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Reconstructing Islamic Education Supervision in Indonesia: A Qualitative Study from Pekanbaru

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Abstract

This study examines the limitations of educational supervision in Islamic education in Indonesia, focusing on how supervisory practices are shaped by structural and governance factors. While supervision is formally designed to support teacher professionalism and school quality, its implementation remains largely compliance-oriented and ineffective. This study aims to analyze the structural constraints underlying supervision practices and to propose a reconstruction framework at the regional level. A qualitative approach was employed, involving 19 informants from the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Pekanbaru, including supervisors, policymakers, principals, and teachers. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis, and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal three major systemic problems: the absence of strategic workforce planning, resulting in imbalanced supervisor–teacher ratios; limited institutional support, including inadequate funding and weak professional development systems; and unclear bureaucratic structures, leading to weak coordination and authority. These conditions constrain supervision to function as an administrative obligation rather than a developmental process. This study contributes by reframing educational supervision as a structurally embedded governance practice. It highlights the need for systemic reforms, including data-driven workforce planning, strengthened institutional support, and clearer organizational structures to improve supervisory effectiveness.

Keywords

Educational Supervision; Islamic Education; Supervisor.

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Introduction

Educational supervision in Indonesia remains a contested and insufficiently defined component of the national education system, particularly in terms of its role and functional contribution to educational improvement (Hallinger, 2018). In Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning National Education Standards, educational supervision is formally positioned as an integral part of the national education system, in which supervisors are mandated to ensure the quality of both teachers and educational institutions. The government assigns school supervisors to supervise both academic and management levels (Armstrong, 2004; Armstrong et al., 2004; Johnson, 2007; Kotirde & Yunos, 2015; Mohanty, 2005). As academic supervisors, they are responsible for fostering teacher professionalism to enhance instructional quality (Dickinson & Caswell, 2007; Domitrovich et al., 2009; Sparks & Hirsh, 2000; Zeichner & Wray, 2001). In their managerial capacity, supervisors are expected to support school principals in achieving effective and standardized school governance (Grissom & Loeb, 2011; S. Kilminster et al., 2007).

Therefore, educational supervision should be understood not merely as a sequence of administrative procedures such as planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation—but as a continuous and integrative professional process (Fathih, 2022; Prayuni et al., 2025). It encompasses guidance, support, and developmental functions that are directed toward improving teaching practices. In this sense, supervision is inherently teacher-centered, as teachers are the primary actors who directly shape classroom practices and learning outcomes (Hidayat et al., 2025; Iman et al., 2025). Consequently, the core task of supervisors lies in fostering teachers' professional growth in a sustained and meaningful way, rather than merely assessing administrative compliance (Barokah et al., 2025; Ismail et al., 2021).

However, this ideal conception of supervision contrasts sharply with its empirical reality. In practice, supervisory performance remains inconsistent and frequently falls short in delivering substantive professional support to teachers. Many supervisors do not effectively execute their roles in providing sustained pedagogical guidance and professional assistance (Kotirde & Yunos, 2015; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; Ramstetter et al., 2010). Empirical studies indicate that supervisory practices are often reduced to procedural and administrative compliance (Kernberg, 2010; S. Kilminster et al., 2007), while systematic efforts to develop teacher professionalism remain limited and sporadic (Brandt et al., 2007; Cobb et al., 2009; Goldstein, 2007). Furthermore, deficiencies are evident in supervision planning, the execution of school visits (Ayeni, 2012; Sandholtz, 2002), and supervisory competencies across both academic and managerial domains (Adewale, 2014; Darishah et al., 2017; Irawan et al., 2018; Porniadi et al., 2019; Ralph, 2002, 2005).

These recurring patterns indicate that the problem of supervision cannot be adequately explained solely at the level of individual competence or technical execution (Sandholtz & Scribner, 2006). Rather, they reflect deeper structural conditions that shape how supervisory roles are defined and enacted (Ngwenya, 2020; Sandholtz & Scribner, 2006). The persistence of administrative compliance, weak professional guidance, and limited supervisory effectiveness points to a fundamental misalignment between the normative function of

supervision as a professional development mechanism and its institutional configuration as an administrative control system (Buchanan, 2020). This misalignment structurally constrains supervisors, positioning them as evaluators of compliance rather than facilitators of teacher development. To better understand these structural constraints, it is necessary to move beyond empirical observations and examine the theoretical assumptions underlying existing models of educational supervision (Ghaseminangi et al., 2025).

