

Challenges in Implementing Sharia-Based Education: Balancing Regional Autonomy and Children's Rights in Aceh

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the implementation of Sharia-based education in Aceh through the perspective of regional autonomy and children's rights. This multidisciplinary study reveals the tension between Aceh's education policies (Law No. 11/2006 and Qanun Education) with the obligation of children's rights (children's rights convention Articles 28-29 and Child Protection Law No. 35/2014). Findings show that some schools do not meet inclusive standards, religious materials are less multicultural, and only some teachers are trained in inclusive pedagogy with infrastructure gaps. The impact on children's rights is significant: female dropout rates are higher due to child marriage and only some schools are disability friendly. Policy analysis revealed that Qanun has not fully adopted the principle of inclusivity, while policies in the district still ignore marginalized groups. The research introduced the "Balanced Integration" model, which was piloted in 10 schools, successfully improving the indicators of inclusivity by aligning Islamic values with the principles of the children's rights convention article 29. Other findings show that hybrid programs (tahfiz-STEM) increase student acceptance in universities. Policy implications include: (1) harmonization of Qanun with human rights standards, (2) children's rights-based teacher training, and (3) policy impact monitoring system. The study offers an operational framework linking regional autonomy, Islamic identity, and children's rights, with specific recommendations to ensure Sharia education in Aceh meets three pillars: local wisdom, religious values, and universal human rights standards. The findings contribute to the global discourse on multicultural education in Muslim societies suggesting that educational autonomy can be implemented without sacrificing children's basic rights.

Keywords: Aceh Specialty, Sharia Education Law, Children's Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menganalisis implementasi pendidikan berbasis Syariah di Aceh melalui perspektif otonomi daerah dan hak anak. Studi multidisiplin ini mengungkap ketegangan antara kebijakan pendidikan Aceh (UU No. 11/2006 dan Qanun Pendidikan) dengan kewajiban hak anak (konvensi hak anak Pasal 28-29 dan UU Perlindungan Anak No. 35/2014). Temuan menunjukkan bahwa beberapa sekolah tidak memenuhi standar inklusif, materi agama kurang multikultural, dan hanya sebagian guru terlatih pedagogi inklusif dengan kesenjangan infrastruktur. Dampak terhadap hak anak signifikan: angka putus sekolah perempuan lebih tinggi akibat perkawinan anak dan hanya sebagian sekolah ramah disabilitas. Analisis kebijakan mengungkap bahwa Qanun belum sepenuhnya mengadopsi prinsip inklusivitas, sementara kebijakan di kabupaten masih mengabaikan kelompok marginal. Penelitian memperkenalkan model "Integrasi Berimbang" yang diujicobakan di 10 sekolah, berhasil meningkatkan indikator inklusivitas dengan menyelaraskan nilai Islam dan prinsip konvensi hak anak pasal 29. Temuan lain menunjukkan program hybrid (tahfiz-STEM) meningkatkan penerimaan santri di perguruan tinggi. Implikasi kebijakan meliputi: (1) harmonisasi Qanun dengan standar HAM, (2) pelatihan guru berbasis hak anak, dan (3) sistem pemantauan dampak kebijakan. Studi ini menawarkan kerangka operasional yang menghubungkan otonomi daerah, identitas Islam, dan hak anak, dengan rekomendasi spesifik untuk memastikan pendidikan Syariah di Aceh memenuhi tiga pilar: kearifan lokal, nilai agama, dan standar HAM universal. Temuan

berkontribusi pada wacana global tentang pendidikan multikultural di masyarakat Muslim menunjukkan bahwa otonomi pendidikan dapat dilaksanakan tanpa mengorbankan hak dasar anak.

Kata Kunci: Spesialisasi Aceh, Undang-Undang Pendidikan Syariah, Hak Anak, Konvensi Hak Anak

INTRODUCTION

The distinctive status of Aceh in the field of education is a critical aspect governed by various regulations, including Law Number 11 of 2006 on the Governance of Aceh, along with several *qanuns* and regulations that support the implementation of Islamic law in education. This special status grants Aceh greater authority in regulating education, including the integration of Islamic values into the formal education curriculum (Hasan & Juhannis, 2024; Samina Batool Shah & Riaz Ahmad Saeed, 2022). However, despite the existence of a strong legal foundation for this educational distinctiveness, its implementation on the ground still faces significant challenges. The main issue is the imbalance between the policies formulated and their less-than-optimal execution. Barriers such as teachers' limited understanding of the Islam-based curriculum, the lack of synchronization between educational levels, and difficulties in measuring policy effectiveness highlight the need for further attention to this issue (Romlah et al., 2023).

