Navigating Islamic Education for National Character Development: Addressing Stagnation in Indonesia's Post-Conservative Turn Era

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Abstract

This research investigates the role of the Islamic education system in shaping the nation's character and addresses the challenges threatening the progress of Islamic education in Indonesia. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach with a desk research method, the study analyzes the phenomenon through extensive literature, including academic articles, books, and reports. The findings reveal that Islamic education in Indonesia confronts the repercussions of a post-conservative era characterized by the ascendancy of conservative religious interpretations altering the political landscape and education system dynamics. Key challenges include resource constraints, inadequate government attention, and the proliferation of conservative ideologies that marginalize local religious authorities. The repercussions include diminished educational quality, widespread teacher moonlighting, and obstacles to integrating Islamic values into the national education framework. Incidents of sexual violence within Islamic educational settings have further damaged institutional reputations. Nonetheless, Islamic education holds significant promise as a solution for character development in Indonesia through a holistic approach that engages schools, families, and communities. Adequate governmental and societal backing is imperative, involving sufficient resource allocation and policies conducive to innovation in Islamic education. By fostering synergy among schools, families, and communities and embracing a flexible, forward-thinking approach, this initiative aims to cultivate a generation strong in faith, morals, and proficient across various scientific and technological domains, poised to confront global challenges and position Indonesia as a cultured, highly competitive nation on the worldwide stage.

Keywords: Challenges of Islamic Education, Conservative Turn, National Character, Threat of Stagnation.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi peran sistem pendidikan Islam dalam membentuk karakter bangsa dan mengatasi permasalahan yang mengancam kejumudan pendidikan Islam di Indonesia. Menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan metode penelitian kepustakaan, penelitian ini menganalisis fenomena melalui literatur yang kaya, termasuk artikel akademik, buku, dan laporan. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan Islam di Indonesia menghadapi ancaman kejumudan pasca era konservatif, dengan kebangkitan pemahaman keagamaan konservatif yang mengubah dinamika politik dan sistem pendidikan. Tantangan yang dihadapi mencakup kekurangan sumber daya, kurangnya perhatian pemerintah, dan infiltrasi paham konservatif yang mengesampingkan otoritas keagamaan lokal. Dampaknya termasuk menurunnya kualitas pendidikan, banyaknya guru yang harus

bekerja sampingan, dan kesulitan mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai Islam dengan sistem pendidikan nasional. Kasus kekerasan seksual di lingkungan pendidikan Islam juga memperburuk citra institusi tersebut. Namun, pendidikan Islam memiliki potensi besar sebagai solusi pendidikan karakter di Indonesia melalui pendekatan holistik yang melibatkan sekolah, keluarga, dan masyarakat. Dukungan kuat dari pemerintah dan masyarakat diperlukan, termasuk alokasi sumber daya yang memadai dan kebijakan yang mendukung inovasi dalam pendidikan Islam. Sinergi antara sekolah, keluarga, dan masyarakat, serta pendekatan yang fleksibel dan responsif terhadap masa depan, diharapkan dapat menghasilkan generasi yang kuat dalam iman, akhlak, serta kompeten dalam berbagai bidang ilmu pengetahuan dan teknologi, siap menghadapi tantangan global dan menjadikan Indonesia bangsa yang beradab dan berdaya saing tinggi di kancah internasional.

Kata Kunci: Ancaman Kejumudan, *Conservatif Turn*, Karakter Bangsa, Tantangan Pendidikan Islam.

Introduction

Islamic education is essential in shaping the character of Muslim individuals and society. Islamic education is about acquiring religious knowledge and developing attitudes, values, and behaviors following Islamic teachings.[1] In this context, the scientific study of Islamic education and its dynamics in shaping character becomes a relevant and significant subject.[2] The importance of Islamic education in shaping character is reflected in the main mission of the Islamic education system, which aims to produce a generation with noble character, knowledge, and Islamic personality. The Islamic education system has a key role in facilitating a deep understanding of Islamic teachings and encouraging the application of Islamic values in daily life.[3]

Meanwhile, the stagnation of Islamic education presents a significant concern, exacerbated by the infiltration of conservative ideologies that diverge from local religious authorities. These circumstances pose persistent challenges to achieving the goal of robust and integrated character education within Indonesian society.[4] As highlighted by various indicators of Islamic education, one key measure of the successful implementation of the Islamic education system in shaping the character of a nation is the cultivation of noble character among every individual of the nation's

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[1] Zaenal Arifin and Moh Turmudi, "Character of Education in Pesantren Perspective:," *Tribakti: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman* 30, no. 2 (July 8, 2019): 335–48, https://doi.org/10.33367/tribakti.v30i2.823.

[2] Hamruni Hamruni and Ricky Satria W, "Eksistensi Pesantren Dan Kontribusinya Dalam Pendidikan Karakter," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 13, no. 2 (December 1, 2016): 197–210, https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.2016.132-06.

[3] Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency, and Commodification on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere," *Contemporary Islam* 3, no. 3 (October 1, 2009): 229–50, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-009-0096-9.

[4] Abdul Rohman and Siti Muhtamiroh, "Integrating Schools and Pesantren Model to Enhance The Quality of Indonesian Madrasa in The Globalization Era," *Journal Al-Ulum* Vol. 22, no. 2 (2022): 507–26.

generation as they integrate into the broader social community.[5] Within the context of religion, character embodies noble virtues that form the foundation for achieving harmony and peace. Peace itself is a primary necessity for humans to lead fulfilling lives.

