

Religious Education and Local Policy: Lessons from the Al-Qur'an Literacy Program in Prabumulih

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ABSTRACT

Local religious education policies in Indonesia are increasingly shaped by the intersection of community aspirations, governance, and political interests. Prabumulih Mayor Regulation No. 42 of 2016, mandating Al-Qur'an reading and writing (BTQ), represents a key case of how religious education is institutionalized within local public policy. This study employed a qualitative case study approach involving in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. A total of 24 informants were selected, including government officials, religious leaders, educators, and parents. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model and validated through source triangulation. Findings indicate that the BTQ policy implementation involves multi-actor governance, including the Education Office, Ministry of Religious Affairs, schools, religious organizations, and the media. The policy is integrated into the school curriculum and functions as both an educational mandate and a political tool. Structural constraints such as teacher shortages, weak parental involvement, and unequal access to learning resources hinder optimal implementation. The BTQ program reflects a convergence of educational, religious, and political agendas. While it enhances Al-Qur'an literacy and student character development, it also serves as a vehicle for political legitimacy in a religiously driven society. The study highlights the importance of collaborative governance and contextual responsiveness in religious education policy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Religious education in Indonesia has strong historical roots and has evolved in line with the nation's social, cultural, and political dynamics. Since pre-colonial times, religious education has been a primary means of shaping community identity and character through various traditional institutions, such as Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), *surau* (prayer rooms), *langgar* (prayer houses), madrasahs (madrasahs), mandalas, and monastic dormitories. In the Islamic context, the study of faith (*aqidah*), *fiqh*

(Islamic jurisprudence), Sufism (Sufism), and Al-Qur'an reading and writing constitute the primary foundation of religious education, enduring to this day (Azra, 2012). This tradition continued even during the colonial period, when religious education developed autonomously outside the colonial government's education system and became the basis for moral development and cultural resistance to colonial domination (Steenbrink, 1994).

Post-independence, the state began to formally recognize religious education as an integral part of the national education system. Law Number 4 of 1950 and Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System affirm religious education as a fundamental right of every citizen. Religious education was then developed through formal, non-formal, and informal channels, with one of the main focuses being strengthening Al-Qur'an literacy. The government issued various regulations to improve Al-Qur'an literacy, including Joint Decree of the Minister of Home Affairs and the Minister of Religious Affairs Number 128 of 1982/44A of 1982 and Decree of the Director General of Islamic Community Development and Hajj Number 3 of 1991, which prioritized Al-Qur'an literacy as a crucial competency for students (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2006; Husni & Yasmansyah, 2022).

The rapid development of religious education in Indonesia is inseparable from the high level of religiosity of the community. Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), *madrasahs* (Islamic boarding schools), TPA (Islamic kindergartens), and TPQ (Islamic recitation schools) have sprung up almost throughout Indonesia, serving not only as centers of religious learning but also as a means of character and moral development for the younger generation (Hasbullah, 2015). However, this situation also makes religious education vulnerable to being used as a political instrument. Political elites often exploit issues of religious education to build a religious image, gain public legitimacy, and strengthen electoral support through various faith-based policies and programs (Bachtiar, 2020; Aminullah, 2020).

This phenomenon is increasingly evident in the context of religious education policies at the local level. The integration of religious practices into government bureaucracies—such as Al-Qur'an reading and writing programs, religious activities in government offices, and regionally-based religious policies—demonstrates that religious education serves not only as an instrument for moral development but also as part of political strategy and the legitimacy of power (Hanif & Dwi, 2021). Educational policy, in this regard, cannot be separated from the social and political interests surrounding it (Kholifah et al., 2022).

The city of Prabumulih is an interesting and significant case in point. The compulsory Al-Qur'an reading and writing policy implemented in the city normatively aims to increase Al-Qur'an literacy and strengthen the community's religious character. However, several studies have shown that this policy is also used by local politicians as a tool for image building and mobilizing political support, exploiting the community's high level of religiosity (Rohmatika & Hakiki, 2018). This situation positions Prabumulih as a concrete example of how religious education intersects with identity politics at the local level (Sholikin, 2012).

