
How religious education policies work in practice: An empirical model from a school Qur'anic program in Indonesia

AAM MUAMAR^{1*}, JOHAR PERMANA², DANNY MEIRAWAN³, AND EKA PRIHATIN⁴

Abstract

This study investigates the implementation of religious education policies through an empirical analysis of a Qur'anic program (Sekolah Mengaji) in Indonesia. Using a qualitative research design, the study incorporates in-depth interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers and observations in seven public junior secondary schools in Bandung regency. The findings reveal that religious education policy is enacted through a multi-layered process influenced by teacher agency, school culture, family involvement, and governance, rather than a direct translation of formal regulations. While policy implementation yielded positive outcomes in Qur'anic literacy and religious habituation, deeper character internalization remained inconsistent and context dependent. Key mechanisms such as teacher role modeling, interpersonal relationships, and instructional discretion were identified as central to linking policy intentions with daily practices. This study offers a model for understanding policy implementation variation across schools and contributes to the scholarship by focusing on the practical mechanisms that shape religious education policies.

Keywords

Policy implementation, Qur'anic program, religious education policy, school culture, teacher agency

Article History

Received 10 August 2025

Accepted 18 November 2025

How to Cite

Muamar, A., Permana, J., Meirawan, D., & Prihatin, E. (2025). How religious education policies work in practice: An empirical model from a school Qur'anic program in Indonesia. *Indonesian Research Journal in Education | IRJE |*, 9(2), 1445 - 1461. <https://doi.org/10.22437/irje.v9i02.52511>

¹ Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia, Corresponding author: aammuamar@upi.edu

^{2,3,4} Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

Introduction

Religious education policy has emerged globally as a critical governance issue, not regarding whether religion should be present in schools, but how religious objectives are translated into routines, assessments, and institutional accountability within modern education systems. In many Muslim-majority contexts, schools are tasked with cultivating piety, ethical conduct, and social cohesion while also meeting national standards for academic achievement, inclusion, and citizenship education. Indonesia offers a particularly significant case, as religious education is structurally embedded in the national education system, shaped by decentralization, multi-ministry governance, and strong local initiatives (Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022; Thoha et al., 2023).

Recent studies indicate that reforms in Islamic education and religious curriculum policy often intensify tensions between national policy goals and local school realities. The success of policy implementation depends heavily on institutional capacity, leadership quality, and local interpretations (Akrim et al., 2022; Tamami, 2024). In this context, school-based Qur'anic programs, especially tahfidz initiatives, have grown rapidly as visible mechanisms through which religious education policy materialized in everyday school practice. These programs influence learning schedules, teacher roles, assessment systems, and even the formation of school identity (Kalimatusyaro, 2024; Nurhaliza, 2024; Qolbi, 2025).

Despite their growth, Qur'anic programs in formal schools reveal a persistent challenge widely documented in international policy research: policy implementation is not a direct translation of policy texts into practice. It is, instead, a social and organizational process that is shaped by how people at the school level interpret, adapt, and negotiate. Contemporary implementation studies emphasize that teachers and school leaders act as policy interpreters, not passive executors, translating abstract directives into workable routines under competing demands and limited resources (Rossi, 2025). This process is especially complex in religious education, as schools must balance spiritual and moral objectives with administrative accountability and measurable educational outcomes. Furthermore, formal curricula cannot easily standardize religious learning, which heavily relies on habituation, authority, and institutional culture (Guhin, 2020; Musyahid, 2023).

Empirical studies in Indonesia confirm that the effectiveness of religious education policy implementation depends on coordination across governance levels, school leadership quality, teacher preparedness, and organizational arrangements, all of which vary significantly across regions and institutions (Tamami, 2024; Thoha et al., 2023). However, much of the existing literature frames religious education primarily as a curricular or normative domain, overlooking its implementation as a system with identifiable mechanisms and causal dynamics (Akrim et al., 2022; Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022).

This limitation is more apparent in the growing body of research on tahfidz and Qur'anic programs in Indonesian schools. While recent studies have documented program planning, instructional methods, memorization targets, and perceived impacts on discipline, spirituality, and character development (Lutfiana, 2025; Nurhaliza, 2024; Qolbi, 2025), they often remain institution-specific and analytically fragmented. These studies offer valuable descriptive insights but provide limited explanatory power for understanding how policy intentions are

translated into sustained practices across different school contexts. Additionally, policy-oriented analyses of Islamic education tend to focus on legal frameworks, curriculum regulations, or ministerial authority without investigating how these policy instruments are enacted within school organizations (Bakar, 2024; Tamami, 2024; Usman, 2024). This gap in the literature suggests that research is needed to explore how policy design, organizational conditions, and actor-level practices interact to shape the implementation of Qur'anic programs in formal schooling.

Furthermore, recent developments in Indonesia's religious and character education emphasize integrating religious values into school culture, positioning schools as key spaces for translating policy ideals into lived educational experiences. The Indonesian government's growing focus on character development through religious education aligns with global trends that emphasize moral and civic education alongside academic achievement. However, these efforts require careful consideration of how local cultural contexts and community dynamics affect the implementation of such policies. As schools vary greatly in their capacity to internalize these values and deliver meaningful religious education, a deeper understanding of local adaptation mechanisms is crucial for the long-term success of religious education reforms.

In addition, the importance of teacher development cannot be overstated. Teachers, as frontline implementers of policy, are responsible for delivering the curriculum but also for fostering an environment in which religious values are continuously reinforced. Teacher professional development in both pedagogical and spiritual dimensions is crucial to the successful implementation of Qur'anic programs. Research indicates that teacher training, ongoing mentoring, and appropriate professional support are vital for ensuring that policy objectives are effectively translated into classroom practice. These aspects should be embedded in the policy design to enhance both the quality and sustainability of religious education in Indonesian schools.

