without losing their fundamental identity. Thus, this study concludes that the Old Order era laid a dual foundation for Indonesian Islamic education: a formal institutional foundation through state recognition, and a socio-cultural foundation through the support of the Muslim community (Azra, 2012; Hefner, 2009).

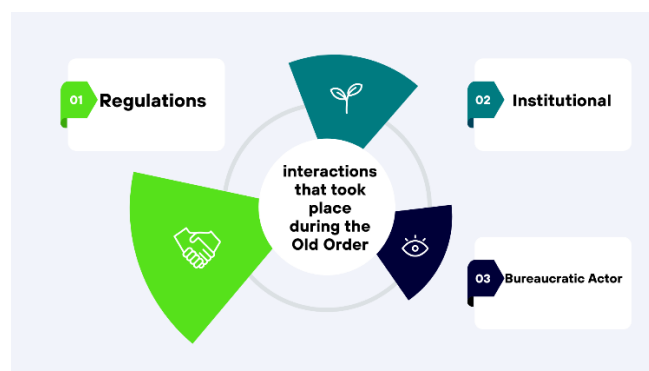


Figure 1: interactions that took place during the Old Order

From these five findings, it appears that the results of this study confirm the general thesis in the literature that Islamic education has always interacted closely with the state, but at the same time provide novelty because it shows in more detail how this interaction took place during the Old Order through three main channels: Regulation, Institutions, and Bureaucratic Actors. While most previous studies have emphasized the transformation of Islamic education in general or in the contemporary context, this article adds a historical-empirical dimension to the negotiation of Islamic education during the formation phase of the modern Indonesian state.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that Islamic education policy during the Old Order cannot be understood as a stand-alone educational policy, but rather as a product of the power relations between the state, ideology, and socio-religious groups. From the perspective of the theory of state-education relations, education policy often reflects the state's efforts to build legitimacy, manage diversity, and shape citizens in line with dominant ideological orientations. The results of this study align with the view that education is a strategic political instrument, particularly during the postcolonial state formation period. In the context of Indonesia, 1945–1966, the state attempted to build a national education system amid tensions among nationalism, Islam, and communism. Therefore, the recognition of Islamic education, whether through madrasas, religious instruction in public schools, or PTKI, is more accurately understood as a form of political accommodation rather than the complete victory of one ideological force. This finding strengthens the arguments of (Azra, 2019) and (Hefner, 2008) that Islamic education in Indonesia developed through a process of negotiation with the state, rather than a completely autonomous path (Lukens-Bull, 2001).

The role of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in this study's findings can be understood through the concept of state mediation, in which the state acts not only as a controller but also as an intermediary in the articulation of socio-religious interests in public policy. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has proven to be the primary institutional channel for maintaining the sustainability of Islamic education amidst the dominance of national educational logic, which tends to be generally oriented. This role is crucial because, without bureaucratic actors specifically advocating for Islamic education, madrasas and Islamic higher education institutions would likely remain on the fringes of the system. Here, the

study's findings support Steenbrink (Steenbrink, 1986) and Daulay (2014), who assert that the existence of madrasas and Islamic higher education is highly dependent on state institutional support (Sunhaji, 2017). This study also adds that this support has been limited from the outset, as the Ministry of Religious Affairs operates within a political space that does not fully support the agenda of strengthening Islamic education. Thus, the study's primary contribution is to demonstrate that the role of the Ministry of Religious Affairs is not merely administrative but also political and ideological.

The findings regarding the establishment and development of Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTAI) indicate that the institutionalization of Islamic higher education is part of the modernization process of Islamic education in Indonesia. Within the framework of educational modernization theory, the transformation from traditional institutions to formal-modern institutions is usually characterized by curriculum standardization, institutional bureaucratization, and the establishment of new academic authorities. The results of this study show that the emergence of STI, PTAIN, ADIA, and then IAIN was not simply the addition of new institutions, but rather the formation of an Islamic intellectual space more compatible with the modern state. This is in line with the findings of Nakamura and Nishino (Nakamura & Nishino, 1993), Abdullah (Abdullah, 2017), that Islamic higher education in Indonesia developed in response to the need to produce intellectual scholars capable of operating in the academic world, bureaucracy, and wider society. The novelty of this study lies in the assertion that this process had already begun to strengthen during the Old Order era, so that the transformation of PTKIN in subsequent eras actually has quite deep historical roots. In other words, the integration of religious knowledge and general knowledge that is now on the PTKIN agenda is not merely a contemporary innovation, but a continuation of the policy foundations pioneered since the beginning of the republic.

The regulation of religious education in Law No. 4 of 1950, in conjunction with Law No. 12 of 1954, can be interpreted as a form of policy compromise in a pluralistic and polarized society. From the perspective of public policy theory, compromise policies generally arise when the state must accommodate conflicting demands without fully satisfying either party. This is evident in the case of religious education in public schools: it is formally recognized but not made fully mandatory or uniform. This finding reinforces the reading of Boland (Boland, 1970) and Sirozi (Sirozi, 2004) that Islamic education in Indonesia is often the result of political bargaining. However, this study further demonstrates that this compromise has practical consequences, including uneven implementation across regions, dependence on local bureaucratic capacity, and uncertainty about the status of religious education in school practice. An important implication is that normative recognition in law does not automatically lead to substantive equality. In other words, the state has recognized religious education, but has not yet fully provided the structural conditions that enable equitable and quality implementation.

