

Negotiating Autonomy and State Regulation in Pesantren Management: A Case Study of Pesantren Baitul Arqom Polinggona.

Abstract :

This study examines the negotiation between institutional autonomy and state regulation in the management of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), using a case study of Pesantren Baitul Arqom Polinggona in Kolaka Regency, Indonesia. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, limited observations, and document analysis involving pesantren leaders, institutional managers, and educators. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, complemented by a *quantitizing qualitative data* approach to strengthen empirical interpretation. The findings reveal that state regulation primarily operates through administrative and legal mechanisms, while direct intervention in religious leadership and substantive curriculum remains limited. The pesantren responds to state regulation through selective administrative adaptation, policy reinterpretation, and the preservation of the *kiai's* authority as the core of strategic decision-making. These findings indicate that the state–pesantren relationship is not characterized by domination, but rather by a form of *negotiated governance* that is contextual and dynamic. This study concludes that pesantren autonomy is not eliminated by state regulation, but instead redefined as a relational and negotiated institutional capacity. Theoretically, this research contributes to governance studies in Islamic education by highlighting pesantren as active institutional actors in educational governance. Practically, the findings suggest the need for more flexible and context-sensitive education policies that acknowledge the distinctive character of pesantren institutions.

Keywords:

Institutional Autonomy, State Regulation, Islamic Boarding School Management

INTRODUCTION

Pesantren are Islamic educational institutions that have played a strategic role in the history and development of education in Indonesia. As community-based educational institutions, pesantren have grown and developed through strong socio-religious relationships between *kiai*, *santri*, and the community (Trisnani, E. E., et.al, 2026). The main characteristic of pesantren lies in their high level of institutional autonomy, where scientific authority, leadership, and traditional educational management are in the hands of *kiai* and the pesantren community (Anwar, N.M, 2021). This management pattern makes pesantren relatively independent from state intervention and able to adapt contextually to the social and religious needs of the community. In its development, pesantren not only function as institutions for the transmission of Islamic knowledge, but also as arenas for the formation of values, social ethics, and religious identity. Pesantren play an important role in building individual and community independence, as well as being social actors that contribute to community development. The distinctive socio-cultural character of pesantren distinguishes them from modern formal educational institutions, which are generally managed through a state bureaucratic system with strict administrative standards.

However, the relationship between Islamic boarding schools and the state has undergone significant changes in line with the increasing role of the state in the management of Islamic education. The enactment of Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Islamic Boarding Schools marks a new phase of integration of Islamic

49 boarding schools into the national education system (Siregar, M. T. I., & Romadhon, M.
50 R, 2025). Through this regulation, the state officially recognizes Islamic boarding schools
51 as part of the national education system, while also establishing a normative framework
52 that regulates institutional governance, curriculum, funding, and accountability
53 mechanisms. From a public policy perspective, this recognition is seen as an affirmative
54 step to strengthen the position of Islamic boarding schools and ensure their institutional
55 sustainability. A number of studies show that the integration of pesantren into the
56 national education system provides legal legitimacy and broader access to state
57 resources, including funding support and institutional development (Azra, 2017; Madjid,
58 2019). From the state's point of view, this policy also serves as an instrument to ensure
59 the quality standards and accountability of Islamic education. However, on the other
60 hand, the inclusion of Islamic boarding schools into the state regulatory regime has
61 structural implications that cannot be ignored.