Recent developments in Indonesian religious and character education further illustrate the importance of an implementation-focused approach. Since 2020, educational reforms have increasingly emphasized character formation and the integration of religious values into school culture, positioning schools as key sites for translating policy ideals into lived educational experiences (Indriani, 2024; Suwarni, 2024). Empirical research indicates that the success of these initiatives depends on teacher competence, leadership mediation, infrastructure, and local adaptation. These factors align with overarching implementation theory but necessitate contextual clarification within religious education environments (Yani et al., 2025). Furthermore, studies on religious moderation and pluralism highlight additional governance challenges, as Qur'anic programs must balance devotional objectives with social harmony and inclusivity (Mukhibat, 2024; Musyahid, 2023). These findings suggest that religious education policy operates within a multi-objective environment, making it insufficient to analyze such policies solely through normative or curricular lenses. There is a growing need for empirically grounded models that can explain variation in implementation outcomes and identify the mechanisms through which policy is enacted at the school level (Abadi & Alfayn, 2025; Thoha et al., 2023).

In response to this gap, the present study develops an empirical implementation model based on a school Qur'anic program in Indonesia to address the central question: how do

religious education policies operate in practice within school organizations? Rather than treating the Qur'anic program as an isolated instructional innovation, the study conceptualizes it as an implementation arena where policy goals are enacted through planning instruments, instructional routines, assessment practices, and institutional engagement with parents and local stakeholders (Lutfiana, 2025; Qolbi, 2025). Drawing on contemporary implementation perspectives that emphasize the role of frontline actors and organizational conditions, the model identifies key components such as policy signals, leadership mediation, resource allocation, teacher interpretation, and monitoring mechanisms, examining how their interaction produces stable or fragile implementation patterns (Rossi, 2025; Abadi & Alfayn, 2025). The aim is not to generalize a single school's experience as a universal template but to construct a transferable explanatory framework for comparative analysis across contexts. This study bridges descriptive research on Qur'anic programs with policy implementation theory, providing a structured account of how religious education policy is translated into everyday school practice (Bakar, 2024; Nurhaliza, 2024; Tamami, 2024).

This study contributes in three ways: first, it advances international scholarship on religious education by shifting attention from debates over aims and content to the mechanisms that determine how policy intentions are realized in practice (Guhin, 2020; Mukhibat, 2024). Second, it offers policy-relevant insights for Indonesia and comparable education systems by clarifying how governance structures, school capacity, and teacher agency shape the enacted form of Qur'anic programs and their character education objectives (Abadi & Alfayn, 2025; Thoha et al., 2023; Yani et al., 2025). Third, it contributes to the growing empirical literature on tahfidz and school Qur'anic programs by explaining variation in implementation outcomes, including differences in program consistency, student participation, assessment credibility, and institutional sustainability (Afkarina, 2025; Baidowi, 2025; Mustafa, 2025; Qolbi, 2025). By articulating implementation processes through an empirical model, this study positions school Qur'anic programs not merely as moral initiatives but as complex policy enactments that can be systematically analyzed, evaluated, and improved within contemporary education systems.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore how religious education policy is enacted in school practice through the implementation of a school Qur'anic program (Sekolah Mengaji) in Indonesia. A qualitative approach was selected because the research focused on understanding the implementation processes, actor interpretations, and organizational dynamics that shape how policy operates at the school level. Qualitative inquiry is widely acknowledged as suitable for policy implementation research, particularly when the objective is to elucidate how frontline actors interpret, adapt, and negotiate policies within institutional and sociocultural contexts (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2023).

The study was conducted in seven public junior secondary schools (SMP Negeri) in Kabupaten Bandung, West Java. These schools were purposively selected because they actively implemented the Sekolah Mengaji program and represented variation in school contexts and implementation conditions. Kabupaten Bandung was chosen as the research setting due to its strong religious culture, institutional support for Qur'anic education, and the formalization of

the Sekolah Mengaji policy at the local government level, making it a relevant site for examining policy enactment in practice.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on individuals with direct responsibility for program implementation. The primary informants were seven Islamic Religious Education teachers (Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam, PAI) who served as official mentors to Qur'anic teachers in their respective schools. These informants were chosen for their strategic roles in coordinating, supervising, and evaluating the program, as well as for their extensive professional experience in religious education. Their positions allowed them to provide informed accounts of both formal policy expectations and everyday implementation realities (Guest et al., 2024).

Data were gathered via comprehensive semi-structured interviews and direct observations. Interviews examined critical implementation factors, encompassing instructional methodologies, educator proficiency, student religious conduct, institutional support, implementation obstacles, and program viability. Semi-structured interviews allowed for consistency across informants while providing the flexibility to explore context-specific experiences and emerging issues (Kallio et al., 2020). Observations were conducted to document daily Qur'anic learning practices, religious routines, and teacher–student interactions, providing contextual evidence to complement interview data and strengthen analytic validity.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis in NVivo. An inductive coding approach was applied, allowing themes to emerge naturally from the data rather than being predefined. Through iterative coding and refinement, seven core themes were identified: program impact, instructional strategies, supporting factors, implementation challenges, interpersonal relationships, teacher role modeling, and program governance. These themes reflect recurring patterns across schools and form the empirical foundation for the implementation model developed in this study.

