



Performance of Islamic Religious Education Supervisors in Central Aceh District

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study aims to analyze the performance of supervisors in improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Aceh Tengah District by examining their roles in academic and managerial supervision, the strategies employed to strengthen teacher performance, and the internal and external factors that influence their success.

Methodology: This study used a descriptive qualitative method with a field study approach; data were collected from IRE supervisors, school principals, and teachers through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis, followed by thematic analysis.

Main Findings: The findings reveal that supervisors play a pivotal role in enhancing learning quality through structured teacher mentoring, support for curriculum development, classroom observation, and performance evaluation. Effective supervisory practices include coaching clinics, collaborative lesson planning, and reflective supervision. However, several challenges hinder optimal implementation, such as limited professional development opportunities, insufficient operational support, constrained supervision coverage areas, and disparities in teachers' digital competence. Despite these limitations, collaborative strategies involving supervisors, principals, and teachers demonstrate strong potential to resolve supervisory barriers and promote a culture of continuous improvement.

Novelty/Originality of this study: The novelty of this study lies in its formulation of an integrated supervisory performance framework that connects the academic, managerial, and digital supervision dimensions within the context of Islamic education, an area underexplored in previous research. The study recommends strengthening competency-based supervisor training, increasing resource allocation, and enhancing inter-agency coordination to ensure sustainable, systemic improvements in the Islamic Religious Education supervisory ecosystem.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education serves as the main pillar in developing high-quality and competitive human resources. In today's era of globalization, education systems face increasingly complex challenges, particularly in preparing young generations who are not only intellectually capable but also possess strong character and spirituality. Unfortunately, the overall quality of education in Indonesia remains relatively low compared to other ASEAN countries. The World Competitiveness Yearbook reports that Indonesia ranks 38th out of 148 countries, far

behind Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and Thailand. Meanwhile, the indicators that Indonesia's Human Development Index (HDI) stands at 0.705, with an average schooling duration of only 8.4 years figures that still trail behind many neighboring nations [1]. These indicators illustrate that efforts to improve national education quality remain an ongoing challenge requiring comprehensive reform, including strengthening the educational supervision system.

Within the national education system, school supervisors play a crucial role in maintaining the quality of learning and ensuring the implementation of educational policies. As mandated in Government Regulation No. 74 of 2008 on Teachers and Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation No. 2 of 2012, supervisors are responsible for guiding, monitoring, assessing, and evaluating school operations to ensure alignment with national standards. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (IRE), the role of supervisors becomes even more strategic because it directly influences the moral, ethical, and spiritual development of students. IRE supervisors are expected not only to oversee administrative compliance but also to act as professional mentors and motivators who guide teachers in improving learning quality based on Islamic values [2]-[5].

However, numerous studies indicate that the performance of IRE supervisors in Indonesia is still far from optimal. Referencing findings from the Research and Development Center for Religious and Religious Education of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (2007), reveals that planning, assessment, and reporting of learning outcomes conducted by IRE supervisors remain weak [6]. Similarly, shows that supervisors are insufficiently active in mentoring teachers in developing syllabi and lesson plans, and their mastery of learning technology is still lacking [7]-[10]. In many regions, supervision is performed more as an administrative formality rather than as a meaningful professional development effort. This situation highlights an evident gap between supervision policies and their actual implementation in the field, which ultimately affects the quality of Islamic religious education in schools.

A similar condition is found in Central Aceh Regency. Observations and interviews conducted in 2023 show that among 25 IRE supervisors, only 40% have regular and structured supervision schedules, while the remaining supervisors have yet to formulate systematic work plans. From the teachers' perspective, around 55% feel that supervision positively contributes to their professional development, whereas 45% consider it merely a formality. Furthermore, only 30% of supervisors utilize digital technology in supervision activities, and only 25% have received supervision training in the past two years. These facts demonstrate that many supervisors are not yet prepared to meet the demands of professionalism and digitalization in modern education systems.

Conceptually, educational supervision can be understood through the lens of clinical supervision theory developed Goldhammer, which emphasizes the importance of professional collaboration between supervisors and teachers in identifying and improving learning challenges [2]. From an Islamic perspective, supervision carries a spiritual and moral dimension reflected in the concepts of *tarbiyah* (nurturing), *ta'dib* (character formation), and *ta'lim* (teaching) [11]-[13]. Effective supervision should be grounded in scientific processes observation, reflection, and analysis to ensure improved learning quality [14]-[16]. Thus, IRE supervisors are expected to function not only as administrators but also as moral guides who ensure that education practices align with Islamic principles.

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum presents new challenges for IRE supervisors. This curriculum demands flexibility, student independence, and project-based learning oriented toward character development. Supervisors must be able to understand and guide teachers in adopting these new approaches so that learning remains contextual and infused with Islamic values. Unfortunately, many supervisors still lack adequate competence and professional development opportunities to meaningfully support this shift. The success of educational reform depends heavily on the ability of educational actors, including supervisors, to adapt to policy changes and adopt innovative learning methods [17]-[19].

