



Power Relations and Ideology in Islamic Education: A Political Analysis of Islamic Education in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Islamic education is often in a dilemmatic position because it has to deal with various political interests of the state. This study aims to examine the relationship between power and ideology in Islamic education and its implications for Islamic education policies and practices. The method used is a qualitative approach with a type of literature study. The research findings show that the research findings show that there is a dialectical relationship between power and ideology in Islamic education in Indonesia which is complex and dynamic. This has implications for Islamic education policies, especially in the aspects of curriculum, regulations, and institutions. In addition, it also has implications for the practice of Islamic education at the micro level, especially in the learning process in the classroom. There are two main trends in learning orientation, namely normative orientation and pragmatic orientation. Thus, Islamic education is expected not only to be the object of power relations, but also to be able to play a role as a critical, reflective, and constructive subject of social transformation in building a civilized and just society.

Keywords: Power, Ideology, Islamic Education.

ABSTRAK

Pendidikan Islam sering berada dalam posisi yang dilematis karena harus berhadapan dengan berbagai kepentingan politik negara. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji relasi antara kekuasaan dan ideologi dalam pendidikan Islam serta implikasinya terhadap kebijakan dan praktik pendidikan Islam. Metode yang digunakan ialah pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis studi kepustakaan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat relasi dialektis antara kekuasaan dan ideologi dalam pendidikan Islam di Indonesia yang bersifat kompleks dan dinamis. Hal ini berimplikasi pada kebijakan pendidikan Islam, khususnya dalam aspek kurikulum, regulasi, dan kelembagaan. Selain itu, berimplikasi juga pada praktik pendidikan Islam di tingkat mikro, khususnya dalam proses pembelajaran di kelas. Terdapat dua kecenderungan utama dalam orientasi pembelajaran, yaitu orientasi normatif dan orientasi pragmatis. Dengan demikian, pendidikan Islam diharapkan tidak hanya menjadi objek dari relasi kekuasaan, tetapi juga mampu berperan sebagai subjek transformasi sosial yang kritis, reflektif, dan konstruktif dalam membangun masyarakat yang berkeadaban dan berkeadilan.

Kata Kunci: Kekuasaan, Ideologi, Pendidikan Islam.

INTRODUCTION

Education in essence does not only function as a process of knowledge transfer, but also as a strategic instrument in the formation of ideology and the legitimacy of power. In the political perspective of education, education is often used as a tool by the state or dominant group to instill certain values, norms, and perspectives to society. This is in line with the view of Louis Althusser who called education an ideological state apparatus, which is an ideological device of the state that functions to reproduce the dominant ideology through the educational process (Althusser, 1971). Thus, education has an important role in maintaining the power structure and shaping the collective consciousness of society. In addition, Antonio Gramsci emphasized that power is not only exercised through coercive domination, but also through cultural hegemony, where education is the main medium in building social acceptance of the ruling ideology (Gramsci, 1971). In this case, educational institutions, including Islamic education, cannot be separated from the ideological and political interests that surround them.

In the modern state order, Islamic education is often in a dilemma because it has to deal with various political interests of the state. The state as the holder of authority has an interest in integrating Islamic education into the national education system in order to maintain social stability, unity, and state ideology. But on the other hand, Islamic education also has a normative mission to maintain the values of Islamic teachings sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith (Kurniawan et al., 2026). This tension creates a space of attraction between the interests of the state and religious authorities in determining the direction, curriculum, and policy of Islamic education. In Indonesia, this dynamic is increasingly complex due to the reality of the plurality of ideologies that develop in society. Indonesia as a multicultural and multireligious country has a diversity of ideological views, ranging from nationalism, religiosity, to the influence of globalization and modernization. This diversity also influences the direction of Islamic education, both in terms of curriculum, learning methods, and the orientation of values developed. According to Azyumardi Azra, Islamic education in Indonesia is experiencing a continuous negotiation process between Islamic traditions, the demands of modernity, and state policies (Azra, 2012).

