

BENCHMARKING

JURNAL MANAJEMEN PENDIDIKAN ISLAM

MANAGERIAL STRATEGIES IN TEACHER WELFARE POLICIES FOR ISLAMIC EDUCATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA

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Abstrak

Teacher welfare in Islamic education has become a strategic issue in Indonesia and Malaysia because it is directly related to professionalism, instructional quality, and the sustainability of Islamic educational institutions amid bureaucratic pressures and limited resources. Although both countries have established formal policies on teacher welfare, their practical implementation often fails to align with normative policy objectives. This article aims to analyze how the managerial strategies of school principals and madrasah leaders mediate the implementation of teacher welfare policies within the institutional contexts of Indonesia and Malaysia. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach based on a literature review of scholarly articles, research reports, and relevant policy documents. The analysis is conducted through a synthesis of the literature using Van Meter and Van Horn's Policy Implementation Theory, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, and the concept of Islamic Work Ethic. The findings indicate that teacher welfare is not determined solely by policy design, but largely by managerial strategies such as budget prioritization, workload management, communication, and teacher participation. The results also show that the fulfillment of hygiene factors and the strengthening of motivators, when framed by Islamic values of trust (amanah), justice, and responsibility, enhance teacher satisfaction and performance. This study underscores the importance of value-based and context-sensitive school leadership. Future research is recommended to incorporate field-based data in order to provide a richer and more contextualized understanding.

Keywords: teacher welfare, managerial strategies, Islamic education, policy implementation, islamic work ethic.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia evolved from the same historical roots, namely the tradition of pesantren- and pondok-based education, which have served as centers of religious learning for centuries. Both countries, despite sharing closely related cultural and religious backgrounds, have followed divergent paths in developing their Islamic education systems in response to political dynamics, colonialism, and modernization. In Indonesia, pesantren grew organically as autonomous institutions capable of adapting to social and political changes, fostering flexibility in scholarly approaches and openness to integrating general and religious sciences (Farish A. Noor, Yoginder Sikand & Bruinessen, 2008). Pesantren not only strengthened religious identity but also acted as agents of social change, particularly in the context of the independence movement and post-colonial nation-building.

On the other hand, Malaysia adopts a more structured and centralized approach to managing Islamic education. The Malaysian government actively integrates Islamic education into the national education system, making it an official part of the general school

curriculum. This structure ensures more stable funding and high standardization in educator quality, yet it simultaneously poses challenges in the form of limited autonomy and insufficient space for local innovation. Pondok institutions in Malaysia tend to be more defensive and emphasize conservatism in religious values, aligning with state policies aimed at preserving Malay-Islamic identity within a pluralistic nation (Farish A. Noor, Yoginder Sikand & Bruinessen, 2008).

Postcolonial institutional configurations in both countries have shaped vastly different systems for managing Islamic education. In Indonesia, Islamic education is specifically managed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, separate from the Ministry of Education and Culture, although curriculum integration and joint accreditation occur. The dual system implemented in madrasah allows a combination of the national core curriculum and in-depth religious subjects, equipping students with dual competencies in general academics and Islamic studies (Ali Mas'ud, Zakki Fuad, 2019). In contrast, Malaysia fully integrates Islamic education into a centralized national system under the coordination of the Ministry of Education, with strict oversight from central and state governments to ensure uniformity and ideological compliance (Sidiq & Widyawati, 2019).

The implementation of teacher welfare policies in both countries is strongly influenced by their respective institutional structures. In Indonesia, the welfare of madrasah teachers is often constrained by limited state budgets, regional disparities, and reliance on supplementary resources from foundations or school committees. Madrasah principals exercise relatively high discretion in managing resources, yet they also face significant challenges in meeting teachers' welfare needs in an equitable and sustainable manner. In Malaysia, although funding is more stable and teachers' salaries are guaranteed by the state, heavy workloads and a rigid system that emphasizes administrative accountability tend to generate stress and work-related fatigue, which ultimately undermine the quality of teaching and teachers' subjective well-being (Mosbiran, Ibrahim, Mokhtar, bin Ab Ghani, & bin Nordin, 2021).

