Institutional Differentiation and Educational Politics in Indonesian Islamic Educational Institutions

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Abstract. Numerous institutions, each with unique traits, power dynamics, and political stances, have contributed to the development of Islamic education in Indonesia. Qur'anic Learning Centers (Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an/TPQ), Islamic Elementary Schools (Madrasah Diniyah/Madin), Pesantren, Madrasah, and Islamic Higher Education Institutions (*Perguruan Tinggi Agama Islam*/PTAI) are the five categories of Islamic educational institutions in which this study seeks to characterize the politics of education and institutional differentiation. This study investigates how differences in institutional structures are created by political configurations and how they, in turn, affect the quality and accessibility of Islamic education through a methodical literature review of laws, regulations, and socio-political dynamics. The results show that, in terms of institutional standing, societal legitimacy, state regulation, curriculum autonomy, and finance sources, the five institutions hold distinct positions along a continuum. Madin and TPQ have a great deal of autonomy but little assistance from the government. Pesantren's dual model (salafiyah–khalafiyah) places them in an intermediate position. In the meantime, Madrasah and PTAI are subject to more stringent regulations and are completely integrated into the national education system. Decentralization, bureaucratization, and digital transformation exacerbate the problems of resource inequality and quality discrepancies among institutions. The concept of differentiated governance within Islamic education, the identification of a bureaucratization paradox that may limit institutional innovation, and a mapping of state-civil society organizational relations that is specifically embedded in the Indonesian Islamic education context are the three main theoretical contributions made by this study. To improve the standard and equity of Islamic education, the report suggests more flexible, inclusive, and cooperative policies engaging local communities, civil society organizations, and the government.

Keywords: Islamic education politics, Pesantren and institutional differentiation

1 Introduction

Islamic education in Indonesia has seen a protracted and intricate development influenced by changing social dynamics, political forces, and state regulatory frameworks [1], [2], [3]. Islamic educational institutions have served as venues for identity formation, community consolidation, and political articulation among Muslim groups

from the colonial era to the reform era [4], [5], [6]. The ability of Islamic educational institutions to adjust to shifting historical contexts, address societal needs, and contribute to national development is demonstrated by a variety of policies implemented during the Dutch East Indies administration, the New Order, and the Reformasi era [7], [8]. Islamic education holds a vital place in Indonesia's larger educational landscape, given that Muslims make up about 86.9% of the country's population [9], [10], [11], [12]. Understanding the dynamics surrounding the operation of different Islamic educational institutions, including Qur'anic Learning Centers (TPQ), Islamic Elementary Schools (Madin), Pesantren, Madrasah, and Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTAI), requires an understanding of educational politics [13]. They all function within the same Islamic education ecosystem, which is constantly shaped by governmental policy and changing socio-cultural realities, even though each type of institution has unique traits, goals, and historical trajectories [14], [15], [16], [17], [18], [19].

This study shows how these institutions are created, governed, and guided by the political configurations that shape their evolution by looking at the link between policy and institutional practice. The main topic of this study is how institutional differentiation within Indonesia's Islamic education system is shaped by political decisions and educational rules, and how these factors affect access and quality. Islamic education does not develop in a vacuum; rather, it functions in a setting that is intricately linked to political agendas and policy preferences [20], [21], [23], [24]. While Madrasah and PTAI operate inside a highly controlled formal education system, TPQ, Madin, and Pesantren are intimately associated with policies that promote community-based religious education [25], [26]. The goal of this study is to give a thorough knowledge of how institutional differentiation and educational politics relate to TPQ, Madin, Pesantren, Madrasah, and PTAI. The study focuses on how each institution maintains relevance in the face of social change, adjusts to current legislation, and advances education and character development in society [27]. Through this analytical endeavor, the study aims to pinpoint the potential and limitations that influence Indonesia's current Islamic educational scene.

Islamic education is positioned in the conceptual framework as an adaptive reaction to cultural, political, and social change. Political analysis comprises an analysis of laws, policies, and government regulations that affect the governance, structure, and functions of Islamic educational institutions at different levels [28], [29]. In addition to legislation, this study takes into account cultural identification and socioeconomic issues, which have a big impact on how Islamic education is taught in the modern world. Given the background information mentioned above, the study tackles a crucial question: how do political configurations influence differences in institutional structures, and what are the consequences for the caliber and accessibility of Islamic education?. The study uses theories from the realm of Islamic political theory to address this subject. An crucial foundation for comprehending how Indonesia's socio-political context shapes Islamic education is provided by a number of theoretical perspectives in the politics of education. The first is the regulatory approach, which highlights how Islamic educational institutions are directly impacted by government laws and policies, including curricular frameworks, funding sources, and teacher competency standards [30]. The second is the structural approach, which looks at bureaucratic procedures and governance

structures that guarantee institutional continuity through administrative decision-making [31]. The third is the state-society relations perspective, which emphasizes how community reactions and governmental policies interact, as well as how non-state actors affect educational dynamics [32].