Despite the importance of educational supervision, several critical gaps remain unaddressed in existing studies. First, most research on IRE supervision in Indonesia focuses on general performance issues at the national level, with limited empirical evidence from specific regions such as Central Aceh. Second, previous studies Habibullah primarily examined administrative and planning weaknesses but seldom explored how supervisors adapt to major policy shifts such as the Merdeka Curriculum [20]. Third, existing literature rarely integrates three interconnected dimensions simultaneously: (1) the academic and managerial performance of supervisors, (2) internal and external factors affecting supervision quality, and (3) supervisors' readiness to implement digital-based and value-oriented supervision aligned with Islamic principles. Fourth, no previous studies have holistically analyzed the interaction between supervision performance, modernization demands (digitalization), and spiritual-moral responsibilities unique to Islamic Religious Education supervision. These gaps warrant a comprehensive, context-based study that captures both empirical realities and conceptual dimensions of IRE supervision.

Given these identified gaps, this study is important to analyze the performance of IRE supervisors in Central Aceh Regency by assessing their academic and managerial functions, identifying internal and external factors influencing their performance, and examining how they respond to policy changes such as the Merdeka Curriculum. The study also aims to formulate recommendations for effective, collaborative, and Islamic-values-

based supervision models that suit local educational needs. The findings are expected to contribute not only to the development of Islamic education supervision theory but also to provide practical implications for improving the quality of education in Central Aceh. Moreover, this research is intended to guide local government and the Ministry of Religious Affairs in developing more adaptive, professional, and sustainable supervision policies. By strengthening the role of IRE supervisors, it is hoped that the quality of Islamic religious education will improve significantly, aligning with the national vision of fostering individuals who are faithful, knowledgeable, and of noble character.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method, which is an appropriate choice for exploring the complexities of social phenomena present in the field. Qualitative research aims to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups give to a social phenomenon. In the context of this research, the main focus is on the performance of Islamic Religious Education supervisors in Central Aceh Regency. This approach goes beyond simply collecting data; it also seeks to understand the context and meaning behind that data, providing a more holistic picture of the challenges and dynamics faced by supervisors.

This research uses the case study method because it is able to explore phenomena in depth and contextually, as case studies are suitable for researching real-life phenomena when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are unclear. This approach is relevant for understanding the role of Islamic Religious Education supervisors working in school and madrasah environments, considering the dynamics of policies and interactions among various stakeholders. This research also follows the naturalistic paradigm as explained, which emphasizes understanding social phenomena in their natural state without manipulation, thus allowing the researcher to obtain authentic data on supervisors' academic and managerial supervision. In this context, supervisors not only play an administrative role but also mentor teachers thru needs analysis and appropriate intervention strategies, despite often facing resource limitations and resistance from school staff. Therefore, this research is expected to generate recommendations for improving the professionalism of supervisors, strengthening cooperation with schools, and supporting the improvement of education quality in Central Aceh Regency.

This research was conducted in Central Aceh Regency, an area known for its strong Islamic educational characteristics and the supervision policies implemented by Islamic Religious Education supervisors. This region has a long history in the development of Islamic education and has been a center of influential religious activities, where its madrasahs integrate religious and general curricula to produce intelligent and moral graduates. Supervisors play a crucial role in ensuring the quality of education thru the evaluation, mentoring, and training of teachers to improve their professional competence. The selection of informants used a purposive sampling technique, which allowed the researcher to obtain in-depth data from individuals who were experienced and relevant to the phenomenon being studied, such as supervisors, teachers, madrasah heads, and officials from the Central Aceh District Ministry of Religious Affairs. Each informant plays a complementary role in supporting supervision and improving the quality of Islamic education. With synergy among all parties, it is hoped that the supervision system and the quality of Islamic education in Central Aceh will continue to develop sustainably.

Table 1. Research Information

Code	Department
Wan. KK	Head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs
Wan. PIRE	Supervisor of Islamic Religious Education
Wan. GIRE	Islamic Religious Education Teacher
Wan. KS	School Principal
Wan. PJS	Supervisory Team

Data collection in this study was carried out through three main methods: in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis, which complemented each other to provide a comprehensive understanding of the performance of Islamic Religious Education supervisors. In-depth interviews were used to explore informants' experiences and perceptions of the role, strategies, challenges, and impact of supervision on teachers and the quality of learning, as well as the importance of supervisors' collaboration with teachers. Observation was conducted to examine the interaction between supervisors and teachers in madrasahs, emphasizing the importance of understanding social actions from the actors' perspectives. Meanwhile, a documentary study was used to verify data through supervision reports, the Ministry of Religious Affairs' education policies, and teacher performance evaluation results. By integrating these three methods, this research provides a comprehensive and valid overview of supervisors' supervision practices and effectiveness in improving the quality of Islamic religious education.

Table 2. Documents Reviewed

Document
Supervisor's supervision report.
Department of Education policy documents
Results of teacher performance evaluation after supervision.