The importance of addressing this research question—regarding how Aceh's educational distinctiveness is implemented, particularly in integrating Islamic law values in North Aceh Regency and Lhokseumawe City—lies in the fact that education is one of the sectors that can significantly impact Aceh's future. Quality education can enhance human resources, foster economic growth, and support peace and social stability in the post-conflict period (Cao, 2024; Melesse & Obsiye, 2022). Furthermore, Islam-based education plays a crucial role in shaping the character of the youth, who are expected not only to be academically competent but also to embody the moral values cherished by the people of Aceh. Therefore, it is crucial to assess whether the existing policies align with expectations, and to understand the challenges and obstacles encountered in their implementation (Kosim et al., 2023; Rohidas Mundhe, 2020).

The fulfillment of children's right to quality, inclusive, and non-discriminatory education in Indonesia is based on national and international regulations. At the national level, Law No. 23 of 2002 on Child Protection (amended by Law No. 35 of 2014) guarantees every child's right to education without discrimination (Article 9). Article 28C of the 1945 Constitution regulates the right to self-development through education, while Article 28E protects freedom of religion, which must be respected in education policies.

However, one of the emerging concerns is whether the implementation of Sharia-based curricula in Aceh leads to the exclusion or marginalization of children with different religious beliefs or backgrounds (Taib et al., 2024). The uniformity of curriculum based on religious norms may also affect children's rights to receive education that promotes critical thinking, diversity, and tolerance—principles enshrined in CRC and SDG 4 (Soler-Campo et al., 2025). This tension between regional autonomy and universal child rights underscores the need for careful monitoring to ensure Aceh's educational distinctiveness does not inadvertently violate Indonesia's national and international human rights commitments.

Recent data highlights disparities in school participation rates between Aceh and other Indonesian provinces. Aceh's dropout rate remains higher than the national average, particularly at the secondary level, influenced by socioeconomic factors and, in some cases, discomfort with the Sharia-based curriculum (BPS, 2023; UNICEF Indonesia, 2022). Parental and teacher perceptions of Islamic-integrated education vary—while many support it as a means of moral and religious reinforcement, others express concerns about its rigidity and potential exclusion of non-Muslim students (Kosim et al., 2023). Regarding

inclusivity, public schools in Aceh are legally required to accept students of all religions, but in practice, non-Muslim students often face social and cultural barriers, leading some to opt for private or non-Islamic schools (HRW, 2021). Teacher training on human rights, tolerance, and value-based teaching methods remains inconsistent, with many educators lacking sufficient preparation to balance Islamic teachings with inclusive pedagogical approaches (Romlah et al., 2023). A concrete case study involves a non-Muslim student in North Aceh who dropped out due to discomfort with mandatory Islamic practices, raising concerns about discrimination (Aceh Child Protection Commission, 2022). Reports from UNICEF and child rights organizations indicate that while Aceh has improved access to education, challenges persist in ensuring non-discriminatory and inclusive learning environments, particularly for minority groups (UNICEF, 2023).

These findings underscore the need for policy adjustments to align Aceh's educational distinctiveness with national and international human rights standards. This study will also examine whether the implementation of Sharia-based curriculum in rural areas of North Aceh—with limited infrastructure and teacher resources—actually widens the gap in access to education for girls or poor families, who may face double barriers due to religious and economic norms. On the other hand, this study will also integrate Sharia values in the Aceh curriculum to meet the principles of education that are 'oriented towards the development of children's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities', as mandated in CRC Article 29 (Hanafi et al., 2025). This is critical to assess whether Aceh's educational approach not only meets religious demands but also holistic principles of children's rights.

This study critically examines the implementation of Aceh's Sharia-based education policies through the lens of children's rights and human rights frameworks. Focusing on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and national human rights laws, the research specifically evaluates: (1) compliance with non-discrimination principles for religious minorities (CRC Articles 2,14); (2) fulfillment of children's right to holistic development of personality, talents, and abilities (CRC Article 29); (3) the balance between Islamic values and universal human rights standards; and (4) equitable access for vulnerable groups, particularly girls and economically disadvantaged students. The analysis aims to identify potential gaps between policy intentions and their practical impacts on children's fundamental rights.

In recent decades, various studies on education in Aceh have been conducted, but many have not examined the implementation of educational distinctiveness in the context of regulations and stakeholder perceptions in depth. Most research has focused on the historical and social aspects of post-conflict education in Aceh, while studies specifically analyzing the implementation of Islam-based educational policies remain limited. Studies like those by Hamzah (2010), which examine Aceh's education in the post-conflict context, or Mahyuddin (2015), which discuss education in Aceh as part of special policies, have made important contributions but have not thoroughly explored the implementation of Islamic law values in the curriculum. Similarly, other studies on the successes or failures of education in Aceh have focused more on administrative or structural challenges rather than on the impact of regulations that emphasize the integration of Islam within education.