The multiplicity of institutions functioning under various social settings and regulatory situations is reflected in institutional difference within Islamic education. In general, this distinction separates Islamic educational establishments into two primary groups: state-regulated schools and community-based institutions. When it comes to offering religious education, community-based organizations like Pesantren and Qur'anic Learning Centers (TPQ) operate with a great deal of autonomy and flexibility. State-regulated establishments, such as Madrasah and Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTAI), on the other hand, operate inside the official education system and are governed by more stringent regulations [33]. The distinction between informal, nonformal, and formal paths further elucidates each institution's unique role in achieving the all encompassing objectives of Islamic education [34]. For communities looking for accessible religious learning possibilities, informal education like religious study circles offers even more flexibility [35]. This study's analytical framework centers on power dynamics and how public policy affects Islamic education governance. The roles and impact of both governmental and non-governmental actors in determining the formulation and course of educational policy are referred to as power relations [36].

Grasp how regulations are applied and how they impact Islamic educational institutions at the local level requires a grasp of national and local public policies [37]. Furthermore, as institutions use various sources of legitimacy to interpret and implement religious principles, disputes over religious authority can influence educational dynamics [38]. The direction and caliber of Islamic education are also strategically determined by its bureaucratization. Excessive bureaucratization inhibits institutional flexibility and context-responsive pedagogical development, whereas in other situations, bureaucratic institutions foster innovation through uniform governance [39]. This study aims to comprehend how Islamic educational policies are developed and carried out in the face of constantly changing sociopolitical circumstances by looking at these dynamics. The study examines how power dynamics influence the creation and execution of Islamic educational policies in Indonesia and examines how theory and practice connect within the larger social environment using a cogent conceptual framework. It is anticipated that the results will aid in the creation of Islamic education policies that are more inclusive, flexible, and community-responsive.

2   Method

In order to investigate the politics of educational governance and institutional differentiation within Indonesian Islamic educational institutions, this study uses a literature review technique with a descriptive analytical design. This method is chosen because it synthesizes different theoretical and empirical data to provide a thorough knowledge of policies, laws, and institutional processes. This study's data sources include: (1) national and international journal articles published between 2020 and 2025; (2)

government policy documents pertaining to Islamic education, such as laws, regulations, and ministerial decrees; (3) books and monographs on Islamic education in Indonesia; and (4) official documents and research reports from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and other relevant institutions. Systematic searches of academic databases, such as Google Scholar, Portal Garuda, and institutional repositories of higher education institutions, were used to gather data. "Islamic education in Indonesia," "TPQ," "Madrasah Diniyah," "Pesantren," "Madrasah," "PTAI," "politics of Islamic education," and "Islamic education policy" were among the terms utilized.

Publications addressing institutional, policy, or political issues of Islamic education whether concentrating on one or more types of institutions under investigation were eligible for inclusion. Four stages of thematic data analysis were conducted: (1) identifying major themes concerning institutional differentiation, policy frameworks, and challenges in Islamic education; (2) classifying the results according to institutional types (TPQ, Madin, Pesantren, Madrasah, PTAI); (3) mapping similarities and differences in institutional characteristics through comparative analysis; and (4) synthesizing theoretical insights to create a more comprehensive understanding of the political governance of Islamic education in Indonesia. By comparing results from academic publications, policy documents, and research reports, source triangulation preserved analytical validity. This study's limitations stem from its reliance on secondary sources and its chronological concentration on contemporary literature, which limits the breadth of historical examination throughout prior eras. The study's applicability in capturing current trends and policy dynamics in Islamic education governance is unaffected by this restriction, though.

3   Results and Discussion

The study's conclusions show that the five Islamic educational institutions occupy various positions along a continuum of financial sources, institutional standing, social legitimacy, degree of governmental oversight, and curriculum autonomy. Madin and TPQ have a lot of autonomy, but they don't get any help from the government. A dual concept (salafiyah–khalafiyah) characterizes Pesantren's status as an intermediate. In the meantime, Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTAI) and madrasahs are subject to more stringent regulatory frameworks and are completely incorporated into the national education system. Decentralization, bureaucratization, and digital transformation all contribute to the major challenges of resource inequities and quality discrepancies between institutions. Three important theoretical contributions are made by this study: (1) the idea of differentiated governance in Islamic education; (2) the identification of a bureaucratization paradox that could limit institutional innovation; and (3) a mapping of the organizational relationships between the state and civil society in Indonesian Islamic education. To improve the caliber and equity of Islamic education, the report suggests more adaptable, inclusive, and cooperative policies including the government, civil society organizations, and local communities.