Furthermore, the entry of globalization has also brought new ideologies such as liberalism, secularism, and even radicalism that directly or indirectly affect the practice of Islamic education (Faizin et al., 2025). This requires Islamic education to be able to adapt without losing its identity as an institution that instills moderate and inclusive Islamic values. In this case, Islamic education is not only an arena for the transmission of knowledge, but also an arena for ideological contestation involving various actors, such as the state, society, and religious institutions. A number of studies have examined the relationship between education, power, and ideology. Azyumardi Azra (2012) highlights the dynamics of Islamic education in the face of modernization and state policies, which shows the process of adaptation and negotiation between traditional values and the demands of the national system. Furthermore, Muhaimin (2009) emphasizes the importance of reconstructing Islamic education in order to be able to respond to global challenges without losing its Islamic identity. On the other hand, Tilaar (2012) examines education from the perspective of social change and shows that

education is often an instrument of reproduction of social structures and power. These studies show that education is not neutral, but is loaded with ideological and political interests. However, most of these studies are still descriptive and have not used an in-depth approach to education politics to comprehensively analyze power relations and ideologies in Islamic education.

Therefore, although there have been many studies on Islamic education and modernization, there are several research gaps that have not been widely studied, namely: first, the lack of an analysis that specifically examines Islamic education from a political perspective of education that focuses on the relationship of power and ideology. Second, the lack of studies that integrate critical theories (such as Althusser and Gramsci) in analyzing the practice of Islamic education in Indonesia. Third, there is limited discussion on how ideological contestation (state, religion, and globalization) concretely affects the policies and practices of Islamic education. Thus, a more critical and comprehensive study is needed to fill this gap. This research has several elements of novelty, namely: first, using the political perspective of education critically to analyze Islamic education. Second, integrating the theories of power and ideology from Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. Third, it offers an analysis of Islamic education as an arena of ideological contestation between the state, religion, and globalization. Fourth, it provides a new conceptual framework in understanding the relationship of power and ideology in the practice of Islamic education.

The research question in this study is, what is the relationship between power and ideology in Islamic education and its implications for Islamic education policies and practices? The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between power and ideology in Islamic education and its implications for Islamic education policies and practices. This research is expected to make a significant contribution both theoretically and practically to the study of the politics of Islamic education. Theoretically, this research contributes to enriching the scientific treasures of Islamic education by presenting a critical analysis based on the political perspective of education. By integrating Louis Althusser's thoughts on the ideological state apparatus and Antonio Gramsci on cultural hegemony, this research offers a more comprehensive conceptual framework in understanding Islamic education as an arena of power relations and ideological contestation. This is important because so far the study of Islamic education tends to be normative and has not elaborated much on the dimensions of power critically.

Practically, this research contributes to policy makers, managers of Islamic educational institutions, and education practitioners in understanding how education policy is inseparable from ideological and political interests. This understanding is important so that the formulation of Islamic education policies can be more sensitive to social dynamics, ideological plurality, and maintain moderate and inclusive Islamic values. Furthermore, this research also contributes to formulating the direction of Islamic education development that is not only adaptive to the demands of globalization, but also critical to the dominance of certain

ideologies. Thus, Islamic education can play a role as a force for social transformation that not only reproduces power structures, but is also able to build critical and emancipatory awareness in society.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a critical literature review design to examine the relationship between power and ideology in Islamic education. A qualitative approach is appropriate as this research focuses on interpreting concepts, discourses, and theoretical perspectives related to educational politics, rather than measuring variables quantitatively (Creswell, 2014). Through this approach, the study aims to develop a critical and reflective understanding of how Islamic education operates within the dynamics of power relations and ideological contestation.

The data source of this research consists of relevant academic literature, including books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and policy documents related to Islamic education, ideology, and the politics of education. The literature was collected through academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and SINTA. The selection of sources was guided by several criteria, including: (1) relevance to the research topic; (2) academic credibility; and (3) contribution to theoretical or empirical discussions on Islamic education and ideology. Priority was given to scholarly works that discuss critical theories of power and ideology, particularly those of Althusser, Gramsci, and Foucault, as well as studies on Islamic education in the Indonesian context.