Data analysis in this study used the interactive model of Patton, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification [21]. In the data reduction stage, the researcher selects and groups relevant data according to the research focus, for example, supervision strategies and challenges in Islamic religious education. The data presentation stage is carried out thru narration, tables, or diagrams to illustrate the relationship between supervision strategies and the quality of education. That collaborative supervision can increase teacher and student engagement. Next, the conclusion-drawing and verification stage is carried out by identifying patterns and cross-checking data from interviews, observations, and documents to ensure the validity of the findings. Overall, the Miles and Huberman analysis model provides a systematic and comprehensive framework that helps researchers understand phenomena in depth and formulate recommendations for improving supervision practices and the quality of Islamic religious education.

Data validity is an important aspect in ensuring the quality and reliability of research results. Referring to Creswell, this study applies four main criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability [22]. Credibility is achieved thru data triangulation and member checking techniques to ensure the accuracy of information, while transferability is enhanced by providing a detailed description of the research context so that findings can be applied to similar situations. Dependability focuses on the consistency of the research process with systematic documentation so that the study can be replicated, while confirmability emphasizes objectivity thru a transparent audit trail [23]. The application of these four criteria ensures that the data obtained is valid, reliable, and free from bias, so that the research results have a significant scientific and practical contribution to the development of education, particularly in improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education supervision.

Research ethics is a key pillar in qualitative research that must be upheld to protect the rights of participants and maintain scientific integrity. This research considers three important ethical aspects as explained [22]: research permission, informant confidentiality, and informed consent. Research permits were obtained from the Central Aceh Regency Ministry of Religious Affairs and the relevant madrasahs as a form of respect for the institution and the community. The confidentiality of informants is maintained by disguising their identities and ensuring that the data is used only for academic purposes. Additionally, informed consent is provided thru an open explanation of the purpose, methods, and the participants' right to participate voluntarily and withdraw at any time. These three aspects reflect the moral and professional responsibility of researchers in ensuring ethical and reliable research. The application of research ethics is fundamental to scientific trust and integrity, which support the advancement of knowledge and societal well-being.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia was established on January 3, 1946, as a government institution responsible for regulating religious affairs at the national level. Over time, the ministry's organizational structure expanded to the regions, including the establishment of the Central Aceh District Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) in 1974. This was aimed at strengthening religious services and Islamic education in an area with strong Islamic traditions. The Central Aceh Ministry of Religious Affairs plays an important role in managing religious education, fostering religious institutions, and serving the religious needs of the community. Despite facing various social challenges, including conflict in the early 2000s, the institution remains committed to maintaining stability and strengthening religious moderation. Based on 2022 data, there are approximately 150 madrasahs with over 20,000 students in the Central Aceh region, indicating a high level of public interest in religious education. In addition, the Ministry of Religious Affairs continues to strive to improve the competence of educators thru training and certification, with over 1,000 teachers having participated in quality improvement programs since 2015. The Central Aceh Ministry of Religious Affairs office is located on Takengon Bireuen Street, Paya Tumpi, Kebayakan, Central Aceh.

The Central Aceh Ministry of Religious Affairs has a vision to create professional and reliable institutions in building a pious, moderate, intelligent, and excellent society, with the main missions of increasing community piety, strengthening religious moderation, expanding religious services, improving the quality of religious education, and implementing accountable and effective governance. With a staff of 1,228 people, including functional positions, administrative staff, and P3K personnel, the Central Aceh Ministry of Religious Affairs has various sections such as Madrasah Education, Early Childhood and Islamic Boarding School Education, Islamic Community Guidance, and Zakat and Waqf Management, which play a role in the implementation of religious and educational policies. Currently, the Central Aceh region has 43 state madrasahs and 78 private madrasahs, 37 Islamic boarding schools, and 14 Religious Affairs Offices in each sub-district. In

the last five years, the Central Aceh Ministry of Religious Affairs has shown a significant improvement in performance, with a 20% increase in the number of madrasas, a 90% increase in the number of certified teachers, and the organization of various interfaith dialogs that strengthen religious harmony. Based on the evaluation results, 85% of educational institutions received a good rating and 80% of the public stated they were satisfied with the services of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Thus, the Central Aceh District Ministry of Religious Affairs has developed into an adaptive and public service-oriented institution thru improving the quality of religious education, fostering religious moderation, and implementing professional governance to build a religious, harmonious, and competitive society.

Performance of IRE Supervisors

Planning and Implementation of Supervision

The performance of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) supervisors in Central Aceh Regency is very strategic in improving the quality of Islamic religious education. Supervisors not only monitor the performance of teachers and principals, but also systematically design and implement supervision. Documents such as the Supervisor's Work Plan and the Annual Supervision Schedule serve as the main guides in carrying out supervision activities, ensuring that all aspects that need to be supervised are well covered. Additionally, supervision instruments, observation results reports, and follow-up notes provide useful empirical data for assessing the effectiveness of the learning process. With careful planning, structured implementation, and continuous evaluation, IRE supervisors serve as agents of change, enhancing teacher competence, school managerial effectiveness, and the quality of student learning outcomes.