3.1 Indonesian Islamic Education Administration Politics
3.1.1 Islamic Education Policies' Historical Transformation

Indonesia's Islamic education policy trajectory is the result of a protracted and dynamic process that has been influenced by sociopolitical upheavals throughout history. The Dutch East Indies government intentionally limited the functioning space of Islamic educational institutes throughout the colonial era. These policies inhibited institutional development and positioned pesantren primarily as places for spiritual formation and the transmission of Islamic scholarly traditions rather than as official educational institutions recognized by the state [40]. Islamic education policies changed significantly after independence as the government worked to create a national education system that was inclusive. Madrasahs were included into the national education system as Islamic education eventually obtained official legitimacy through a number of rules.

In addition to strengthening Madrasah's institutional standing, this integration opened the door for more organized funding sources, governance structures, and curriculum standards [41]. As the modern period began, government policies on Islamic education changed to focus on enhancing graduate competency, quality, and relevance in order to maintain competitiveness in a quickly globalizing environment. Curriculum changes that integrate religious sciences with general education and the adoption of pedagogical strategies responsive to scientific and technological breakthroughs are examples of this modernization [42]. New changes in the administration of Islamic education were subsequently brought about by the reform era and the adoption of decentralization strategies. Local governments now have more power to create and carry out regional-specific educational programs. Decentralization brought challenges as well as opportunities for innovation and textual strengthening, especially with regard to regional differences in educational quality, inconsistent national standards, and coordination gaps between central and local governments [43], [44].

3.1.2 Important Rules Influencing Islamic Education's Institutional Differentiation

A number of strategic policies have a direct impact on the institutional variety of Islamic education in Indonesia. The first is the National Education System Law (Law No. 20/2003), which requires religious education to be included in formal curriculum and formally places Islamic education as an essential part of the national education system [45], [46]. The second is made up of technical guidelines for Madrasah, Pesantren, and Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTAI) that are given by the Ministry of Religious Affairs through several Ministerial Decrees (Permenag). In order to promote organized, uniform, and responsible governance throughout Islamic educational institutions, these norms are essential [47], [48]. In addition to national laws, regional policies have a big impact on institutional differences. A variety of initiatives have been started by provincial and district/city governments, such as the creation of local wisdom-based curricula, operational support, financial support schemes, and institutional management strengthening [49], [50]. By enabling institutions to both follow national norms and adjust to local sociocultural needs, these local initiatives enhance the administration of Islamic education across areas.

3.2 Political Dynamics of State-Islamic Mass Organizations

The direction of policies and the actual governance of Islamic education in Indonesia have been greatly influenced by the interaction between the state and Islamic mass organizations, especially Muhammadiyah (MD) and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) [51], [52]. These two organizations can act as strategic partners of the government in the development of policies and the execution of programs within Islamic education because of their long historical trajectories, robust institutional capacities, and wide-ranging educational networks [53]. Islamic organizations have impacted Madrasah, Pesantren, and other Islamic educational institutions' institutional orientations, governance structures, and quality standards through constant communication, negotiation, and cooperation [54]. Beyond structural elements, Islamic organizations have an impact on teaching methods and ideological views. The character-building aspect of Islamic education is greatly enhanced by the values of moderation, tolerance, and inclusivity that are shared by MD and NU. Additionally, these principles serve as tactical reactions to modern issues including extremism, intolerance, and social disintegration [55]. In this regard, Islamic educational establishments act as agents of social harmony and community cohesion in addition to being hubs for the dissemination of knowledge [56]. A unique governance model for Islamic education in Indonesia has been created through collaboration between the state and Islamic mass groups. This approach combines top-down official regulations with bottom-up community activities. Even while there are times when the relationship is competitive, it is still primarily collaborative, which promotes positive dynamics for policy reform, innovation, and the improvement of educational quality. Because of this synergy, Islamic education may be cohesively integrated into the national education system while also being sensitive to local requirements.

3.3. Different Types of Islamic Schools
3.3.1 Qur'anic Learning Centers (TPQ, or Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an)

Community-based religious organizations called Qur'anic Learning Centers (TPQ) have their roots in Indonesia's long history of Islamic education. TPQs address social demands for children to get a foundational religious education, especially in the areas of Qur'anic literacy development and the early cultivation of Islamic principles [57]. Despite being classified as non-formal educational units, they play a crucial role in fostering early religious literacy. Local volunteers or community leaders dedicated to educational da'wah usually oversee TPQs. Although this shows a high level of community involvement, instructors' pedagogical proficiency is sometimes uneven because many lack formal training in instructional approaches. As a result, regional differences in instructional quality are common, particularly when it comes to character-building and Qur'anic reading strategies [58]. Because of their strong ties to the community, TPQs are inclusive, adaptable, and available to kids from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds [59]. However, there are significant differences in the quality of education across the country due to the lack of comprehensive and sustainable government programs. Inconsistent curriculum and non-standardized learning procedures are caused by a lack of funds, poor facilities, and little official supervision [60]. These circumstances demonstrate the necessity of more methodical policy intervention to bolster