In this context, research on the role of Islamic education in shaping the nation's character becomes increasingly important to identify practical solutions and strategies in facing this challenge. By understanding the dynamics of social and political change surrounding Islamic education in Indonesia, this research aims to provide in-depth insights into how Islamic education can face the challenges of post-conservative era dullness and play an active role in shaping the character of a qualified and globally competitive nation.[6]

However, in reality, the focus on character development in the current generation is experiencing a noticeable decline. In an article discussing Indonesia's declining national character, Abdullah attributes this decline to several factors: a. The education system lacks adequate emphasis on character formation, prioritizing intellectual development instead. b. The prevailing environment does not sufficiently support the cultivation of good character traits. Amin Abdullah highlights these factors as significant contributors to the diminishing emphasis on character development among today's youth.[7]

The assumption presented by Abdullah is a scenario where the educational practices implemented in certain institutions do not seem to prioritize the importance of noble character principles as the primary asset in establishing a solid foundation in the personalities of the younger generation in various aspects as the inheritors of the nation. However, the main elements of successful education should encompass several criteria, such as cognitive (knowledge), which shapes good attitudes or noble character (affective), and skills (psychomotor), which develop innovative potential. Furthermore,

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[5] Dhevin M.Q Agus Puspita W, "Pemikiran Pendidikan Islam Menurut K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari," *FALASIFA : Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 10, no. 2 (2019): 50–67, https://doi.org/10.36835/falasifa.v10i2.196.

[6] Hosaini Hosaini, Rif'ah Rif'ah, and Muslimin Muslimin, "Integration of Formal Education And Islamic Boarding Schools As New Paradigm From Indonesian Perspective," *At- Ta'lim : Jurnal Pendidikan* 10, no. 1 (January 25, 2024): 107–21, https://doi.org/10.55210/attalim.v10i1.1497.

[7] M. Amin Abdullah, "Islamic Religious Education Based on Religious Intersubjectivity: Philosophical Perspectives and Phenomenology of Religion," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 19, no. 1 (June 30, 2022): 141–64, https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.2022.191-11.

the noble character is also referred to as the central pillar of educational success in the context of Indonesian identity and cultural order.[8]

Therefore, this research delves into the pivotal role played by the Islamic education system in shaping the nation's character and seeks to address the multifaceted challenges that impede the advancement of Islamic education in Indonesia. The study is motivated by recognizing the profound influence that education rooted in Islamic principles has on the development of individuals and society. By exploring the dynamics within the Islamic education system, this research aims to shed light on how it contributes to molding Indonesian citizens' moral fiber, values, and worldviews. Through an in-depth analysis, this research seeks to identify strategies and initiatives to strengthen the Islamic education system, ensuring its alignment with societal needs and aspirations. By addressing these challenges head-on, the research aims to pave the way for a more robust and responsive Islamic education framework that can better serve the Indonesian populace's character development and educational aspirations.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach aided by the library research method. This combination utilizes a rich body of literature to explore and analyze phenomena within a qualitative framework.[9] Researchers systematically collect and review published materials such as academic articles, books, and reports using the library research method for qualitative descriptive research.[10] They synthesize information from these sources to comprehensively understand the subject under study. The analysis process in this study involved critical evaluation and interpretation of findings from the selected literature.[11] The researchers identified recurring themes, conceptual frameworks, and empirical evidence to build a coherent narrative explaining the research topic.

Through library research, the researchers could place their findings and interpretations in the broader context of the existing academic discourse. They relate

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[8] Sauqi Futaqi and Saepudin Mashuri, "Intellectual Capital of Islamic Boarding Schools to Build Multicultural Education Epistemology," *Edukasia : Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam* 18, no. 1 (2023): 1, https://doi.org/10.21043/edukasia.v18i1.17329.
[9] Michael Huberman and Matthew B. Miles, *The Qualitative Researcher's Companion* (SAGE, 2002).
[10] Miza Nina Adlini et al., "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Studi Pustaka," *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan* 6, no. 1 (March 1, 2022): 974–80, https://doi.org/10.33487/edumaspul.v6i1.3394.
[11] Jose Molina Azorin and Roslyn Cameron, "The Application of Mixed Methods in Organisational Research: A Literature Review," *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods* 8, no. 2 (December 1, 2010): pp95-105-pp95-105.

their observations and interpretations to existing theoretical frameworks and previous empirical studies, enriching the depth of analysis.[12] This enhances the credibility and reliability of the findings obtained through the desk research process. The results of descriptive qualitative library-based research can provide valuable insights that can be used to inform practical applications and theoretical development. Researchers advance knowledge and understanding in the field under study by synthesizing diverse perspectives and empirical evidence. Through a systematic and rigorous approach to the literature review, researchers can generate meaningful interpretations and implications that enrich our understanding of the research topic.

Result and Discussion

The State of the Islamic Education System in Indonesia

The Islamic education system in Indonesia has faced several challenges and problems. Since the early development of Islam in the archipelago, Islamic education has been a top priority for the Muslim community. However, in recent years, it has experienced significant setbacks and deficiencies.[13] In the last decade, Islamic education in this nation has faced numerous problems regarding quality, facilities, and infrastructure at the primary and tertiary levels.[14] These problems hinder Islamic education's development, so this aspect of education has not become an actual force for improving the quality of people's lives.

Some key factors that have hindered the development of Islamic education are the dichotomies within the Indonesian education system.[15] This dichotomy significantly impacts the development and enhancement of the quality of the religion-based education system. A primary obstacle is the insufficient funding provided by the government for religious education, which consistently hinders educational reforms. This limited funding affects all aspects, from teacher salaries and school facilities to

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[12] Shipra Arya, Amy H. Kaji, and Marja A. Boermeester, "PRISMA Reporting Guidelines for Meta-Analyses and Systematic Reviews," *JAMA Surgery* 156, no. 8 (August 1, 2021): 789–90, https://doi.org/10.1001/jamasurg.2021.0546.