This research seeks to fill this gap by providing a more comprehensive understanding of how Aceh's educational distinctiveness policies are implemented within the existing educational regulatory framework. One key aspect to be examined is the extent to which policies contained in the Qanun of Aceh on Educational Implementation and the Aceh Governor Regulation Number 07 of 2022 are effectively executed, along with the challenges faced in their implementation (Shah & Lopes Cardozo, 2014). This study also aims to explore the perceptions of stakeholders, including the government, teachers, school

principals, and the community, regarding this policy. Do they view this educational distinctiveness as an opportunity to improve the quality of education in Aceh, or as a burden that is difficult to implement effectively?

A review of existing literature reveals that most research on education in Aceh still focuses on historical aspects, the impact of conflict, and post-Helsinki peace agreement educational development policies (Ali & Rahmawati, 2024). For example, the study by Mustaffa and Ahmad (2017) on post-tsunami education development in Aceh emphasizes the rehabilitation of educational infrastructure and curriculum reconstruction, while Nurdin's (2020) research on inclusive education policy in Aceh does not delve deeply into the implementation of Islam-based education.

Furthermore, Syamsul's (2014) study on the implementation of Islamic law in Aceh generally focuses on legal and regulatory aspects, but does not link it with the application of Islamic law values in formal education systems. Therefore, this research contributes significantly by integrating both aspects—the Islam-based educational policy and its implementation challenges at the primary and secondary education levels—while also offering perspectives from various stakeholders involved in the process. By using an empirical approach, this study will provide data and findings that are grounded in the realities on the ground.

Additionally, this study aims to address the gap in literature that has not fully discussed the concrete impacts of educational regulations related to Aceh's distinctiveness. A review of the Qanun of Aceh Number 11 of 2014 on the Implementation of Education, for instance, shows that while this regulation provides a clear legal basis for Islam-based education, its application at the school level remains highly varied. In this regard, this research will offer a sharper analysis of whether the regulation is adequate to support the implementation of Islam-based education in Aceh, or if changes or improvements in policy are necessary.

This research is expected to make a significant contribution to improving understanding of the implementation of Aceh's educational distinctiveness and how this policy can be optimized to meet the goals of quality and Islamic education. Understanding this intersection between Islamic law, educational autonomy, and children's rights is essential to ensure that Aceh's educational distinctiveness does not compromise basic human rights principles. The challenge is not merely technical or administrative but has profound implications for the future of Aceh's children, who must navigate a unique education system while retaining their rights to inclusivity, diversity, and holistic development. Policymakers must balance Aceh's special status with constitutional and CRC obligations to safeguard the best interests of every child.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative empirical approach to explore the implementation of Aceh's special autonomy in education, specifically in North Aceh Regency and Lhokseumawe City (Kuehn & Rohlfing, 2024; Lira et al., 2023). The primary focus of this research is to understand how the educational autonomy, which includes the integration of Islamic law, is applied and perceived by stakeholders such as government officials, school principals, teachers, and the community (Dziubaniuk et al., 2023). Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with key informants, document analysis of relevant educational regulations, such as Law No. 11 of 2006 on Aceh Governance, Qanun Aceh No. 5 of 2008, Qanun Aceh No. 11 of 2014, Qanun Aceh No. 9 of 2015, and Governor Regulation No. 07 of 2022, which governs education in Aceh. This research also includes direct observations in schools and educational institutions implementing Islamic law-based programs, as well as a review of relevant Governor Regulations concerning education implementation in Aceh.

The theoretical framework used in this study is the theory of integrating Islamic values in education and the theory of multicultural education, to analyze how education in Aceh integrates Islamic values while preserving local wisdom (Isman et al., 2024; Subaidi et al., 2023). The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis techniques to identify patterns and themes emerging from interviews and observations as well as to compare policies with on-the-ground practices (B. Chen et al., 2024). The results of this study are expected to provide a clearer understanding of the challenges in implementing Islamic law-based.

The theoretical framework combines Islamic education integration theory, multicultural education theory, and human rights-based approaches to education. This triad enables analysis of how Islamic values are contextualized within curricula while safeguarding children's fundamental rights to inclusive, equitable, and quality education. The framework specifically interrogates intersections between religious norms and CRC Articles 2 (non-discrimination), 14 (freedom of religion), and 29 (holistic development).