62 Various critical studies indicate that state regulations have the potential to
63 encourage the bureaucratization of Islamic boarding schools, where modern
64 administrative logic begins to influence leadership and management patterns that were
65 previously cultural and charismatic in nature, as in the research conducted by Mustofa,
66 M. S., Syukur, F., & Muhlisin, M. (2025) entitled *Islamic Educational Policy Analysis on
67 Facilitating Islamic Boarding School Development Under the Local Regulation*. This study
68 describes the implementation of national regulations on the development of Islamic
69 boarding schools at the local level (Pekalongan), including opportunities and obstacles
70 in the implementation of the Islamic Boarding School Law and the integration of
71 religious and general curricula. Empirical data through interviews and case studies show
72 that the implementation of regulations opens up space for infrastructure and
73 curriculum facilitation, but administrative challenges remain as institutional
74 accountability demands increase. Then, research conducted by (Kairin, Tiara Dwi Febria,
75 & Mukodas Arif Subekti, 2025) entitled *Integration of Islamic Boarding Schools and
76 Public Schools: Analysis of Regulations and Policies Based on Law No. 18 of 2019
77 concerning Islamic Boarding Schools*. This study reviews the legal framework for the
78 integration of Islamic boarding schools in the context of the national education
79 system. An analysis of the Pesantren Law provides an overview of the policy implications
80 for pesantren autonomy when collaborating with public schools, including issues of
81 legality, curriculum autonomy, and bureaucratic obstacles. Then there is research
82 conducted by (Zahwa A. Pasya, S. A. Tasya, et al, 2025) entitled *Integration of Pancasila
83 Education in Islamic Boarding Schools: A Juridical Review of the National Education
84 System Law*. This study discusses the legal implications of integrating Pancasila
85 education into the pesantren learning system based on the National Education System
86 Law. The findings show that although there is room for integration, the source of
87 conflict between pesantren autonomy and national curriculum requirements needs to
88 be addressed through policy interpretations that are sensitive to the character of
89 pesantren.

90 In summary, the three previous studies show a consistent pattern: state
91 regulation brings opportunities for strengthening pesantren institutions, but at the
92 same time creates bureaucratic pressures that have the potential to limit pesantren
93 autonomy. However, these studies still leave gaps in our understanding of how

94 pesantren actively negotiate state regulations in their daily management practices.
95 Therefore, the study “Negotiating Autonomy and State Regulation in Islamic Boarding
96 School Management: A Case Study of the Baitul Arqom Polinggona Islamic Boarding
97 School” positions itself as a continuation and enrichment of previous studies by focusing
98 on the dimensions of negotiation, adaptation, and institutional strategies of Islamic
99 boarding schools in responding to state regulations. Thus, this study not only reinforces
100 empirical findings regarding the impact of state regulations on Islamic boarding schools,
101 but also offers a new perspective on Islamic boarding schools as active actors in Islamic
102 education governance. This approach provides a theoretical contribution to the
103 development of Islamic education governance studies as well as a practical contribution
104 to the formulation of policies that are more sensitive to the autonomy and unique
105 characteristics of Islamic boarding schools.

106 The relationship between Islamic boarding schools and the state, therefore,
107 cannot be understood dichotomously as a relationship of domination or subordination
108 alone. Instead, the relationship is dynamic and negotiable, especially in the daily
109 practice of institutional management. Pesantren as institutional actors are not passive
110 in facing state regulations, but actively interpret, adapt, and, to a certain extent,
111 negotiate the policies that are implemented (Rizqi, R. M., Maulana, A. R., Pratama, A., &
112 Yudra, M. D, 2025). These negotiation practices are an important arena for
113 understanding how pesantren autonomy is maintained or redefined in the context of
114 state regulations. However, most research on pesantren and Islamic education policy
115 still focuses on normative policy analysis or macro studies of the relationship between
116 the state and Islam. These studies have not explored the empirical dimensions at the
117 institutional level, particularly regarding how Islamic boarding schools respond to and
118 implement state regulations in management practices. As a result, understanding of
119 pesantren transformation tends to be abstract and fails to capture the internal
120 dynamics of pesantren as educational organizations. This research gap highlights the
121 need for empirical studies that directly capture the practice of negotiation between
122 pesantren autonomy and state regulation. Such analysis is important for understanding
123 pesantren not only as objects of public policy, but as active subjects in educational
124 governance. Without a contextual empirical approach, educational policy risks ignoring
125 the social, cultural, and institutional complexities of pesantren.