To date, most research on Al-Qur'an literacy education has focused more on pedagogical aspects, learning effectiveness, or its contribution to the development of students' religious character (Husni & Yasmansyah, 2022). Meanwhile, studies specifically analyzing the implementation of Al-Qur'an literacy policies within the framework of the relationship between religious education and local political interests are still relatively limited. Thus, there is a research gap in understanding how Al-Qur'an literacy policies at the regional level are implemented not only as educational programs but also within the dynamics of power and political legitimacy.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the implementation of Al-Qur'an literacy policies in Prabumulih City and examine the accompanying challenges and political implications. Specifically, this study asks the following questions: (1) How is the Al-Qur'an literacy policy in Prabumulih City implemented in religious education practices? And (2) What challenges and political implications arise during its implementation? The answer to this question is expected to provide

theoretical and practical contributions in understanding the relationship between religious education, public policy, and local politics in Indonesia.

2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to understand the implementation of religious education policies within the Al-Qur'an Reading and Writing Program in Prabumulih City. The case study was chosen because it allows researchers to examine policy phenomena in depth within their natural context, particularly regarding the policy background, decision-making process, and program implementation by executive and legislative actors. Therefore, the primary unit of analysis is the policy process, not solely the educational institution or community in isolation, but rather the relationship between policy, political actors, educational institutions, and the local community.

This research is a field study with a phenomenological approach that emphasizes understanding social reality through inductive thinking. Subjects included Prabumulih City Government bureaucrats, members of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), religious scholars, academics, school principals and teachers, educational foundation managers, and parents. Informants were selected purposively and developed using snowball sampling techniques to obtain rich and relevant data. Overall, this study involved 24 informants, consisting of 5 local government officials, 3 members of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), 4 religious leaders and academics, 6 school principals and teachers, and 6 parents/guardians of students. The number of informants was flexible and adjusted until data saturation was reached.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews and documentation. In-depth interviews were used to explore informants' understanding of policy formulation and implementation, the impact of programs on education quality and access, and the implications of education financing. Documentation was used to complement the interview data through a review of regional regulations, budget documents, local government accountability reports, decrees, and relevant scientific literature. The combination of these two techniques enabled a comprehensive understanding and strengthened the credibility of the research data.

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which encompasses data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing and verifying conclusions. To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation by comparing information obtained from various informants and documents. The analysis process was continuous from the initial data collection to the final stage of the research, through simplification, organization, and verification of the data to obtain valid and meaningful conclusions.

This research also adhered to ethical principles of social research, particularly as it dealt with sensitive issues such as religion and politics. Each informant was given an explanation of the research objectives and obtained informed consent before the interview. The informant's identity was kept confidential using initials or job titles to ensure anonymity and security. The researcher maintained a neutral stance and respected differing perspectives to minimize bias and avoid using data for political purposes.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Policy framework of the Al-Quran reading and writing program in Prabumulih City

The Al-Qur'an Reading and Writing (BTA) program in Prabumulih City was born from a strong constitutional foundation, specifically Articles 29 and 31 of the 1945 Constitution, which affirm the state's role in guaranteeing religious freedom and providing education that focuses on faith, piety, and noble character. The local government has authority over elementary and junior high school education, so the BTA policy was formalized through Prabumulih Mayoral Regulation No. 42 of 2016. This policy is a response to the government and community's perceived low Al-Qur'an literacy skills among

Muslim students, and is also a concrete effort to support national education goals and develop religious character within the school environment.

Empirically, the program's background is supported by field data showing that approximately 30% of Muslim students in Prabumulih City still struggle to read the Quran, and some are unable to read at all. This fact was revealed in various evaluation activities, including Al-Qur'an reading exams and a statement by the Head of the Prabumulih City BKPRMI. This situation prompted the Prabumulih City Council (DPRD) to initiate a Draft Regional Regulation on Reading, Writing, and Memorizing the Quran as a form of the local government's moral and spiritual responsibility. The BTA program then became mandatory at all levels of education as local content to develop students with noble morals, a love for the Quran, and a guide to their daily behavior.