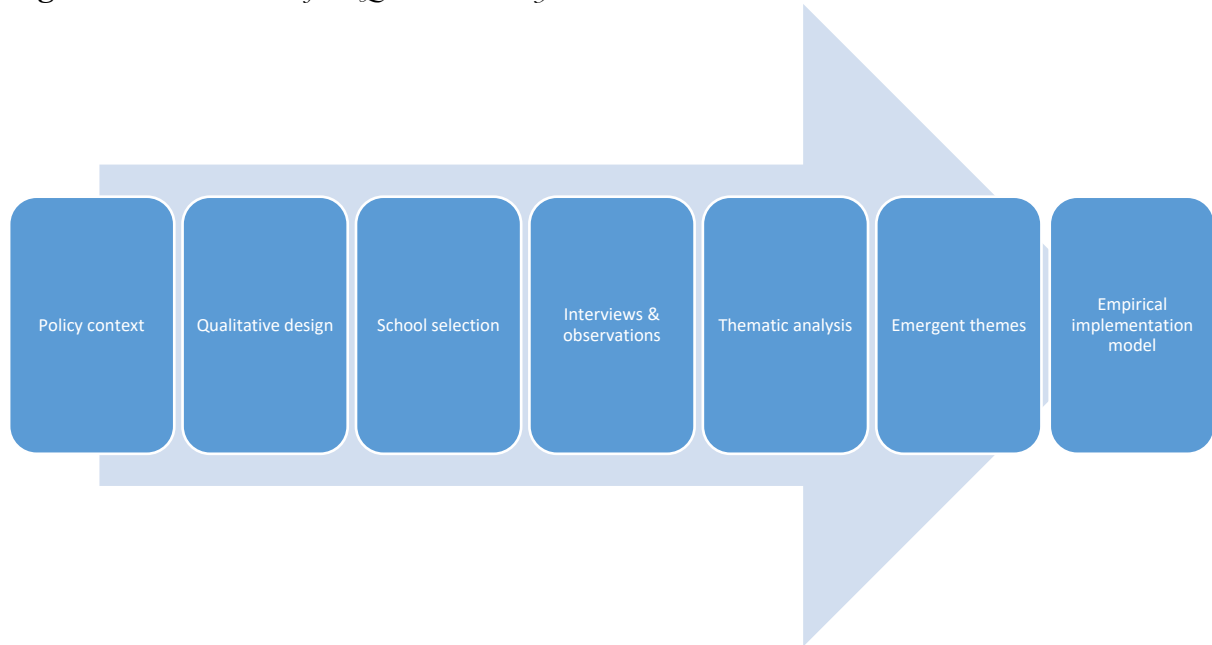
To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed data triangulation between interviews and observations, maintained a transparent analytic process, and grounded interpretations in empirical evidence. A comprehensive contextual description was employed to facilitate transferability, allowing readers to evaluate the relevance of the findings to analogous educational and policy environments (Miles et al., 2020; Nowell et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the research design incorporated member checking, in which key informants reviewed the findings to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations. This step helped reduce bias among the researchers and ensured that the results accurately reflected participants' feelings. The integration of both interviews and observations enabled richer data collection. It enhanced the credibility of the study's conclusions by providing multiple lenses through which to understand the policy implementation process.

In addition to interviews and observations, document analysis was also employed as part of the data collection process. Official school records, policy documents, and lesson plans related to the Sekolah Mengaji program were reviewed to gain a deeper understanding of the formal structures and written expectations underlying the program. This helped triangulate the data and provided a more comprehensive view of how religious education policies are implemented in practice. By examining both formal documents and the lived experiences, the study captured the gap between policy design and real-world enactment.

Through this qualitative approach, the study provides an empirically grounded account of how religious education policy operates in practice, focusing on mechanisms of implementation rather than solely on policy design.

Figure 1. *Research Flow of the Qualitative Study*

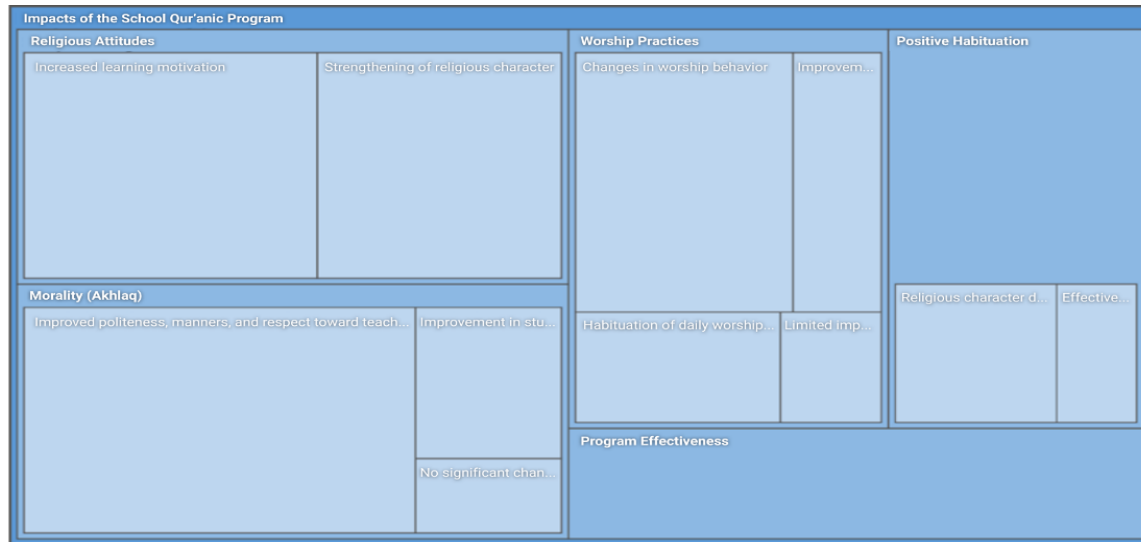


Findings

The qualitative findings reveal how the Sekolah Mengaji program serves as a concrete arena for implementing religious education policy at the school level. Analysis of in-depth interviews with seven Islamic Religious Education teachers and field observations across seven public junior secondary schools in Kabupaten Bandung generated seven interrelated themes that explain how the policy is enacted, supported, constrained, and sustained in practice.

