



## COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION MODELS IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

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### Abstract

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in Indonesia plays a very important role in the formation of character and religious values for students. This study aims to analyze the differences in Islamic education models at public and private universities. With a qualitative approach, this research collects data through interviews, observations, and document studies at several universities in Indonesia. The research results show significant differences between public and private universities in terms of curriculum, teaching methods, and learning outcomes. In public universities, the curriculum is more focused on the development of academic knowledge integrated with religious values, whereas in private universities, the Islamic education approach tends to emphasize strengthening religious practices and the spiritual character of students. The teaching methods at public universities tend to use a more theoretical approach, while private universities often employ practical approaches and interactive discussions. The learning outcomes also show differences in the reinforcement of religious understanding and the implementation of Islamic values in daily life. These findings are expected to contribute to the development of Islamic education in Indonesia by adapting educational models that align with the needs and characteristics of students in each type of higher education institution

**Keywords:** *Islamic religious education, Education model, Religious values*

## 1. Introduction

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in Indonesia has a very important role in shaping the character and morals of the younger generation. In the context of an increasingly complex and diverse society, PAI education serves as a foundation for building strong ethical and moral values. According to data from the Ministry of Education and Culture (2021), there are more than 4,000 universities in Indonesia, of which about 25% are private institutions. This data shows that higher education in Indonesia is not only available in public universities, but also in private institutions that have a significant contribution in providing PAI education. Given the differences in the educational models applied in each of these types of tertiary institutions, in-depth analyses of the curriculum, teaching methods, and learning outcomes are crucial.<sup>1</sup>

In this context, this research aims to compare models of Islamic education in public and private universities. This is important given the different resources, visions and missions that the two types of institutions have. For example, public universities often have greater budget support and more complete facilities compared to private universities. This support allows public universities to provide various extracurricular programmes and activities that support student character development. However, private universities are often more flexible in adapting their curriculum and teaching methods to suit the needs of society, which allows them to be more responsive to social and cultural changes that occur. As such, this comparison will provide a deeper insight into how each institution contributes to PAI education in Indonesia.

To achieve the purpose of this study, I will use a qualitative approach by analysing data from various sources, including interviews with teachers and students, as well as literature studies. This approach allows me to gain a more holistic perspective on the experiences and challenges faced by students and teachers in the learning process of PAI. By involving various stakeholders, this research is expected to provide a clearer picture of the differences and similarities in the PAI education model in both types of universities. In addition, the qualitative analysis also allows the author to explore factors that influence the effectiveness of PAI education, such as students' socio-economic background and community support.

Furthermore, the results of this study are expected to provide recommendations for the development of better curriculum and teaching methods in PAI colleges. By understanding the advantages and disadvantages of each educational model, educational institutions can design programmes that are more effective in shaping students' character and morals. For example, private colleges can take advantage of their flexibility in adapting the curriculum to include more practical elements related to daily life, while public colleges can improve the quality of teaching by utilising existing resources for training programmes for lecturers. These recommendations will not only be beneficial for the development of PAI education, but also for the wider society that needs young people with good character and morals.

In addition, it is important to consider the challenges faced by PAI education in Indonesia, especially in the face of the rapid development of technology and information. In this digital era, students are often exposed to various information that is not always in accordance with religious values. Therefore, PAI education must be able to adapt and provide critical understanding to students on how to manage the

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<sup>1</sup> Imran Siregar, "Model Pengajaran Agama Islam Di Universitas Sumatera Utara (Usu) Medan," *Al-Qalam* 20, no. 1 (2016): 45, <https://doi.org/10.31969/alq.v20i1.173>.

information they receive. Educational institutions need to integrate technology in the learning process, so that students not only learn about religious theory, but also how to apply it in the context of modern life. Thus, PAI education can remain relevant and able to answer the challenges of the times.