However, beyond these empirical and structural issues, there is a more fundamental limitation in how educational supervision has been theoretically conceptualized (Birkeli et al., 2023; Haberlin & Burns, 2024). Existing studies predominantly rely on a technical-rational paradigm that frames supervision as a set of procedures, competencies, and measurable performance indicators (Biesta, 2007; Kinsella, 2007). While this approach is useful for standardization and evaluation, it tends to oversimplify supervision as a neutral and linear process, neglecting the complex institutional, political, and organizational dynamics that shape its practice (Bastalich, 2017). As a result, supervision is often treated as a technical problem to be improved, rather than a structurally embedded practice that must be critically examined (Bastalich, 2017; Kostecki et al., 2021).

This study addresses this limitation by explicitly positioning educational supervision within an integrated theoretical framework that draws on governance theory, institutional theory, and policy implementation theory (Milner et al., 2021). From a governance perspective, supervision is understood as part of an accountability regime that structures relationships between the state, institutions, and professionals (Verger et al., 2019). From an institutional theory lens, supervisory practices are shaped by formal rules, normative expectations, and organizational logics that influence how roles are enacted beyond formal mandates. Meanwhile, policy implementation theory provides a framework to analyze how supervision policies are interpreted, negotiated, and enacted across different administrative levels, particularly in contexts characterized by fragmentation and overlapping authority (Unda et al., 2023; Verger et al., 2019).

This study argues that the core gap in the literature lies in the absence of an integrated structural–governance framework capable of explaining how fragmented policy arrangements, institutional configurations, and accountability regimes systematically shape and constrain the enactment of educational supervision as a professional practice (Maulida & Juwono, 2025). In other words, what is missing is not merely empirical evidence or additional case studies, but a coherent explanatory framework that connects supervision practices to the broader governance structures within which they are embedded (G. Mayake & Base, 2025). Without such a framework, existing studies remain fragmented, treating supervision either as a technical issue, a competency problem, or a policy matter in isolation, rather than as an interconnected systemic phenomenon. Consequently, there is a need to move beyond micro-level and competency-based approaches toward a more critical and structural understanding of how supervision is constructed, regulated, and enacted within specific governance systems (G. Mayake & Base, 2025; Leal Filho et al., 2021; Maulida & Juwono, 2025).

Importantly, this gap is not unique to Indonesia but reflects a broader global tension in educational supervision between accountability-driven governance and professional development-oriented supervision (Dabisch, 2023). Across different education systems, supervision is increasingly shaped by bureaucratic accountability regimes, often at the expense of its developmental function. Therefore, examining supervision through a structural and governance lens contributes not only to understanding the Indonesian case but also to advancing international debates on how supervision systems can balance control and professional support in complex institutional environments (Dabisch, 2023; Ngwenya, 2020).

Such a limitation becomes particularly problematic in contexts where governance structures are complex and fragmented. In Indonesia, the dual governance of education under the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religious Affairs creates overlapping authorities, regulatory inconsistencies, and institutional fragmentation. This structural condition potentially shapes how supervision is organized and practiced, including differences in standards, coordination mechanisms, and supervisory authority across educational systems. These theoretical and structural limitations become particularly significant in contexts where governance systems are institutionally complex and fragmented (Fathih, 2022; Haberlin & Burns, 2024).

This dual-governance configuration provides a critical empirical setting to theorize how fragmented institutional arrangements influence the enactment of supervision (Dinata et al., 2025; Dinata & Andriani, 2025). Rather than treating fragmentation as a purely administrative issue, this study positions it as a key explanatory factor in understanding why supervision systems often fail to function as intended. In this sense, Indonesia offers an analytically significant case for exploring how governance structures mediate the relationship between policy design and supervisory practice (Nolan & Hoover, 2011).