The fundamental issue addressed in this study is the gap between teacher welfare policies as normatively formulated and their implementation in practice. Although welfare policies are designed to enhance teacher professionalism, their implementation at the institutional level faces various structural and managerial constraints (Hartati & Zulkarnain, 2024). In Indonesia, limited budget allocations and inconsistencies in the performance evaluation system constitute major obstacles, while in Malaysia, special education teachers experience stress due to excessive workloads and inadequate health protection (Mosbiran et al., 2021)

This study aims to address the existing gap in the literature by adopting an integrative approach that combines three theoretical frameworks: Van Meter and Van Horn's Policy Implementation Theory, which explains how policy variables, resources, and communication influence implementation outcomes; Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which distinguishes between hygiene factors (such as salary and social security) and motivating factors (such as recognition and career development); and the concept of the Islamic Work Ethic (Al-Attas), which emphasizes work as an act of worship, a trust (*amanah*), and an integral part of human responsibility before God.

This multidisciplinary approach enables a more comprehensive analysis of how managerial strategies at the institutional level function as mediators between macro-level policies and teachers' micro-level experiences. No previous study has holistically explored the interaction among these three dimensions within the context of Islamic education. Accordingly, this research is expected to offer both theoretical and practical contributions to the improvement of teacher welfare systems in Indonesia and Malaysia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using a systematic literature review (SLR) method. This approach was chosen to allow an in-depth exploration and comprehensive understanding of policy implementation, particularly in capturing policy nuances that cannot be explained solely through quantitative indicators. The SLR method enables researchers to systematically identify, evaluate, and synthesize relevant literature in an objective and structured manner. The strength of the descriptive qualitative approach lies in its capacity to analyze complex phenomena that arise in the practical implementation of policies, especially in different contextual settings (Arcanita et al., 2023). This is highly relevant given the social, cultural, and administrative differences between Indonesia and Malaysia in managing their education systems (Malahati et al., 2023).

The data sources for this study consist of authoritative secondary data, including peer-reviewed journal articles, official research reports from educational institutions and government agencies, as well as formal policy documents related to Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia. The literature search focused on three main themes: Islamic education policies, public sector human resource management, and teacher welfare policies. The use of official and scholarly sources ensures that the analysis is grounded in valid regulatory frameworks and reflects current policy conditions in both countries.

The data analysis was conducted through five systematic stages. First, the research focus was defined, emphasizing managerial strategies in the implementation of welfare policies for Islamic education teachers. Second, relevant literature was identified through academic databases and official policy repositories. Third, sources were selected based on inclusion criteria, including relevance to the research topic, institutional or publisher credibility, and a publication period between 2015 and 2025. Fourth, the selected literature was analyzed using thematic content analysis guided by relevant theoretical frameworks. Finally, data validation was carried out through source triangulation to enhance credibility and reduce interpretive bias.

The analytical framework of this study integrates three interrelated dimensions. Welfare policies are positioned as structural inputs in the form of regulations and resource allocation. Managerial strategies function as implementation processes at the institutional level. Teacher welfare and performance are treated as the outputs resulting from the interaction between policy structures and managerial practices. This framework allows for a comprehensive analysis of how policy implementation operates in Indonesia and Malaysia and how different managerial approaches influence teacher welfare outcomes in both contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Comparative Analysis: Indonesia vs. Malaysia

The fundamental differences in the configuration of the Islamic education systems between Indonesia and Malaysia create unique managerial contexts in each country. In Indonesia, the Islamic education system is overseen by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, with relatively high autonomy granted to madrasahs (Ali Mas'ud, Zakki Fuad, 2019). This system allows madrasahs to develop curricula that integrate religious and general knowledge according to local needs.

In contrast, Malaysia adopts a centralized system in which Islamic education is integrated into the national education system under the Ministry of Education (Kholidin & Kodriyah, 2025). A strict bureaucratic structure regulates the curriculum, employment status, and overall governance of Islamic schools.