The implementation of the BTA program also faces structural challenges, particularly the shortage of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, estimated at around 200 due to high retirement rates and limited recruitment of new teachers. Although the number of PAI teachers in Prabumulih City is quite large, their distribution and availability have not been sufficient to meet the needs of all educational institutions. Meanwhile, the city government continues to prioritize the religious sector as a development priority, in line with Prabumulih's sociological context as a multireligious city with a majority Muslim population and relatively adequate facilities for worship.

Interviews with community, religious, and political leaders indicate that the BTA program is viewed not only as an educational policy but also has social and political dimensions. This program is fully supported by the community as it is seen as a strategy for fostering the morals of the younger generation, and is also appreciated by religious leaders as a concrete implementation of the constitutional mandate. However, research also reveals the political dynamics behind this program, with the local government, the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), and political parties utilizing the BTA program to strengthen the government's image, electoral strategy, and strengthen religious identity. Thus, the BTA program in Prabumulih City is the result of the interaction between the real needs of the community, the constitutional mandate, and political interests that are intertwined in public policy practice.

3.2. Stakeholder perspectives on the implementation of the Al-Quran reading and writing program in Prabumulih City

From the perspective of Islamic religious education, stakeholders view the ability to read and write the Quran as the primary foundation for developing students' religious understanding. This aligns with the academic view that the basic principles of the Quran and Hadith will be more easily understood if students possess adequate Al-Qur'an literacy skills (Sudarmono et al., 2020). However, stakeholders also recognize that technological developments and modern entertainment culture have diverted children's interest from Al-Qur'an learning, as emphasized by Fahriani (2022). This situation has given rise to collective concerns and prompted the development of local government policies to strengthen Al-Qur'an literacy through formal education.

From the perspective of the local government and the legislature, the implementation of the Al-Qur'an Reading and Writing Program (BTA) in Prabumulih City is understood as part of the state's constitutional authority and moral responsibility in the field of religious education. Local governments have the legal legitimacy to establish legally binding regional regulations and mayoral regulations (Irianto, 2020; Jabarudin & Karmila, 2022). This is reflected in Prabumulih Mayoral Regulation Number 42 of 2016, which serves as the basis for implementing the BTA program. Political figures stated, "We, from the legislative branch, fully support this policy. Al-Qur'an literacy must be instilled from an early age... because religious education is an essential foundation for national life." This statement demonstrates that political support for the BTA program is cross-party and not solely based on religious ideology.

From the perspective of religious figures, the implementation of the BTA program is perceived as a concrete manifestation of the long-awaited structural da'wah (Islamic outreach). This policy is considered capable of expanding the responsibility for Al-Qur'an learning from mosques and TPA

(Islamic kindergartens) to formal schools, thus ensuring a more systematic outreach. A religious figure stated, "Since the enactment of Prabumulih Mayor Regulation Number 42 of 2016, the community has become increasingly aware of the importance of children learning to read and write the Qur'an... this is in line with our mission of preaching." This view is in line with Marannu (2017) who emphasized that religious education is no longer the sole responsibility of religious teachers, but also the government and the community.

Community perspectives, particularly from parents, indicate a very positive reception to the implementation of the BTA program. This program is considered helpful for families with limited time and ability to teach the Quran to their children at home. One resident stated, "It used to be difficult to find a Quran teacher, but now my child can learn the Quran at school and even get a certificate." The community also feels the social impact of this program, particularly changes in children's behavior, who have become more polite, disciplined, and religiously zealous. These findings reinforce Prameswati's (2019) view that regional policies can substantively strengthen the learning objectives of Islamic religious education.