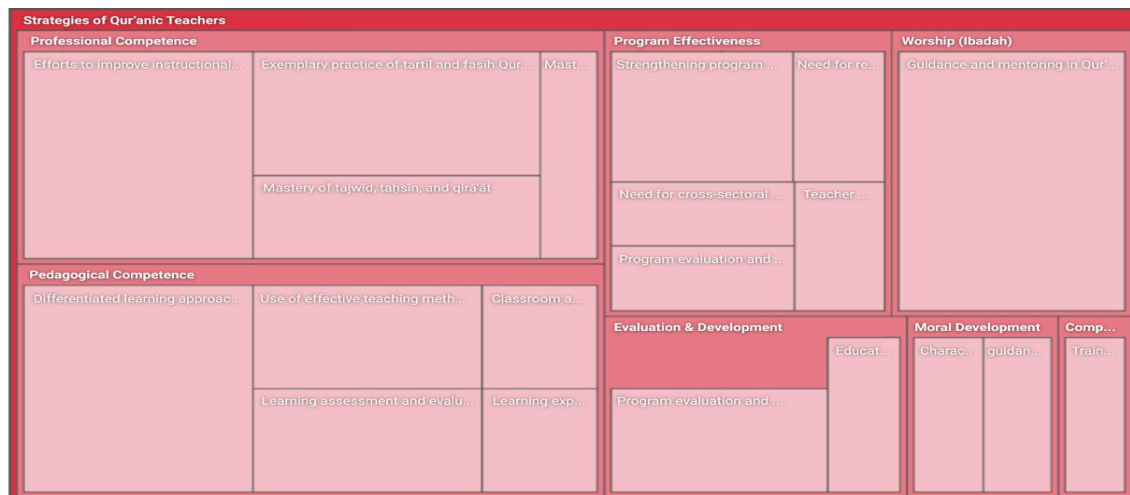
First, the program demonstrates a clear and consistent impact on students' basic Qur'anic literacy and religious routines. Schools reported substantial improvements in students' ability to read the Qur'an, memorize short surahs, and recite daily prayers, allowing them to participate more confidently in religious activities. In addition to technical religious skills, the program contributed to the habituation of religious practices, such as routine tadarus (Qur'anic recitation), collective prayer, and the use of religious greetings in daily school life. While character-related changes, such as politeness, discipline, and respect toward teachers, were observed, informants noted that these outcomes were uneven and more gradual compared to improvements in Qur'anic reading skills. This indicates that the program's strongest effects currently lie in cognitive and behavioral habituation, with moral internalization still requiring further reinforcement.

Figure 2. Hierarchy chart of program impacts



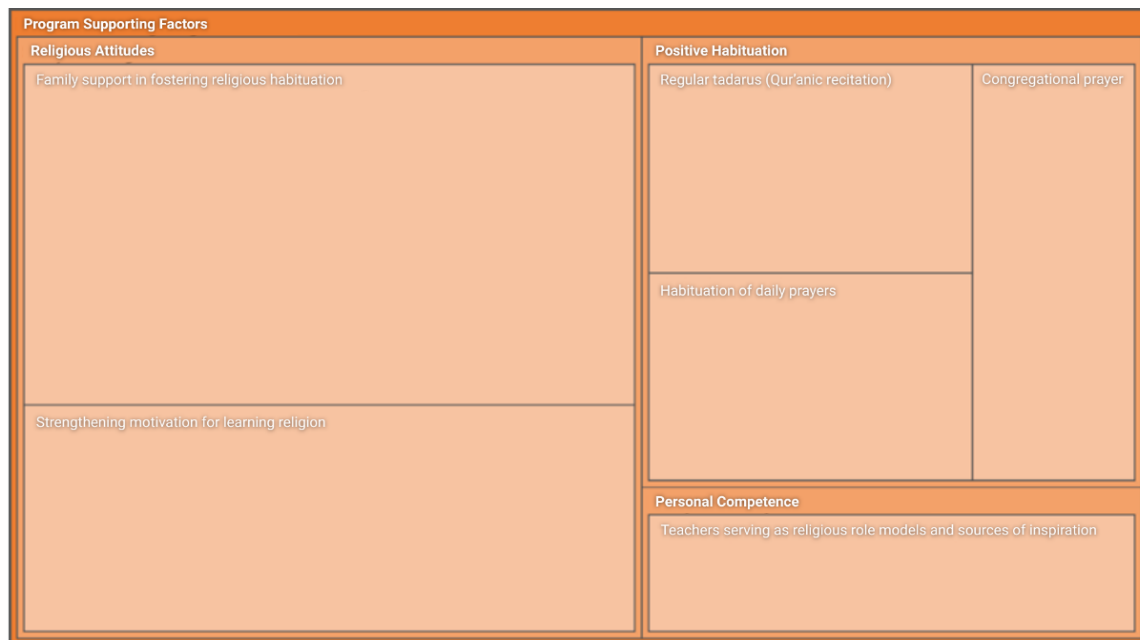
Second, the effectiveness of implementation is strongly influenced by the instructional strategies employed by Qur'anic teachers. Teachers commonly used differentiated grouping based on students' Qur'anic literacy levels, separating beginners from more fluent readers to ensure targeted guidance. Repetitive practice, direct modeling, and routine-based instruction were the dominant pedagogical approaches. The findings show that teachers' professional backgrounds, particularly prior experience in pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) or madrasah settings, enhanced instructional quality and credibility. However, limited variation in teaching methods and minimal use of instructional technology constrained learning innovation. Continuous mentoring by PAI teachers (Islamic Religious Education teachers) emerged as a key mechanism for maintaining instructional consistency across schools.