TPQs' institutional capabilities. To improve the quality of Qur'anic teaching at the fundamental level, the government and Islamic groups must establish tiered oversight systems, improve the pedagogical competencies of teachers, and develop a more structured diniyah curriculum. With these enhancements, TPQs will be better able to serve as the main organizations influencing the religious literacy of the younger generation in Indonesia.

3.4 Madrasah Diniyah (Madin)

Madrasah Diniyah (Madin) are non-formal Islamic educational establishments that offer children and teenagers systematic religious education outside of the classroom. Madin were created in response to community needs and are usually run by Pesantren, Islamic mass groups, or local communities. As a result, the religious beliefs and customs of these organizations have a significant impact on their institutional features. Madin are crucial to bolstering religious literacy at the grassroots level because they offer supplemental religious instruction. Madin and local governments have a largely cooperative relationship, especially when it comes to facilities, operational support, and teacher development initiatives [61]. However, bureaucratic complexity and inconsistent regulations between national and local agencies can undermine the efficacy of this cooperation. These difficulties have an impact on curriculum development, institutional standards compliance, and licensing procedures. For Madin, funding continues to be the biggest obstacle.

The majority of institutions rely on alms, community donations, and parental payments, which frequently leads to insecure funding. This has a direct impact on the continuation of professional development programs, the availability of suitable learning facilities, and the supply of teacher incentives [62]. Despite these drawbacks, Madin's institutional adaptability and strong linkages to local communities allow them to meet educational requirements in locations where official institutions do not adequately serve [63]. Modernizing teaching techniques and updating the curriculum are essential to ensuring Madin's viability and relevance in the face of swift societal change. Improving the pedagogical skills of teachers, implementing more active learning strategies, and incorporating educational technologies are all crucial steps in raising the caliber of instruction. Madrasah Diniyah has the potential to be adaptable cornerstones of nonformal Islamic education in Indonesia with deeper cross-stakeholder engagement and more cohesive policy support.

3.5 Islamic Boarding School (Pesantren)

One of Indonesia's oldest and most significant Islamic educational institutions is the pesantren. Pesantren has historically evolved into two main models: salafiyah and khalafiyah. Through conventional teaching methodologies that stress mastery of ancient religious sciences, Salafiyah pesantren concentrate on the study of classical Islamic writings (kitab kuning or turāth). Khalafiyah pe-santren, on the other hand, use more contemporary methods by including general education into their curriculum, creating a model that is better suited to the demands of modern society and education [64]. In Indonesia's sociopolitical context, pesantren serve as important social and cultural hubs with substantial local and national influence in addition to being educational

establishments. Their responsibilities include the propagation of religious authority that influences religious discourse and political dynamics in Indonesia, as well as community moral development, da'wah initiatives, and local economic empowerment [65], [66]. As a result, pesantren play a crucial role in influencing both public policies pertaining to Islamic education and Islamic academic traditions.

The formal legitimacy of pesantren within the national school system was further reinforced with the passage of the Pesantren Law. While allowing access to institutional support and public funding, this rule recognizes the uniqueness of pesantren customs. However, its implementation has created bureaucratic complications that could potentially diminish institutional autonomy, which has long been recognized as pesantren's strength in maintaining adaptability, independence, and local knowledge [67], [68]. Maintaining a balance between institutional independence and adherence to national norms is a major difficulty that pe-santren is currently facing. Pesantren must comply with regulations without sacrificing their traditional identity. In order to maintain pesantren's relevance, adaptability, and competitiveness in the face of continuous socio-political shifts, curriculum innovation, institutional capacity building, and cooperation with the government and local communities are crucial tactics.

3.6 Madrasah

Madrasah, which are official educational establishments under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag), are crucial to the development of Indonesia's national educational system. Madrasah must follow national education standards pertaining to curriculum development, teacher credentials, infrastructure, and institutional governance as part of formal education [69]. However, the distribution of financial resources and the caliber of institutional management are directly related to the effectiveness of madrasah implementation. Inadequate funding frequently leads to poor educational facilities, a teacher shortage, and uneven execution of quality-improvement programs [70]. Curriculum reform in madrasahs is an essential agenda item in the framework of modernizing Islamic education in order to address societal demands and keep up with scientific and technical advancements. Madrasahs are supposed to proportionately integrate religious and general topics, enabling graduates to possess both critical twenty-first-century abilities and high religious competence [71], [72]. Therefore, improving curriculum integration is essential to generating graduates who can adjust to changes in the economy, society, and technology.