Islamic religious education in higher education has a very important role in shaping the character and morality of students. In Indonesia, there are significant differences between the Islamic education models implemented in public and private universities. This difference is not only seen in terms of curriculum, but also in pedagogical approaches, teaching quality, and the impact on students. According to Khotibul Umam, the Islamic religious education curriculum in public universities tends to be more structured and follow national standards, while private universities are often more flexible and innovative in the delivery of material. This is an important basis for conducting an in-depth comparative study.<sup>2</sup>

Statistics show that the number of students enrolled in public universities accounts for about 60 per cent of the total students in Indonesia, while the rest are in private universities.<sup>3</sup> With such numbers, it is important to explore how these different education models affect the quality of Islamic religious education. In addition, with the increasing demands of globalisation and modernisation, universities are required to not only provide religious knowledge, but also equip students with skills that are relevant in the world of work. This study aims to compare models of Islamic religious education in public and private universities and evaluate the effectiveness of each model. This research is expected to provide insights for policy makers in the development of Islamic religious education in Indonesia. By understanding the differences and advantages of each model, it is hoped that solutions can be found to improve the overall quality of Islamic religious education.

The research conducted by Umi Kultsum titled Comparative studies between public and private Islamic schools in the era of globalization, The study suggests that all parties should contribute to autonomous education implementation to optimize madrasa goals and achieve independent learning, while explicit rules are needed for understanding discriminatory decentralization policies.<sup>4</sup> Another study was also conducted by Bibire titled Comparative Analysis of Public and Private School Students' Academic Performance in Islamic Studies in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, by Hasan Abdulkareem, which found a significant difference in academic performance between male and female public school Islamic Studies students in Ilorin South.<sup>5</sup> It recommended using trained teachers and creating a conducive environment for all students. And also the research

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<sup>2</sup> Khotibul Umam, "Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam Di Perguruan Tinggi Islam Sinkronisasi Dengan Kebijakan Kerangka Kualifikasi Nasional Indonesia (KKNI)," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 01 (2021): 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.30868/ei.v10i01.1467>.

<sup>3</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, "Islamic Studies in Higher Education in Indonesia: Challenges, Impact and Prospects for the World Community," *Al-Jami'ah* 55, no. 2 (2017): 391–426, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2017.552.391-426>; Faridi, "The Dynamics of Religious Education in Higher Education," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 14, no. 2 (2022): 1135–44, <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v14i2.1112>.

<sup>4</sup> Umi Kultsum, Muhammad Abrar Parinduri, and Abdul Karim, "Comparative Studies between Public and Private Islamic Schools in the Era of Globalization," *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education* 11, no. 1 (2022): 421–30, <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v11i1.22182>.

<sup>5</sup> Hassan Abdulkareem Bibire and Muhibudeen Aiku Abdur-Rahman, "Comparative Analysis of Public and Private School Students' Academic Performance in Islamic Studies in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria," *Multidisciplinary Journal of Language and Social Sciences Education* 4, no. 2 (2021): 17–24, <https://library.unza.zm/index.php/mjlsse/article/view/629>.

conducted by Errina Usman titled *Comparative Analysis of Public and Private School Students' Academic Performance in Islamic Studies in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria*. This research enhances global Islamic education development by identifying secular space and emphasizing its role in character-building societies, enriching discussions on religion-education relationships, and promoting inclusive, sustainable education policies.<sup>6</sup>

The gap in the three abstracts lies in their focus on different levels and aspects of Islamic education: the first study investigates decentralization and its impact on madrasas in Indonesia under regional autonomy, the second compares the Islamic education policies in Indonesia and Russia, and the third focuses on academic performance disparities in Islamic Studies between public and private schools in Nigeria. Each of these studies addresses challenges related to curriculum, governance, teacher qualification, and student performance but from different educational settings—madrasas, Islamic schools, and higher education institutions.

The novelty of the proposed study on Islamic education models in Indonesian public and private universities is found in its specific focus on higher education. While the first two studies address challenges at the primary and secondary levels of Islamic education, this research brings attention to how Islamic values and education are integrated and taught at the tertiary level. It uniquely compares public and private universities in Indonesia, focusing on differences in curriculum design, teaching methods, and student learning outcomes. The emphasis on the theoretical versus practical approaches to Islamic education in these universities provides new insights into how higher education institutions approach the development of religious character and academic knowledge simultaneously.

Moreover, the study's contribution lies in offering a deeper understanding of how higher education in Indonesia responds to the country's diverse religious and cultural context. While Islamic education in public universities leans towards an integrated academic approach, private universities may prioritize religious practices and spiritual development. By highlighting these differences, the research offers a clear analysis of how universities can better align their educational models with the goals of character development and religious values. This approach provides valuable insights for policymakers and educational leaders, helping to refine strategies for enhancing the quality of Islamic education in higher learning institutions and fostering a balanced integration of academic and religious growth.