Figure 3. Hierarchy chart of Qur'anic teaching strategies



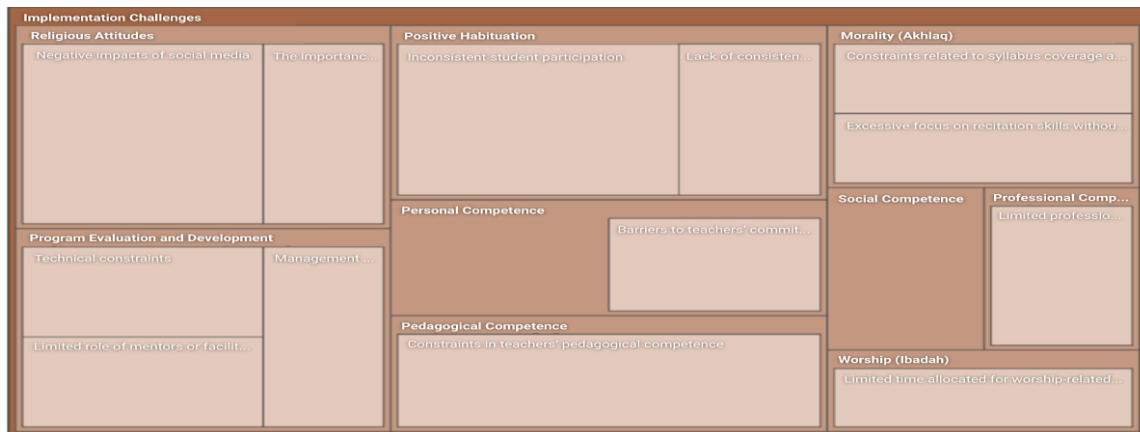
Third, several supporting factors were found to strengthen program implementation. Family support, especially prior habituation of religious practices at home, significantly enhanced students' engagement and learning readiness. At the school level, pre-existing religious routines provided a conducive foundation for integrating the program into daily schedules. Another critical support factor was the personal example set by Qur'anic teachers, whose discipline, demeanor, and consistency reinforced students' religious learning beyond formal instruction. These findings highlight that the success of policy implementation depends not only on formal program design but also on alignment between school culture and home environments.

Figure 4. *Hierarchy chart of supporting factors*



Fourth, the study identified several challenges that constrained the implementation effectiveness. Time allocation emerged as a recurring issue, as Qur'anic activities were often scheduled at the end of the school day when students' attention and energy were depleted. Variation in teacher competence also posed challenges, particularly where pedagogical skills and classroom management were limited. External influences, including students' exposure to social media and inconsistent parental support, further weakened religious habituation outside of school. Additionally, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms were found to be primarily administrative, focusing on attendance rather than assessing learning quality or character outcomes.

Figure 5. Hierarchy chart of implementation challenges



Fifth, interpersonal relationships facilitated policy enactment. Positive collaboration between Qur'anic teachers, PAI teachers, and school staff enabled smoother coordination and problem-solving. Teachers from local communities were perceived as more socially embedded and more effective at engaging students. However, communication between Qur'anic teachers and parents remained limited, thereby reducing opportunities to reinforce learning outcomes at home. Strengthening this relational dimension was identified as an important leverage point for improving program consistency.

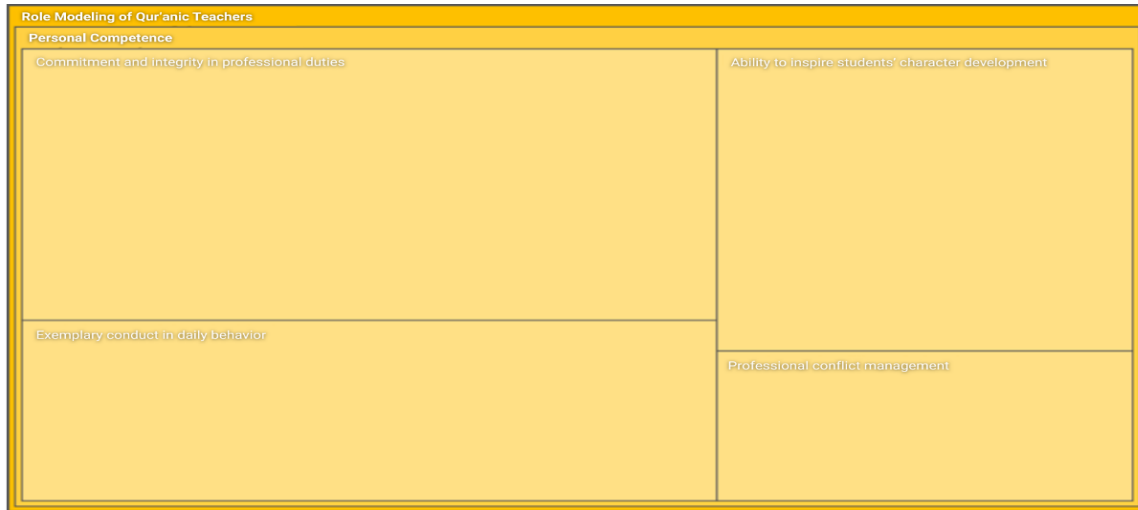
Figure 6. Hierarchy chart of interpersonal relationships



Sixth, teacher role modeling emerged as a central mechanism linking policy implementation to character formation. Qur'anic teachers were widely perceived as moral exemplars whose behavior influenced students more powerfully than formal instruction alone. Their commitment, integrity, and consistency in religious practice enhanced teacher authority and student imitation. Where such role modeling was strong, students showed greater motivation

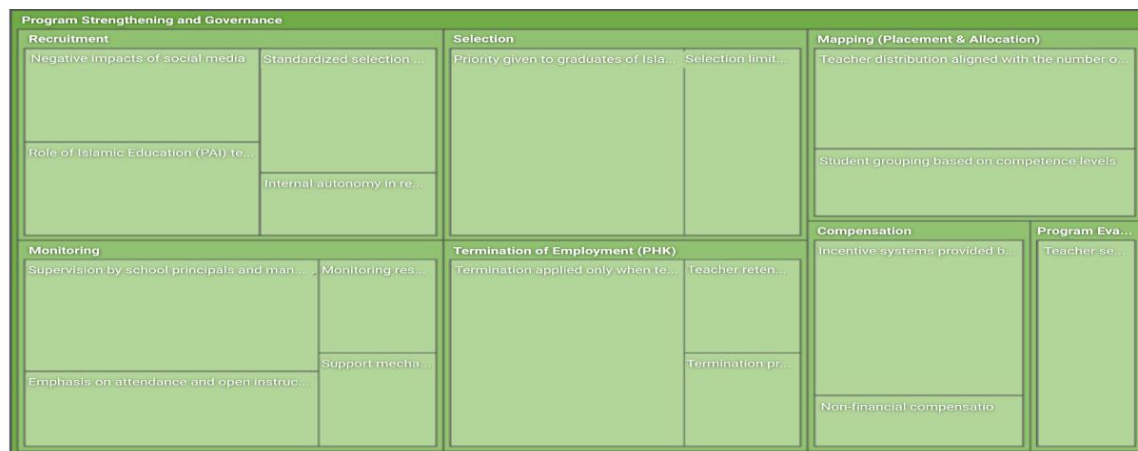
and behavioral alignment with religious values. This finding underscores that religious education policy operates not only through instructional content but also through embodied practices.