Expected outcomes include a comprehensive understanding of challenges in implementing Sharia-based education under regional autonomy, balanced with the state's duty to uphold child rights. The findings aim to yield policy recommendations for: (1) enhancing teacher capacity in multicultural pedagogy, (2) developing culturally responsive curricula compliant with human rights standards, and (3) strengthening inter-institutional coordination to harmonize local values with universal human rights principles in education systems.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Implementation of Special Education Policies and Regulations in Aceh

Aceh's special status in the field of education is well regulated in various laws and regulations that provide a strong legal basis. These include Law No. 11 of 2006 concerning the Government of Aceh, which serves as the legal basis for Aceh's special autonomy, as well as various Qanun (regional regulations) that serve as special regional rules governing the administration of education (Pradana et al., 2024). Among the most significant Qanun are Qanun Aceh No. 5 of 2008 concerning Education Administration, Qanun Aceh No. 11 of 2014 concerning Education Administration, and Qanun Aceh No. 9 of 2015, which perfects the implementation of the education policy. In addition, Governor's Regulation No. 07 of 2022 also plays a role in realizing the vision of Islamic Sharia-based education, especially regarding the strengthening of dayah education and local curriculum based on Islamic values (Maslijar, 2020).

Legal Foundations and Education Policies in Aceh

Aceh's special status in the field of education aims to build an education system that is in harmony with the cultural and religious values of the Acehnese people, especially Islam. The legal basis provided through Law No. 11 of 2006 concerning the Government of Aceh plays a crucial role in directing education policy in Aceh, with a mandate for local governments to provide education based on local wisdom and Islamic teachings. "The implementation of Qanun Aceh No. 9 of 2015 and Governor's Regulation No. 07 of 2022 must be studied in the context of Law No. 23/2002 concerning Child Protection and Article 28C of the 1945 Constitution which guarantees the right to education. Indonesia's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989 requires all education policies—including those of regional autonomy—to meet the standards of non-discriminatory, accessible, and quality education for every child (CRC Articles 28-29). Data shows that 15% of schools in Aceh have not met this minimum standard of

inclusivity (BPS Aceh, 2023)." This strengthening was followed by an explanation of the Aceh Qanun on Education Administration which allows the strengthening of Islamic education, both through dayah institutions and the integration of Sharia-based local content in the general education curriculum (Halim, 2022a; Ramaioli, 2024).

The Sharia-based education system intended in this policy involves more intensive religious instruction through dayah education, which functions as an institution focusing on Islamic learning (Susan, 2023). Additionally, the local content curriculum developed aims to introduce students to the religious, cultural, and local traditions of Aceh, which are integrated into the general education curriculum.

However, despite the existence of strong policies in this area, research shows that the implementation of these policies still faces several challenges, particularly in terms of coordination between institutions and policymakers, as well as the application of policies at the operational level (Estellés & O'Neill, 2024; Kanju & Masabo, 2024).

Implementation of Sharia-Based Education and Challenges in Fulfilling Children's Rights in Aceh

One of the main challenges in implementing Aceh's special education status is the misalignment between regulations and field practices. Although Sharia-based education policies have been regulated through various legal instruments, such as Aceh Qanun No. 9 of 2015 and Governor Regulation No. 29 of 2009, their implementation still faces significant obstacles. Interviews with stakeholders reveal that not all schools optimally implement local Sharia-based content, particularly in areas less supportive of these policies. The transformation of the Aceh Education Council's (AEC) function, which should oversee Islamic education, has also not been fully effective, creating a gap between regulatory structures and on-the-ground realities regulations (N. Chen & Yu, 2023).

Beyond these structural challenges, this study uncovers a more fundamental issue: potential violations of children's rights to quality and inclusive education (Thu, 2022a). BPS Aceh data (2023) shows that 34% of elementary schools in 12 rural districts fail to meet minimum infrastructure standards, a condition that risks violating children's constitutional right to education (Article 28C of the 1945 Constitution). This problem is exacerbated by limited teacher capacity—only 18% of teachers in remote areas have received inclusive pedagogy training (Aceh Education Office, 2022). Consequently, learning environments become unequal, particularly for vulnerable groups.

More alarming findings come from observations in 5 remote schools, where 72% of minority students struggle with mandatory Islamic-oriented subjects (Field Observation, 2023). This situation contradicts the non-discrimination principle in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC Article 2) and CRC General Comment No.1 which emphasizes holistic education. Furthermore, girls and minority children in rural Aceh have a dropout rate 2.3 times higher than urban areas (UNICEF, 2023), indicating systemic discrimination contrary to CRC Article 31's spirit (Thu, 2022b; Veisi Hasar, 2023).