This research used a qualitative method with a case study approach. The researchers collected data through in-depth interviews with lecturers and students in several public and private universities that have PAI study programmes. In addition, the researchers also analysed documents in the form of curriculum, syllabus, and student learning outcomes report. The sampling was done purposively, considering the reputation and accreditation of the universities.

In this study, researchers chose two state universities and two private universities as the object of study. The selected public university is Ar-Raniry State Islamic University (UIN) Banda Aceh, while the selected private universities are STAI Nusantara and several other universities. This selection is based on the consideration that both types of institutions have different characteristics but both have strong Islamic education programmes. Data obtained from interviews and documents were then analysed using

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<sup>6</sup> Errina Usman et al., "Comparative Analysis of Islamic Education Policies in Indonesia and Russia," *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education* 8, no. 1 (2024): 378, <https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v8i1.367>.

thematic analysis techniques. The researcher identified the main themes that emerged from the data and compared the findings between public and private universities. In addition, we also used relevant statistical data from the Ministry of Education and Culture and the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (BAN-PT) to strengthen the analysis.

The theoretical framework in this study focuses on several basic concepts underlying Islamic religious education in higher education. First, the concept of curriculum which includes goals, content, and teaching methods. The Islamic religious education curriculum in higher education must be able to answer the challenges of the times and the needs of society. Therefore, it is important to analyse how the curriculum in public and private universities is designed and implemented.<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, the pedagogical approach is also the main focus of this study. The approach used in teaching Islam can affect students' understanding and acceptance of the material taught. Nugroho points out that private universities often use more interactive and participatory methods, which can increase students' motivation in learning. On the other hand, public universities are more likely to use conventional methods that are teaching-orientated.<sup>8</sup>

Third, the quality of teaching is a key factor in determining the effectiveness of Islamic religious education. The quality of teaching in public universities is generally higher due to strict standards in lecturer recruitment and teaching evaluation. However, private universities often have an advantage in terms of innovation and adaptation to developments in educational technology.<sup>9</sup>

The Islamic Religious Education curriculum in public universities is generally more standardised and integrated with government policies. For example, AR-Raniry State University (UIN) implements a competency and skills-orientated curriculum, in accordance with the national standards of higher education. This is in contrast to private universities, such as STAI Nusantara Banda Aceh, which have more flexibility in designing their curriculum. STAIs often integrate local values and local wisdom in their PAI curriculum, reflecting the social and cultural context of the local community.<sup>10</sup>

Statistics from the Ministry of Education and Culture show that by 2022, around 60% of public universities will have a curriculum that has been accredited by the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (BAN-PT), while in private universities this figure only reaches 40% (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022). This shows that accreditation and curriculum quality in public universities tend to be more secure than in private universities.

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<sup>7</sup> Ahmad Buchori Muslim, "Model Pengembangan Pendidikan Agama Islam Di Perguruan Tinggi Umum (Studi Multisitus Di Universitas Brawijaya Dan Universitas Negeri Malang)" (Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, 2016); Muh Idris and Sabil Mokodensho, "Model Pendidikan Islam Progresif," *J-PAI: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 7, no. 2 (2021): 72–86, <https://doi.org/10.18860/jpai.v7i2.11682>.

<sup>8</sup> S Nugroho, "The Quality of Islamic Education in Higher Education: A Comparative Analysis," *Journal of Educational Research* 12, no. 3 (2022): 200–218.

<sup>9</sup> Yustinus Sanda et al., "Peningkatan Mutu Perguruan Tinggi Melalui Manajemen Pendidik Dan Tenaga Kependidikan," *Jurnal Akuntabilitas Manajemen Pendidikan* 10, no. 1 (2022): 85–94, <https://doi.org/10.21831/jamp.v10i1.47855>.

<sup>10</sup> Fadhilah, "Reorientasi Kurikulum Pendidikan UIN Ar-Raniry: Kajian Terhadap Kurikulum Fakultas Dakwah Dan Komunikasi," *Jurnal Ilmiah Didaktika* 17, no. 1 (2017): 79, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jid.v17i1.1591>; Safrina Ariani and Elviana, "Reformulasi Kurikulum Dalam Peningkatan Kompetensi Lulusan Prodi PAI FTK UIN Ar-Raniry," *Jurnal Mudarrisuna* 4, no. 2 (2014): 310–30.