Table 1.
Comparative Table of the Education Systems in Indonesia and Malaysia

| Aspect | Indonesia | Malaysia |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Administrator | Ministry of Religious Affairs | Ministry of Education |
| Autonomy | High (private madrasahs) | Low (centralized system) |
| Curriculum | Dual system (religious & general) | National integration |
| Funding | Mixed (state & foundations) | Predominantly state-funded |
| Evaluation | Accreditation & national exams | Integrated assessment system |

This systemic structure automatically shapes the role of school leadership in both countries. In Indonesia, madrasah principals have greater discretion in managing human resources (HR). While this autonomy allows for the adaptation of welfare policies to local conditions, in practice it often results in uneven standards across madrasahs (Hartati & Zulkarnain, 2024). Indonesian madrasah principals are required to act as resilient managers, balancing national accreditation standards, teacher welfare needs, and limited available budgets. Their managerial strategies include recruitment processes involving foundations and school committees, training programs funded through mixed sources, performance appraisal systems that combine academic and spiritual aspects, and creative allocation of welfare facilities amid resource constraints.

On the other hand, school principals in Malaysia operate within a more standardized bureaucratic framework. While the centralized system provides stable funding and uniform operational standards, it tends to limit managerial flexibility. In this context, principals primarily function as agents of national policy implementation, fully accountable for achieving the targets set by the central government (Tony Bush, 2022). Managerial strategies in Malaysia follow formal procedures, including recruitment through the national Education Service, training integrated within the national professional development system, and standardized competency-based performance evaluations, with welfare facilities varying minimally across schools.

Despite these structural differences, both countries face significant implementation challenges. In Indonesia, the primary obstacles stem from budgetary limitations, which often create uncertainty in long-term planning. Additionally, there are pronounced disparities among madrasahs, particularly for institutions in remote areas with limited access to resources. These issues are further complicated by the dual coordination structure between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education, which sometimes overlaps, combined with excessive administrative reporting burdens that often divert teachers' focus from the quality of instruction.

Malaysia faces a different set of challenges. Although financially more stable, heavy workloads—especially for special education teachers—have triggered high stress levels due to long working hours and exhausting administrative demands (Mosbiran et al., 2021). The lack of flexibility in the centralized system makes it difficult for schools to adapt to specific local needs. Moreover, accountability pressures that overly emphasize numerical targets often overlook teachers' subjective well-being. This has contributed to high teacher turnover rates, which in turn can disrupt the continuity of nationally planned educational programs (Tony Bush, 2022).

Policy Implementation at the Institutional Level

Within the educational bureaucratic structure, madrasah principals in Indonesia and school principals in Malaysia play a vital role as street-level implementers. They serve as the frontline actors who determine whether teacher welfare policies are genuinely translated into everyday managerial practices or merely remain as formal administrative regulations (Hartati & Zulkarnain, 2024). Peran ini menjadi sangat krusial karena para pemimpin lembaga ini memiliki otoritas diskresioner untuk menginterpretasikan dan

mengadaptasi kebijakan makro dari pemerintah pusat agar sesuai dengan konteks, kebutuhan, dan dinamika sosial di tingkat lokal. Tanpa keberpihakan dan kecerdasan manajerial dari kepala sekolah, kebijakan kesejahteraan yang paling ideal sekalipun di tingkat nasional tidak akan pernah dirasakan manfaatnya secara nyata oleh para guru di ruang kelas (Arifin, 2015)

One leadership model that has proven effective in mediating policy implementation is Transformational Leadership. Principals who adopt this style do not merely manage through transactional authority; they inspire, provide genuine individualized support, and stimulate the intellectual growth of their teachers. Transformational leaders are generally more successful in converting rigid policies into meaningful practices that engage teachers' intrinsic motivation. This leadership style is particularly relevant in the context of Islamic education, where the integration of spiritual values with professional standards is a primary requirement for creating a harmonious and productive work environment.