126 Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the negotiation
127 between pesantren autonomy and state regulation through a case study of Pesantren
128 Baitul Arqom Polinggona, Kolaka Regency. This pesantren was chosen because it
129 represents pesantren in non-metropolitan areas that actively interact with national
130 education policies, while facing resource constraints and a social context that differs
131 from pesantren in urban areas. This context provides an analytical opportunity to
132 understand how state regulations are adapted in specific institutional conditions. This
133 study views state regulations as social practices articulated through interactions
134 between pesantren actors and policy structures. By examining aspects of institutional
135 management, such as leadership, decision-making, curriculum management, and
136 accountability mechanisms, this study seeks to reveal the strategies used by pesantren
137 in negotiating regulations without losing substantive autonomy. The novelty of this
138 research lies in its empirical and contextual approach to examining the relationship

139 between pesantren autonomy and state regulation at the institutional level. This study
140 is expected to enrich the body of knowledge on Islamic education management, while
141 also contributing theoretically to the development of a more inclusive concept of
142 Islamic education governance that is sensitive to the diversity of educational
143 institutions. In addition, the findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference
144 for the formulation of education policies that not only emphasize regulatory aspects but
145 also respect the autonomy and sustainability of Islamic boarding schools as community-
146 based educational institutions.

147

148 **RESEARCH METHOD**

149 This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design (Adji, T.P, 2024),
150 which aims to analyze the negotiation between pesantren autonomy and state
151 regulation in institutional management practices. This approach was chosen because
152 the state-pesantren relationship is a complex, contextual, and dynamic social
153 phenomenon, requiring a deep understanding of the perspectives of actors and
154 institutional practices. The research was conducted at the Baitul Arqom Polinggona
155 Islamic Boarding School, Kolaka Regency, which was selected purposively because it
156 represents Islamic boarding schools in non-metropolitan areas that actively interact
157 with national education policies. The research focuses on pesantren management
158 practices as the main arena for negotiations between state regulations and institutional
159 autonomy.

160 The research subjects included Islamic boarding school leaders, institutional
161 managers, and educators involved in decision-making and curriculum management.
162 Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in
163 policy implementation and boarding school management. Data were collected through
164 semi-structured in-depth interviews, limited observation, and documentation studies.
165 Interviews were used to explore the perceptions and strategies of Islamic boarding
166 school actors in responding to state regulations, while observation and documentation
167 were used to strengthen understanding of managerial practices and policy contexts.
168 Data analysis was conducted qualitatively and thematically through the stages of
169 reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The theoretical frameworks of
170 governance, institutional autonomy, and education policy were used as analytical lenses
171 in interpreting empirical findings. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of
172 sources and techniques, as well as member checking. This study also adhered to
173 research ethics principles by maintaining the confidentiality of informants and using
174 data responsibly.

175 To strengthen the transparency of the analysis, this study applies a quantitative
176 approach to qualitative data, namely converting the results of qualitative thematic
177 coding into descriptive frequencies and percentages (Siregar, T, 2025). This process is
178 carried out after thematic analysis of interviews, observations, and documents, by
179 calculating the occurrence of themes in informants and relevant units of analysis. This
180 approach is not intended to produce statistical generalizations, but rather to provide a
181 proportional picture of empirical trends and strengthen analytical arguments. The use
182 of quantification allows for the integration of numerical evidence in qualitative case
183 studies without obscuring the contextual depth of the data.

185 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

186 Result

187 State–Pesantren Governance Relations in Management Practices

188 The results of the study show that the presence of the state in the management
 189 of the Baitul Arqom Polinggona Pesantren is mainly manifested in administrative and
 190 institutional legality aspects. Of the 12 key informants, 83.3% said that state regulations
 191 were most clearly felt through the management of institutional legality, while 75.0%
 192 highlighted administrative reporting obligations as the main form of interaction with the
 193 state. Organizational structure standardization was mentioned by 58.3% of informants,
 194 while intervention in substantive curriculum was only acknowledged by 33.3% of
 195 informants. Direct intervention in *kiai* leadership was relatively rare (8.3%).

196 The distribution of these findings shows that state regulation operates primarily
 197 as a mechanism of indirect governance, focusing on formal accountability rather than
 198 substantive control over pesantren educational practices. Managers' perceptions of the
 199 state-pesantren relationship also varied. A total of 41.7% of informants viewed the
 200 relationship as a conditional partnership, while 33.3% saw it as pragmatic administrative
 201 compliance. A small number of informants assessed the regulations as bureaucratic
 202 pressure (16.7%) or a dominant state relationship (8.3%), indicating that there was no
 203 single dominant perception.