Additionally, pedagogical innovation is essential to raising the standard of instruction and learning in madrasahs. It has been demonstrated that the use of educational technologies in conjunction with active, creative, and student-centered learning approaches improves classroom engagement and fosters more thorough competency development. Digital technologies improve administrative effectiveness, promote access to education, and give teachers chances for professional growth. Therefore, institutional capacity to transform curricula and teaching methods is one of the main obstacles encountered by madrasahs, in addition to structural issues like funding and facilities. To stay relevant and competitive in Indonesia's changing national education landscape, madrasah must consistently work to improve teacher competency, strengthen school administration, and incorporate technology-enabled learning.

3.7 Islamic Institutions of Higher Learning (PTAI)

Islamic higher education institutions, such as Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN), Institut Agama Islam (IAI), Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN), and Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam (STAI), are essential in producing graduates who are skilled in both Islamic studies and modern academic fields. An increasing academic mandate toward multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary work that responds to worldwide scientific developments is reflected in institutional transformations, such as those from STAI or IAIN into UIN [73]. The direction of PTAI development is greatly influenced by academic politics and campus autonomy throughout this process, particularly when it comes to adapting to social change and global competitiveness [74]. In order to ensure that graduates have a thorough understanding of Islam and the professional skills required for global competitiveness, PTAI's dedication to the integration of religious and scientific knowledge necessitates ongoing adaptation to global developments [75]. The state's quality assurance and certification requirements are important tools for preserving academic rigor and institutional credibility [76], [77]. PTAI has a great deal of potential to develop into preeminent hubs of Islamic knowledge and important contributors to the development of Muslim society with progressive policies and improved institutional governance. In Indonesia's Islamic education ecosystem, the five types of Islamic educational institutions TPQ, Madrasah Diniyah (Madin), pesantren, madrasah, and PTAI all perform different but connected functions. Madrasah integrate religious and general curricula within formal education, TPQ and Madin offer basic religious education at the community level, pesantren offer comprehensive Islamic learning rooted in tradition, and PTAI act as hubs for the creation of Islamic scholarship and modern expertise.

3.8 Comparative Evaluation

A methodical comparison analysis across many institutional dimensions is required to fully comprehend the roles and responsibilities of each Islamic educational institution. A comprehensive overview of each school's contributions to Indonesia's Islamic education landscape is provided by this comparison, which makes it possible to identify the parallels, contrasts, and unique qualities of each institution. Comparative summaries of curriculum and instructional procedures, funding and resource management, and institutional characteristics are shown in Tables 1, 2, and 3 for each of the five types of institutions this study looked at.

Table 1. Comparison of Institutional Features

Aspect	TPQ	Madin	Pesantren	Madrasah	PTAI
Status of Institutions	Informal	Informal	Both formal and informal	Formal	Formal
The origin of legitimacy	Community	Islamic and Community Organizations	Islamic and Community Organizations	Nation	Nation
State Regulation Level	Very little	Minimal	Moderate	Elevated	Extremely High

Curriculum Independence	Extremely High	Elevated	Elevated	Moderate	Minimal
Sources of Funding	Self-sufficient	Grants and Independent	Grants and Independent	Nation /Grants	Nation
Ministry of Supervision	-	Ministry of Religious Affairs (unofficial)	Religious Affairs Ministry	Religious Affairs Ministry	Ministry of Education and Ministry of Religious Affairs
Main Legal Structure	Guidelines for Diniyah	Ministerial Proclamation Regarding Pesantren and Diniyah	Pesantren Law No. 18/2019	The National Education System Law No. 20/2003	Higher Education Law No. 12/2012
Levels of Education	Basic (for kids)	Basic to Secondary	Basic to Higher	MI, MTs, and MA	Doctorate, Master's, and Bachelor's
Autonomy in Management	Complete	Elevated	Elevated	Moderate	Minimal

Table 2. Funding and Resource Distribution Comparison of Islamic Educational Institutions

Aspect	TPQ	Madin	Pesantren	Madrasah	PTAI
Principal Sources of Funding	• Community contributions • Student fees • Donations	• Community contributions • Student fees • Limited local government funding	• Community support • Donations • Pesantren businesses • Government grants	• National/Local Government Budget (APBN/APBD) • BOS Funds • Student fees	• National Government Budget (APBN) • Institutional Revenue (PNBP) • Research funding
Stability of Funding	Unpredictable	Less steady	comparatively steady	Consistent	Extremely Stable
Qualifications for Teachers	Diverse (many informal)	Different	Kyai/Ustadz (self-governing) + qualified instructors	A minimum of a bachelor's degree plus certification	Academic rankings plus master's and doctoral degrees
Facilities for Learning	Very little (prayer rooms, mosques)	Simple	Basic to Adequate	Sufficient	Sufficient and All-Inclusive
Ratio of Teachers to Students	Elevated (1:20–40)	Moderate (1:15–25)	Different	Standardized (1:20)	Minimal (1:15–30)
Technology Access	Very little	Restricted	Restricted to Moderate	Good to Moderate	Good