The supervision carried out by the IRE supervisor is also collaborative and communicative. Supervisors not only serve as observers but also as facilitators who assist teachers thru activities such as workshops or pedagogical discussions, aiming to improve the quality of teaching. The data obtained from the supervision results were then analyzed to formulate appropriate recommendations for improving the quality of learning. Thus, IRE supervisors become the main driving force in improving the quality of professional, effective, and sustainable Islamic religious education in schools. Documents such as the Supervisor's Work Plan and the Annual Supervision Schedule serve as clear guidelines for carrying out supervisory duties. The observation and follow-up reports serve as concrete evidence of the data collected during supervision. Regular observations conducted by supervisors provide constructive feedback to teachers and help them improve their teaching abilities. For example, if it's found that a particular teaching method is less effective, the supervisor can recommend more suitable training or learning strategies. This process ensures that supervision is not merely an administrative formality, but also an integral part of efforts to improve the quality of Islamic religious education.

The results of interviews with the Head of the Central Aceh District Ministry of Religious Affairs Office indicate that despite constraints such as a limited number of supervisors, IRE supervisors have performed their duties well. In academic supervision, supervisors play an important role in improving the quality of learning, the suitability of learning materials, and teacher competence. In the managerial supervision aspect, supervisors also contribute to strengthening school management. However, the effectiveness of supervision is highly dependent on good cooperation between supervisors, school principals, and teachers [24]-[27]. The Head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office also emphasized that supervisors must continue to develop themselves, especially in terms of mastering learning technology and adapting to the Merdeka Curriculum.

The documents collected during the supervision process, such as observation reports, follow-up notes, and feedback from teachers, become important for monitoring learning progress and providing constructive recommendations. The use of technology in supervision is also becoming increasingly important, with some supervisors starting to utilize online applications for efficient observation and feedback. With accurate documents and data available, supervisors can evaluate and formulate the necessary corrective measures to improve the quality of teaching.

Overall, the planning, implementation, and evaluation of supervision by IRE supervisors are very important in improving the quality of education. Thru mature documents and continuous evaluation processes, supervisors play a key role in improving teacher competence, school managerial effectiveness, and the quality of learning. A collaborative and communicative approach helps create a better and more relevant learning environment for educational development. With the right support, IRE supervisors can continue to contribute to improving the quality of Islamic religious education in schools.

Analysis of School Administrative Documents by the Supervisor

In the implementation of academic supervision, the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) supervisor plays a very important role in reviewing school administrative documents as a basis for assessing the readiness and suitability of the learning process with applicable curriculum standards, especially in the context of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Documents such as Lesson Plans (RPP), syllabi, and annual programs demonstrate the systematic planning carried out by teachers in conducting learning. A good Lesson Plan not only

contains learning objectives, but also includes the strategies used, learning media, and assessments applied. This allows supervisors to ensure that the learning process is structured and meets the expected standards [28]-[30].

Additionally, grade books, student report cards, attendance lists, and learning evaluations provide a realistic picture of student progress, attendance rates, and learning outcomes. These documents are very important for evaluating the effectiveness of the teaching conducted by the teacher. For example, supervisors can use grade books to track students' academic progress over time and identify specific patterns or difficulties students may be facing in Islamic religious studies. The results of interviews with the school principal and several IRE supervisors indicate that they heavily rely on these administrative documents to assess the quality of teaching. The principal stated that the analysis of documents by supervisors helps ensure that teachers are following the curriculum correctly and meeting established standards. A IRE supervisor also explained, "We check documents like lesson plans and syllabi to make sure teachers have planned their lessons well. We also look at learning evaluations to see if students truly understand the material being taught."

During direct field observation, the supervisor was seen conducting an in-depth analysis of these documents. They checked the alignment between the learning objectives in the lesson plan and the teaching methods used by the teacher in the classroom. Additionally, supervisors also check whether the assessments conducted align with the achievement indicators in the curriculum. For example, when a supervisor finds that a teacher does not clearly state the learning achievement indicators in their lesson plan, the supervisor provides feedback and recommends that the teacher improve it to make it more focused and measurable.

Thru the examination and analysis of these documents, supervisors can comprehensively assess teacher professionalism, teaching effectiveness, and school accountability in implementing education. Additionally, supervisors also provide constructive feedback and recommendations for improvement to help teachers develop more effective lesson plans and teaching methods. For example, if supervisors find that a particular teaching method is not working, they can suggest that the teacher attend training or change their approach to be more interactive and engaging for students. In this context, academic supervision conducted by IRE supervisors is not merely an administrative formality, but a crucial part of maintaining and improving the quality of Islamic religious education in schools. By providing constructive feedback and recommending improvements, supervisors help create a better learning environment that is more tailored to students' needs.