204 **Table 1. Forms of State Presence in Pesantren Management**

Forms of State Regulation	Number of Informants	Percentage (%)
Institutional legal status	10	83.3
Administrative reporting obligations	9	75.0
Standardization of organizational structure	7	58.3
Limited curriculum intervention	4	33.3
Intervention in <i>kiai</i> leadership	1	8.3

205

206 The state has a strong presence in administrative matters, but substantive
 207 intervention remains limited and not dominant.

208 **Table 2. Managers' Perceptions of the Relationship between the State and Islamic**
 209 **Boarding Schools**

Perceptions of the State–Pesantren Relationship	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Conditional partnership	5	41.7
Pragmatic administrative compliance	4	33.3
Bureaucratic pressure	2	16.7
State-dominant relationship	1	8.3

210

211 There is no single consensus, reinforcing the argument that governance is an
 212 arena for negotiation. The finding that the strongest state presence is felt in the aspects
 213 of institutional legality (83.3%) and administrative reporting (75.0%) shows that state
 214 regulation operates primarily at the symbolic and procedural levels of governance,
 215 rather than the substantive level. The state builds compliance through formal-legal
 216 administrative mechanisms, while the pedagogical space and core leadership remain
 217 relatively untouched. This pattern indicates that state control over Islamic boarding

218 schools does not take place through direct intervention, but rather through what can be
 219 called regulatory steering, namely the regulation of institutional direction without deep
 220 penetration into daily educational practices. The low level of intervention in kiai
 221 leadership (8.3%) reinforces the argument that the charismatic authority and cultural
 222 legitimacy of kiai remain a boundary that is relatively impenetrable by the state. In the
 223 context of governance, this shows that pesantren maintain a zone of substantive
 224 autonomy, even though they are subject to the state's formal regulatory framework.
 225 Thus, the state-pesantren relationship does not reflect complete domination, but rather
 226 a configuration of power that is segmented based on managerial domains.

227 The diversity of perceptions among pesantren administrators regarding the
 228 relationship between the state and pesantren (Table 2) confirms that governance is not
 229 experienced uniformly by pesantren actors. The absence of a single dominant
 230 perception indicates that state regulations are interpreted situationally, depending on
 231 the position of the actor, bureaucratic experience, and institutional capacity. This
 232 finding rejects the assumption that education policy works in a linear and uniform
 233 manner, and affirms governance as an arena of interpretation and negotiation.

234 **Institutional Autonomy Negotiation Strategies**

235 In responding to state regulations, Baitul Arqom Polinggona Islamic Boarding
 236 School implemented various institutional autonomy negotiation strategies. Selective
 237 administrative adaptation was the most common strategy, mentioned by 75.0% of
 238 informants. This strategy is realized through the fulfillment of formal requirements
 239 without fundamentally changing the leadership patterns and organizational culture of
 240 the pesantren. In addition, 58.3% of informants reinterpreted the curriculum policy by
 241 partially and contextually integrating the national curriculum. The maintenance of the
 242 kiai's authority as the center of strategic decision-making was mentioned by 66.7% of
 243 informants, confirming the role of the kiai as a key actor in determining the limits of
 244 state regulation acceptance. A small number of informants (25.0%) revealed limited or
 245 passive resistance, especially in administrative practices that were considered irrelevant
 246 to the needs of the pesantren.

247 The curriculum implementation pattern shows a hybrid tendency. A total of
 248 50.0% of educational activity units adopted a partial integration model, 40.0%
 249 implemented flexible contextual adaptation, and only 10.0% approached full adoption
 250 of the national curriculum. These findings indicate that the national curriculum
 251 functions as a reference framework rather than an instrument of complete control.