[13] Kamaluddin MH Pasi, Rasyidin Rasyidin, and Radinal Mukhtar Harahap, "Education System of Modern Islamic Boarding School in The Postmodern Era," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 3 (October 21, 2020): 311–23, https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v3i3.805.

[14] Defnaldi Defnaldi et al., "The Evolution of Islamic Education Institutions in Indonesia," *JMKSP (Jurnal Manajemen, Kepemimpinan, Dan Supervisi Pendidikan)* 8, no. 1 (January 24, 2023): 164–74, https://doi.org/10.31851/jmksp.v8i1.10941.

[15] Gavin W. Jones, "Religion and Education in Indonesia," *Indonesia*, no. 22 (1976): 19–56, https://doi.org/10.2307/3350976.

curriculum development.[16] This has left many Islamic schools and universities unable to provide education of sufficient quality. As a result, graduates from Islamic educational institutions are often less competitive in the job market than those from general education institutions managed by the Ministry of Education and Culture.[17]

Based on the 2019 Financial Memorandum, in addition to the main budget allocated to the education sector, there is also an education budget sourced from the General Transfer Fund (DTU) and the Special Transfer Fund (DTK). These two sources of funds are allocated to schools under the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC). In 2019, the total budget allocated amounted to IDR 309.9 trillion. This budget includes the Physical Special Allocation Fund (DAK) and the Non-Physical DAK, which consists of the Teacher Professional Allowance (TPG) and School Operational Assistance (BOS). These funds are focused on early childhood education (ECE), primary education, and secondary education units but exclude higher education. Additionally, this budget excludes IDR 36 trillion directly managed by MoEC and IDR 40.2 trillion allocated to the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education (Kemristek Dikti).[18] Thus, the total budget for education under the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education as a whole is much larger.

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[16] Resnita Resnita, "Dualism in Education: Management of School and Madrasah Education," *Journal of Innovation in Teaching and Instructional Media* 4, no. 3 (March 16, 2024): 137–48, https://doi.org/10.52690/jitim.v4i3.790.

[17] Muhammad Amin Abdullah, "Islamic Studies in Higher Education in Indonesia: Challenges, Impact and Prospects for the World Community," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 55, no. 2 (December 15, 2017): 391–426, https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2017.552.391-426.

[18] Kemenag, "Anggaran Pendidikan Kemenag Tidak Lebih Besar dari Kemendikbud," https://kemenag.go.id, accessed May 14, 2024, https://kemenag.go.id/nasional/anggaran-pendidikan-kemenag-tidak-lebih-besar-dari-kemendikbud-qxvxw1.
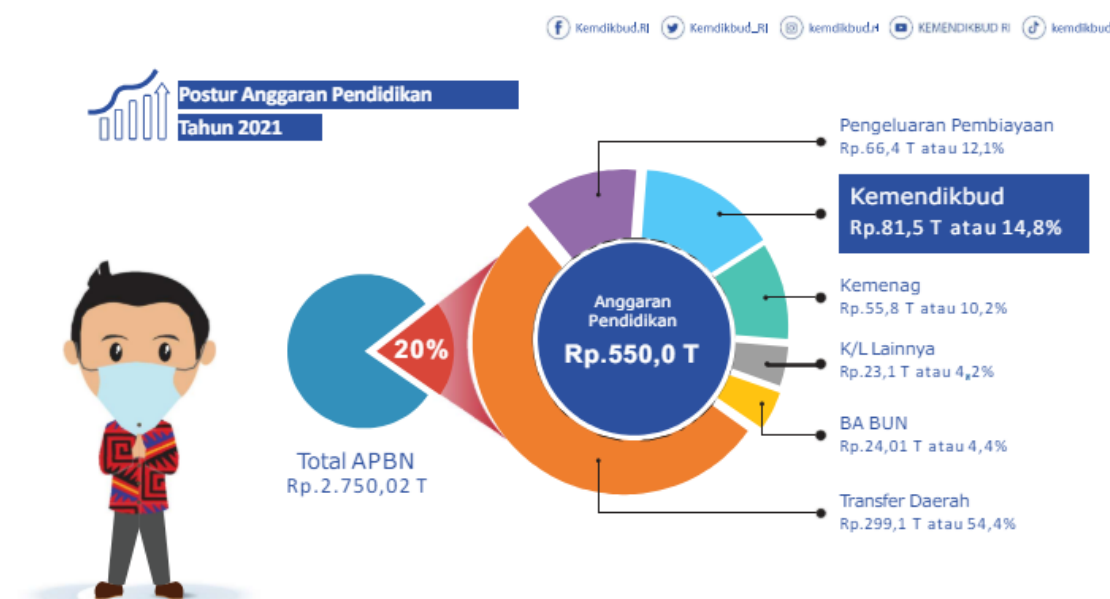
Figure 1. Indonesia Education Fund Allocation in 2021

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) manages IDR 52 trillion in funds, covering various budget items, including the Teacher Professional Allowance (TPG), School Operational Assistance (BOS), Smart Indonesia Program (PIP), as well as education quality improvement programs. These funds support education ranging from *Raudatul Athfal* (RA), *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (*MI), *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (MTs), *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA), to Islamic Religious Higher Education (PTKI) such as State Islamic University (UIN), State Islamic Institute (IAIN), State Islamic College (STAIN), and Private Islamic Religious College (PTKIS).[19] In addition, this fund also covers other religious education units, including Diniyah education and Islamic boarding schools, as well as Christian, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucian religious education units.

A 2019 World Bank study revealed that MoRA receives less than 10.5% of the total education budget despite accounting for 15.3% of primary and secondary education students. This disparity in funding allocation indicates an imbalance that impacts the quality of education within Islamic institutions.[20] Limited funds pose significant challenges for many Islamic schools and colleges in providing adequate facilities and infrastructure. This situation directly impacts the quality of learning and

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[19] mediaindonesia com developer, "Kemenag Kucurkan Rp11,2 Triliun untuk Dana BOS Madrasah," 2023, https://mediaindonesia.com/humaniora/597773/kemenag-kucurkan-rp112-triliun-untuk-dana-bos-madrasah.

[20] medcom id developer, "Terima Bantuan Rp3,7 T dari World Bank, Kemenag Bakal Benahi Madrasah," medcom.id, December 16, 2021, https://www.medcom.id/pendidikan/news-pendidikan/4baq4YZb-terima-bantuan-rp3-7-t-dari-world-bank-kemenag-bakal-benahi-madrasah.

educational outcomes. Consequently, due to restricted funding, curriculum development and teaching quality in Islamic educational institutions often fall behind those in general education institutions. Consequently, graduates from Islamic educational institutions may face lower competitiveness in the job market.[21]

According to the Statistics Indonesia report, in the 2022/2023 school year, there were 399,376 school units in Indonesia, a slight increase of 1.18% from the previous school year of 394,708.[22] There are 93,385 kindergartens in Indonesia, with the vast majority (94.67%) privately owned. This statistic underscores the dominant role of the private sector in preschool education, significantly contributing to access to early childhood education. *Raudatul Athfal* (RA) schools are managed under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and have 31,049 units. RA is an educational institution equivalent to kindergarten but emphasizes Islamic religious education. RA is an important alternative for parents seeking religious education from an early age.[23]

In Indonesia, there are 148,975 primary schools, with 87.29% being public schools, indicating the predominant role of public institutions in primary education. Additionally, there are 26,503 units of *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (MI), of which 93.54% are private schools. MI offers basic education that integrates general and religious subjects. For junior secondary education, there are 41,986 units, with 56.83% being public schools. In contrast, *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (MTs) has 19,150 units, 92.03% of which are private. This illustrates that junior secondary education is mostly government-managed compared to MTs, predominantly in the private sector.[24] There are 14,236 schools (SMA) at the senior high school level, with 50.92% private. Meanwhile, vocational high schools (SMK) total 14,265 units, of which 74.11% are private. There are 9,827 *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA) units, with 91.75% private. This data underscores the

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[21] Nur Kafid and Arina Rohmatika, "Academic Social Capital And Institutional Transformation Of Islamic Higher Education In Indonesia," *Akademika : Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 24, no. 2 (January 8, 2020): 335–52.

[22] Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia, "Statistik Pendidikan 2023," accessed March 15, 2024, https://www.bps.go.id/id/publication/2023/11/24/54557f7c1bd32f187f3cdab5/statistik-pendidikan-2023.html.

[23] Ridhwan Mustajab, "Ada 44,19 Juta Murid di Indonesia pada 2022/2023 - Dataindonesia.id," accessed March 15, 2024, https://dataindonesia.id/pendidikan/detail/ada-4419-juta-murid-di-indonesia-pada-20222023.

[24] Yuli Nurhanisah, "Berapa Jumlah Sekolah Di Indonesia 2023? | Indonesia Baik," 2023, https://indonesiabaik.id/infografis/berapa-jumlah-sekolah-di-indonesia-2023.

significant role of private schools, particularly in SMK and MA, at the upper secondary education level.[25]

Based on this data, it's evident that the private sector plays a significant role across various levels of education in Indonesia, particularly in religious education (RA, MI, MTs, and MA). Madrasahs make substantial contributions to achieving key education indicators at the district level, including net enrollment rates (APM), Human Development Index (HDI) targets, and the fulfillment of minimum service standards (MSS). Specifically, madrasahs account for approximately 11% of primary school enrollment (MI) and 22% of junior secondary school enrollment (MTs). The largest share of this contribution comes from private madrasahs, often managed by local religious foundations affiliated with Indonesia's two largest Islamic organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah.[26]

In detail, private madrasahs contribute significantly to enrollment at the MI level, accounting for 9.57% of total enrollment, compared to the 1.43% contributed by public madrasahs. Similarly, at the MTs level, private madrasahs contribute 16.5% to enrollment, whereas public madrasahs contribute only 5.5%. This data underscores the vital role of private madrasahs in achieving regional education goals, particularly in enhancing access to and participation in primary and secondary education. The predominance of the private sector at this level of education highlights the important role of private institutions in complementing government efforts to expand educational opportunities, especially in religious education. However, the heavy reliance on private schools also presents challenges, particularly in ensuring standardized education quality and adequate supervision.[27] The government must ensure that private schools, especially those with religious affiliations, adhere to the same standards as public schools to guarantee that all students receive a quality education.

Furthermore, the annual increase in schools signifies an ongoing effort to enhance education accessibility. However, ensuring educational quality remains a significant challenge. The government must improve academic standards across public

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[25] Ridwan Mustajab, "Ada 219.485 Sekolah di Indonesia pada 2022/2023 - Dataindonesia.id," accessed March 15, 2024, https://dataindonesia.id/pendidikan/detail/ada-219485-sekolah-di-indonesia-pada-20222023.

[26] Muhamad Basyrul Muvid and Miftahuuddin, "Pendidikan Islam dan Indeks Pembangunan Manusia (Telaah atas Kontribusi dan Peran Pendidikan Islam dalam Pengembangan IPM):," *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 20, no. 1 (July 8, 2022): 31–46, https://doi.org/10.35905/alishlah.v20i1.2604.

[27] Ismi Adelia and Oki Mitra, "Permasalahan Pendidikan Islam Di Lembaga Pendidikan Madrasah," *Islamika : Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 21, no. 01 (August 25, 2021): 32–45, https://doi.org/10.32939/islamika.v21i01.832.

and private schools by enhancing teacher quality, curriculum, and educational facilities. Despite the expansion of educational institutions, substantial efforts are still needed to ensure that every child in Indonesia receives a high-quality and equitable education, providing them with equal opportunities for a brighter future.[28]

Challenges Facing Islamic Education in the Post-Conservative Turn Era

The conservative turn in Indonesia's religious landscape began following the ousting of President Soeharto.[29] Not only does it have implications for changing the map of Islamic religious groups in Indonesia, but it also changes the map of political identity in Indonesia.[30] Conservative Islamic groups later played this political identity in 2014 and 2019 to create a stigma that the incumbent government, Joko Widodo's presidency, was anti-Islam or Islamophobic.[31] After 15 years of reform, these conservative Islamic groups infiltrated the government and benefited from various sectors during President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's rule.[32]

Van Bruinessen offers several explanations for the rise of conservatism in Indonesia. The first is the link between democratization and the diminishing influence of liberal and progressive views of Islam. This argument asserts that most Indonesian Muslims are inherently conservative or lean towards fundamentalism. Van Bruinessen rejects this explanation because liberal Islamic ideas can only flourish under authoritarian regimes. This argument also illustrates that proponents of liberal and progressive Islamic ideas who were previously active in various civil society organizations are now active in practical politics, which in turn leads to a weakening of the cultural foundations of liberal Islam.[33]

The second factor is the increasing influence of conservative Islamic movements from the Middle East on Indonesia. Alums of universities in the Middle East,

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[28] Muhammad Sholeh Hoddin, "Dinamika Politik Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia; Studi Kebijakan Pendidikan Islam Pada Masa Pra-Kemerdekaan Hingga Reformasi.," *Jurnal Ilmiah Iqra'* 14, no. 1 (2020): 15–30.

[29] Marcus Mietzner, "Indonesia in 2014: Jokowi and the Repolarization of Post-Soeharto Politics," *Southeast Asian Affairs* 2015, no. 1 (2015): 117–38.

[30] Robert W. Hefner, "Muslim Democrats and Islamist Violence in Post-Soeharto Indonesia," *Remaking Muslim Politics: Pluralism, Contestation, Democratization* 306 (2005).

[31] Azyumardi Azra, "Political Islam in Post-Soeharto Indonesia," *Islamic Perspectives on the New Millennium*, 2004, 133–49.

[32] Hasbi Aswar, "Destructing The Islamist In Indonesia: Joko Widodo Policy and Its Controversy," *International Journal of Malay-Nusantara Studies* 1, no. 1 (May 30, 2018): 62–79.

[33] Martin van Bruinessen, *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the "Conservative Turn," Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam*, 2013, https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814414579.

particularly in Saudi Arabia, propagate a textual and rigid interpretation of Islam among the public.[34] This effort began in the last two decades of the 20th century, involving the translation and free distribution of religious books to individuals, Islamic social organizations, and educational institutions in Indonesia. They were supported financially by entities like the Ihya' al-Turath al-Islami Foundation in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, Middle Eastern alums disseminate Islamic teachings through lectures in mosques and offices, the establishment of madrassas and Islamic boarding schools, radio and television da'wah programs, as well as through publishing books and magazines. They collaborate with Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies (LIPIA) graduates, a Jakarta-based university affiliated with Imam Ibn Saud University in Riyadh.[35] As the research conducted by Hasan[36] and Wahid shows this solid Middle Eastern influence.[37]

The transnational movement, according to Van Bruinessen, to some extent diminishes the religious authority of Islamic organizations in Indonesia, such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, Islamic Unity (Persis), and the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI). For example, Salafi proselytizers never refer to the fatwas given by the aforementioned Islamic organizations for religious issues that occur in Indonesia.[38] Instead, they seek fatwas directly from their teachers in the Middle East. This shows that Salafi activists do not trust the religious authority of Indonesian Islamic organizations.

The threat of the post-conservative era of Islamic education can be identified from several factors that affect the Islamic education system in Indonesia. One significant factor is the shortage of educational resources and the lack of government attention to Islamic education. The Indonesian government has long considered Islamic education a stepchild, so the allocation of funds is very different from education within

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[34] Moch Muwaffiqillah, "The Trichotomy of Islam, Democracy, and Secularism in Indonesia Post The Conservative Turn," *Tribakti: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman* 34, no. 1 (2023): 79–94.

[35] M. M. van Bruinessen, "What Happened to the Smiling Face of Indonesian Islam? Muslim Intellectualism and the Conservative Turn in Post-Suharto Indonesia," *RSIS Working Papers, No. 222*, 2011.

[36] Noorhaidi Hasan, "Faith and Politics: The Rise of the Laskar Jihad in the Era of Transition in Indonesia," *Indonesia*, no. 73 (2002): 145–69, https://doi.org/10.2307/3351472.

[37] Din Wahid, "Kembalinya Konservatisme Islam Indonesia," *Studia Islamika* 21, no. 2 (August 31, 2014): 375–90, https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v21i2.1043.

[38] Dr Martin van Bruinessen, *NU ; Tradisi, Relasi-Relasi Kuasa, Pencarian Wacana Baru* (Lkis Pelangi Aksara, 1994).

the Ministry of National Education.[39] This shortage of educational resources has direct implications for the quality of Indonesian education, forcing Islamic religious teachers to do side jobs to earn a living, disrupting the effectiveness of learning.

Islamic education also grapples with the challenge of integrating Islamic cultural values with the national education system. It must evolve into a modern educational system comparable to the national education framework, fostering scientific and academic progress that integrates spiritual, moral, and material values for human life. As a response, the emergence of transnational Islam, seen as a harbinger of change, gained rapid traction in Indonesia following the Conservative Turn era.[40]

In this context, Islamic education in Indonesia grapples with dichotomous challenges within its educational system, which can impact the quality of education and students' capabilities. Ideally, Islamic education should offer an integrated learning approach combining general and religious subjects to cultivate students with critical thinking skills and strong spiritual values. However, the reality is that Islamic education has struggled to effectively address the decline in educational quality. For instance, Islamic boarding schools, which are symbolic of Islamic education, have faced issues of violence within the educational environment in recent decades.
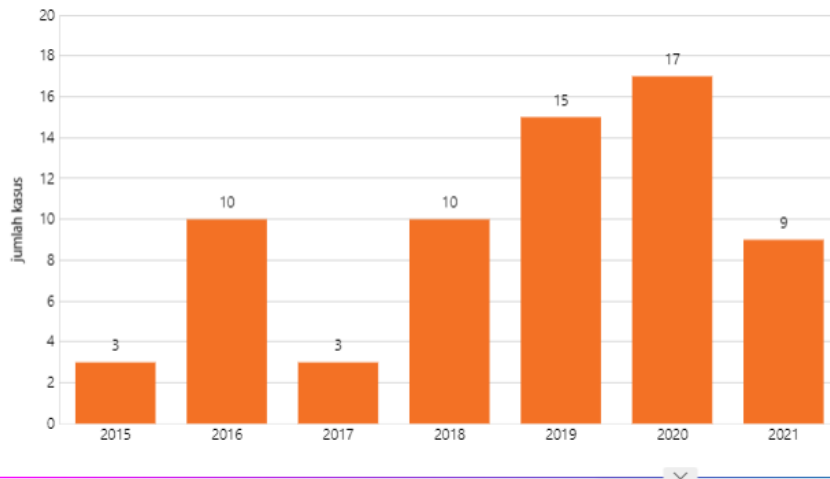

Figure 2. Number of Violence in Islamic Education Institutions in Indonesia

According to the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan), during the 2017-2021 period, the most cases of sexual violence in

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[39] Armawati Armawati and Kemas Imron Rosadi, "Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Manajemen Lembaga Pendidikan Islam: Sistem Pendanaan," *Jurnal Ilmu Manajemen Terapan* 2, no. 3 (February 16, 2021): 410–17, https://doi.org/10.31933/jimt.v2i3.432.

[40] Ade Imelda Frimayanti, "Latar Belakang Sosial Berdirinya Lembaga Pendidikan Islam Terpadu Di Indonesia," *Al-Tadzkiyyah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 1 (August 28, 2017): 27–45, https://doi.org/10.24042/atjpi.v6i1.1476.

educational settings occurred in universities with 35 cases, followed by Islamic boarding schools with 16 cases, and senior high schools (SMA) with 15 cases.[41] These figures highlight that sexual violence is not confined to general education settings but also occurs in faith-based educational institutions. According to Komnas Perempuan, supervision is often limited in many pesantren and other Islamic educational institutions. The lack of transparency and effective reporting mechanisms means that many cases go undiscovered, exacerbating the decline in education quality by creating an unsafe environment for students.[42]

Increased cases of sexual violence that are not appropriately handled will damage the image of Islamic educational institutions in the eyes of the public. This can reduce public trust in Islamic educational institutions and interest in studying there. Islamic education should focus not only on the academic aspect but also on students' character and moral development. Sexual violence cases that are not appropriately handled will hinder this goal, as a safe and supportive environment is the main prerequisite for good character development.[43] This situation contributes to the growing perception that Islamic education in Indonesia is increasingly undervalued in shaping national character education.

The Role of Islamic Education in Shaping the Character of the Indonesian Nation

The direction of Islamic education in shaping the character of the Indonesian nation can be seen through its goals and principles. Islamic education in Indonesia plays a crucial role in developing spiritual and moral values in individuals. It is not only about teaching religious doctrines but also about instilling these values into everyday life.[44] Thus, Islamic religious education can be a strong foundation for shaping good character and making individuals who have high spiritual and moral awareness. Islamic education in Indonesia plays a vital role in shaping the nation's character, emphasizing the

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[41] Anugrah Andriansyah, "Komnas Perempuan: Kasus Kekerasan Seksual di Lingkungan Pendidikan, Paling Tinggi di Universitas," VOA Indonesia, April 12, 2022, https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/komnas-perempuan-kasus-kekerasan-seksual-di-lingkungan-pendidikan-paling-tinggi-di-universitas/6525659.html.

[42] Dwi Hadya Jayani, "Kekerasan Seksual di Lingkungan Pendidikan Terus Terjadi, Ini Datanya | Databoks," 2023, https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2022/03/10/kekerasan-seksual-di-lingkungan-pendidikan-terus-terjadi-ini-datanya.

[43] Siti Muawanah et al., "Persepsi Masyarakat Terhadap Layanan Pendidikan Madrasah Di Jawa Tengah," *EDUKASI: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan* 20, no. 1 (May 10, 2022): 41–58, https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v20i1.1227.