These disparities demonstrate the need for a new approach prioritizing children's rights in Aceh's educational autonomy implementation. First, region-based educational vulnerability mapping is required to identify the most affected areas. Second, a special complaint mechanism should be established to monitor education rights violations. Third, CRC-based monitoring indicators need development to align Aceh's policies with international human rights standards. Without these interventions, educational autonomy risks deepening inequities, particularly for children in remote areas and marginalized groups.

Lack of Coordination Among Policymakers

In-depth interviews with government officials, school principals, and teachers revealed a lack of alignment and insufficient coordination among the various parties involved in the implementation of educational policies in Aceh. The inadequate coordination between the provincial and district/city governments, as well as educational institutions, has resulted in policies not being effectively implemented. For example, despite the policy to strengthen dayah education and Sharia-based curricula, in some regions, particularly more remote areas, the implementation of these policies has been inconsistent (Halim, 2022b). This is due to limited resources and differing understandings of the policy's importance across various levels of government.

The study also found that coordination between educational institutions posed another challenge. In many regions, schools under the Ministry of Education have not fully integrated Sharia-based education into their curriculum, while dayah institutions, which provide intensive religious instruction, are not connected to the formal education system. This results in a gap between general education and religious education, which should ideally operate harmoniously (Hannam, 2024; Lewin, 2023).

Constraints in Strengthening Teacher Capacity and Resources

Another challenge identified in this study is the limited capacity of teachers in understanding and implementing Islamic values in daily education. Many teachers have not received adequate training regarding the curriculum based on Islamic law (syariah) and its implementation in the context of formal education. Additionally, the lack of supporting infrastructure presents an obstacle, especially in more remote areas of Aceh. Therefore, despite policies that strongly support the uniqueness of education in Aceh, the implementation on the ground still faces numerous challenges that require more attention from the government and relevant institutions.

Misalignment of Regulatory Changes

In addition to the challenges above, one of the significant issues identified in this study is the inconsistency of regulatory changes with the needs on the ground. Policy changes in education, as reflected in Qanun Aceh No. 9 of 2015, which replaced Qanun No. 11 of 2014, and other regulations such as Governor of Aceh Regulation No. 07 of 2022, have brought significant changes in the management of education. However, these changes are often not accompanied by adequate socialization and training for the stakeholders involved in their implementation, such as teachers, school principals, and other policymakers. As a result, although the new regulations are expected to improve the quality of education, their implementation often does not meet expectations (Choi, 2024).

Challenges and Strategies for Strengthening the Implementation of Syariah Education

The implementation of Aceh's special education system in North Aceh Regency and Lhokseumawe City faces various significant challenges. Based on empirical research, which includes regulatory analysis and in-depth interviews with various stakeholders such as government officials, school principals, teachers, and the community, it was found that the implementation of education policies in Aceh has not been optimal. Although the regulations underlying Aceh's special education are clear, such as Law No. 11 of 2006 on Aceh Government and various related qanuns, challenges in policy implementation continue to hinder the achievement of quality and Islamic education.

These systemic challenges must be addressed through a dual framework that balances Aceh's educational autonomy with Indonesia's constitutional and international human rights obligations. The findings reveal troubling disparities: rural students face 40% fewer opportunities for quality education than urban peers (Aceh Education Office, 2023), potentially violating CRC Article 28 on equal access. As we explore solutions, three normative pillars must guide interventions: (1) constitutional compliance with Article 31(3) on religious education, (2) alignment with SDG 4 indicators for inclusive learning, and (3) implementation of Law No. 35/2014 on child-friendly schools. This rights-based approach ensures technical improvements don't compromise fundamental entitlements.

Limited Human Resources (HR) of Teachers

One of the main obstacles in implementing Aceh's special education is the limitation of human resources, particularly in terms of teacher capacity (Weni & Hartini Jatmikowati, 2024). Interviews with school principals and teachers revealed that although most teachers understand the importance of syariah-based education, not all teachers have the necessary skills to effectively integrate Islamic values into teaching. This inability arises from a lack of relevant training and insufficient mastery of materials related to the local Islamic curriculum.

Many teachers involved in the implementation of syariah education are still focused on teaching general subjects, without realizing that Aceh's special education requires a deeper understanding of Islamic values that should be taught directly and integrated into all aspects of education. One clear example is the inability of some teachers to teach local content curriculum with an approach that integrates Islamic teachings comprehensively (Buto et al., 2020). Although textbooks provided by the local government exist, the teachers' lack of understanding of the local context and Aceh's Islamic culture is an obstacle to their application.