Overall, the analysis of school administrative documents by IRE supervisors serves as an important instrument in improving the quality of education. These documents are not only administrative tools, but also a means of assisting teachers in planning and implementing better learning, as well as ensuring that the educational process runs according to expected standards.

Policies and Regulations Related to Supervision

In the implementation of educational supervision, the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) supervisor plays an important role in ensuring the quality of education received by students. This role is based on policies and regulations from the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which provide the legal basis and technical guidance for supervisors in carrying out their duties. The Head of the Central Aceh District Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs stated, "The existing policy provides clear guidance for supervisors in carrying out their duties, ensuring they can professionally and objectively assess and report the results of supervision."

The observation results indicate that IRE supervisors routinely refer to national policy documents and guidelines from the Ministry of Religious Affairs when conducting supervision. The supervisor checked the suitability of the material taught with the Merdeka Curriculum, which focuses on student-centered learning. Additionally, they provide support to teachers in adapting the material to students' needs. A IRE teacher stated, "The supervisors gave very helpful guidance in implementing this new curriculum, making the material more interactive and relevant." In addition to national policies, local policies also influence the implementation of supervision. These policies allow supervisors to adapt their supervision strategies to the local conditions of schools or madrasas [31]-[33]. The policy document includes mechanisms for assessing, reporting, and following up on supervision results, which are essential for providing constructive feedback to schools and teachers.

Overall, IRE supervisors with a deep understanding of this policy can conduct supervision professionally, objectively, and effectively, ensuring that every student receives quality Islamic religious education that aligns with national values and the needs of the times.

Supporting Documents for Supervisor Performance

Effective supervision by Islamic Religious Education (IRE) supervisors is a complex process that requires a high level of professionalism, legality, and accountability. This is evidenced by various supporting documents such as appointment decrees, training certificates, monitoring data, and proof of digital technology usage. The appointment decree serves as the legal basis confirming the authority and responsibilities of

supervisors, while participation in training and workshops reflects a commitment to continuously developing competence in understanding curriculum, pedagogy, and educational technology.

In an interview with the Head of the Central Aceh District Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, he stated, “The appointment decree provides a clear basis for the authority of the supervisors. This is very important in ensuring that supervisors can carry out their duties legally and responsibly.” Additionally, the training attended by supervisors ensures they stay updated with developments in the world of education. The observation results indicate that supervisors use monitoring and evaluation data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office to assess the effectiveness of supervision. This data is used as a benchmark to evaluate and improve the implemented supervision strategies. Supervisors also utilize digital technology, such as online applications for observation and feedback, demonstrating their ability to adapt to modern educational transformation [34]-[37].

These documents not only serve as administrative proof but also reflect the dedication of IRE supervisors in carrying out their duties professionally and effectively. By utilizing all these supporting documents, IRE supervisors can improve the quality of Islamic religious education in schools.

Evaluation Results and Feedback Documents

Evaluation and feedback are an important part of the educational supervision cycle, especially for Islamic Religious Education (IRE) supervisors, as they serve as a measure of performance and a means of reflection to continuously improve the quality of supervision. The results of interviews with the Headmaster and IRE teachers revealed that the evaluation conducted by the Headmaster, guidance teachers, and the Supervisory Working Group (Pokjaswas) thru questionnaires provided an objective overview of the effectiveness of supervisors in assisting teachers, resolving learning problems, and developing supervision innovations. The principal stated, “Evaluation thru questionnaires is very helpful for us to assess the extent to which supervisors have a positive impact on teaching at the school.”

Field observation results indicate that supervisors use evaluation documents to formulate improvement and professional development steps, such as attending training or workshops. This evaluation documentation is crucial because it not only demonstrates the accountability and responsiveness of supervisors but also reflects their commitment to continuous learning and adapting to changes in the world of education. The feedback documents generated from this evaluation were then followed by an official report including improvement steps and recommendations for professional development, demonstrating the supervisor’s dedication to improving the quality of education. The supervisor also used it to enhance the learning process, making it more effective and relevant to the needs of the times [38].

Overall, evaluation and feedback are not just administrative formalities, but part of a continuous cycle that drives the improvement of the quality of Islamic religious education. Supervisors, teachers, and all stakeholders work together to achieve ever-improving quality, in line with the demands of the times..

The Performance of IRE Supervisors in Carrying Out Academic and Managerial Supervision Tasks in Central Aceh Regency.

The performance of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) supervisors in Central Aceh Regency is considered good, especially in the implementation of academic and managerial supervision. In academic supervision, supervisors play a role in guiding teachers in preparing lesson plans, syllabus, assessments, and implementing the Merdeka Curriculum [39], [40]. Meanwhile, in the managerial aspect, supervisors assist madrasah heads in institutional governance, administration, and the development of educational quality improvement programs.