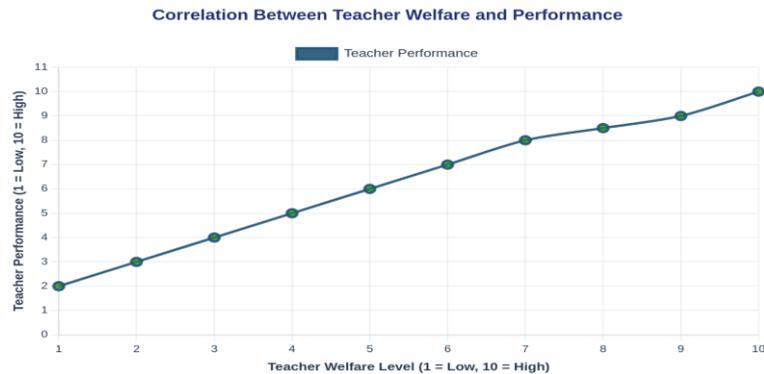
In addition to leadership style, Value-Based Management has emerged as a key approach in the successful implementation of teacher welfare. In this context, principals who internalize the principles of the Islamic Work Ethic tend to exhibit greater sensitivity to teachers' fundamental needs and demonstrate higher creativity in allocating often-limited resources (Salsabila & Sesmiarni, 2025). They view teacher welfare not as a cost burden but as an investment in upholding the trust (*amanah*) of education. Empirically, this value-based approach not only enhances teachers' job satisfaction but also fundamentally strengthens their professional commitment to continue serving under the banner of Islamic education.

Furthermore, the implementation of innovative practices in education has shown significant progress in both Indonesia and Malaysia. In Indonesia, innovation has focused on strengthening communal values and spiritual aspects through the Gotong Royong Welfare Program, which encourages the collaborative use of resources among madrasahs. Professionalism is further reinforced through a Performance-Based Allowance System that is transparent and results-oriented, as well as professional mentoring where senior teachers guide junior teachers in both academic and spiritual aspects. This approach is complemented by a Holistic Health Program that integrates physical and spiritual well-being through various religious activities.

In contrast, Malaysia emphasizes innovation in work efficiency and teachers' emotional welfare through a Work-Life Balance Program, which offers more flexible working hours and leave policies. Administrative workloads have been significantly reduced through the digitalization of administrative processes, allowing teachers to focus more on teaching. To support mental health, a Peer Support System is available as a platform to manage work-related stress, alongside a Career Development Program that provides clear, merit-based promotion pathways.

Furthermore, the effective implementation of welfare policies has a significant impact on teacher performance in both countries. Research indicates a positive relationship between job satisfaction and the quality of teaching and learning (Safrudin, 2024).

These positive effects are reflected in improved levels of discipline, such as higher attendance and punctuality. Teachers also tend to be more willing to innovate in their teaching by applying more varied and contextually relevant instructional methods for students. Socially, well-maintained welfare fosters more positive and supportive relationships with students and encourages teachers to contribute more to extracurricular activities through active participation in various school development programs.



Picture 1.

Relationship Between Teacher Welfare and Performance

Integrative Conceptual Framework

This study proposes an integrated conceptual framework that combines three key dimensions—policy, management, and ethics—to explain the dynamic relationships influencing the successful implementation of teacher welfare policies. In the structural policy dimension, teacher welfare is positioned as an **input** designed by the state based on the needs of the national education system and the vision for developing Muslim human resources. This dimension encompasses fundamental regulations, including salary arrangements, allowances, social security, and work standards, which serve as the legal foundation for the teaching profession.

These policies are then operationalized through the managerial dimension, which functions as the realm of implementation at the educational institution level. At this stage, madrasah or school principals serve as the key actors in translating policies into daily practices. The focus of implementation lies on strategic aspects, including the efficient distribution of resources, effective internal communication, and the balanced allocation of workloads. The successful management of these processes serves as a crucial link between macro-level normative policies and the operational realities in the field.