Figure 7. *Hierarchy chart of teacher role modeling*



Finally, program governance and reinforcement were identified as critical determinants of sustainability. Effective implementation relied on structured recruitment and selection of Qur'anic teachers, alignment between teacher availability and class size, provision of incentives, and regular supervision by school leadership and PAI teachers. However, limited financial compensation and uneven evaluation practices affected teacher motivation and long-term commitment. Governance arrangements thus functioned as enabling or constraining conditions that shaped the consistency with which policy intentions were translated into daily practice.

Figure 8. *Hierarchy chart of program governance and reinforcement*



Taken together, these findings show that the Sekolah Mengaji program operates as a multi-layered implementation system in which policy goals are mediated by teacher agency, school culture, family support, and governance structures. The interaction of these elements explains why similar policy directives produce varied outcomes across schools and provides the empirical foundation for the implementation model proposed in this study.

Discussion

This study set out to explain how religious education policies operate in practice by examining the implementation of a school Qur'anic program in Indonesia. The findings demonstrate that religious education policy does not function as a linear transmission of formal directives into classrooms but rather as a multi-layered enactment process mediated by teacher agency, institutional routines, relational dynamics, and governance structures. This aligns with contemporary policy implementation scholarship that conceptualizes policy as enacted, interpreted, and negotiated by actors within specific organizational contexts, rather than simply delivered as intended (Ball et al., 2022; Honig, 2023; Rossi, 2025). In the case of the Sekolah Mengaji program, policy effectiveness emerged not solely from the existence of formal regulation but from the interaction between policy signals and school-level capacities to translate them into stable daily practices.

One key contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that the strongest immediate effects of the Qur'anic program were observed in students' technical religious competencies and behavioral habituation, rather than in deeper character internalization. Improvements in Qur'anic literacy, memorization, and participation in routine religious practices were consistently reported across schools. In contrast, changes in moral dispositions, such as discipline and ethical behavior, were described as uneven and gradual. This pattern echoes findings in recent studies of character and religious education, which suggest that habituation-based interventions tend to yield faster behavioral outcomes than value internalization, which requires longer-term reinforcement across multiple social environments (Guhin, 2020; Indriani, 2024; Yani et al., 2025). From an implementation perspective, this indicates that policy success should not be evaluated solely through short-term character outcomes, but through the establishment of durable institutional routines that enable sustained moral development over time.

The findings also highlight the central role of teacher interpretation and instructional strategy in shaping how policy is enacted. Qur'anic teachers exercised considerable discretion in grouping students, selecting teaching methods, and prioritizing learning objectives. Such discretion reflects what implementation scholars describe as "frontline sense-making," where teachers actively translate abstract policy goals into contextually workable practices (Honig, 2023; Spillane et al., 2021). Teachers with prior pesantren or madrasah experience were better positioned to perform this translation effectively, suggesting that professional background functions as an informal policy capacity. However, limited pedagogical variation and minimal integration of instructional technology constrained innovation, reinforcing concerns raised in recent Islamic education research about the need to align religious instruction with contemporary learning approaches without diluting its substance (Akrim et al., 2022; Lutfiana, 2025; Nurhaliza, 2024).

Beyond individual teacher competence, the study underscores the importance of alignment between school culture and external environments, particularly family contexts. Family support emerged as a critical reinforcing mechanism that amplified the effects of school-based religious habituation, while inconsistent parental engagement weakened program outcomes. This finding resonates with broader research on religious and moral education, which emphasizes that school interventions are most effective when embedded within supportive family and community ecosystems (Afkarina, 2025; Mukhibat, 2024; Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022). From a policy standpoint, this suggests that religious education policies that focus narrowly on school-based implementation risk underestimating the relational infrastructure required for sustained impact.

At the same time, the findings reveal significant structural constraints that limit policy enactment. Time allocation emerged as a persistent challenge, with Qur'anic activities often scheduled at the end of the school day when students' attention and energy were depleted. Similar constraints have been documented in other contexts where religious or character education is positioned as an "add-on" rather than an integrated component of the curriculum (Bakar, 2024; Tamami, 2024). In addition, uneven teacher competence and limited monitoring mechanisms weakened consistency in implementation. Evaluation practices were largely administrative, focusing on attendance rather than learning quality or character outcomes, reflecting the mismatch between policy goals and accountability instruments in religious education governance that Abadi and Alfayn (2025) describe.

A particularly significant finding concerns the role of interpersonal relationships and teacher role modeling in policy implementation. The study shows that Qur'anic teachers' moral authority derived less from formal instructional content than from embodied practice, including consistency, discipline, and everyday conduct. This supports recent arguments that religious education operates through performative and relational dimensions that cannot be fully captured through curricular design alone (Guhin, 2020; Musyahid, 2023). Where teachers functioned as credible moral exemplars, students demonstrated higher motivation and behavioral alignment, reinforcing the idea that policy effectiveness in religious education is deeply relational. This challenges policy models that prioritize standardization and measurable outputs while neglecting the ethical and affective dimensions of teaching.