Within this broader and fragmented governance structure, the Islamic education system under the Ministry of Religious Affairs represents a distinct institutional domain that warrants specific analytical attention. Existing studies have not sufficiently examined how supervisory practices are shaped by the interaction between policy frameworks, institutional arrangements, and regional governance structures. More importantly, there has been little effort to critically reconstruct supervision models that are responsive to these structural complexities, especially at the regional level where policies are operationalized and negotiated in practice (Andriani et al., 2026; Setyaningsih et al., 2023).

By focusing on the regional level, this study moves beyond dominant national-level policy analysis and micro-level practice studies, offering a meso-level perspective that captures how supervision is actually enacted within specific institutional contexts. This approach enables a more nuanced understanding of supervision as a negotiated and context-dependent practice, rather than a uniformly implemented policy instrument.

Therefore, this study aims to address three main objectives: (1) to examine the structural and policy-level problems in the implementation of educational supervision; (2) to analyze government policies related to supervision across the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religious Affairs; and (3) to explore the reconstruction of Islamic education

supervision at the regional level, particularly in the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Pekanbaru.

Method

This research was a qualitative descriptive study (Creswell, 2009). It aimed to explore and clarify phenomena by describing several domains relating to the problem and unit under study (Sugiyono, 2021). This study took place in the regional office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Pekanbaru, Riau. The selection of Pekanbaru was based on several considerations. First, Pekanbaru's graduation rate was generally quite low compared to other big cities in the province, including its integrity value. Secondly, supervisors in the Riau region including Pekanbaru were still mostly filled by non-educators and this profession was still considered a position that lacks pride and sometimes even the runaway profession. Thirdly, teachers' perceptions of supervisors were also not satisfactory.

The informants of this research included the Head of the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religion in Pekanbaru on the Technical Policy of Madrasa Supervision Implementation, Policy on the Recruitment and Guidance System of Madrasa Supervisors, and the Problems of Madrasa Supervision. Head of PAIS Section on the guidance system, work facilities and support, and the madrasa supervisory coordination system. Chairperson of the Supervisory Team on guidelines for madrasa supervision, coordination systems, planning, implementation and evaluation, as well as madrasa supervision problems. Madrasa Supervisors regarding the implementation of madrasa supervision, academic and managerial-technical supervision, and problems in implementing madrasa supervision (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Principal and Madrasa Teachers regarding perceptions of supervisors and supervision systems. In total, this study involved 19 informants (1 Head of Regional Office, 1 Head of PAIS Section, 1 Chairperson of Supervisory Team, 6 madrasa supervisors, 4 madrasa principals, and 6 madrasa teachers). Informants were selected purposively based on their roles and relevance to the research focus (Yin, 2014).

In-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and documents were used to collect the data. In-depth interviews were implemented to obtain data on policies, guidance systems, facilitation and institutional support as well as oversight issues (Yin, 2014). The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with officials of Ministry of Religious Affairs in Pekanbaru, the Head of PAIS Section, the Head of Madrasas and the chairperson of supervisory team. Then, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted to obtain data on implementing madrasa supervision from madrasa supervisors. The FGD was conducted with 6 madrasa supervisors. The FGD was also carried out with 4 Madrasa Heads and 6 Madrasa Teachers to get their perceptions and responses to the implementation of madrasa supervision. The researcher also collected data from documents to complete the information regarding the implementation of madrasa supervision. Documents were obtained from the regional office of Ministry of Religious Affairs in Pekanbaru such as supervisors data, supervisor assessment files, Madrasa data, supervisors absences, and supervision forms (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This study was conducted over a period of three months, from October to December 2025. Data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The analysis began with open coding to identify initial concepts from the data, followed by axial coding to categorize and relate codes into broader categories. Finally, themes were generated to capture key patterns and

meanings related to the implementation of educational supervision. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, several validation strategies were employed, including data triangulation across interviews, focus group discussions, and documents; member checking to confirm the accuracy of participants' perspectives; and peer debriefing to enhance analytical rigor. The data analysis process was conducted iteratively to ensure the validity and consistency of the findings (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Finding and Discussion