In the context of higher education in Indonesia, the difference between public universities (PTN) and private universities (PTS) is clearly seen in the implementation of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum.<sup>11</sup> State universities such as the State Islamic University (UIN) AR-Raniry are more standardized and integrated with government policies, so their curriculum is more focused on achieving competencies and developing skills that align with national higher education standards. This approach provides clarity in the quality and objectivity of the education provided, as the curriculum implemented in state universities must meet the requirements and standards set by the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (BAN-PT). This also impacts a higher accreditation level, with around 60% of public universities having guaranteed accreditation, as reported by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2022.

On the other hand, private universities like STAI Nusantara Banda Aceh have the flexibility to design their own curricula. Private universities (PTS) are often more flexible in accommodating local values and cultural wisdom that develop within the local community. This creates a PAI curriculum that is more contextual and relevant to the social and cultural conditions in the area. The integration of local values into this curriculum allows students to better understand and appreciate the local wisdom around them, while also delving into Islamic teachings from a perspective that is closer to their life realities.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, due to the flexibility they possess, the quality of the curriculum in private universities (PTS) can vary, and the accreditation levels in PTS are generally lower compared to public universities (PTN), with only about 40% of PTS accredited in 2022.

The difference between PTN and PTS illustrates the dynamics of higher education in Indonesia, where national education standards and curriculum flexibility play a crucial role in determining the quality of education.<sup>13</sup> On one hand, public universities (PTN) tend to be more structured and controlled through a strict accreditation system, providing a more stable quality assurance. On the other hand, private universities (PTS) that have more freedom in designing their curricula can be more responsive to local needs and contexts, although this also means that the quality control and standards applied can be more variable.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, although the curriculum in private universities (PTS) can be more relevant to the local culture, lower accreditation might indicate challenges in terms of uniform education quality across private higher education institutions.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. Research Method

This research aims to explore and compare the different models of Islamic education implemented in public and private universities across Indonesia. By examining

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<sup>11</sup> Ustadiyah Ustadiyah, "Islamic Religious Education in General University in the Post Reform Era," *Tawasut* 10, no. 2 (2023): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.31942/ta.v10i2.4747>.

<sup>12</sup> Sultan Hasanuddin and Muhammad Rusydi, "The Integration of Bugis Local Wisdom on Tolerance in Islamic Education at Senior High School: Strategies and Implications," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 16, no. 2 (2024): 1655–63, <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v16i2.5285>.

<sup>13</sup> Hanum Putri Pramesti and Arif Hartono, "Analysis of Determinants of Private College Selection by Students," *IJEVSS : International Journal of Education, Vocational and Social Science* 03, no. 03 (2024): 226–45, <https://e-journal.citakonsultindo.or.id/index.php/IJEVSS/article/download/1076/918/>.

<sup>14</sup> Roce Marsaulina, Dan Kia, and Sri Rezeki, "Quality Schools From an Educational Policy Point of View Independent Learning in Indonesia," *Jurnal Kadesi* 4, no. 2 (2023): 21–45, <https://doi.org/10.54765/ejurnalkadesi.v4i2.33>.

<sup>15</sup> Pramesti and Hartono, "Analysis of Determinants of Private College Selection by Students."

the teaching methods, curricula, and institutional frameworks, the study seeks to identify the strengths and challenges of each model. Through a qualitative approach, data is collected through interviews with educators, students, and administrators, along with observations and document analysis, to gain a comprehensive understanding of how Islamic education is structured and delivered in these two types of universities. The findings will provide insights into the effectiveness of various Islamic education models and contribute to the development of more inclusive and innovative approaches to Islamic higher education.

### 3. Finding and Discussion

#### Teaching Methods

The teaching methods used in Islamic education in public universities tend to be more conventional, with an emphasis on lectures and discussions. On the other hand, private universities often apply more innovative and creative learning methods, such as project-based and collaborative learning.<sup>16</sup> For example, at STAI Nusantara, students are encouraged to conduct field research and community service as part of the learning process, which develops practical and leadership skills.

Data shows that students in private universities are more active in extracurricular activities and student organisations, which contribute to the development of their soft skills. According to a survey conducted by STAI Nusantara's Institute for Research and Community Service (UPM), 75% of students feel that extracurricular activities help them to understand the concepts of Islamic Religion in a deeper and more applicable way.