The results of interviews with the Head of the Central Aceh Religious Affairs Office indicate that supervisors have carried out their duties quite optimally. He stated:

“I assess that the IRE supervisors have performed their academic supervision duties quite well, despite facing limitations in the number of supervisors. The main indicators of successful supervision include improved learning quality, alignment of learning materials, and enhanced teacher competence. Supervisors are considered to have made a significant contribution to motivating teachers and providing pedagogical guidance. In terms of management, the supervisor is considered quite capable of providing guidance for school management, although its effectiveness is highly dependent on the working relationship with the principal and teachers”. (Wan.KK, Friday, 21/02/2025)

The determining factors for supervisor performance include motivation, professionalism, and time management, while the main constraints are the vast work area, limited facilities, and lack of incentives. The Head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs also emphasized that:

“Internal factors affecting performance include the motivation and professionalism of supervisors, as well as time management. External factors include a large workload, transportation limitations, and inadequate facility support. I provide support thru training, regular coordination, and the

provision of operational funds, although supervisors still feel a lack of incentives as a form of appreciation". (Wan.KK, Friday, 21/02/2025).

In adapting the Merdeka Curriculum, supervisors have actively played a role in socializing and mentoring teachers. According to the Head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs:

"Supervisors have participated in training on the Merdeka Curriculum and have also helped socialize it to IRE teachers. The challenges faced include the unpreparedness of some teachers and the lack of modules suitable for the local context and Islamic values. However, supervisors play an active role in bridging central policies with the conditions of the madrasah. Socialization is carried out thru training and personal mentoring". (Wan.KK, Friday, 21/02/2025).

He also considers the collaborative approach to be the best model:

"I recommend a collaborative approach as the ideal model, where supervisors are not only evaluators but also facilitators and partners to teachers. The use of technology like Zoom and WhatsApp Groups has helped improve the effectiveness of supervision, especially in hard-to-reach areas". (Wan.KK, Friday, 21/02/2025).

Field observation results provide concrete evidence: supervisors actively conduct technical guidance on the Merdeka Curriculum, assist teachers in preparing lesson plans, and utilize digital media for coordination [41]. Documentation in the form of attendance lists, activity banners, and madrasah meeting minutes indicates that supervision is taking place in reality. However, limitations were still found in the teaching modules based on local Islamic values and supervisory transportation facilities.

Meanwhile, interviews with the principal reinforced these findings. One of the school principals stated:

"Most of us believe that IRE supervisors play a positive role in mentoring teachers, providing concrete feedback on teaching strategies, and assisting in the preparation of lesson plans and assessments. In terms of management, supervisors evaluate madrasah administration and help formulate quality improvement programs. However, we expect an increase in the intensity of visits". (Wan. KS, Saturday, March 15, 2025).

.From the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, it can be concluded that the IRE supervisors in Central Aceh have played a strategic role as mentors, facilitators, and agents of change. Supervision is conducted collaboratively and adaptively, utilizing technology to reach madrasas in remote areas, despite still facing resource and geographical constraints.

Factors Influencing the Performance of IRE Supervisors, Both Internally and Externally, in Central Aceh Regency.

The performance of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) supervisors in Central Aceh Regency is influenced by various factors originating from both internal (within the supervisor) and external (work environment and institutions) aspects. The results of interviews, observations, and documentation indicate that these two factors interact and influence the effectiveness of academic and managerial supervision tasks in the field. From interviews with the Head of the Central Aceh Regency Ministry of Religious Affairs Office, it was explained that the most determining internal factors for supervisors' performance are work motivation, professionalism, and time management skills. He stated that supervisors with high work ethic and discipline in managing supervision schedules will demonstrate better performance in guiding teachers and madrasas. In his interview on Friday, February 21, 2025, he stated:

"Personal motivation and integrity greatly influence the performance of supervisors. Supervisors with a high level of commitment tend to be more active in conducting supervision". (Wan.KK, Friday, February 21, 2025).

The statement shows that the supervisor's professionalism and personal dedication are the main foundation for determining the success of supervision. Competent supervisors with high moral responsibility are able to optimize their performance even with limited resources. The researcher's field observations also showed that most IRE supervisors remained active in providing guidance and supervision despite the considerable distance between madrasas and the difficulty of reaching some areas. In the documentation notes, it was found that supervisors used digital technology such as WhatsApp Groups and Zoom Meetings to maintain communication with teachers, as a form of adaptation to time and distance constraints [42]-[44].

Meanwhile, the most dominant external factors affecting supervisor performance are limited transportation facilities, the vastness of the supervised area, and the lack of incentive support. The geographical conditions of Central Aceh Regency, which consists of mountainous areas, make many schools difficult to access. Some supervisors have to travel long distances to reach the madrasas they oversee. Limited official vehicles and operational funds also pose an obstacle to scheduling regular visits to all schools. Based on observation results, in some madrasas located in Linge and Rusip Antara sub-districts, supervision activities are only carried out once per semester due to limited transportation access.

Additionally, interviews with the Head of the Madrasah also support this finding. He assessed that the supervisors' enthusiasm and mastery of the material were internal factors that significantly influenced the

success of supervision, while time and transportation constraints were the main external obstacles. The principal stated:

"In my opinion, the pedagogical and managerial competence of supervisors is the main determinant of the success of their duties. I appreciate supervisors who are able to provide substantive input toward improving the quality of learning". (Wan. KS, Saturday, 15/03/2025).