The data collection technique used in this study is documentation, which involves identifying, selecting, and reviewing written sources systematically (Arikunto, 2013). The collected literature was then organized based on thematic relevance to facilitate analytical interpretation. For data analysis, this study applies a thematic analysis approach. The analysis process was conducted through several stages: first, identifying key concepts related to power, ideology, and Islamic education; second, categorizing recurring themes emerging from the literature; and third, interpreting the relationships among these themes within the framework of educational politics. This process allows the researcher to synthesize various perspectives and construct a coherent analytical narrative.

Rather than aiming to produce generalizable findings, this study seeks to offer a conceptual and critical interpretation of the dynamics of power and ideology in Islamic education. Therefore, the validity of the analysis is grounded in the credibility and relevance of the selected literature, as well as the consistency of theoretical interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Power in Education

Power in a social perspective is not only interpreted as the ability to impose one's will coercively, but also as the ability to shape individual and collective ways of thinking, values, and consciousness. In the study of modern social theory, power works subtly through the mechanisms of knowledge production and normalization of certain values in society (Foucault,

1980). In this regard, Antonio Gramsci's thought becomes relevant, especially the concept of hegemony which explains that power can survive not only through physical force, but through socially constructed social consent through institutions such as education (Gramsci, 1971).

In the world of education, power is manifested in various forms, ranging from the determination of curriculum, the preparation of competency standards, the selection of teaching materials, to the learning evaluation system. All of these aspects are not neutral, but reflect certain values, interests, and ideologies (Apple, 2004). In other words, education functions as an institutional mechanism that regulates what is considered legitimate knowledge and what must be internalized by students. Louis Althusser's thought strengthens this argument by stating that educational institutions are ideological state apparatus, which is a state instrument that functions to systematically reproduce dominant ideologies (Althusser, 1971). Through the educational process, values that are considered to be in accordance with the interests of the state are instilled in a repetitive and structured manner, thus forming a collective consciousness that supports the stability of power.

In the scope of Islamic education, schools, madrasas, and pesantren are not only spaces for religious learning, but also arena for the formation of social and ideological identities. The state plays a dominant role through education regulations, such as national education standards, teacher certification, institutional accreditation, and curriculum policies (Putri et al., 2025; Tilaar, 2012). The dynamics of changes in the Islamic Religious Education curriculum in Indonesia, especially in the period 2000-2025, show how the state is actively directing the content and orientation of religious education in accordance with the evolving socio-political needs (Izzah, 2025; Azra, 2012). Thus, Islamic education can be understood as a strategic space in which power works systemically through institutional and cultural mechanisms, rather than simply through direct control.

Ideology in Islamic Education

Ideology in education refers to a set of values, beliefs, and orientations of thought that are the basis for determining the direction, goals, and practices of education (Eagleton, 1991). In the Islamic educational order, ideology is not only related to religious teachings, but also related to how these teachings are interpreted, contextualized, and integrated in the national education system (Suyatno, 2012). There are two main ideological poles that interact in Islamic education in Indonesia, namely state ideology and Islamic ideology. The state ideology is based on Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, and the goal of national education which emphasizes the formation of citizens who have faith, piety, and noble character while having a national commitment. Meanwhile, Islamic ideology is rooted in normative sources such as the Qur'an, hadith, and Islamic intellectual traditions that develop in various schools and thought (Azra, 2012; Muhaimin, 2009).

The interaction between these two ideologies does not always run harmoniously, but is often dialectical. In some contexts, there is an integration of values, for example in strengthening religious moderation, tolerance, and nationalism in the Islamic Religious

Education curriculum. However, in other contexts, there are tensions related to the interpretation of religious teachings, the boundaries of secularization, and the position of religion in the public sphere (Hasan, 2015). This phenomenon shows that ideology in Islamic education is not singular, but plural and dynamic. Terms such as "religious moderation", "radicalism", and "tolerance" not only have normative meanings, but are also discursive constructions produced in the context of education policy (Rahmat, 2022). Thus, the curriculum and learning practices become a space where ideology is produced, negotiated, and disseminated. The internalization of these ideologies is seen in various aspects of education, such as learning objectives, the content of teaching materials, pedagogical methods, and interactions between teachers and students. Teachers in this case not only play the role of teachers, but also as ideological agents who transmit certain values to students.