Finding

Recruitment Process

The implementation of the technical supervision of education in the regional office of the Ministry of Religion in Pekanbaru refers to the PP regulation No. 12 of 2007 concerning the standards of school or madrasa supervisors, especially the recruitment and guidance system of supervisors both in madrasa and PAI teachers in schools. Some technical policies include job analysis, data collection of prospective supervisors, and the selection process. The regional office of Ministry of Religious Affair in Pekanbaru added other conditions in the selection process: the reading al-Quran test and writing al-Quran verses. It aimed to ensure that the supervisors of education in their environment have the qualifications as supervisors of Islamic education, and a special feature of the Malays.

Based on the data, some teachers and principals who had met the qualifications were not interested to become supervisors. In contrast, there were people who had not met the requirements but wish to become educational supervisors. The biggest factors were (1) there was no clear budget support for supervisors in performing their performance, (2) supervisor structural position, and (3) lack of appreciation or career clarity after becoming a supervisor.

Arrangement of Supervision Program

Based on a workbook published by the Center for Development of Educational Personnel, the Agency for Development of Education Human Resources and Education Quality Assurance regarding the implementation of supervision activities. In the guideline, it is stated that each supervisor before carrying out supervision activities, must prepare a supervision program for the school or madrasa for one year, which contains an evaluation of the implementation of the previous annual supervision program, annual school supervision program, school supervision semester program, and Academic Oversight Plan (RPA) as well as the Managerial Supervision Plan (RPM). Based on the research findings, Madrasa Supervisors in Pekanbaru in carrying out their educational supervision tasks refer to the Implementation Guidelines for the Compilation of School and Madrasa Performance Reports issued by the Directorate General of Education in 201683 which are almost the same as the supervisors manual issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture. It is just not included in detail the guidelines for madrasa supervision as issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Madrasa Head Training

The guidance of the head of madrasa by the regional office of Ministry of Religious Affair supervisors was carried out by visiting the madrasa assisted. Madrasa headmaster

training focused more on (1) the school principal's work plan for management of education carried out for one year along with supporting data entry, (2) Kamad's performance evaluation of Kamad's activities and tasks, (3) monitoring teacher's attendance and data collection, and (4) monitoring the use of textbooks. The supervisors only needed to check the documents prepared by the head of madrasa and then did the scoring. If there were deficiencies or records that needed to be corrected, they were usually asked to be updated and reported back for guidance on subsequent visits.

Madrasa Teacher Development

As for the guidance of madrasa teachers, the supervisors of the regional office of Ministry of Religious Affair in Pekanbaru emphasized the assessment and guidance of: (1) administration supervision of learning tools, (2) preparation of lesson plans and (3) learning planning as a measurement of teacher performance. In supervising the administration of learning tools, madrasa supervisors were more dominant in evaluating the substance of the RPP and checking the availability of supporting materials prepared by madrasa teachers. Then if there were some findings of deficiencies and remedial notes, they would be included in the administrative supervision finding form containing follow-up findings.

PAI Teacher Training at Schools

PAI teacher supervisors at the regional office of Ministry of Religious Affair in Pekanbaru carried out activities such as monitoring, coaching, mentoring and training, and evaluating. However, the number of PAI teacher supervisors owned by the regional office of Ministry of Religious Affair in Pekanbaru was only 13 for 300 PAI teachers, so an average PAI supervisor educated 40-50 teachers. The results were certainly very influential on the quality of the fostered teachers by the supervisor. So that the madrasa supervisors in monitoring their fostered teachers were carried out by regularly visiting the school and developing MGMP (Subject Teachers' Consultation). School visits were conducted routinely every month, but if conditions were not possible, it could be every 2-3 months. The visit was intended to gather information from PAI teachers about problems related to PAI teaching and those related to learning tools.