In addition, this conceptual framework incorporates an ethical-spiritual dimension, in which teacher welfare and performance are understood as outputs influenced by work motivation. In this context, the Islamic Work Ethic serves as a reinforcing element that shapes both the professional and spiritual commitment of teachers. This ethical dimension allows for the integration of organizational justice, which is administrative in nature, with divine justice, ensuring that teachers' dedication is driven not solely by material rewards but also by transcendent values.

Furthermore, in the proposed framework, managerial strategy is positioned as a mediating variable, emphasizing the central role of school leaders in converting abstract policies into concrete actions. The success of implementation largely depends on the managerial capacity of school principals to balance compliance with formal regulations and sensitivity to contextual local needs. The ability to manage resources effectively, foster constructive internal communication, and create a conducive organizational climate becomes a critical factor in ensuring that welfare policies are genuinely experienced and beneficial for teachers.

Meanwhile, the Islamic Work Ethic is positioned as a moderating variable that strengthens the relationships among the elements in policy implementation. The internalization of Islamic values within managerial practices introduces a spiritual dimension that encourages teachers to perceive their profession as an act of worship. This perspective enhances resilience in the face of resource limitations and fosters intrinsic motivation to deliver optimal performance for the collective good. At the same time, this

work ethic also serves as a moral guide for school principals in managing institutions fairly and transparently, creating alignment between professional demands and religious values.

This conceptual framework generates several practical implications for improving the implementation of teacher welfare policies in the future. First, managerial competencies should be strengthened through targeted training programs for school and madrasah principals, emphasizing ethical human resource management. Second, governments need to design more flexible policies that provide adequate room for adaptation according to the characteristics and local needs of each educational institution. Third, the integration of Islamic values through the application of the Islamic Work Ethic across all aspects of school management is crucial to reinforce teachers' moral commitment. Finally, monitoring systems should be transformed toward a more comprehensive approach, where evaluations not only focus on administrative compliance but also reflect teachers' subjective welfare more holistically.

CONCLUSION

Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia, despite sharing a common historical foundation, has followed different developmental paths regarding teacher welfare management. Indonesia adopts a more flexible approach with high madrasah autonomy but remains vulnerable to resource limitations and disparities between institutions. In contrast, Malaysia implements a more structured and standardized system, yet faces challenges such as bureaucratic rigidity and excessive workloads.

The success of teacher welfare policy implementation largely depends on the quality of interaction between national policies and local capacity. The role of madrasah or school principals as key implementers cannot be replaced by regulations alone. Their ability to translate policies into responsive, value-based managerial practices ultimately determines the outcomes of welfare policies.

The application of the Islamic Work Ethic has proven to be a significant enhancer in the implementation of teacher welfare policies. The values of justice, *amanah* (trust), and *ihsan* (excellence) not only strengthen teachers' professional commitment but also optimize the use of limited resources.

RECOMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, several strategic recommendations are proposed to strengthen the implementation of teacher welfare, categorized into policy, research, and practical domains. Reforms in teacher welfare policy are needed to create greater flexibility by establishing adequate minimum standards while still allowing room for adaptation to local contexts. This should be accompanied by the strengthening of managerial capacity through continuous training for school and madrasah principals, focusing on ethical human resource management and the mainstreaming of the Islamic Work Ethic across all aspects of Islamic education management. Furthermore, a holistic monitoring system should be implemented to balance administrative compliance evaluation with assessments of teachers' subjective welfare.

Future studies should adopt longitudinal approaches to track the long-term impacts of policy implementation and understand the dynamics of change over time. Cost-benefit analyses are also essential to calculate the economic impact of investing in teacher welfare on the overall quality of education. Subsequent research is recommended to explore in-depth case studies of best practices in various local contexts and to develop a comprehensive welfare index specifically designed to accurately measure the conditions of Islamic education teachers.

Educational institutions are encouraged to develop integrated welfare programs that harmoniously combine financial, psychological, and spiritual aspects. This can be supported by establishing peer support systems through professional networks as platforms for sharing best practices and providing emotional support among educators. Optimizing administrative technology should also be a priority to reduce teachers' routine workload, alongside increasing teachers' active participation in the planning and evaluation of welfare programs to ensure policies are more targeted and effective.

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