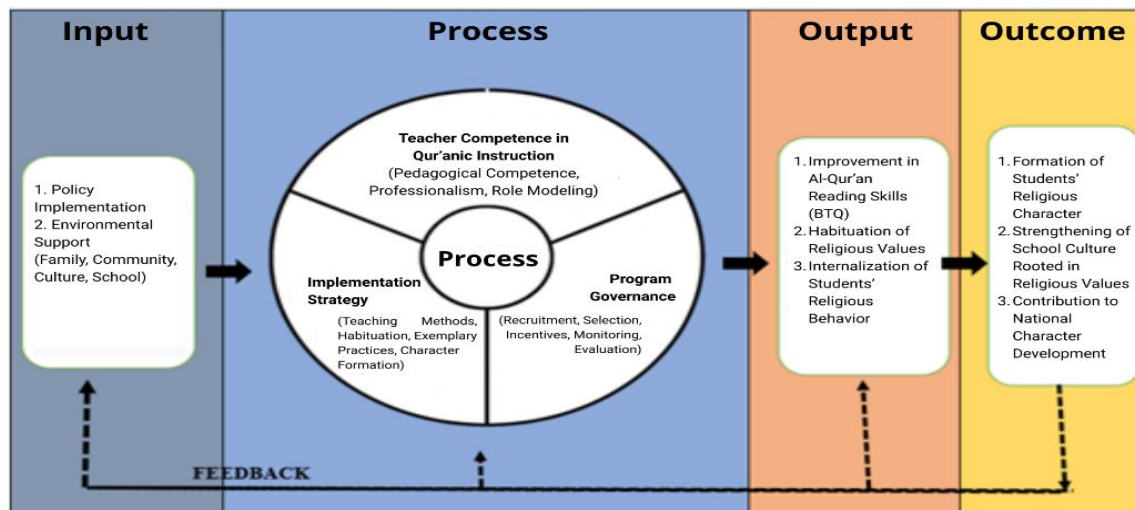
Governance arrangements further shaped the sustainability of policy implementation. Structured recruitment, alignment between teacher availability and student numbers, supervision by school leaders, and provision of incentives emerged as enabling conditions for consistent enactment. However, limited financial compensation and uneven evaluation practices undermined teacher motivation and long-term commitment. These findings mirror international research showing that policy sustainability depends on the coherence between policy expectations, resource allocation, and implementer incentives (Honig, 2023; Rossi, 2025). In the context of religious education, where moral authority and commitment are central, governance weaknesses can have disproportionate effects on implementation quality.

Taken together, these findings support conceptualizing the Sekolah Mengaji program as a policy enactment system rather than a discrete educational intervention. Policy goals were filtered through multiple layers, including teacher agency, school routines, family environments, relational dynamics, and governance mechanisms. This explains why similar policy directives produce varied outcomes across schools, a phenomenon widely observed but

insufficiently theorized in existing literature on Qur'anic and Islamic education programs (Baidowi, 2025; Mustafa, 2025; Qolbi, 2025). The empirical implementation model developed from this study addresses this gap by making these mediating mechanisms explicit.

The findings suggest that religious education policies must adapt to the complexities of local contexts to achieve their intended outcomes. Policymakers should consider the varying conditions of schools and the broader socio-cultural influences when designing and implementing policies. Future research could explore how these findings apply in different regions or educational settings, offering further insights into the broader applicability of the proposed implementation model.

Figure 9. Empirical model of religious education policy implementation in school qur'anic programs



The model proposed in this study contributes to international debates in three ways. First, it extends religious education scholarship by shifting analytical attention from normative aims and curricular content to implementation mechanisms, responding to calls for more empirically grounded policy analysis in this field (Mukhibat, 2024; Thoha et al., 2023). Second, it advances policy implementation theory by illustrating how moral and religious objectives interact with organizational constraints, highlighting dimensions that are often under-theorized in secular policy models. Third, it offers a transferable framework for analyzing similar programs in other contexts, particularly in Muslim-majority education systems where religious education is institutionally embedded but locally enacted.

Importantly, the findings also suggest that strengthening religious education policy requires more than technical improvements. Enhancing teacher training, improving monitoring systems, and increasing incentives are necessary but insufficient without attention to relational trust, role modeling, and cultural alignment. Policymakers should therefore view school Qur'anic programs not merely as instructional add-ons but as institutional practices that require coherent support across pedagogical, relational, and governance dimensions.

In sum, this study demonstrates that religious education policies work in practice through complex processes of enactment shaped by human agency and institutional context. By articulating these processes through an empirical model, the study provides a robust

analytical foundation for improving policy design, implementation, and evaluation in religious education, both in Indonesia and in comparable international settings.

Conclusion

This study examined how religious education policies are enacted in practice by analyzing a school Qur'anic program in Indonesia. The findings demonstrate that religious education policy is not a direct translation of formal regulations into classroom activities, but rather a layered implementation process mediated by teacher agency, school culture, family engagement, and governance structures. The Sekolah Mengaji program served as an arena for implementing policy goals, where they interpreted, negotiated, and stabilized through everyday routines, instructional strategies, and relational practices within schools.

Empirically, the study shows that policy implementation produced the strongest outcomes in Qur'anic literacy and religious habituation. At the same time, deeper character internalization remained uneven and dependent on sustained reinforcement across both school and home environments. Teacher role modeling, interpersonal relationships, and contextual alignment emerged as central mechanisms linking policy intentions to student outcomes. These findings underscore that religious education policy operates not only through curricular content but also through embodied and relational practices. Governance structures—particularly recruitment, supervision, incentives, and monitoring—further shaped the consistency and sustainability of the implementation process.

By developing an empirically grounded implementation model, this study contributes to religious education scholarship by shifting the analytical focus from normative goals and program descriptions to the mechanisms through which policy is enacted in practice. The findings highlight the need to conceptualize school Qur'anic programs as complex policy enactments rather than isolated moral initiatives, offering a framework for comparative research in similar educational contexts.

Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this study have several important implications for policy, practice, and future research. From a policy perspective, religious education policies should be designed with explicit attention to implementation conditions. This includes aligning policy goals with realistic time allocations, providing sustained support for teacher development, and strengthening governance mechanisms that focus on instructional and character-related quality, rather than simply administrative compliance. Policymakers should also recognize the critical role of teacher role modeling and relational trust as essential policy mechanisms, rather than viewing them as informal or peripheral elements.

For school practice, the results suggest that strengthening Qur'anic programs requires integrated strategies that combine instructional competence, consistent religious routines, and active engagement with families. Schools should prioritize ongoing mentoring for Qur'anic teachers, enhance collaboration between religious and non-religious staff, and develop communication channels that connect school-based religious practices with home

environments. Without such alignment, the program's effect are likely to remain fragmented and uneven.

From a research standpoint, this study underscores the value of qualitative, implementation-focused approaches in analyzing religious education policy. Future studies could test and refine the proposed implementation model across different regions, school types, or religious traditions, and examine its applicability in comparative or longitudinal designs. Such research would further clarify how religious education policies can be enacted more coherently and sustainably within diverse educational systems.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

References

- Abadi, T., & Alfayn, M. R. (2025). Policy implementation and governance challenges in Islamic education: Evidence from decentralized school systems. *Journal of Educational Policy and Leadership*, 20(1), 45–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/edpol.2025.0004>
- Afkarina, N. (2025). School culture and religious character formation through Qur'anic habituation programs. *Journal of Islamic Education Studies*, 9(1), 33–48.
- Akrim, A., Siregar, E., & Lubis, R. R. (2022). Reforming Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia: Policy challenges and implementation dynamics. *International Journal of Islamic Educational Studies*, 4(2), 101–117. <https://doi.org/10.31098/ijies.v4i2.889>
- Baidowi, A. (2025). Sustainability of tahfidz programs in public schools: Institutional and pedagogical perspectives. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 14(1), 75–92.
- Bakar, A. (2024). Governance of Islamic education policy in Indonesia: Between regulation and school autonomy. *Policy Futures in Education*, 22(4), 563–579. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1478210324123456>
- Ball, S. J., Maguire, M., & Braun, A. (2022). *How schools do policy: Policy enactments in secondary schools*. Routledge.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2023). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. SAGE Publications.
- Guest, G., Namey, E., & Mitchell, M. (2024). Collecting and analyzing qualitative data at scale. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 50, 247–268. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-021123-034512>
- Guhin, J. (2020). *Agents of God: Boundaries and authority in Muslim and Christian schools*. Oxford University Press.
- Honig, M. I. (2023). Implementation research for education policy: Theory, practice, and prospects. *Educational Policy*, 37(5), 821–848. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08959048221123451>
- Indriani, S. (2024). Character education policy and school-level enactment in post-pandemic Indonesia. *Journal of Moral Education*, 53(1), 56–71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2023.2298741>

- Kalimatusyaro, A. (2024). Tahfidz programs in public schools: Pedagogical adaptation and policy implications. *Ta'dib: Journal of Islamic Education*, 29(2), 141–156.
- Kallio, H., Pietilä, A. M., Johnson, M., & Kangasniemi, M. (2020). Systematic methodological review: Developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured interview guide. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 76(3), 772–782. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.14330>
- Lutfiana, S. (2025). Instructional practices in school-based Qur'anic education: A qualitative study. *Journal of Religious Education Research*, 11(1), 55–71.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2020). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. SAGE Publications.
- Mukhibat, M. (2024). Religious moderation and Islamic education policy in plural societies. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 46(2), 193–207. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2023.2261124>
- Mustafa, R. (2025). Institutional resilience of Qur'anic learning programs in formal education. *Journal of Southeast Asian Education*, 6(1), 88–104.
- Musyahid, A. (2023). Religious education, authority, and habituation in Indonesian schools. *Studia Islamika*, 30(2), 345–372. <https://doi.org/10.36712/sdi.v30i2.28764>
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2022). Thematic analysis revisited: Trustworthiness and rigor. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 19(4), 526–544. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1804760>
- Nurhaliza, F. (2024). Implementation of Qur'anic literacy programs in Indonesian public schools. *Journal of Islamic Pedagogy*, 7(2), 101–118.
- Nurtawab, E., & Wahyudi, Y. (2022). Islamic education, decentralization, and local policy enactment in Indonesia. *Comparative Education Review*, 66(3), 462–485. <https://doi.org/10.1086/720432>
- Qolbi, M. A. (2025). Tahfidz education and policy enactment in Indonesian secondary schools. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 101, 102853. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2025.102853>
- Rossi, P. H. (2025). Frontline actors and policy adaptation in complex education reforms. *Public Administration Review*, 85(1), 34–48. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13678>
- Spillane, J. P., Reiser, B. J., & Reimer, T. (2021). Policy implementation and cognition: Reframing implementation research. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 43(1), 3–26. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373720968084>
- Suwarni, S. (2024). Integrating religious values into school culture under Indonesia's character education policy. *Educational Research for Policy and Practice*, 23(2), 211–227. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10671-023-09345-2>
- Tamami, B. (2024). Islamic education reform and school-level policy translation in Indonesia. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 44(1), 112–128. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2023.2289017>
- Thoha, M., Rohman, A., & Fitria, N. (2023). Multi-level governance of religious education in Indonesia. *Journal of Education Policy*, 38(6), 845–863. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2022.2145678>
- Usman, H. (2024). Legal frameworks and institutional dynamics of Islamic education policy. *Indonesian Journal of Educational Review*, 11(1), 1–15.

Yani, A., Rahman, F., & Kurniawan, D. (2025). Teacher capacity and character education implementation in Indonesian secondary schools. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 126, 104032. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2025.104032>

Biographical Notes

AAM MUAMAR is a student at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia.

JOHAR PERMANA is a lecturer at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia.

DANNY MEIRAWAN is a lecturer at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia.

EKA PRIHATIN is a lecturer at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia.