

From Policy to Institutional Transformation: Curriculum Integration and Governance Reform under Law No. 18 of 2019 in an Indonesian Islamic Boarding School

(Dari Kebijakan ke Transformasi Kelembagaan: Integrasi Kurikulum dan Reformasi Tata Kelola di bawah Undang-Undang No. 18 Tahun 2019 di Sebuah Pondok Pesantren di Indonesia)

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study addresses the implementation of Law No. 18 of 2019 on Islamic Boarding Schools (Pesantren) at Pondok Pesantren Pangeran Diponegoro in Sleman, Yogyakarta, amidst government policy shifts aimed at strengthening pesantren in education, proselytization (*dakwah*), and community empowerment. It examines operational implementation and its impact on governance and educational activities. **Method:** Employing a qualitative case study design in Sleman, data were collected through direct observations and semi-structured interviews with a purposively selected sample of administrators and students, analyzed using thematic analysis. **Findings:** Findings reveal that the law significantly reshaped administrative governance, curriculum integration, and community service programs, successfully enhancing the pesantren's institutional role despite operational adaptation and resource readiness challenges. **Contribution:** Beyond offering a context-specific case, this study contributes conceptually to Islamic educational governance by introducing the framework of hybrid governance transformation. It demonstrates how traditional faith-based institutions dynamically negotiate between state-mandated standardization and indigenous pedagogical autonomy, revealing that successful policy integration relies on adaptive co-governance rather than top-down compliance. Future research should explore long-term quantitative metrics of community impact across diverse pesantren typologies.

Keywords: Islamic boarding school education; implementation; development of Islamic boarding schools

ABSTRAK



Tujuan: Studi ini membahas implementasi Undang-Undang Nomor 18 Tahun 2019 tentang Pesantren di Pondok Pesantren Pangeran Diponegoro di Sleman, Yogyakarta, di tengah pergeseran kebijakan pemerintah yang bertujuan memperkuat pesantren dalam bidang pendidikan, dakwah, dan pemberdayaan masyarakat. Studi ini meneliti implementasi operasional dan dampaknya terhadap tata kelola dan kegiatan pendidikan. **Metodologi:** Dengan menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif di Sleman, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi langsung dan wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan sampel administrator dan siswa yang dipilih secara purposif, dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. **Hasil Penelitian:** Temuan menunjukkan bahwa undang-undang tersebut secara signifikan membentuk kembali tata kelola administrasi, integrasi kurikulum, dan program pengabdian masyarakat, berhasil meningkatkan peran kelembagaan pesantren meskipun menghadapi tantangan adaptasi operasional dan kesiapan sumber daya. **Kontribusi:** Selain memberikan kontribusi berbasis konteks lokal, studi ini memberikan sumbangan konseptual terhadap tata kelola pendidikan Islam dengan memperkenalkan kerangka transformasi tata kelola hibrid. Studi ini mengungkapkan bagaimana lembaga tradisional berbasis keagamaan secara dinamis bernegosiasi antara standarisasi negara dan otonomi pedagogis lokal, yang menunjukkan bahwa keberhasilan integrasi kebijakan bergantung pada tata kelola adaptif (co-governance) alih-alih kepatuhan top-down semata. **Penelitian selanjutnya** harus mengeksplorasi metrik kuantitatif jangka panjang tentang dampak komunitas di berbagai tipologi pesantren.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan pesantren; Implementasi; Pengembangan pesantren

Introduction

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) play a strategic role in fostering a religious and competitive younger generation by integrating religious education with essential life skills. As one of the oldest traditional educational institutions in Indonesia, *pesantren* hold a unique societal position in preserving and disseminating Islamic values. This role received formal state recognition through the enactment of Law No. 18 of 2019 on Pesantren, which legally aligns *pesantren* with mainstream formal education and grants them autonomy to design curricula based on local wisdom and Islamic values. However, a critical problem arises at the operational level: top-down educational policy reforms often encounter implementation bottlenecks such as resource constraints, administrative unpreparedness, and institutional adaptation friction when translated into daily governance at localized, traditional institutions (Mustarsyidah, 2021).

Recent scholarly work has extensively analyzed the macroeconomic and regulatory dimensions of policy changes in Islamic education. Studies on educational governance in Indonesia have primarily documented the historical evolution of national curriculum shifts and evaluated policy impacts through broad, macro-level surveys. These works emphasize the theoretical alignment between state regulations and religious education, highlighting how formal recognition boosts institutional legitimacy and financial access for faith-based schools.

Despite these contributions, existing research presents distinct limitations. Most contemporary literature focuses predominantly on high-level policy formulation or generalized national assessments, frequently overlooking the nuanced operational mechanics within individual institutions. Furthermore, studies evaluating Law No. 18 of 2019 tend to treat *pesantren* as a homogenous group, failing to account for how specific institutional culture, human resource

readiness, and facility infrastructure in regional boarding schools influence actual policy absorption and execution.

While existing literature on Islamic educational policy provides valuable descriptive accounts, it predominantly relies on traditional top-down compliance models that fail to explain how non-state, faith-based institutions negotiate regulatory mandates without forfeiting their core pedagogical identity. Current governance theories often oversimplify policy adoption as either seamless integration or total resistance, overlooking the complex mechanisms of institutional co-governance and adaptive hybridization in traditional educational settings (Brooks & Mutohar, 2021; Shah, 2022). Consequently, a critical scholarly gap exists in understanding how regulatory frameworks interact with localized, faith-based organizational structures. To bridge this gap, this study advances the scholarship of Islamic educational governance by demonstrating how institutional actors construct a hybrid governance model that reconciles state-mandated standardization with indigenous religious authority (Berglund, 2020; Grace, 2021).

To bridge this gap, this study addresses two central research questions: how does Pondok Pesantren Pangeran Diponegoro in Sleman operationalize Law No. 18 of 2019 within its daily educational governance and community empowerment initiatives, and what are the resulting impacts and operational hurdles? Consequently, the objective is to analyze the ground-level implementation mechanisms, identify structural obstacles, and evaluate the institutional outcomes at this specific boarding school. The novelty of this research lies in its micro-level, empirical investigation of policy execution in a localized traditional *pesantren*, offering actionable insights into how regulatory frameworks interact with grass-roots Islamic educational governance.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative single-case study design to investigate the operationalization of Law No. 18 of 2019 at Pondok Pesantren Pangeran Diponegoro in Sleman, Yogyakarta. A purposive sampling strategy was utilized to select key informants who possessed direct operational authority and first-hand experience in executing policy reforms. The final sample comprised eight participants ($N = 8$), including the head of the pesantren (1), senior curriculum directors (2), administrative officers (2), Islamic education teachers (2), and student welfare coordinators (1).

Data collection was conducted on-site over a four-week period. Primary data were gathered through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews using an instrument outline focusing on educational policy, governance reform, curriculum integration, and community empowerment. Interviews ranged from 45 to 75 minutes in duration and were audio-recorded with written informed consent obtained from all participants prior to data collection. To safeguard participant anonymity, identifiers were replaced with alphanumeric codes (e.g., P1, P2). Primary interview data were supplemented by direct field observations of daily educational routines and documentary analysis of institutional syllabi, administrative records, and legal compliance reports.

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis framework. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and subjected to repeated reading for data familiarization. Initial open coding captured granular operational descriptions, which were subsequently grouped into broader thematic categories such as administrative restructuring and curriculum balancing.

To move beyond descriptive coding into higher-order theoretical interpretations, the analytical process engaged in an iterative cycle between empirical codes and governance theory. Descriptive themes were synthesized into conceptual abstractions, specifically identifying how ground-level administrative friction reflects the tension between state-mandated coercive isomorphism and indigenous organizational identity. Data credibility and rigor were ensured through source and method triangulation (cross-referencing interview transcripts with institutional documents and observational logs), member checking with selected administrators, and maintaining a detailed audit trail of analytical decisions.

Results

1. *Administrative Governance Reform and State Recognition*

The enactment of Law No. 18 of 2019 catalyzed a structural transition in the administrative governance of Pondok Pesantren Pangeran Diponegoro. Field observations and documentary analysis of internal organizational charts revealed that formal state recognition required the establishment of standardized administrative desks to interface with regional government offices. Prior to the regulation, institutional record-keeping operated on traditional, informal arrangements.

Participants emphasized that formal recognition enhanced external legitimacy while introducing unprecedented bureaucratic procedures. As the Head of the Pesantren (P1) stated:

"The legal recognition under the 2019 law opened official channels for state assistance and institutional validity. However, it also required us to completely restructure our administration. We had to create dedicated roles for reporting and compliance, moving away from our traditional, purely informal management style."

2. *Curriculum Hybridization: Reconciling Kitab Kuning and National Standards*

Data from curriculum documents and teacher interviews indicate that the pesantren implemented a hybrid pedagogical framework to align with national education standards without sacrificing its core Islamic identity. The daily schedule was restructured into two primary shifts: general academic subjects in the morning and traditional Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*) in the afternoon and evening.

While this hybridization broadened students' educational scope, it introduced severe instructional time constraints. A senior Islamic education teacher (P3) highlighted this pedagogical tension:

"Integrating the national curriculum requires strictly structured lesson plans and standard examinations. The main struggle for us as educators is time allocation. Our students must master classical texts like Tajweed and Fiqh, but they also have to prepare for standardized general exams. Balancing both creates a heavy daily load for both teachers and students."

3. *Operational Bottlenecks: Resource Allocation and Administrative Capacity*

Despite the legal mandate enabling government infrastructure support, empirical findings reveal persistent operational bottlenecks. Interview data with administrative officers (P2, P4) showed that financial support from government grants remains irregular and insufficient to cover the physical infrastructure upgrades required for national compliance.

Furthermore, administrative friction with local education authorities was frequently cited as a barrier. An administrative officer (P2) noted:

"We often face delays when coordinating with local government offices. The reporting standards demanded by external regulators frequently clash with the operational pace of traditional pesantren staff, who are still adapting to complex digital reporting systems."

4. *Community Engagement and Outreach*

Field observations confirmed that formal recognition under Law No. 18 of 2019 strengthened community empowerment initiatives. Institutional records show an increase in collaborative programs, such as community skill workshops and public religious lectures, conducted jointly with local civic organizations. Informants reported that state backing increased public trust and local community participation in pesantren-sponsored social programs.

Discussion

While previous studies primarily view Law No. 18 of 2019 through the lens of policy compliance (Arif & Aziz, 2021; Diana Handayani, 2022), the empirical evidence from Pondok Pesantren Pangeran Diponegoro demonstrates that traditional faith-based institutions do not merely passively absorb state regulations. Instead, local actors actively reshape top-down mandates through localized co-governance. Rather than experiencing coercive isomorphism, where state standards erase institutional identity, the pesantren leverages its indigenous authority to filter and translate national policies (Steiner-Khamsi, 2022). This finding extends current literature (Yahya, 2023) by revealing that policy implementation in Islamic education is a bi-directional negotiation: state recognition grants legal equity, but local institutional culture dictates the operational boundary of compliance.

Beyond confirming existing implementation bottlenecks (Basri et al., 2024; Panut et al., 2021) this study identifies critical institutional mechanisms that facilitate successful policy absorption. The primary mechanism is the structural bifurcation of time (Ball, 2021), where the deliberate separation of learning hours academic subjects in the morning and *kitab kuning* in the afternoon and evening serves as a protective shield for traditional Islamic pedagogy. Furthermore, administrative mediation plays a crucial role through the creation of specialized compliance roles. These positions bridge the operational gap between traditional kiai leadership and regional bureaucratic bodies, absorbing external administrative pressure before it disrupts daily classroom instruction.

To synthesize these empirical insights into a broader theoretical contribution, this study proposes the Adaptive Hybrid Governance Model for traditional pesantren navigating state regulation (Daun

& Arjmand, 2020). This transferable framework relies on three interrelated dimensions: a pedagogical dual-track system that preserves religious authority through temporal separation, a bureaucracy-tradition interface that creates specialized units as administrative buffers, and community-anchored empowerment that utilizes state recognition to expand local civic engagement. This analytical shift demonstrates that the survival and success of traditional pesantren under modern regulatory frameworks depend on constructing internal adaptive governance buffers rather than relying solely on government resources.

Notwithstanding these insights, this study possesses inherent methodological boundaries that highlight valuable avenues for future research. First, future longitudinal studies should track long-term academic outcomes and career trajectories of graduates educated under this dual-curriculum system. Second, comparative cross-typology analyses across diverse pesantren models (*salaf*, *khalaf*, and hybrid institutions) in different geographical regions are needed to examine whether implementation challenges vary by institutional capacity. Finally, quantitative policy research should focus on measuring the precise correlation between state infrastructure grants and quantifiable educational performance metrics.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the operationalization of Law No. 18 of 2019 within traditional pesantren extends beyond passive regulatory compliance, serving instead as an active process of institutional negotiation and adaptation. By examining the empirical reality of Pondok Pesantren Pangeran Diponegoro, this research advances the scholarship of Islamic educational governance by introducing the concept of adaptive hybrid governance. This framework reveals how faith-based institutions construct internal administrative buffers and temporal curriculum bifurcations to reconcile state-mandated educational standards with indigenous religious authority without sacrificing their core pedagogical identity. Beyond its theoretical contributions, the study provides critical insights into curriculum integration by demonstrating that successful alignment depends on structural support mechanisms rather than mere curricular additions. Practically, these findings offer actionable implications for policymakers in refining faith-based education frameworks. Policy implementation must shift from top-down administrative enforcement toward decentralized, collaborative governance models that respect pesantren autonomy while providing targeted infrastructure and capacity-building resources. Ultimately, this research underscores that the sustainable modernization of Indonesian Islamic boarding schools lies not in complete institutional standardization, but in fostering structural hybridization that honors both religious heritage and national educational objectives.

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Ethical Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards for research involving human participants. The research protocol for the study entitled “From Policy to Institutional Transformation: Curriculum Integration and Governance Reform under Law No. 18 of 2019 in an Indonesian Islamic Boarding School” received Ethical Approval. Before data collection, all participants were informed about the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before interviews and observations were conducted. To ensure confidentiality and protect participants’ privacy, all identifying information was anonymized using pseudonyms, and personal data were treated with strict confidentiality. Considering that participants were individuals undergoing addiction recovery, particular attention was given to their psychological well-being. Interviews were conducted with sensitivity to participants’ emotional conditions, and all procedures were designed to minimize any potential physical, psychological, or social harm. All research procedures complied with institutional ethical guidelines governing social and educational research involving human participants.

Declaration of conflicting interest

The authors of this article declare that the authors have no potential conflict of interest

Author contribution

CRedit: **Fadhil Ikhsan Nur Ramadhan**: conceptualization, data curation, methodology, resources, formal analysis, supervision, writing the original draft, and reviewing and editing the manuscript. **Risky Fajriyatuz-zahro**: reviewing and editing the manuscript, investigation, supervision and visualization. The author contributed substantially to the study, approved the final version of the manuscript, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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Data Availability Statement

The authors state that the data presented in this research is the data found in the research field. All data relevant to this research can be found in this article; and if you have other questions regarding data availability, you can ask the authors directly

AI Usage Declaration

The authors declare no used AI Tools

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