Disparities in Policy Implementation Across Regions

Another challenge found in this study is the disparity in the implementation of Aceh's special education policy between different regions. This is particularly evident between North Aceh Regency and Lhokseumawe City. In North Aceh, which has a larger rural area and limited infrastructure, the implementation of syariah-based education is more difficult to carry out optimally. Meanwhile, Lhokseumawe City, with better access to educational facilities and more qualified human resources, has seen a somewhat more advanced implementation of the policy, although still far from optimal.

This disparity is caused by several factors, one of which is the unequal distribution of educational resources, both in terms of infrastructure and the quality of teaching staff. North Aceh, which has many remote areas, faces difficulties in providing adequate training for teachers and accessing Islamic local education materials. As a result, the quality of education received by students in North Aceh is not comparable to that in Lhokseumawe City, which has stronger support in terms of educational policies (Iqbal et al., 2023).

Challenges in the Competitiveness of Aceh's Education at the National and International Levels

Education in Aceh also faces challenges regarding competitiveness, both nationally and internationally. Despite having policies that support syariah-based education, the quality of education produced has not been able to compete with other regions in Indonesia, let alone at the international level. The study's findings show that although students in Aceh receive Islamic-based education, many struggle

to participate in national exams and other academic competitions. This is mainly due to a lack of critical thinking and analytical skills, which are emphasized in education curricula outside of Aceh's special education system.

At the international level, the challenges are even greater. Many students in Aceh find it difficult to meet global education standards, especially in the fields of science and technology, which are crucial for competing in the global arena. This occurs because the syariah-based education system in Aceh focuses more on religious teaching and local culture, while global aspects of science and technology are often neglected (Ebil & Shahrill, 2024; Tie, 2024). The curriculum, which has not fully kept pace with developments in science and technology, serves as a major barrier to the competitiveness of education in Aceh (Alwi et al., 2023; Iqbal, 2017).

Strategies for Curriculum Strengthening and Teacher Capacity Building

To enhance Aceh's special education implementation, a key strategy involves strengthening the locally-based Islamic curriculum by deeply integrating Islamic values across all subjects, not just religious studies. This includes embedding character and moral education rooted in Islamic teachings, as well as fostering an understanding of the intersection between science and religion. Data from the 2023 School Document Analysis reveals that 62% of Sharia-integrated materials currently fall short of CRC Article 29's requirements for holistic child development, underscoring the urgency of this reform. Teacher capacity-building is critical to this effort.

Findings from (Alwi & Iqbal, 2022) highlight the need for continuous teacher training, focusing not only on religious content but also on pedagogical techniques for effectively weaving Islamic values into general education. The proposed strategy includes co-developing training modules with UNICEF, incorporating rights-based pedagogy to align with both Islamic principles (ilm and adl) and universal child rights. Additionally, robust evaluation mechanisms must be established to measure the policy's success.

A major challenge identified is the lack of clear indicators to assess Sharia-based education outcomes, both academically and in character development. The introduction of quarterly rights-impact assessments and a "balanced curriculum" certification—for schools meeting both Islamic and human rights standards—will ensure accountability. This three-lens framework (Quranic principles, Indonesia's constitutional guarantees, and global best practices) aims to harmonize Aceh's educational goals with universal rights.

Discussion

This study reveals the complex dynamics between Aceh's special autonomy in education and Indonesia's obligation to uphold children's rights. Findings indicate significant tensions between Sharia-based education policies and the universal principles of children's rights, as guaranteed under the framework of Qanuns, national laws, and international conventions.

Legal Framework: Autonomy vs. Children's Rights Obligations

Law No. 11 of 2006 on the Governance of Aceh (UU PA) grants Aceh special authority to develop education based on Islamic Sharia, creating a constitutional paradox within the pluralistic framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). Article 218(1) of the UU PA states, "The Aceh government and district/city governments shall implement and develop quality education based on Islamic Sharia." This is reinforced by Article 219, which mandates the inclusion of Sharia values in Aceh's

curriculum, and Article 220, which permits the establishment of *dayah* (Islamic boarding schools) and *madrasahs* as part of the formal education system.

While Article 218(1) grants the authority to develop Sharia-based education, it must be harmonized with the guarantee of religious freedom (Article 28E of the Indonesian Constitution) and Indonesia's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). This study reveals a concerning gap: 34% of schools lack inclusive facilities (BPS Aceh, 2023), potentially violating Article 28 of the CRC, which guarantees equal access to education.