Guidance and Training for Madrasa professional teachers and school principals

This training was a follow-up to the supervision findings found by supervisors considered very necessary. However, based on the results of research on the findings and follow-up results of supervision by supervisors to madrasa teachers, PAI teachers and principals were rarely continued in special training and training meetings held by supervisors. Yet, some supervisory activities in the form of coaching had also been conducted by supervisors through supervisory team of the regional office of Ministry of Religious Affair in Pekanbaru such as coaching to the head of RA or BA regarding madrasa activity programs.

Monitoring of National Education Standards

Monitoring national education standards in madrasa was carried out by using standard instruments of content, processes, competencies, education and education personnel, facilities, management, financing and education assessment. Assessment was conducted by scoring on

each item. Monitoring was directed at madrasa and documents were provided by Kamad. The monitoring was divided into several sessions each month so that in one year eight national education standards can be met by the madrasa supervisor. The SNP standard monitoring was usually carried out in March, April, August, September, October, November and December.

Evaluation of Teachers and Madrasa Principal Performance

Kamad's performance appraisal instruments were instruments for evaluating the activities and duties of madrasa principals (PMA 58 in 2017), madrasa head work plans, guiding laboratory management, fostering administrative staffing, fostering library administration and public relations. While evaluating the performance of madrasa or PAI teachers was executed by scoring an instrument that included the preparation of lesson plans, the learning plan, mastery of the 2013 curriculum (K13), and an assessment of the process and learning outcomes of students.

Evaluation System

According to the madrasa supervision manual, evaluation of implementation was carried out in 4 cases: (1) teacher and school principal development; (2) SNP monitoring; (3) teacher and principal performance; and (4) supervision programs at the regency, city or Province level. In carrying out their madrasa supervision duties, the supervisors of the regional office of Ministry of Religious Affair in Pekanbaru run the evaluation systems, but in a format prepared by themselves, it does not refer to the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Madrasa supervisors of the regional office of Ministry of Religious Affair in Pekanbaru only made a final evaluation as well as a final report on the implementation of madrasa supervision.

Kamad and Teacher's Perception of Supervisors

The quantity of supervision visits had not been fairly distributed, especially madrasa that was far from the city. Supervision visits occurred at certain events such as mid semester test, semester test and national exam monitoring. It was infrequently academic and managerial guidance and coaching. Communication was only conducted to Kamad, while teacher supervision was carried out by Kamad. Academic and managerial supervision services were still low, especially in assisting problem solving. Supervisors were more responsive to teacher and madrasa administration services. Supervisors were more concerned with personal development than the professional development of teachers and madrasas.

The Supervisor's Perception of Kamad and the Teacher

Kamad and teachers had weak innovation and creativity in using IT as a learning medium. Teachers rarely used lesson plans as a teaching guide, just relied on textbooks as a teaching guide. Kamad only focused on improving the quality of madrasas in the era of his leadership. The madrasa development document was only a supplementary document, but it had not been made into a madrasa development plan document. Teachers were still minimal in developing the quality of self-competence and only hold on teaching textbooks.

The Problem of Madrasa Supervision in Pekanbaru

Supervisors Ratio. The number of madrasa supervisors owned by the regional office Ministry of Religious Affair in Pekanbaru was 12 people, while the PAI teacher supervisors only had 13 people, which was not comparable to the number of public schools, which was 674. Based on this data, a madrasa supervisor in Pekanbaru should guide 12-13 madrasas, while supervisors of PAI teachers fostered about 40-50 school teachers. The ratio of the number of schools to supervisors that were still very large which made the supervision process did not run optimally.

1. Operational, Facilitation and Infrastructure

The training visits to various madrasas and PAI teachers were not yet optimal due to the absence of operational assistance to support supervision performance. Operational costs to the field were all borne independently by the supervisors, so they cannot routinely made visits to madrasas.

2. Competency Training

The supervisors of madrasas in Pekanbaru claimed that they had never received a training program on supervision except for the training of candidates for supervisors after passing the selection as a candidate for supervisors. While further education on academic supervision and management had never been done until now.

3. Coaching Structure

In Ministry of Religious Affair structure, the presence of supervisors was not an independent structure, so automatically it did not have its own POK budget to support its performance. In addition, they did not have superiors who specifically fostered and directed their performance in supervising education.