Beside physical and structural factors, institutional and policy support from the Ministry of Religious Affairs also influences the performance of supervisors. Based on documentation from the Central Aceh Religious Affairs Office, training, routine coordination, and the provision of operational funds are indeed carried out every year, but they have not yet been able to cover all the needs of supervisors. Some supervisors admitted they had never received advanced training on the Merdeka Curriculum or the use of technology in supervision. This impacts their ability to adapt to new policies in the field of education.

Another external factor that also has an impact is the inadequate reward and incentive system. The interview results indicate that supervisors feel their performance is still not adequately appreciated, which lowers the work motivation of some senior supervisors. Moral support and appreciation from leadership are considered important for maintaining work morale and loyalty, especially for supervisors serving in remote areas [45]-[47]. Nevertheless, their spirit of service and moral awareness of their religious duties served as a strong motivation for them to continue fulfilling their responsibilities well.

From the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, it can be concluded that internal and external factors complement each other in influencing the performance of IRE supervisors in Central Aceh Regency. Internally, professionalism, motivation, and managerial skills are key to success. Externally, support for facilities, transportation, training, and institutional incentives are important factors that need to be strengthened. Despite facing various limitations, IRE supervisors in Central Aceh remain highly dedicated, utilizing technology and collaborative strategies to ensure the quality of academic and managerial supervision in madrasahs is maintained.

Adaptation to Changes in Education Policy, Such as the Independent Curriculum in Central Aceh Regency.

The changes in national education policy thru the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum require all elements of education, including Islamic Religious Education (IRE) supervisors, to adapt to a new learning paradigm that is more flexible, contextual, and student-centered. Based on the research findings, IRE supervisors in Central Aceh Regency have demonstrated a fairly good ability to adapt to this change, although they still face several obstacles in the field. This adaptation is evident in the supervisors' efforts to attend training, provide mentoring to teachers, and facilitate the socialization of the Merdeka Curriculum in the madrasahs they oversee.

The results of interviews with the Head of the Central Aceh District Ministry of Religious Affairs Office indicate that IRE supervisors play an active role in bridging central policies with the realities in educational units. He explained:

"The IRE supervisors have shown a positive response to the curriculum changes. 'They have actively tried to attend training and socialize with the teachers under their supervision,' he said. The Ministry of Religious Affairs also provides support in the form of technical guidance and training for supervisors". (Wan. KK, Tuesday, 15/04/2025).

This statement shows that supervisors not only perform administrative duties but also function as policy facilitators and mediators between the government and schools. They play an important role in ensuring the Merdeka Curriculum is implemented without neglecting Islamic values and the local cultural context of Gayo. The researcher's observation results in several madrasahs indicate the presence of limited technical guidance and workshops facilitated directly by IRE supervisors. Activity documents, attendance lists, and photo documentation support the fact that the socialization of the Merdeka Curriculum was indeed carried out at the madrasah level. In that activity, the supervisors provided training on the preparation of teaching materials, project-based learning, and formative and diagnostic assessments tailored to students' needs.

Additionally, the results of interviews with the Madrasah Principal also confirmed the active involvement of supervisors in assisting teachers in facing curriculum changes. The principal stated:

"Supervisors are considered quite helpful in understanding and implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. They provide training on project-based learning, diagnostic assessments, and the integration of Islamic values. The main issues are the short adaptation time and the lack of supporting books".

From the quote, it can be concluded that supervisors play an active role in providing technical training and personal guidance, although the adaptation process is still hampered by time constraints, limited learning resources, and teachers' readiness to understand the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. Nevertheless, supervisors continue to strive to provide solutions thru group guidance, online mentoring, and the distribution of simple modules tailored to the local madrasah context.

Observation findings also indicate that supervisors have utilized digital technology to accelerate the curriculum socialization process. Communication and coaching are conducted thru Zoom Meetings, WhatsApp Groups, and online discussion forums between teachers and supervisors. This is an effective strategy for reaching madrasas in remote areas, such as in Linge, Rusip Antara, and Atu Lintang sub-districts. Meeting minutes and screenshots of online activities serve as concrete evidence of the digital-based supervision implemented by IRE supervisors. Beside technical adaptation, supervisors also play an important role in maintaining a balance between the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum and Islamic values. They are striving to ensure that flexible and project-based learning activities still reflect Islamic moral values, spirituality, and character. During the mentoring process, supervisors often emphasize the importance of the “Pancasila Student Profile and the Rahmatan Lil ‘Alamin Student Profile” as the spirit in curriculum development at madrasas.

Based on the overall results of interviews, observations, and documentation, it can be concluded that IRE supervisors in Central Aceh Regency have progressively adapted to changes in national education policies. Despite still facing limitations in resources and teacher readiness, supervisors successfully took on a strategic role as mentors, facilitators, and agents of curriculum transformation in madrasahs. With a collaborative approach, the use of technology, and a strong Islamic spirit, supervisors make a significant contribution to the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the region [48].