Findings on the challenges and opportunities of Islamic education reveal a pattern of marginal inclusion, whereby Islamic education is included in the

national system, but not on a fully equal footing. Madrasahs are granted formal space, but their status, funding, and academic legitimacy remain subject to ongoing negotiation. This situation aligns with the literature that views Indonesian Islamic education as a field constantly shifting between tradition and modernity, between community support and state regulation, and between strengthening religious identity and demands for national citizenship (Lukens-Bull, 2001). This research contributes by demonstrating that this ambivalent pattern has been present since the Old Order era. This means that many contemporary problems in Islamic education, such as institutional equality, curriculum integration, and financial support, are not new issues, but rather historical legacies of state policy design that was initially accommodative but not fully egalitarian.

The theoretical implications of this research strengthen the argument that Islamic education studies should be situated within the political framework of education, not merely within the history of institutions or curriculum development. Islamic education is proven to be more than just a pedagogical domain, but a field in which the state defines the relationship between religion, nationality, and modernity. This research also enriches discussions on the formation of the Indonesian state by demonstrating that the education sector is one of the most visible arenas for negotiating Islam's position within the republic. Meanwhile, the practical implications are quite broad. For policymakers, this research emphasizes the importance of developing Islamic education policies that go beyond formal recognition but also ensure equitable funding, teacher quality, diploma legitimacy, and institutional integration. For PTKI/PTKIN (Islamic boarding school) and madrasah (Islamic school) administrators, this finding provides a historical understanding that the strength of Islamic education has emerged from a combination of community support and the ability to negotiate with the state. Such historical awareness is crucial to ensure that the current Islamic education reform agenda does not escape its structural roots.

Several factors may explain why the research results demonstrate a compromising policy pattern. Supporting factors included the strong social base of the Muslim community, the existence of the Ministry of Religious Affairs as an institutional advocate, and the need for the new state to maintain national integration while still providing space for religious aspirations. However, there were also factors that contradicted the initial hope of strengthening Islamic education, such as political instability, intense ideological competition, state fiscal constraints, and the dominant national-secular orientation in the formulation of general education. These factors led the state to provide limited space, rather than fully strengthening it. Thus, the results of this study demonstrate that the direction of Islamic education policy during the Old Order era was not primarily determined by the quality of pedagogical arguments, but rather by the balance of political power and the state's institutional capacity at the time.

Compared with previous research, this article confirms the general finding that Islamic education in Indonesia has always interacted closely with the state, but also offers important insights. Azra (2012), Hefner (2009), and Steenbrink (1993) have demonstrated the modernization, negotiation, and transformation of Islamic education throughout Indonesian history. This study complements these

findings by more specifically demonstrating how this process operated during the Old Order era through regulatory channels, the Ministry of Religious Affairs bureaucracy, and the institutionalization of Islamic higher education institutions (PTKI). At this point, the research's contribution lies in its ability to connect the macro dimension the national political configuration with the meso and micro dimensions of institutional policies, actors' experiences, and variations in implementation on the ground. Thus, this research not only adds to the narrative of the history of Islamic education but also helps explain the historical origins of various policy patterns that remain evident today.

This study has several limitations that require critical attention. First, because it uses a qualitative-historical approach, the results are highly dependent on the availability of archives, the quality of documents, and the memories of informants. In studies of the Old Order period, not all documents are available in their entirety, and informants' narratives may be influenced by temporal distance, selective memory, or retrospective interpretation. Second, this research focuses on a few institutions and locations of significant historical significance, thus failing to fully capture the diverse experiences of other regions in Indonesia, which may have had different political and educational dynamics. Third, the research emphasizes the perspectives of the state and institutional elites; the voices of grassroots groups such as village madrasah teachers, Islamic boarding school students (*santri*), or students' families during that period have not been optimally explored. These limitations do not invalidate the findings, but rather indicate that the results should be read as in-depth representations of specific patterns, rather than blanket generalizations for all of Indonesia.

For future improvement, follow-up research should expand the scope to compare variations in the implementation of Islamic education policies across provinces or regions. Furthermore, the oral history approach could be further developed to capture the experiences of non-elite groups that have been underrepresented in the history of education policy. Future research could also combine analysis of national archives with local archives, contemporary newspapers, and documents from Islamic organizations to enrich historical reconstruction. Furthermore, a comparative study of the Old Order, New Order, and Reformation eras would be invaluable for more comprehensively examining the continuity and changes in patterns of Islamic educational policy. With such a focus, Islamic education studies would not only yield historical understanding but also serve as a basis for reflecting on more responsive, equitable, and sustainable policies.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the politics and policies of Islamic education during the Old Order were shaped by a very close relationship between the configuration of state power, the struggle for national ideology, and the institutional struggles of Muslims. National political dynamics have been shown to influence the direction of educational policy, resulting in Islamic education developing through a pattern of compromised accommodation: formally recognized, but not yet fully achieving an equal position in the national education

system. In this context, the Ministry of Religious Affairs emerged as a strategic actor, maintaining the continuity of madrasahs, expanding religious instruction in public schools, and laying the foundations for Islamic higher education through the establishment of PTAI (Islamic Higher Education Institutions). These findings provide a deeper understanding that the development of Islamic education is not merely a pedagogical process, but rather the result of historical negotiations between the state, religion, and society. This study simultaneously strengthens previous research findings on the strong relationship between Islamic education and state policy, but provides a new contribution by showing in more detail how this relationship operated during the Old Order through regulation, bureaucracy, and the institutionalization of Islamic higher education. Socially and culturally, this study confirms the crucial role of Islamic education in the formation of religious and national identity; academically, this research enriches the study of the politics of Islamic education by positioning the Old Order as a key phase in the formation of policy foundations that have been influential to the present day. However, this research still has limitations in terms of location coverage, reliance on archives and informant memories, and unequal representation of regional and grassroots group experiences. Therefore, future research needs to expand the study area, deepen the oral history approach, and compare across periods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Islamic education politics in Indonesia.

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