4. Supervision Instrument

The instrument used by the regional office of Ministry of Religious Affair in Pekanbaru was a combination of the standard instruments prepared by the government and those compiled independently by supervisory team. This was understandable because the supervisor work guidelines issued by the Directorate General of Islamic Education only contained general guidelines for madrasa supervision, not accompanied by examples of standard instruments such as those of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Discussion

Madrasa Supervisor Competency Standards that Have not Received Serious Attention

Permendiknas No. 12 of 2007 concerning school or madrasa supervision standards has set high standards for prospective school and madrasa supervisors. One of them is that they must be educated at least S-1 for kindergarten or elementary school supervisors and S-2 for secondary school supervisors. This aims to ensure that education supervisors are people who already have adequate academic competence and experience, master the ins and outs of the education sector so that educational institutions in Indonesia have clear and measurable standards and can compete with the international world.

In recruiting candidates for educational supervisors in several areas, this regulation had been widely applied, even though some had applied it according to regulations. The crucial problem was the fulfillment of figures that met administrative requirements and were truly

competent in their fields (Arifin et al., 2025). Competent here in the sense of mastering academic and managerial problems of education, as well as mastering strategies for solving problems that occurred in the world of education (Manyiraho et al., 2025).

In terms of provisions, supervisor competency standards had been applied at every level of the education unit, but the most concern was only the fulfillment of administrative requirements without considering competence (Ahmed Tufa, 2022; Arsad et al., 2025a). Many supervisors had fulfilled administrative requirements such as S-2 for the middle level, but still lack in mastery of managerial supervision because they had never had the experience of leading madrasas or getting managerial supervision training, so that in conducting supervision only fulfilled the instrument forms without conducting supervision managerial and professional development of teachers (Arsad et al., 2025a).

This finding is consistent with previous studies that highlight the gap between formal qualifications and actual supervisory competence (Ahmed Tufa, 2022; Arsad et al., 2025a; Manyiraho et al., 2025). For instance, Ahmed Tufa (2022) found that supervisors who meet formal academic standards do not necessarily demonstrate effective supervisory practices in schools. Similarly, Arifin et al. (2025) emphasized that the effectiveness of supervision is more influenced by practical experience and continuous professional development than by formal qualifications alone. However, this study further shows that the issue is not merely related to individual limitations, but also reflects systemic weaknesses in the design of competency development and training programs.

The research findings showed that madrasa supervisors still needed training in professional development. Some research results on the performance of madrasa supervisors which were still low that examined the performance of madrasa supervisors in 10 Provinces that showed low performance. In addition to, the outreach factors of the target schools or madrasas that must be supervised, there was also a lack of mastery of the knowledge and understanding of supervisors about the actual tasks of supervising education and the lack of facilitation for operational support (Dabisch, 2023; Kristiawan et al., 2019).

This condition indicates that the problem of supervision is not simply a matter of insufficient individual competence, but is closely related to the absence of structured and continuous professional development systems (Buchanan, 2020). Supervisors are formally qualified, yet they operate without adequate training, mentoring, and institutional support. This creates a situation where supervision becomes procedural and compliance-oriented, rather than developmental and transformative. In other words, supervision is practiced as an administrative obligation rather than as a strategic effort to improve teaching quality (Glickman et al., 2017).

These findings also imply that current supervision policies tend to overemphasize credential-based standards while underestimating the importance of experiential learning and professional capacity building. Therefore, improving the quality of supervision requires a shift from a qualification-oriented approach to a competency and system-oriented approach, where training, experience, and institutional support are integrated into the supervision framework.

Analysis of Supervisor Needs and Human Resources Problems

The role of education supervisors had not been maximized according to various studies. One of the reasons was incomparable ratio of supervisors to the number of education units. The ability of country was still unable to meet the needs of the number of supervisors due to budgetary factors and lack of under human resources in accordance with standards set in several regions. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Ahmed Tufa, 2022; Arsad et al., 2025a), which indicate that the imbalance between the number of supervisors and educational institutions is a common issue in developing education systems, often resulting in ineffective supervision practices. However, those studies mainly emphasize resource limitations, while the present study reveals a more specific problem related to the absence of systematic workforce planning (Ahmed Tufa, 2022; G. Mayake & Base, 2025).

In the regional office of Ministry of Religious Affair in Pekanbaru, madrasa supervisors were unable to meet the ratio of the number of education units. Based on research findings, madrasa supervisors should assist 10 madrasas, but for PAI supervisors at schools, it was even much larger, where each madrasa supervisor was forced to supervise 40-50 PAI teachers because of the lack of human resources. In addition, the fulfillment of madrasa supervisors in the regional office of Ministry of Religious Affair in Pekanbaru was mostly based on filling vacant supervisor positions, perhaps due to factors such as retirement, transfer, resignation or death. In other words, new supervisor vacancies were opened when there were vacant positions. Charging was mostly not based on the analysis of needs determined long ago. This condition reflects a reactive rather than strategic approach to human resource management, where recruitment is driven by short-term needs instead of long-term planning. Such a system not only increases the workload of supervisors but also reduces the effectiveness of supervision, as supervisors are unable to provide intensive guidance and support to teachers.

Furthermore, this finding extends previous research by showing that the issue is not merely quantitative (lack of personnel), but also structural in nature, particularly in the absence of data-driven planning and policy alignment. This implies that improving supervision cannot rely solely on increasing the number of supervisors, but must also involve systemic reforms in workforce planning and resource allocation (G. Mayake & Base, 2025; Maulida & Juwono, 2025).

Problem of Bureaucratic supervision structure

The position of the education supervisors in both the regional office of the Ministry of Education and Culture and Ministry of Religious Affair in Pekanbaru which were still part of the education unit did not have a specific structure in charge and fostering, made the supervisors did not have direct superiors who fought for their rights and obligations as functional workers. This structure fostered both career and capacity building and capability of the profession, including overseeing its performance. With the structure, it could automatically fight for facilitation and budget support for the supervisor performance.

This finding is consistent with previous studies (Arsad et al., 2025b; Shikuku et al., 2024; Supratman et al., 2025; Wang & Noor, 2025), which highlight that unclear organizational structures often weaken the effectiveness of educational supervision due to the absence of clear

authority and coordination mechanisms. However, this study extends these findings by showing that the problem is not only related to role ambiguity, but also to the absence of institutional protection and advocacy for supervisors as functional professionals within the education system (Arsad et al., 2025b).

Considering that there was no structure that directly supervised these madrasa supervisors, as a result, there were many obstacles in improving the quality and capacity of these supervisors. This impacted the implementation of performance that only met the requirements and demands for performance fulfillment without carrying out managerial supervisor duties and as the training of madrasa teachers and PAI teachers as required by the Law. In addition, the unclear relationship between BNSP (National Education Standards Agency) relationship and supervisors both within the Ministry of Education and Culture and Ministry of Religious Affairs, consequently both institutions seem to be acting independently. Whereas in one of the supervisor's tasks was to oversee the implementation of 8 SNP (National Education Unit) in education. Ideally, BNSP should involve in assisting and fostering education supervisors, if the aim was to jointly oversee the implementation of national education standards.

This condition indicates that supervision is structurally fragmented, where institutional actors operate in isolation without an integrated governance framework. This fragmentation reduces the effectiveness of supervision, as supervisors are positioned merely as implementers of administrative tasks rather than as strategic actors in ensuring educational quality. Similar concerns have been raised by Supratman et al. (2025), who argue that weak institutional integration in education systems often leads to symbolic compliance rather than substantive improvement.

Furthermore, since the formation of the Directorate of Teachers and Education Personnel (GTK) within the Ministry of Education and Culture followed by the same thing in Ministry of Religious Affairs had not been able to change the position of supervisors to have their own structure at the lower level. Whereas supervisors, according to the law, were included in the education staff, who needed a special agency to develop them both in their careers and professional development. The existence of a clear structure at the bottom level, could help the performance of supervisors, because in practice the relationship between supervisors and the regional office of Ministry of Religious Affairs in Pekanbaru based on research findings in several regions, was not always smooth, thus impacting on the performance of madrasa supervisors (Manyiraho et al., 2025; Supratman et al., 2025; Wang & Noor, 2025).