252 **Table 3. Institutional Autonomy Negotiation Strategy**

Negotiation Strategies	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Selective administrative adaptation	9	75.0
Reinterpretation of curriculum policy	7	58.3
Preservation of <i>kiai</i> authority	8	66.7
Limited / passive resistance	3	25.0

254

255 The dominant strategy is accommodative-strategic, not resistant.

256 **Table 4. National Curriculum Implementation Patterns**

Implementation Patterns	Number of Units	Percentage (%)
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Partial integration	5	50.0
Flexible contextual adaptation	4	40.0
Near-full adoption	1	10.0

257

258 Demonstrating hybrid curriculum governance, without claiming full state
 259 dominance. The dominance of selective administrative adaptation strategies (75.0%)
 260 indicates that pesantren compliance with state regulations is instrumental and strategic,
 261 rather than normative. Pesantren fulfill formal requirements as a means of obtaining
 262 legitimacy and institutional sustainability, without fully internalizing the logic of state
 263 bureaucracy into the organizational culture of pesantren. Adaptation in this context is
 264 not a sign of weakening autonomy, but rather a form of institutional power to control
 265 the impact of regulations. The maintenance of kiai authority (66.7%) as the main
 266 strategy confirms that charismatic leadership remains the center of gravity in pesantren
 267 management. The kiai functions as a gatekeeper who determines the extent to which
 268 state regulations are accepted, adapted, or ignored. Thus, the negotiation of autonomy
 269 does not take place at an abstract level but is mediated by leadership figures who have
 270 religious and social legitimacy.

271 The hybrid curriculum implementation pattern (50.0% partial integration and
 272 40.0% contextual adaptation) indicates that the national curriculum is treated as a
 273 normative reference, not as an absolute operational framework. Pesantren use
 274 interpretive flexibility to align policy demands with internal scientific traditions. This
 275 shows that curriculum autonomy is not eliminated, but rather negotiated through
 276 practices of selection and reinterpretation.

277

278 **The Impact of Regulations on the Management and Sustainability of Islamic Boarding** 279 **Schools**

280 State regulations have an ambivalent impact on the management and
 281 sustainability of Islamic boarding schools. A total of 66.7% of informants assessed that
 282 regulations increase the legal legitimacy of Islamic boarding schools, while 58.3% stated
 283 that regulations add to the administrative burden. The perception that regulations
 284 encourage improvements in institutional governance only appeared in 41.7% of
 285 informants, while 33.3% considered that regulations have the potential to reduce the
 286 autonomy of Islamic boarding schools. In terms of institutional sustainability factors, kiai
 287 leadership received the highest perception score (average 4.4), followed by community
 288 support (4.1) and management flexibility (3.8). Compliance with regulations (3.5) and
 289 access to state funding (3.3) were considered important but not dominant factors. This
 290 data shows that the sustainability of Islamic boarding schools is more supported by
 291 social capital and internal leadership than by regulatory compliance alone.

292

Table 5. Perceptions of the Impact of State Regulation

Impacts of State Regulation	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Enhancing legal legitimacy	8	66.7
Increasing administrative burden	7	58.3
Promoting improvements in governance	5	41.7
Reducing institutional autonomy	4	33.3

293

294 The effects of regulation are not singular, but ambiguous and contextual.

295 **Table 6. Determinants of Pesantren Sustainability**

Sustainability Factors	Average Score
<i>Kiai</i> leadership	4.4
Community support	4.1
Management flexibility	3.8
Compliance with regulations	3.5
Access to state funding	3.3

296

297 Sustainability is determined more by social capital and leadership than by
298 regulation alone.

299 **Table 7. Synthesis of Findings and Theoretical Contributions**

Conservative Quantitative Findings	Theoretical Contributions
75% selective administrative adaptation	Governance as a negotiated process
66.7% preservation of <i>kiai</i> authority	Relational institutional autonomy
58.3% increase in administrative burden	Risk of bureaucratic overload
Leadership > regulation (4.4 vs. 3.5)	Redefinition of pesantren sustainability

300

301 Findings regarding increased legal legitimacy (66.7%) accompanied by increased
302 administrative burdens (58.3%) reveal the ambivalent nature of state regulations.
303 Regulations serve as both a source of reinforcement and pressure. On the one hand,
304 regulations provide formal recognition that expands Islamic boarding schools' access to
305 state resources; on the other hand, regulations create an administrative load that has
306 the potential to divert institutional energy from pedagogical functions to bureaucratic
307 functions. The average score for sustainability factors shows that *kiai* leadership (4.4)
308 and community support (4.1) are more decisive than regulatory compliance (3.5) and
309 access to state funding (3.3). These findings confirm that social capital and cultural
310 legitimacy remain the main foundations for the sustainability of pesantren. State
311 regulation plays a secondary supporting role, not a primary determinant.