From the perspective of educational institutions, schools view the BTA program as a reinforcement of the local curriculum that has a direct impact on student character development. An educational figure emphasized, "This program not only improves students' ability to read the Quran, but also influences their behavior at school." Schools play a technical role by providing special BTA learning sessions and involving Islamic Religious Education teachers in teaching methods training. This demonstrates efforts to maintain effective policy implementation in accordance with the principles of regional regulation formation, such as clarity of objectives and benefits (Maulamin et al., 2018).

From the perspective of the local government, as the primary policy implementer, the BTA program is positioned as a long-term strategy to eradicate Al-Qur'an illiteracy and build a religious community. The local government affirmed its commitment through coordination with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and partner institutions. The statement by a local official, "We want to ensure that there is no longer a generation of Al-Qur'an illiterates in Prabumulih," demonstrates a policy orientation that is not merely administrative, but also ideological and cultural. This perspective aligns with practices in various other regions in Indonesia that have implemented similar policies through regional regulations, such as in Maros, Gowa, Gorontalo, Tasikmalaya, Banjar, and Riau (Hayadin, 2011; Andayani et al., 2021).

Overall, stakeholder perspectives indicate that the implementation of the Al-Qur'an Reading and Writing Program in Prabumulih City is a policy that simultaneously enjoys social, political, and religious legitimacy. This program is understood as a form of collaboration between the state, society, and educational institutions in responding to the challenges of Al-Qur'an literacy in the modern era. While there are differences in nomenclature and legal basis for the policy in various regions, the policy's substance consistently emphasizes the importance of Al-Qur'an literacy learning for Muslim students. Thus, the implementation of the BTA program in Prabumulih represents a public policy practice based on religious values, social needs, and relatively strong multi-stakeholder support.

3.3. Implementation of Religious Education Policies in the Quran Reading and Writing Learning Program in Prabumulih City

The formal implementation of religious education policies within the Al-Qur'an Reading and Writing Program (BTQ) in Prabumulih City is based on Prabumulih Mayoral Regulation Number 42 of 2016. This regulation affirms that Al-Qur'an literacy is a binding part of regional education policy, including making Al-Qur'an literacy certificates a prerequisite for certain levels of education. This policy demonstrates that religious education is positioned not merely as a pedagogical matter but also as a political instrument of regional policy in developing the religious character of the younger generation through formal and non-formal education.

In terms of technical implementation, the BTQ program is implemented in a structured manner in schools, involving Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers who have received special training in Al-Qur'an literacy. BTQ lessons are held one hour before Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lessons begin, focusing on Tajweed, *Makhrāj* (recitation of the Koran), Arabic script, and memorization of the 30th

chapter of the Quran. The learning method used is considered adaptive and does not burden students, even providing incentives in the form of additional PAI practice points for students who achieve memorization targets (Haidir et al., 2023). This demonstrates that the policy does not stop at regulation but is translated into concrete pedagogical practices (Rambe et al., 2020).

When analyzed using George C. Edward III's policy implementation model (in Widodo, 2011), the implementation of BTQ in Prabumulih is influenced by several key variables: communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure. In terms of communication, obstacles remain in the equitable dissemination of policy information to teachers and parents. The Head of the Prabumulih City Student Association (DMI) emphasized, "Teachers often do not receive complete information regarding the technical mechanisms of BTQ implementation in schools." This shows that cross-sector communication is a crucial factor in the successful implementation of religious education policies.

In terms of resources, the implementation of the BTQ program is highly dependent on budget availability, teaching staff, and infrastructure. The local government has provided training for BTQ teachers and provided learning media, but there are still gaps in facilities between schools, particularly between public and private schools, and schools in outlying areas. A member of the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) stated, "We highlight implementation challenges, such as the disparity in facilities and the need for additional BTQ teachers in outlying areas." This situation confirms that budgetary policy plays a crucial role in supporting the sustainability of religious education policies.