Power Relations and Ideology in Islamic Education

The relationship between power and ideology in Islamic education is complex and dynamic. Islamic education is not only a means of conveying religious teachings, but also an arena for ideological contestation involving various actors and interests (Azra, 2012). On the one hand, the state has an interest in making Islamic education an instrument for strengthening national identity, social stability, and national integration. On the other hand, Islamic educational institutions have the responsibility to maintain the authority of religious values derived from Islamic teachings. This relationship results in a continuous negotiation process between three main forces, namely normative Islamic values, state ideology, and globalization demands.

In Michel Foucault's perspective, power is not centralized, but rather spread across social relations and works through discursive practices (Foucault, 1980). Thus, Islamic education becomes an arena where ideologies are not only produced by the state, but also negotiated by various actors such as scholars, teachers, and educational institutions. Globalization also strengthens the complexity of this relationship with the inclusion of various transnational ideologies, such as liberalism, secularism and even fundamentalism, which influence the direction of Islamic education (Hefner, 2009). In this case, Islamic education becomes a discursive arena that not only reflects social reality, but also shapes it. Power relations are not one-way, but involve interaction between various actors, such as: the state as policymakers and controllers, scholars and religious leaders as guardians of normative authority, educational institutions as policy implementers, teachers as ideological agents at the praxis level. This interaction between actors shows that Islamic education is a space where ideology is not only forced, but also negotiated, modified, and even resisted.

Implications for Islamic Education Policy

The relationship between power and ideology has significant implications for Islamic education policies, especially in curriculum, regulation, and institutional aspects. First, changes in the Islamic Religious Education curriculum show that there is political intervention in determining the direction of education. The curriculum is not only prepared based on

pedagogical considerations, but also based on ideological interests, such as strengthening religious moderation, preventing radicalism, and strengthening national identity (Apple, 2004; Wahidah, 2024). Second, the regulation and standardization of Islamic education reflects the state's efforts to control and direct educational practices. The accreditation system, teacher certification, and national education standards are instruments used to ensure that Islamic education runs in accordance with state policies (Khairunisapril et al., 2025). Third, there is a dialectic between the autonomy of Islamic educational institutions and state control. Islamic educational institutions, especially Islamic boarding schools, have a strong tradition of autonomy in determining curriculum and learning methods (Mustofa et al., 2025; Tilaar, 2012). However, in the national education system, this autonomy must be adjusted to applicable regulations. This dialectic creates tension as well as opportunities. On the one hand, state control can guarantee educational quality standards. On the other hand, too strong control can reduce the creativity and independence of Islamic educational institutions in developing a curriculum based on Islamic values.

Implications for Islamic Education Practices

The relationship between power and ideology has a direct impact on the practice of Islamic education at the micro level, especially in the learning process in the classroom. There are two main tendencies in learning orientation, namely normative orientation and pragmatic orientation (Muhaimin, 2009). Normative orientation emphasizes the formation of students' faith, worship, and morals as the main goal of Islamic education. Meanwhile, pragmatic orientation adjusts Islamic education to the social, economic, and policy needs of the state. In the contemporary order, these two orientations are no longer diachotically opposed, but tend to be integrated. Islamic education is expected to be able to produce students who are religious and adaptive to social changes.

In addition, Islamic education is also directed to form a moderate, tolerant, and inclusive character (Almukarromah, & Subhi, 2024; Hefner, 2009). This shows that Islamic education not only functions as a transmission of religious values, but also as an instrument of social and political development. However, the challenges faced are increasingly complex. Islamic education must deal with: the development of religious radicalism, the increasing secularization in the education system, the pressure of globalization that brings new values, and digitalization that accelerates the spread of transnational ideologies (AS et al., 2025; Hasan, 2015). In this situation, Islamic education is required to be able to maintain a balance between Islamic identity and openness to change. Islamic education must be not only adaptive, but also critical in filtering out various ideological influences that come in.