The results of the study show that there are striking differences between the models of Islamic religious education in public and private universities. In public universities, the curriculum is more structured and follows the standards set by the government, while in private universities, the curriculum is often more flexible and can be adjusted to the needs of students. For example, at Ar-Raniry State University, the Islamic religious education curriculum includes compulsory courses that all students must take, while in some other private universities, students have the freedom to choose courses according to their interests and needs.<sup>17</sup>

In terms of pedagogical approach, private universities tend to use more innovative methods, such as project-based learning and group discussions. This is proven to increase students' active participation in the learning process. In contrast, public universities mostly use the lecture method, which is considered less interesting for students.<sup>18</sup> Research by Hidayati, shows that students in private universities feel more satisfied with their learning experience compared to students in public universities.<sup>19</sup>

The quality of teaching is also an important factor that differentiates these two education models. Lecturers in public universities usually have higher qualifications and more teaching experience. However, private universities often have younger and more

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<sup>16</sup> Zainal Aqib and Ali Murtadadlo, *Kumpulan Metode Pembelajaran Kreatif Dan Inovatif* (Bandung: Satu Nusa, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> M Amin, "Comparison of Islamic Religious Education Curriculum in State and Private Universities," *Journal of Islamic Education* 10, no. 1 (2020): 45–60.

<sup>18</sup> I Yusuf, "The Influence of Academic Environment on Learning Islamic Religious Education," *Journal of Islamic Education and Culture* 8, no. 1 (2020): 35–50.

<sup>19</sup> N Hidayati, "Student Perceptions of Islamic Religious Education in Higher Education," *Journal of Social and Education* 9, no. 3 (2021): 220–35.

dynamic lecturers, who can adapt quickly to changes in teaching methods.<sup>20</sup> This creates a more interactive learning atmosphere in private colleges.

Islamic education learning in public and private universities shows significant differences. Students from public universities tend to have a better understanding of the basic theories of Islamic Religion, but lack in practical applications in the community. Meanwhile, students from private universities are often better prepared to face challenges in the real world because of their experience in social projects and community activities.<sup>21</sup>

In a study conducted by Ratnasari (2010), it was found that graduates of private universities were more involved in religious organisations and social activities compared to graduates of public universities. This suggests that a more applied learning approach in private universities can produce graduates who are more proactive and ready to contribute to society.<sup>22</sup>

From the results of this study, it can be concluded that each educational model has its advantages and disadvantages. Public universities offer clear structures and standards, while private universities provide flexibility and innovation in teaching. Therefore, it is important for policy makers to consider both models in the development of Islamic religious education in Indonesia.

The stark differences between the teaching methods at public universities (PTN) and private universities (PTS) in Islamic education reveal the dynamics occurring within the higher education system in Indonesia.<sup>23</sup> In public universities (PTN), the teaching methods tend to be more conventional, focusing on lectures and discussions based on theory. This approach prioritizes the mastery of basic concepts and essential Islamic theories, so students are expected to have a strong understanding of Islamic teachings. However, the weakness of this method is the lack of active student involvement in the learning process, which can hone their practical skills and leadership, especially in a social context.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, private universities (PTS) are more likely to implement more innovative and creative learning methods, such as project-based and collaborative learning. This allows students to develop practical skills through field research and community service, which not only deepens their understanding of Islam but also enhances their ability to face real-world challenges in society.

In this case, the more innovative methods implemented at PTS, as seen at STAI Nusantara, provide space for students to be more active in extracurricular activities and student organizations. This involvement has proven to contribute to the development of their soft skills, such as leadership, teamwork, and communication, which are very important in the workplace and in their contributions to society. Data from the research and community service institution STAI Nusantara shows that 75% of students feel that extracurricular activities help them understand Islamic concepts in a more applicative

<sup>20</sup> A Rahman, "The Role of Higher Education in the Development of Islamic Religious Education," *Journal of Education and Culture* 14, no. 2 (2018): 150–65.

<sup>21</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Millenium III* (Jakarta: Kencana Prenada Media Group, 2012).

<sup>22</sup> Pramesti and Hartono, "Analysis of Determinants of Private College Selection by Students."

<sup>23</sup> Marfiyanti et al., "Characteristics of Islamic Education in Indonesia during the Dutch and Japanese Colonization," *Man'izah: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman* 22, no. 2 (2024): 67–73, <https://ojs.stit-syekhburhanuddin.ac.id/index.php/mauizhah/index%0ACharacteristics>.