Table 3. Curriculum and Instructional Approaches Comparison

Aspect	TPQ	Madin	Pesantren	Madrasah	PTAI
Focus on Learning	• Qur'anic literacy • Tajwīd • Memorization of brief surahs	• Fiqh • Theology (Tawḥīd) • Ethics (Akhlaq) • Arabic • Qur'an	• Salafiyah: Traditional Islamic writings (kitab kuning) • Khalafiyah: General sciences plus classical literature	• National curriculum (70%) • Islamic education (30%)	• Islamic sciences • General sciences • Research • Community service
Teaching Methods	• Classical • *Talaqqi* • Drill and practice	• Classical • *Sorogan* • *Halaqah*	*Salafiyah*: *Sorogan*, *bandongan*, *halaqah* *Khalafiyah*: Traditional and classical techniques	• Modern classroom • Student-centered learning • Educational technology	• Lectures • Seminars • Research • Academic discussions
Acquiring knowledge	Duration: 1-2 hours every day in the afternoon	Two to three hours every day (afternoon/evening)	Part-time or 24-hour boarding	6–8 hours every day	system based on semesters
Curriculum Requirements	Absence of a national standard	Curriculum for optional Diniyah	National standard (Khalafiyah) or free (Salafiyah)	National curriculum requirements	Curriculum criteria for KKNI and SNPT
System of Assessment	Internal	Internal	National and internal exams (Khalafiyah)	Accreditation plus national and school exams	National accreditation plus exams (BAN-PT)

Source: 2024, compiled from multiple sources.

3.9 Islamic Educational Institutions: A Comparative Study

The five categories of Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia occupy different places within the country's educational spectrum, as the comparative overview above shows. The nonformal sector, which has strong institutional autonomy but little government assistance, is where TPQ (Qur'anic Learning Centers) and Madin (Islamic nonformal schools) operate. Islamic boarding schools, or pesantren, are in a unique position: khalafiyah pesantren have adopted formal education tracks and integrated state-recognized curricula, but salafiyah pesantren maintain complete independence with a traditional curriculum. Madrasahs and Islamic higher education institutions (PTAI), on the other hand, function fully inside the formal education system, are subject to stricter regulatory monitoring, and receive comparatively steady state funding. Each institution also has varying degrees of formal legitimacy within the larger political framework of national education. For instance, a number of state laws that specifically acknowledge

madrasahs and pesantrens as essential parts of the country's educational system are advantageous to them [78], [79].

Access to public funds, uniform curricula, and national recognition of academic credentials are all made possible by this formal legitimacy. On the other hand, TPQ and Madin continue to be classified as nonformal institutions with little support and little regulatory recognition [80]. As seen in Table 1, Madin is subject to very few regulations established by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, whereas TPQ is virtually completely outside the purview of governmental regulation. Curriculum flexibility is made possible by this legal openness, but it also presents issues with financial sustainability, uniformity, and quality control. Islamic mass organizations like Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) are particularly significant in this dynamic. In addition to managing institutions and supplying resources, these groups also have a political role in promoting more acceptance and assistance for non-formal Islamic educational establishments [81]. As a result, TPQ and Madin rely less on official governmental recognition and more on community-based legitimacy and the moral power of these mass organizations. Significant institutional heterogeneity is also revealed when comparing the levels of state intervention in Tables 1 and 2. Madrasahs and PTAI are subject to strict regulatory frameworks that include adherence to national curricula, accreditation processes, and teacher qualification requirements established by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs [82]. On the other hand, despite receiving official recognition by Law No. 18/2019 on Pesantren, pesantren, particularly the salafiyah variety, enjoy significantly more liberty in choosing their curriculum [83]. Stricter rules apply to khalafiyah pesantrens or those running formal education units, putting them on a path more akin to madrasahs.