312

313 Discussion

314 Negotiative Governance in Islamic Boarding School Education

315 These findings reinforce and expand the perspective of governance in Islamic
316 education by showing that policy implementation does not work through uniform
317 hierarchical control mechanisms. This finding extends governance theory by
318 demonstrating that state regulation in faith-based education is mediated through
319 negotiated administrative practices rather than direct institutional domination. The
320 dominance of administrative aspects (83.3% legality; 75.0% reporting) over substantive
321 intervention shows that the state plays more of a formal regulatory role than a
322 pedagogical control role. This positions Islamic boarding schools not as passive objects
323 of policy, but as actors with the capacity to strategically manage governance relations.
324 Theoretically, the findings of this study reinforce the governance approach that views
325 education policy as an interactive process rather than a one-way control instrument
326 (Qomariyah, E., & Rustam, A. S, 2024). The state does have regulatory power, but the
327 effectiveness of that power is highly dependent on the capacity of local institutions to

328 interpret and implement policies. In the context of Islamic boarding schools,
329 governance works through negotiated compliance, where compliance is built through
330 administrative compromise, not pedagogical domination. These findings expand the
331 theory of Islamic education governance by showing that community-based institutions
332 have significant agency in responding to public policy. Pesantren are not merely objects
333 of regulation, but actors that actively manage power relations with the state.

334

335 **Redefining Institutional Autonomy in Islamic Boarding Schools**

336 Quantitative data on selective administrative adaptation strategies (75.0%) and
337 the maintenance of kiai authority (66.7%) show that the autonomy of Islamic boarding
338 schools has not been lost due to regulation, but rather redefined in a more relational
339 form. This finding expands the theory of institutional autonomy by showing that
340 autonomy operates as a negotiated institutional capacity, shaped by regulatory
341 involvement rather than isolation from the state (Sentanu, 2024). Autonomy in this
342 context lies in the ability of Islamic boarding schools to determine the limits of
343 adaptation, particularly in leadership and curriculum. Thus, autonomy is not
344 synonymous with rejection of regulation, but rather with the ability to manage
345 regulation without losing institutional identity. Empirical data show that pesantren
346 autonomy cannot be understood as a condition free from regulation, but rather as a
347 relational capacity to regulate distance from the state. Autonomy is realized through
348 the ability to determine the limits of adaptation, particularly in the areas of leadership
349 and core curriculum. Thus, autonomy is not lost in the regulatory process, but
350 undergoes a transformation of form. This finding challenges the classic dichotomy
351 between autonomy and regulation. Instead of negating each other, the two operate
352 simultaneously in a hybrid governance configuration. Islamic boarding schools remain
353 autonomous, but that autonomy is exercised in a continuously negotiated space.

354

355 **Policy Implications and Institutional Sustainability**

356 The findings that legal legitimacy (66.7%) and administrative burden (58.3%)
357 appear simultaneously confirm the ambivalent nature of state regulation. This finding
358 expands the analysis of education policy by suggesting that the effectiveness of
359 regulations depends more on institutional capacity and contextual sensitivity than on
360 formal compliance. The sustainability of Islamic boarding schools, which is more
361 influenced by the leadership of the kiai (score of 4.4) and community support (4.1),
362 shows that Islamic boarding school education policy needs to consider social capital as a
363 key variable. Regulations that ignore this dimension risk creating administrative burdens
364 without significant improvements in educational quality. From a policy perspective, the
365 results of this study indicate that a uniform regulatory approach risks producing
366 inefficiency and latent resistance. Islamic boarding schools with different social
367 characteristics, managerial capacities, and scholarly traditions require a more flexible
368 policy approach. Therefore, the concept of differentiated governance becomes
369 relevant, namely policies that provide room for adaptation based on institutional
370 characteristics (Huraerah, A, 2022). Regulations that are sensitive to the context of
371 Islamic boarding schools will not only reduce the administrative burden but also
372 strengthen institutional sustainability and the quality of Islamic education. In this

373 framework, the state acts as a facilitator and strategic partner, not merely an
374 administrative supervisor.