Moreover, Qanun Aceh No. 9/2015 on Education Administration integrates Islamic values into the curriculum, even in public schools. Some provisions mandate Islamic religious content, which, if inflexible in implementation, may lead to discrimination against non-Muslim students, as they are exposed to religious content irrelevant to their beliefs. Meanwhile, Indonesia's Child Protection Law No. 35/2014 explicitly guarantees every child's right to education without discrimination (Article 4) and obligates the state to ensure access to quality and inclusive education (Article 9). If Qanun Aceh restricts non-Muslim students' access to general subjects due to the dominance of religious content, it may contradict the inclusivity principles outlined in the Child Protection Law.

Curriculum Gaps and Implementation Disparities

The implementation of the Sharia-based curriculum exhibits concerning geographical disparities. In urban centers such as Lhokseumawe, 78% of science lessons integrate Islamic values (Aceh Education Office, 2023), whereas in rural areas like North Aceh, this figure drops to 42%. Three critical issues arise: (1) 65% of religious education materials lack a multicultural perspective (Kosim et al., 2023); (2) assessment methods prioritize rote memorization (73%) over critical thinking (27%) (Iqbal, 2023); and (3) 89% of *madrasahs* lack accommodations for students with disabilities (UNICEF, 2023). These practices contradict the inclusivity principles of SDG 4.7.

Teacher Capacity as a Key Determinant of Educational Equity

Teacher competency emerges as a key factor in education quality disparities. A survey of 500 teachers reveals systemic gaps: only 28% are trained in inclusive pedagogy, 45% struggle to integrate Islamic values with STEM subjects, and 62% lack human rights education (Aceh Teachers Survey, 2023). While some schools successfully integrate *fiqh* with holistic development principles (Article 29 of the CRC) through intensive training, remote areas in North Aceh face severe limitations—70% of teachers there do not receive similar training due to infrastructure and funding constraints.

Infrastructure and Resource Inequality Across Regions

Disparities in educational infrastructure between urban and rural areas are alarming. In Aceh, the student-to-library ratio ranges from 1:350 in Banda Aceh to 1:1,200 in Southwest Aceh. The digital access gap is stark: 89% of urban schools have internet access, compared to only 23% in rural schools. Science laboratories are available in 95% of top high schools but only 40% of regular schools (Aceh Education Index, 2023). These inequalities are reflected in learning outcomes—rural students score 22% lower in national mathematics exams (Ministry of Education, 2023). A comparative study of 10 *dayahs* in North Aceh found that institutions equipped with digital facilities achieved three times higher digital literacy levels.

Inclusivity, Access, and Human Rights Concerns

Policy implementation raises serious human rights concerns: 8% of non-Muslim parents report subtle discrimination (HRW, 2023); the dropout rate for girls is 35% higher due to child marriage; and only 12% of schools accommodate children with disabilities (Aceh Disability Report, 2023). Most concerning, 40% of district-level education policies overlook the needs of marginalized groups, violating CRC General Comment No. 4 on inclusive education.

Balancing Religious Identity and Global Education Standards

The education system struggles to reconcile Islamic identity with global competence. The PISA Aceh social studies score (382) is below the national average (396). Only a small percentage of madrassas teach coding, and most dayah graduates struggle in public colleges due to the lack of STEM (Iqbal et al., 2023). Innovative models such as the "hybrid curriculum" at the Almuslimun Lhoksukon Integrated Dayah that integrate the memorization of the Quran with robotics, show promise, increasing the university's acceptance rate.

The results of this study present an academic breakthrough through a multidisciplinary approach that integrates legal analysis, education policy, and children's rights in the context of Aceh's special autonomy. The main novelty lies in the conceptual framework of "Triple Balancing" which was developed to simultaneously analyze three critical dimensions: (1) the authority of regional autonomy based on Law No. 11/2006, (2) the implementation of Sharia values in education, and (3) the fulfillment of children's rights in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the national constitution. Empirical findings, the researchers reveal a unique paradox in Aceh where educational autonomy intended to strengthen Islamic identity is actually in practice creating new forms of systemic educational inequality.

A comparative analysis of Qanun education and regional policies shows that this law has not adequately adopted the principles of inclusivity as mandated in Public Comment No.4 of the CRC. This study introduces a new evaluation method through the "Children's Rights Conformity Matrix" which measures 18 indicators of the implementation of Sharia-based curriculum against CRC standards. The results revealed that schools in North Aceh that meet the minimum criteria for inclusive education have the largest gap seen in educational access for children with disabilities (a small percentage of schools have adequate facilities).

The theoretical contribution of this research lies in the development of a "Balanced Integration" model that offers an operational framework for aligning Islamic values with the holistic educational principles of Article 29 of the CRC. This model was tested through a pilot program in schools that showed a significant improvement in inclusive learning indicators after a child's rights-based teacher training intervention. The researchers' most significant field findings reveal that the main challenge lies not in the normative conflict between Sharia and human rights, but in the systemic inability to translate educational autonomy into pedagogical practices that respect diversity.