The ongoing conflict between the necessity for standardization and the maintenance of educational autonomy is framed by these circumstances. While standardization is necessary to guarantee quality and equity in educational services, too strict restrictions may stifle institutional creativity and lessen responsiveness to local demands [84]. Despite their great degree of flexibility in curriculum administration and instruction, TPQ and Madin's lack official status limits them access to finance, institutional development programs, and capacity-building activities. Islamic educational providers also differ greatly in terms of institutional legitimacy. Religious organizations, who view TPQ and Madin as essential tools for maintaining religious instruction, endorse them and provide them with considerable legitimacy [85]. Madrasahs and PTAI, on the other hand, have institutional legitimacy from the state but must constantly uphold public trust, especially with regard to the applicability of their curricula in the face of rapid social change and technological innovation. Despite growing demands from modernity and changing societal attitudes toward formal education, pesantren are based on deeply ingrained moral and cultural legitimacy [86]. Institutional inequities are made worse by the distribution of resources. Many educational institutions, especially those in distant locations, struggle with inadequate facilities and limited infrastructure as a result of unequal budget allocation across regions [87]. When finance is inadequate, madrasahs which frequently rely significantly on governmental subsidies are susceptible to drops in educational quality. In the meanwhile, pesantren that rely on private or community

donations face financial uncertainty that impacts service delivery and program continuity [88].

The ability of institutions to innovate and uphold excellence is directly impacted by the political structure of Islamic education governance. While institutional responsiveness to new educational demands may be hampered by bureaucratic rigidity and political contestation, progressive policies can support initiatives to modernize curricula and develop teacher capacity [89], [90], [91]. Compared to pesantrens, which have more management flexibility, madrasahs and PTAI frequently implement changes more slowly since they function inside more established regulatory frameworks. As a result, Indonesia's many Islamic educational institutions have a great deal of potential to satisfy the country's varied religious and intellectual needs. However, the surrounding political support systems and policy contexts have a significant impact on how effective their contribution is. As a result, the government needs to create policies that are more inclusive, flexible, and sensitive to the many institutional features of Islamic educational institutions [92]. In the contexts of decentralization, digitization, and budget politics discussed in the section that follows these institutional disparities also pose additional difficulties.

3.10 Current Concerns Regarding Indonesia's Islamic Education Administration

Local governments now have more control over organizations like Madrasah Diniyah (Madin) and Qur'anic Learning Centers (TPQ) thanks to the decentralization of Islamic education. But this approach has also made it difficult for national and regional authorities to coordinate, especially when local laws deviate from national policies [93]. Because of this, curriculum implementation, graduation requirements, and teaching quality are frequently variable throughout locations. According to Mubarok (2025), there are differences in Madrasah graduates' competency levels between Java and non-Java regions of up to 23%. These differences are mostly caused by differences in local implementation and policy interpretation. Excessive focus on local needs can sometimes even overshadow national norms, worsening regional disparities in education. Simultaneously, the increasing bureaucratization of Islamic education governance tends to result in uniform and inflexible standards. Institutional innovation in creating learning models that represent sociocultural realities and local expertise is frequently hampered by policies that place an undue emphasis on uniformity [94]. In actuality, pupils' character development is greatly influenced by local values. Discipline, integrity, and a strong work ethic are examples of long-standing Madrasah traditions that serve as fundamental attributes that enhance educational procedures [95].

The efficacy of curriculum implementation at the school level is frequently reduced by uniform regulations that ignore these cultural differences. There are particular complexities in the relationship between formal institutions like Madrasah and community-based organizations like TPQ. While Madrasah must adhere to government-mandated standards and standard operating procedures, TPQ enjoys a significant degree of curricular flexibility and pedagogical autonomy [96]. A lack of coordinated governance may lead to social friction between communities, even though institutional rivalry might promote quality development [97]. Therefore, a cooperative mechanism is required to balance the roles of formal and community-based organizations in meeting

society's requirements for religious education in a sustainable way. Islamic educational methods have also undergone substantial change as a result of globalization and digitalization. Technology is being used by educational institutions more and more to improve the efficacy of instruction [98]. The Madrasah Information System (SIMADRASAH), online religious seminars, pesantren-based Learning Management Systems (LMS), and the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Qur'an application are a few examples. However, there are still issues with ensuring that digital content is curated in accordance with Islamic educational principles and bridging technological barriers in rural places [99], [100]. Inadequate digital integration could lead to the emergence of new disparities and jeopardize the legitimacy of religious educational resources. In the meantime, budget politics has emerged as a crucial problem that threatens the viability of smaller organizations like Madin and TPQ. Financial uncertainty stems from their reliance on private and community donations, particularly when government budget allocations are still insufficient to cover operational demands and raise educational standards [101].