Discussion Synthesis

Overall, the findings of this study were obtained through a systematic synthesis of literature on various theoretical and empirical sources relevant to the political study of Islamic education. Through a thematic and critical analysis approach, this study identifies the main

patterns that show that Islamic education is a strategic arena in the relationship between power and ideology. The results of the synthesis show that Islamic education functions not only as a normative educational institution, but also as a space for the production, reproduction, and contestation of ideologies involving various actors, such as the state, scholars, educational institutions, and teachers. This relationship is dynamic and is formed through a negotiation process between state ideology, Islamic values, and the influence of globalization. Furthermore, this study constructs a conceptual framework that places Islamic education as an arena for the interaction of three main forces, namely: (1) state power that operates through educational policies and regulations, (2) Islamic ideology that is rooted in religious normative values, and (3) global influences that carry transnational ideology. These three elements interact with each other and shape the dynamics of Islamic education practices in Indonesia. Thus, Islamic education needs to be understood not only in a normative framework, but also in the perspective of education politics in order to be able to play a role as a critical, reflective, and constructive force for social transformation.

Table 1. Literature Synthesis

No.	Author/Researcher	Study Focus	Key Findings	Relevance to Research
1.	Azra	Islamic education and modernization	Negotiations between tradition and state	The basis of ideological relations
2.	Muhaimin	Reconstruction of Islamic education	Integration of Islamic values and modernity	Pragmatic onboarding basis
3.	Tilaar	Education and power	Education as a tool of social reproduction	The concept of power
4.	Gramsci	Hegemony	Domination through consent	Ideological analysis
5.	Althusser	Ideological apparatus	Education as a state tool	Reproduction of ideology

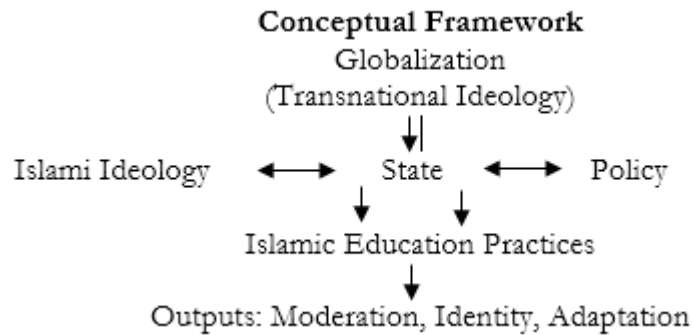


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

This framework shows that Islamic education is at the intersection between: state power, Islamic ideology and global pressures that simultaneously shape educational practices.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion above, the findings of the study show that there is a dialectical relationship between power and ideology in Islamic education in Indonesia which is complex and dynamic. This has implications for Islamic education policies, especially in the aspects of curriculum, regulations, and institutions. In addition, it also has implications for the practice of Islamic education at the micro level, especially in the learning process in the classroom. There are two main trends in learning orientation, namely normative orientation and pragmatic orientation. The main contribution of this research lies in strengthening the political perspective of education in the study of Islamic education, by integrating power theory and ideology into a more critical and contextual analysis. This research not only enriches conceptual studies, but also offers a new analytical framework in understanding Islamic education as an arena of ideological contestation, not just a religious normative institution. Practically, this research has important implications for policy makers, managers of Islamic educational institutions, and educational practitioners. First, Islamic education policies need to be designed in a more reflective and critical manner so that they are not only a tool for legitimizing power, but also able to be a means of empowerment and social transformation. Second, Islamic educational institutions need to maintain a balance between compliance with state regulations and strengthening ideological autonomy based on Islamic values. Third, teachers as ideological agents need to have a critical awareness in managing learning in order to be able to instill the values of moderation, tolerance, and inclusivity without losing the substance of Islamic teachings.

However, this study has limitations, especially because it uses a conceptual literature study method and has not touched on empirical reality directly in the field. In addition, the focus of the study that emphasizes on theoretical analysis has not been explored in depth the variety of Islamic education practices in various diverse local contexts in Indonesia. Therefore, further research is recommended to develop empirical approaches, such as case studies, ethnography, or field research in Islamic educational institutions, in order to test and enrich

these conceptual findings. In addition, further research can also examine more specifically the practice of ideological negotiation at the micro level, such as in the classroom, teacher-student interaction, and curriculum dynamics in Islamic boarding schools, madrasas, and schools. Studies that integrate global and local perspectives are also important to understand how Islamic education responds to the flow of transnational ideologies in the digital era. Thus, Islamic education is expected not only to be the object of power relations, but also to be able to play a role as a critical, reflective, and constructive subject of social transformation in building a civilized and just society.

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