Effective Supervision Models Applied in the Context of Islamic Religious Education in Central Aceh Regency.

The most effective supervision model implemented by Islamic Religious Education (IRE) supervisors in Central Aceh Regency is the collaborative supervision model combined with technological and participatory approaches. This model is considered the most suitable for the characteristics of teachers and madrasas in the area, which have diverse backgrounds, needs, and geographical conditions. Collaborative supervision allows for cooperation between supervisors, teachers, and madrasah heads in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning and managerial activities openly and respectfully.

The results of the interview with the Head of the Central Aceh District Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs support this finding. He believes that a collaborative approach is the ideal and relevant form of supervision for the local context of Central Aceh. In an interview on Friday, February 21, 2025, he stated:

“We, the principals of model schools that are suitable for implementation, such as collaborative and consultative supervision models, are most supportive of improving the quality of IRE teachers. We are more comfortable if the supervision is dialogical.” Supervisors are not present to judge, but to guide and encourage. We appreciate the approach where supervisors involve teachers in designing follow-up programs based on supervision results. Supervisors who use WhatsApp groups for coordination and digital feedback are very helpful. However, we also emphasize the importance of consistency and the frequency of supervision. There are supervisors who are active once a month, but there are also those who only come during accreditation. This needs to be standardized. Supervision is conducted at least every three months intensively”. (Wan. KS, Saturday, 15/03/2025).

The statement affirms that IRE supervisors not only function as quality controllers but also as professional working partners who assist teachers and madrasah heads in resolving learning issues. This approach fosters mutual trust and strengthens shared commitment to improving the quality of religious education. Thru a collaborative model, supervision is no longer top-down, but rather participatory and builds horizontal relationships between supervisors and teachers.

Based on field observations and documentation, the implementation of the collaborative supervision model is evident in group discussions among teachers, technical guidance, and direct classroom mentoring. Supervisors not only provide assessments but also assist teachers in designing learning strategies, developing teaching materials, and solving problems that arise in the classroom. In some activities, supervisors also invite madrasah heads and senior teachers to share best practices related to classroom management and project-based learning assessment according to the Merdeka Curriculum.

Observations also show that supervisors are implementing technology-based supervision to overcome distance and time limitations. Thru Zoom Meetings and WhatsApp groups, supervisors facilitated IRE teachers to discuss, submit learning reports, and consult on classroom issues online. Documentation of the activities shows that this digital supervision is quite effective, especially in mountainous areas that are difficult to reach by official vehicles.

In addition to collaborative and digital approaches, supervisors are also developing a reflective supervision model that encourages teachers to self-evaluate. In this model, supervisors do not directly assess teacher performance, but rather facilitate joint reflection on the learning outcomes that have occurred. This aligns with an interview with one of the madrasah principals, who stated:

“The supervisory approach is now more guiding and open. We were invited to discuss, not just be evaluated. At each meeting, the supervisor asks about the teachers' constraints and helps find solutions together”.

These findings indicate that reflective supervision strengthens collaboration and enhances teachers' professional awareness of their responsibilities. Teachers feel more valued and motivated because their involvement is recognized in the process of improving the quality of learning [49]-[51]. Overall, the results of interviews, observations, and documentation show that the collaborative-reflective supervision model with digital technology support is the most effective strategy to implement in Central Aceh Regency. This model allows supervisors to act as mentors, professional partners, and innovators in improving the quality of religious education. Given the limited number of supervisors and challenging geographical conditions, a combination of collaborative, reflective, and digital approaches is considered the most realistic for maintaining the continuity of teacher and madrasah development. Thus, it can be concluded that the effective supervision model in the context of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Central Aceh is collaborative, reflective, and adaptable to technology, where supervisors act as facilitators, working partners, and agents of change in improving the quality of Islamic religious education in the region.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings regarding the performance of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) supervisors in Central Aceh Regency, obtained thru interviews, field observations, and document analysis, it can be concluded that the supervisors' performance in academic and managerial supervision is quite optimal, with active roles in guiding teachers, developing IRE program planning, strengthening religious activities in schools, and conducting reporting and evaluation of learning administration, although implementation is not yet uniform due to individual capacity and institutional support; this performance is influenced by internal factors such as motivation, work commitment, professional capacity, and digital literacy, as well as external factors such as organizational policies, challenging geographical conditions, and limited infrastructure; supervisors also demonstrate adaptability to the Merdeka Curriculum thru teacher training, mentoring in preparing teaching modules, diagnostic assessments, and socializing new policies, although there are still obstacles in technology literacy, the innovative and responsive spirit is quite high; and the most effective supervision model in this context is a combination of clinical, collaborative, and contextual religious supervision approaches that allow for improved learning quality, strengthen trust between supervisors and teachers, and integrate Islamic values, making it more suitable for the characteristics of the local community.

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