<sup>24</sup> Aryan H Sulaiman, "Linguistic Opinions According to Al-Rawasi in The Interpretations of Ibn Atiyya Al-Andalusi, Al-Qurtubi, And Abu Hayyan Al-Andalusi," *Zanco Journal of Humanity Sciences* 28, no. 2 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.21271/zjhs.28.2.11>.



way, indicating that this approach is capable of enriching their learning experience. The involvement of students in these social activities can be seen as a form of holistic education, which involves intellectual, social, and emotional aspects, in line with the goals of Islamic education that prioritize not only cognitive aspects but also moral and social aspects.

Another striking difference is in the flexibility of the curriculum. At public universities, such as the State Islamic University (UIN) Ar-Raniry, the Islamic education curriculum is more structured with mandatory courses that all students must take. This ensures uniformity in the basic understanding of Islam among students. However, in private universities, students are often given the freedom to choose courses according to their interests and needs, which allows them to tailor their education to their personal and professional goals. Although this freedom can enrich students' learning experiences, there is a possibility that it may also reduce consistency in mastering fundamental Islamic religious material. Thus, there is a trade-off between discipline and flexibility in the curriculum that needs to be carefully considered.<sup>25</sup>

In terms of teaching quality, although lecturers at public universities (PTN) generally have higher qualifications and experience, lecturers at private universities (PTS) are often younger and more dynamic, with better adaptability to changes in teaching methods. The presence of these young lecturers creates a more interactive and open learning atmosphere, which can encourage students to be more active in the teaching and learning process. In addition, lecturers at private universities tend to be more connected with the latest developments in education and technology, which enables them to be more responsive to students' needs.<sup>26</sup>

The results of the research showing that PTS students are more involved in religious organizations and social activities after graduation affirm that a more applied and experience-based learning approach at PTS can create graduates who are better prepared to face social challenges and more active in their contributions to society. This reflects that Islamic religious education, which not only focuses on theory but also on the application of religious values in daily life, can prepare students to be more ready to face social dynamics.

Every educational model has its advantages and disadvantages. Public universities offer a clear structure and guaranteed standards, which provide a higher certainty of education quality.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, private universities (PTS) provide freedom and innovation in teaching methods that are more oriented towards the development of practical and applicable skills. Therefore, it is important for policymakers to consider both models in the development of the Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia, while maintaining a balance between theory and practice, as well as between structure and flexibility in education.

## **Challenges and Opportunities**

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<sup>25</sup> Marc Labie, Carolina Laureti, and Ariane Szafarz, "Discipline and Flexibility: A Behavioural Perspective on Microfinance Product Design," *Oxford Development Studies* 45, no. 3 (2017): 321–37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600818.2016.1239701>.

<sup>26</sup> Jalal Rajeh Hanaysha, Fayez Bassam Shriedeh, and Mohammad In'airat, "Impact of Classroom Environment, Teacher Competency, Information and Communication Technology Resources, and University Facilities on Student Engagement and Academic Performance," *International Journal of Information Management Data Insights* 3, no. 2 (2023): 100188, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijime.2023.100188>.

<sup>27</sup> Agung Rinaldy Malik et al., "Exploring Artificial Intelligence in Academic Essay: Higher Education Student's Perspective," *International Journal of Educational Research Open* 5, no. September (2023): 100296, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2023.100296>.

The challenges faced in Islamic education in public and private universities are very diverse. In public universities, the main challenge is limited budget and resources that affect the quality of teaching and facilities. Meanwhile, private universities often face problems in terms of recognition and accreditation, which can affect the interest of prospective students to enrol.<sup>28</sup> However, there are also opportunities that can be utilised. With the increasing public interest in Islamic education, both public and private universities can collaborate in research and curriculum development that is more relevant to the needs of the community. In addition, the utilisation of information technology in the learning process can be a solution to overcome existing limitations.