[44] Abdullah, "Islamic Religious Education Based on Religious Intersubjectivity."

development of spiritual and moral values in each individual.[45] Islamic education focuses on religious knowledge and aims to internalize and apply religious teachings in daily life. Islamic education is a strong foundation for forming good character, spiritual awareness, and high morality.

The development of spiritual and moral values in Islamic education encompasses religious teachings and the appreciation and practice of these values in daily life. Values such as honesty, justice, empathy, and responsibility are taught from an early age, shaping individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also possess high moral integrity. This teaching includes various activities such as worship, social ethics, and interactions with others, emphasizing the importance of Islamic values in every aspect of life.[46]

The Islamic education curriculum is designed to integrate Islamic values into various subjects, including both religious and general subjects such as math, science, and language. This approach offers a holistic and balanced education that combines academic knowledge with moral values, ensuring that students receive intellectual development and strong character education.[47] High spiritual awareness is one of the primary goals of Islamic education, achieved through teaching the significance of relationships with God and fellow human beings. This awareness guides individuals in making wise and responsible decisions, motivating them to consistently do good and avoid actions that harm themselves and others. The role of teachers in Islamic education is crucial, as they serve not only as educators but also as role models for moral and ethical behavior.[48] Teachers who exemplify Islamic values such as patience, sincerity, and compassion become inspirations for students, who will emulate and learn from their teachers' behavior.

Islamic educational environments, such as pesantren and madrasahs, provide an atmosphere conducive to learning and practicing Islamic values. In these settings, students learn in the classroom and through daily life activities that instill discipline, cooperation, and social responsibility. This supportive environment significantly shapes

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[45] Mubaidi Sulaiman, "Konsep Pendidikan Islam Dalam Perspektif Muhammad Fethulah Gulen," *Didaktika Religia* 4, no. 2 (2016): 61–86.

[46] Pasi, Rasyidin, and Harahap, "Education System of Modern Islamic Boarding School in The Postmodern Era."

[47] Hosaini, Rif'ah, and Muslimin, "Integration of Formal Education And Islamic Boarding Schools As New Paradigm From Indonesian Perspective."

[48] Muhammad Hamid and Syamsul Bakri, "Urgensi Sanad Keilmuan Dalam Meningkatkan Profesionalitas Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI)," *Piwulang: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 6, no. 1 (September 17, 2023): 45–54, https://doi.org/10.32478/piwulang.v6i1.1814.

students' character, ensuring the values taught are actively applied in real-life situations.[49] Overall, Islamic education in Indonesia significantly shapes the nation's character by integrating spiritual and moral values into every aspect of life. Through this comprehensive approach, Islamic education aims to produce individuals who are not only academically proficient but also possess good character, high spiritual awareness, and strong moral integrity. These qualities enable them to contribute positively to society and the nation.

Islamic education in Indonesia faces several significant challenges, including a shortage of educational resources. This includes inadequate educational facilities, a lack of quality teaching materials, and limited access to educational technology. These shortcomings directly impact the quality of education, hindering efforts to create a conducive and effective learning environment. Additionally, the government's lack of attention and support for Islamic education exacerbates the situation, with limited budget allocations and policies that are less supportive of the development of Islamic education.[50]

This condition forces many Islamic religious teachers to seek second jobs to make ends meet. As a result, the time and energy that should be dedicated to teaching and educating students is compromised, reducing the effectiveness of learning and the positive impact it can have on students. This situation creates a vicious cycle where low-quality education results in unsatisfactory outcomes, discouraging further support and investment in Islamic education. [51] To overcome this problem, various alternative solutions have been proposed. One of them is the development of more flexible, responsive, and future-oriented Islamic education. Islamic education must adapt to changing times and the demands of globalization without compromising its deeply held core values. This involves integrating modern technology into the learning process, improving teachers' capacity and skills through continuous training, and enriching the curriculum with subjects relevant to future needs.

Islamic education has great potential to provide solutions for character education in Indonesia through a holistic approach that includes schools, families, and community-based education. Character education in Islamic education emphasizes more

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[49] Muvid and Miftahuuddin, "Pendidikan Islam dan Indeks Pembangunan Manusia (Telaah atas Kontribusi dan Peran Pendidikan Islam dalam Pengembangan IPM)."

[50] Armawati and Rosadi, "FAKTOR YANG MEMPENGARUHI MANAJEMEN LEMBAGA PENDIDIKAN ISLAM."

[51] Abdullah, "Islamic Studies in Higher Education in Indonesia."

than just knowledge transfer; it focuses on forming strong moral and spiritual values. Therefore, Islamic education can play a central role in shaping a generation that excels not only in science and technology but also in character and personality. In Islamic education, schools are not merely places for academic learning but also environments for developing students' character. Schools function as value-oriented enterprises.[52] School character education entails integrating Islamic values into the curriculum, extracurricular activities, and school culture. Schools are responsible for nurturing students who are not only intellectually adept but also possess noble character, a sense of responsibility, and empathy.

Teachers in Islamic education play a crucial role as role models. Their exemplary behavior in applying Islamic values on a daily basis serves as a tangible example for students. Additionally, the interactive and practical learning approach, which connects theory with daily life practices, helps students better understand and internalize the taught values.[53] For example, community social activities, volunteer service initiatives, or environmental conservation programs at school can serve as avenues to apply Islamic values such as cooperation, caring, and responsibility.