Inadequate funding has an impact on teachers' professional growth and training possibilities in addition to infrastructure development. For these nonformal institutions to continue to exist and be relevant, government agencies, Islamic groups, and local communities must work together more closely. Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia must continue to adjust to social changes and technical breakthroughs in the face of these modern difficulties. However, as the fundamental basis of educational practice, this adaptation must continue to be firmly grounded in Islamic values. It is anticipated that efforts to improve governance, distribute resources equally, and maximize technology in accordance with religious principles will protect the caliber and applicability of Islamic education as it faces the challenges of the contemporary world. This study shows that varied roles in addressing the educational demands of Muslim communities are reflected in the diversity of Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. Regarding accessibility, service quality, and institutional sustainability, Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an (TPQ), Madrasah Diniyah (Madin), Pe-santren, Madrasah, and Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTAI) all have unique [102], [103], [104]. For example, TPQ and Madin have significant pedagogical autonomy and curriculum flexibility, yet they continue to struggle with a lack of funding and staff. Although their governance is strictly governed by national rules, PTAI, on the other hand, benefit from more established institutional structures and amenities [105], [106]. The systemic difficulties that Islamic education at all levels faces, especially with regard to curriculum implementation and resource management, are another important finding. TPQ and Madin are susceptible to institutional instability due to a lack of funds and growing operating expenses [107]. Madrasah and PTAI, on the other hand, are subject to strict regulations yet enjoy comparatively steady government funding [108], [109].

These circumstances emphasize how urgent it is to create more flexible regulatory frameworks that allow all Islamic educational institutions to provide fair, excellent, and long-lasting educational services. There are three main ways in which this work theoretically advances the topic of Islamic education politics. By demonstrating that a single governance model is inadequate for institutions with varying organizational structures, cultural orientations, and legitimacy grounds, it first develops the idea of differentiated

governance. By showing that institutional diversity can be a strategic advantage in a heterogeneous society, this enhances current discussions that are dominated by the unified system perspective. Second, the study highlights the paradox of bureaucratization, whereby local responsiveness is diminished and creativity is paradoxically constrained by standardization meant to equalize quality. This paradox is consistent with Weber's concept of the "iron cage of rationalization," but it also highlights further complexity in the context of religious education, where local customs and religious ideals collide with governmental requirements. Third, the study emphasizes how important state-civil society connections are in influencing Islamic education in Indonesia. Islamic mass organizations (ormas) in Indonesia actively participate in institutional development and co-produce educational policy, in contrast to secular nations where civil society mainly serves as a check on governmental power [110], [111]. This result emphasizes the significance of hybrid governance in Islamic education, wherein institutional administration, quality control, and knowledge production are mutually influenced by the state and community groups. In order to guarantee equitable financing for both formal and non-formal institutions, the report suggests a thorough assessment of Islamic education policies.

The creation of policies that support various pedagogical techniques is one important suggestion, enabling institutions to innovate in response to regional demands and learner characteristics [112]. Such actions would increase Islamic education's applicability in adapting to societal and technological development. Islamic educational institutions must improve their operational resource management strategies through open financial planning, collaborations with private and community organizations, and ongoing teacher professional development initiatives [113], [114]. Enhancing service quality and guaranteeing program sustainability require building strong institutional capability. In the conclusion, the study shows that the state, educational institutions, and the local community must work together for Islamic education governance in Indonesia to be successful. The synergy is essential for building public trust, enhancing educational quality, and guaranteeing that Islamic education continues to be a significant pillar in forming national character [115], [115].

4   Conclusion

Taman Pen-didikan Al-Qur'an (TPQ), Madrasah Diniyah (Madin), Pesantren, Madrasah, and Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTAI) are the five categories of Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia where this study sought to investigate the politics of education and institutional differentiation. The results demonstrate the various stances these institutions have on a range of institutional status, social legitimacy, state regulation, curricular autonomy, and financial sources. Madin and TPQ have little state assistance but a great deal of autonomy. Pesantren's dual concepts of salafiyah and khalafiyah allow them to occupy an intermediate position. In the meantime, Madrasah and PTAI are subject to more stringent regulations and are completely incorporated into the country's educational system. Decentralization, bureaucratization, and digital

transformation all contribute to the persisting problems of resource inequality and quality discrepancies among institutions.

The development of differentiated governance as an analytical framework for Islamic education, the identification of the bureaucratization paradox that may impede institutional innovation, and the mapping of Indonesia's distinct state-ormas relations in shaping Islamic education are the three main theoretical contributions of the study. Future studies should investigate the ways in which institutional differentiation in Islamic education is influenced by political dynamics, digital development, and ideological contestation. Understanding regional differences in policy adaptation requires comparative research across institutional types and geographical areas. To evaluate the long-term effects of national policies on institutional identity, intellectual orientation, and educational outcomes, longitudinal research is also required. Examining how governmental, market, and religious logics interact is also essential to understanding how Indonesia's Islamic educational institutions have changed over time. In general, multidisciplinary, context-sensitive, and justice-oriented techniques should be used in future research to promote more inclusive and equitable policy development for Islamic education across the country.

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