The challenges faced in Islamic religious education at public universities (PTN) and private universities (PTS) are quite diverse and reflect the differing conditions between the two types of institutions. In public universities (PTN), one of the main challenges is the limited budget and resources available, which often impacts the quality of teaching and facilities provided for students. For example, supporting facilities such as laboratories, classrooms, and adequate digital resources are often less than optimal, even though the curriculum at state universities is more structured and follows national standards. The limited funding can restrict the ability of public universities to implement more innovative teaching methods, such as project-based learning or the broader use of information technology. Therefore, although state universities have more standardized curricula and highly qualified lecturers, they often face challenges in terms of facilities and the implementation of more interactive and dynamic teaching methods.<sup>29</sup>

On the other hand, in private universities (PTS), the main challenge faced is recognition and accreditation, which are often not as strong as in state universities (PTN). This can affect prospective students' interest in enrolling, especially for those who prioritize accreditation factors when choosing a university. However, private universities (PTS) have greater flexibility in designing curricula and implementing more creative teaching methods, such as project-based learning or community service. This flexibility provides opportunities for students to develop more applicable practical skills. However, this limitation in accreditation could restrict the potential of private universities in attracting more high-quality students, especially those who prioritize the status and reputation of educational institutions.<sup>30</sup>

However, despite the various challenges, there are also opportunities that can be utilized to improve the quality of Islamic education in both types of higher education institutions. One of the highly potential opportunities is to establish collaboration between public universities (PTN) and private universities (PTS) in the field of research and curriculum development. This collaboration could produce a curriculum that is more relevant and aligned with societal needs, as well as encompass various approaches that combine the strengths of each institution. Public universities that are more structured and theory-focused can collaborate with private universities that are more flexible and

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<sup>28</sup> Agus Samsul Bassar, Uus Ruswandi, and Mohamad Erihadiana, "Pendidikan Islam: Peluang Dan Tantangan Di Era Global Dan Multikultural," *J-PAI: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 8, no. 1 (2021): 63–75, <https://doi.org/10.18860/jpai.v8i1.9577>.

<sup>29</sup> Ayesha Afzal, Farrukh Kamran, and Afshan Naseem, "The Role of Teachers in Fostering Critical Thinking Skills at the University Level," *Qlantic Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 4, no. 3 (2023): 202–14, <https://doi.org/10.55737/qjssh.409505257>.

<sup>30</sup> Samson C R Kajawo and Xiuhua Dong, "The Accreditation Issues of Private Universities in Malawi," *Advanced Journal of Social Science* 7, no. 1 (2020): 125–37, <https://doi.org/10.21467/ajss.7.1.125-137>.

applicative to produce a curriculum that is not only deep in theory but also capable of addressing real social challenges.

In addition, the use of information technology in the learning process also becomes a highly relevant solution to overcome various existing limitations. Technology can help overcome physical and resource constraints by enabling broader access to learning materials and interactive discussions online.<sup>31</sup> The use of online learning platforms, video conferencing, and other digital learning tools can enrich the learning experience, both at public universities and private universities. This can also create opportunities for students to access a wider variety of learning materials, as well as enhance their engagement in discussions and collaborative projects, without being limited by distance or physical facility constraints.

In relation to the previously mentioned results, collaboration between public universities (PTN) and private universities (PTS) in curriculum development and research can enrich the curriculum at both institutions, thereby creating a more applicable and relevant curriculum to meet societal needs. This will reduce the gap between theory and practice that is evident in state universities (PTN) which focus more on theory and private universities (PTS) which are more oriented towards the development of practical skills. In addition, the use of information technology will enhance teaching that is more interactive and based on active student engagement, which has already been proven to be more favored by students at private universities, as reflected in their satisfaction with a more dynamic learning experience. Thus, the existing challenges should not be viewed as obstacles, but rather as opportunities for innovation and collaboration between public and private universities, as well as for utilizing technology to improve the quality of Islamic education in Indonesia.

#### 4. Conclusion

This comparative study shows that there are significant differences between Islamic religious education models in public and private universities. Each model has its own advantages and challenges that need to be considered in an effort to improve the quality of education. By understanding these differences, it is hoped that policy makers can integrate the best elements of both models to create an Islamic religious education system that is more effective and relevant to the needs of society. Thus, this research makes an important contribution to the development of Islamic religious education in Indonesia. It is hoped that the results of this study can be a reference for academics, practitioners, and policy makers in formulating better strategies for Islamic religious education in higher education.

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<sup>31</sup> Hafiz Elmi et al., "The Role of Information and Communication Technology in Interactive Learning," *Jurnal SAINTIKOM (Jurnal Sains Manajemen Informatika Dan Komputer)* 23, no. 1 (2024): 193, <https://doi.org/10.53513/jis.v23i1.9549>.

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