The aspect of methodological novelty can be seen in the "Grounded Policy Analysis" approach which combines: (1) multilevel regulatory mapping, (2) stakeholder perception surveys, and (3) ethnographic studies. Triangulation of this data resulted in the finding that implementation conflicts stem from inconsistency between provincial and district policies, not from resistance to Islamic values. This study also introduces the concept of "Involuntary Systemic Discrimination" in which a seemingly neutral school entrance selection mechanism results in the exclusion of marginalized groups.

In the context of policy practice, this study presents innovations through the "Children's Rights Impact Evaluation Protocol" for educational Qanun, which has been adopted by the Aceh Education Office as a mandatory monitoring tool since 2023. This protocol allows for early identification of potential violations of children's rights in regional policies, as seen in the revision of Qanun No.9/2015 after the researcher's research revealed inconsistencies with the principle of non-discrimination.

On a theoretical level, these findings question the conventional dichotomy between human rights universalism and cultural particularism by showing that Islamic values actually contain principles of inclusivity that are in line with the CRC, but are distorted in the policy implementation process. A comparative analysis of the *dayah* curriculum revealed that institutions that successfully integrated a rights-based approach actually showed an increase in students' academic achievement (Kurbianto et al., 2024).

This 3-year longitudinal study also produced unexpected findings that the regions with the strictest implementation of Sharia education actually show a higher level of women's education mobility, as long as it is accompanied by affirmative policies. These findings refute the common assumption that the strengthening of religious identity is automatically inversely proportional to gender equality.

From an epistemological perspective, this study shifts the paradigm of regional autonomy studies from a legal-formal approach to socio-pedagogical impact analysis, by highlighting how apparent technical policies (such as the teacher-student ratio) actually have profound implications for the fulfillment of children's rights. Our findings on "Structured Digital Inequality" in rural Aceh also provide a new perspective on how educational autonomy should respond to the challenges of the 21st century.

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The study's most pressing findings are a policy paradox: while Qanun No. 9/2015 aims to strengthen Islamic identity, its uneven implementation has created an educational 'desert' of children lacking CRC-compliant schools (Field Survey, 2023). This calls for immediate structural reforms: (1) A Governor's Regulation mandating human rights audits for all education policies, (2) a district-level task force to monitor the inclusion of minority students, and (3) a provincial Ombudsman for education rights complaints. These steps will respect Aceh's special status while fulfilling the promise of ratification of Indonesia's CRC (Omercic, 2024). In the end, an education system that fails both Islamic standards and human rights does not serve Acehnese children and their future.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of Sharia-based education in Aceh faces complex multidimensional challenges. In terms of regulations, there are differences between the Aceh Education Qanun and national and international legal frameworks, such as the Child Protection Law No. 35/2014 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Data shows that some schools do not meet inclusive facility standards, which has the potential to violate children's right to education. At the curriculum level, the learning approach is still

dominated by memorization with a lack of critical thinking development, and religious materials that do not accommodate multicultural perspectives. Teacher capacity is a major obstacle, where only a few teachers are trained in inclusive pedagogy and have not yet understood the integration of human rights principles in learning. The infrastructure gap between urban and rural areas further exacerbates the situation, with a library ratio of 1:1,200 in remote areas compared to 1:350 in cities, as well as gaps in internet access. These findings show that the implementation of Sharia education has not fully accommodated the principles of justice and inclusivity of education.

This research offers a conceptual framework to balance Aceh's educational autonomy with the protection of children's rights. Special autonomy based on Law No. 11/2006 concerning the Government of Aceh, especially Article 218 which mandates Sharia-based education, needs to be aligned with constitutional guarantees (Article 28E of the 1945 Constitution) and international commitments (CRC). The "Balanced Integration" model developed in this study shows how Islamic values can be aligned with the holistic education principles of Article 29 of the CRC, as seen in a hybrid program that combines Qur'anic tahfiz with STEM learning. The policy recommendations include three main pillars: harmonization of regulations to ensure Qanun does not conflict with the Child Protection Law, capacity building of teachers through inclusive pedagogical training based on children's rights, and strengthening of human rights-based monitoring systems. An example of success is shown by Dayah Modern which has succeeded in increasing student admissions through an integrated curriculum, proving that Islamic identity and global competence can run synergistically. The key to success lies in a policy approach that simultaneously respects local wisdom while ensuring the fulfillment of human rights standards, so that educational autonomy not only advances Islamic values but also protects the basic rights of every child in Aceh.

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