375 Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of governance theory,
376 particularly in the context of Islamic education and community-based educational
377 institutions. The findings of this study expand the understanding of governance theory
378 by showing that educational governance does not always work through top-down state
379 control mechanisms, but also through situational and actor-centered institutional
380 negotiation processes. Thus, this study extends governance theory by emphasizing the
381 importance of cultural dimensions, local leadership, and religious values in shaping
382 educational governance practices. In addition, this study also contributes to the
383 discourse on institutional autonomy by showing that autonomy is not absolute, but
384 rather relational and negotiable. Pesantren autonomy is not lost within the framework
385 of state regulation, but is redefined through selective adaptation practices. These
386 findings enrich the literature, which has tended to position autonomy and regulation as
387 two opposing poles, by offering an alternative perspective that the two can operate
388 simultaneously within a hybrid governance framework.

389 Furthermore, through the approach of quantifying qualitative data, this study
390 also contributes methodologically by showing how qualitative data on perceptions,
391 experiences, and institutional practices can be translated into quantitative indicators
392 that maintain the substantive meaning of field findings. This approach is relevant to
393 studies of educational governance that seek to bridge the depth of qualitative analysis
394 with the precision of quantitative analysis. From a policy perspective, this study has
395 important implications for the formulation and implementation of Islamic education
396 policy in Indonesia. The research findings show that a uniform regulatory approach has
397 the potential to ignore the diversity of pesantren characteristics and may actually
398 weaken institutional innovation capacity. Therefore, this study recommends that state
399 policy towards pesantren be designed with a more flexible and contextual approach,
400 based on the principle of differentiated governance.

401 The relevant ministries, particularly the Ministry of Religious Affairs, need to
402 develop a model for guiding Islamic boarding schools that is not only oriented toward
403 administrative compliance, but also toward strengthening the managerial and
404 leadership capacities of these schools. Policies that provide room for interpretation for
405 Islamic boarding schools in implementing national standards will be more effective in
406 maintaining a balance between public accountability and institutional autonomy. For
407 pesantren administrators, the results of this study can serve as a basis for strategic
408 reflection in responding to state regulations in a more proactive and planned manner.
409 Negotiations with the state should not be understood as a threat to the identity of
410 Islamic boarding schools, but rather as an opportunity to strengthen institutional
411 legitimacy without losing the basic character of Islamic boarding school education. Thus,
412 this study not only contributes to the development of theory and methodology, but also
413 provides a strong empirical basis for the formulation of Islamic education policies that
414 are more inclusive, adaptive, and sustainable.

415

416 CONCLUSION

417 This study aims to analyze the dynamics of negotiation between the institutional

418 autonomy of Islamic boarding schools and state regulations in the context of Islamic
419 education management, using the case study of the Baitul Arqom Polinggona Islamic
420 Boarding School. Based on empirical findings, this study concludes that the relationship
421 between Islamic boarding schools and the state is not antagonistic or completely
422 subordinate, but rather forms a pattern of negotiated governance that is contextual,
423 adaptive, and selective. The results show that Islamic boarding schools maintain
424 substantive autonomy in core aspects such as religious leadership, diniyah curriculum,
425 and pedagogical values, while at the same time making administrative and structural
426 adaptations to state regulations, particularly those related to accreditation, reporting,
427 and institutional standardization. The quantitative findings included in the results
428 section show that most of these adaptation practices are perceived by pesantren actors
429 not as a form of restriction, but as a pragmatic strategy to obtain formal legitimacy and
430 access to public resources. Furthermore, this study found that negotiations between
431 autonomy and regulation did not take place uniformly, but were influenced by
432 leadership factors, institutional capacity, and the local socio-political context. Pesantren
433 with strong leadership and extensive social networks tend to have greater bargaining
434 power in interpreting and implementing state policies. Thus, the state-pesantren
435 relationship in Islamic education management is better understood as a dynamic
436 process that is constantly undergoing adjustments, rather than a static or hierarchical
437 relationship. Overall, this study confirms that Islamic boarding schools remain
438 autonomous educational actors, but this autonomy is exercised within a governance
439 framework that is increasingly connected to the national regulatory system. This
440 conclusion enriches our understanding of how community-based educational
441 institutions negotiate with the state in the context of modern education governance.

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