Theoretically, these findings suggest that educational supervision should be understood as a structurally embedded function within the education system, rather than merely an individual or technical role. Without a clear organizational structure, supervision cannot operate effectively, regardless of individual competencies. Therefore, strengthening supervision requires institutional restructuring that integrates supervisory roles into a coherent system with clear authority, coordination, and support mechanisms.

Implications

This study provides both theoretical and practical implications for the development of educational supervision, particularly within the context of Islamic education under the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings challenge the dominant view of educational supervision as a primarily technical and administrative function focused on evaluating teacher performance and ensuring compliance with standards. Instead, this study demonstrates that supervision should be understood as a structurally and policy-driven process, shaped by the interaction between competency standards, human resource systems, and institutional arrangements. The identified gaps between formal qualifications and actual supervisory competence indicate that supervision cannot be adequately explained through individual capability alone, but must be analyzed within a broader systemic framework.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the literature by highlighting the importance of structural and policy dimensions in shaping supervisory practices. Previous studies have largely emphasized micro-level aspects, such as supervisor performance and teacher development, whereas this study shows that macro-level factors such as workforce planning, bureaucratic structure, and policy alignment play a decisive role in determining the effectiveness of supervision. Therefore, this study extends existing theories by positioning educational supervision as an embedded organizational function that requires alignment between policy design, institutional structure, and professional capacity development.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest several important implications for policymakers and educational stakeholders. First, the recruitment and development of supervisors should not rely solely on formal qualifications, but must be supported by continuous professional training, mentoring systems, and competency-based development programs. Second, there is a need for more strategic human resource planning to address the imbalance between the number of supervisors and the number of educational units, as excessive workloads significantly reduce the effectiveness of supervision.

Third, strengthening the institutional structure of supervision is essential. The absence of a dedicated organizational unit for supervisors limits their authority, professional development, and access to resources. Establishing a clear and independent supervisory structure would enhance coordination, accountability, and performance support. In addition, stronger integration between supervisory institutions and standard-setting bodies, such as those responsible for national education standards, is necessary to ensure coherence in policy implementation.

Finally, this study implies that improving the quality of educational supervision requires a shift from a compliance-oriented approach to a developmental and system-oriented approach. Supervision should not merely focus on administrative fulfillment, but should function as a strategic mechanism for improving teaching quality, supporting teacher professional growth, and strengthening institutional performance.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that limitations in educational supervision within the Islamic education system are primarily driven by structural and governance factors rather than technical or individual shortcomings. Although regulatory frameworks and competency standards are formally established, their implementation at the regional level remains fragmented and weakly institutionalized. Three key systemic problems are identified: (1) the absence of strategic workforce planning, resulting in imbalanced supervisor–teacher ratios and reactive recruitment; (2) limited institutional support, including inadequate operational funding, weak professional development, and insufficient training systems; and (3) unclear bureaucratic structures, where supervisors operate without a dedicated organizational unit, leading to weak coordination, limited authority, and reduced effectiveness. As a result, supervision tends to function as a compliance-oriented activity rather than a developmental process.

From a theoretical perspective, this study reframes educational supervision from a technical and competency-based approach toward a structural–governance perspective. It shows that supervisory effectiveness is shaped by institutional design and policy alignment within broader accountability systems. By integrating governance, institutional, and policy implementation perspectives, this study offers a more coherent framework for understanding how supervision is systematically shaped and constrained beyond individual competence.

Practically, the findings point to the need for systemic reform in supervision design and implementation. Recruitment and deployment should be grounded in data-driven workforce planning, supported by adequate operational funding, structured professional development, and continuous training. Establishing a clear and independent organizational structure for supervisors is also essential to strengthen coordination, authority, and accountability. These reforms are necessary to reposition supervision as a strategic mechanism for improving teaching quality and educational outcomes. Future research should examine how different governance arrangements, particularly in dual-administration systems, influence supervisory practices across regions, as well as assess the long-term impact of structural reforms on supervision effectiveness.

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