In Islamic education, the family is the primary environment for shaping learners' character. It is expected to function as a "school of love" filled with genuine affection and compassion. Parents play a crucial role in instilling fundamental values and life principles from early childhood, such as honesty, patience, and sincerity. The harmonious and affectionate interactions among family members provide a solid foundation for children's character development.[54] Family-based character education involves teaching Islamic values through daily life activities. For example, families can share stories about prophets and Islamic figures, engage in joint prayers, and participate in family worship activities. Families can foster children's social skills through discussions, educational games, and recreational activities by creating a conducive learning environment. These practices help integrate Islamic values into everyday life, reinforcing moral and spiritual development within the family unit.[55]

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[52] Defnaldi et al., "The Evolution of Islamic Education Institutions in Indonesia."

[53] Muvid and Miftahuuddin, "Pendidikan Islam dan Indeks Pembangunan Manusia (Telaah atas Kontribusi dan Peran Pendidikan Islam dalam Pengembangan IPM)."

[54] Aimi Aimi, "Manajemen Pendidikan Anak Dalam Keluarga," *Jurnal Ecoment Global* 4, no. 2 (August 19, 2019): 134–45, https://doi.org/10.35908/jeg.v4i2.760.

[55] Cheryl S. Al-Mateen and Aneeta Afzal, "The Muslim Child, Adolescent, and Family," *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics* 13, no. 1 (January 1, 2004): 183–200, https://doi.org/10.1016/S1056-4993(03)00071-3.

Society plays a significant role in shaping the character of learners within the context of Islamic education. It serves as an environment that upholds aesthetic and ethical values, influencing the attitudes and perspectives of individuals. The value system embraced by the community profoundly impacts how learners perceive and adopt moral and spiritual principles.[56] Therefore, the community is responsible for upholding positive values and discouraging negative ones. Strengthening community-based character education can be achieved through programs and activities that encourage active community involvement. For instance, collaborative efforts include cooperation, humanitarian initiatives, and religious gatherings in mosques or prayer rooms. Schools, families, and communities can provide students with a rich and immersive learning experience by coordinating activities that align with Islamic values.[57]

In this way, Islamic education serves as a solution to character development in Indonesia by emphasizing the importance of synergy between schools, families, and communities. This integrated character education approach aims to cultivate a generation characterized by moral uprightness, intellectual prowess, and competitiveness. Ultimately, this holistic educational framework is envisioned to produce individuals who excel academically, possess strong ethical values, and actively contribute to improving society and the nation.

In addition to the above, Islamic Education should aim to foster integrated scientific and educational progress by harmonizing spiritual, moral, and material values in human life. This approach involves comprehensive religious teachings and the development of practical life skills, scientific knowledge, and technological proficiency.[58] Therefore, students can comprehend and apply Islamic values within a broader context, preparing them to contribute significantly to modern society. Implementing this solution necessitates robust support from the government and society. The government should allocate more resources to Islamic education, ensuring that Islamic schools have sufficient facilities and that religious teachers receive fair

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[56] Florian Pohl, "Islamic Education and Civil Society: Reflections on the Pesantren Tradition in Contemporary Indonesia," *Comparative Education Review* 50, no. 3 (August 2006): 389–409, https://doi.org/10.1086/503882.

[57] Mujawazah Mujawazah and Agus Widyantoro, "Speaking Materials for Conversation Class at Islamic Senior High School," *LingTera* 6, no. 1 (August 9, 2019): 41–50, https://doi.org/10.21831/lt.v6i1.15017.

[58] Hiroko Kushimoto, "Islam and Modern School Education in Journal Pengasuh: Review of the Kaum Muda - Kaum Tua Dichotomy," *Studia Islamika* 19, no. 2 (2012), https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v19i2.361.

salaries.[59] Furthermore, policies supporting innovation in Islamic education should be implemented, including incentives for schools that successfully integrate technology and modern teaching methods into their curriculum.

Communities also play a vital role in supporting Islamic education. Active participation from parents, community leaders, and religious organizations can create a supportive and inspiring environment for students. By fostering close collaboration between the government, schools, and communities, the challenges confronting Islamic education can be effectively addressed, enabling Islamic education to thrive and make a more significant contribution to shaping the character and future of the Indonesian nation. Ultimately, a flexible, responsive, and future-oriented Islamic education system will empower a generation that excels not only in faith and morals but also in various fields of science and technology. This generation will be equipped to confront global challenges confidently and competently, positioning Indonesia as a civilized, advanced, and highly competitive nation on the international stage.

Conclusion

This study highlights the challenges facing Islamic education in Indonesia due to a post-conservative turn, marked by the ascendancy of conservative religious interpretations that have reshaped political dynamics and the Islamic education system. These challenges include resource shortages, insufficient government attention, and the infiltration of conservative ideologies that marginalize local religious authorities. Consequently, the quality of education has declined, leading many teachers to seek additional employment and posing difficulties in integrating Islamic values into the national education framework. Incidents of sexual violence within Islamic educational settings have further tarnished institutional reputations.

Despite these challenges, Islamic education presents significant potential for character development in Indonesia through a comprehensive approach involving schools, families, and communities. Achieving this requires robust government and community support, including adequate resource allocation and policies fostering innovation in Islamic education. By fostering synergy among schools, families, and communities and adopting a flexible, forward-looking approach, a generation can be

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[59] Riza Rahmawati, Rosita Rosita, and Masduki Asbari, "The Role and Challenges of Islamic Religious Education in the Age of Globalization," *Journal of Information Systems and Management (JISMA)* 1, no. 1 (April 30, 2022): 6–11, https://doi.org/10.4444/jisma.v1i1.2.

nurtured that embodies strong faith, morals, and proficiency in various scientific and technological fields—equipping Indonesia to tackle global challenges and enhance its international standing as a cultured, competitive nation.

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