From an educational bureaucratic perspective, the Prabumulih City Education and Culture Office plays a central role in coordinating the implementation of the BTQ program. The Head of the Office emphasized, "The Al-Quran Reading and Writing Program... is a commitment by the local government to strengthen the morals of the younger generation." Implementation is carried out through the development of standard operating procedures (SOPs), teacher training, and coordination with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and partner institutions such as the Indonesian Center for Religious Education (BKPRMI). However, it is acknowledged that there are still challenges in consistent implementation and the availability of infrastructure in some schools.

In the context of new student admissions, the BTQ policy also serves as a selection tool and standardization of students' religious abilities. Top schools tend to be more stringent, requiring certificates and Al-Qur'an literacy tests. While middle- to lower-quality schools still accept students without certificates, they require further guidance and certification exams. Parents are involved through a written statement of commitment to accompany their children in Al-Qur'an learning, demonstrating the expansion of policy responsibility to the family and community.

The participation of non-state actors, such as religious leaders, religious study groups (Majelis Taklim), religious teachers (Ustaz) at the Islamic Religious Education Center (TPQ), and the community, is a crucial supporting factor in the implementation of this religious education policy. The Chairperson of the Forum Majelis Taklim Prabumulih stated, "We fully support this program, but implementation is uneven, and outreach to parents is still lacking." This finding suggests that despite the strong legitimacy of the policy, its effectiveness depends heavily on community participation and collective awareness of the policy's objectives.

Overall, the implementation of religious education through the Al-Qur'an Reading and Writing Program in Prabumulih City reflects the synergy between regulations, educational practices, and regional political interests. This program serves not only as an educational policy but also as a symbol of the local government's commitment to religious politics. Despite facing challenges in the form of limited resources, communication, the influence of entertainment technology, and the socio-economic conditions of parents, support from various actors—government, legislature, religious leaders, schools, and the community—is the main capital so that the BTQ program can run substantively, sustainably, and have an impact on the formation of the religious character of students in Prabumulih City.

3.4. Challenges and supporting factors in the implementation of the Al-Quran reading and writing program in Prabumulih City

The study's findings reveal a number of trends that can be seen as factors supporting or hindering local governments' efforts to enforce policies to teach their citizens to read and write the Quran. Here are some specific details about these factors:

- 1) Regional government budget allocation (APBD) for Al-Qur'an literacy activities. Several regions allocate funds for Al-Qur'an literacy activities, which are operationally allocated for evaluation and certification exams for Al-Qur'an literacy skills; rewards and incentives for teachers; the establishment of learning centers such as TPQ (Islamic Quran Religious Education Center), TPA (Islamic Senior High School), Madrasah Diniyah (Islamic Madrasah), and the provision of learning resources and media. In these regions, Al-Qur'an literacy learning activities take place effectively, both within the community and through formal channels. The regional government budget allocation (APBD) for Al-Qur'an literacy education activities remains very low, and is generally drawn from the budget allocations for education development, public welfare (Kesra), and mental and spiritual development. Similarly, support for media and learning resources still relies heavily on community self-help.
- 2) Involvement and Participation of Human Resources (HR) at the Ministry of Religious Affairs offices in the regions. In all regions that have issued policies on Al-Qur'an reading and writing, the inclusive role of religious education teachers, religious education teacher supervisors, religious instructors, and staff from the Ministry of Religious Affairs in the regions is very prominent. Generally, they are the teaching staff who teach Al-Qur'an reading and writing in schools and outside of school. Islamic Religious Education Teacher Supervisors are also involved in policy monitoring and evaluation activities, which are carried out in parallel with their official duties as supervisors. They submit reports to the head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs office and to the Al-Qur'an reading and writing implementation team in the regions.
- 3) School Participation. Al-Qur'an reading and writing activities are officially and regularly included in extracurricular activities. Islamic religious education classes do not include Al-Qur'an reading and writing; instead, these lessons take place outside of regular school hours. As an additional criterion for accepting new students, schools routinely and flexibly require certificates proving students' proficiency in Al-Qur'an reading and writing. Schools will offer additional classes outside of school hours to assist children who still have difficulty reading and writing the Quran.
- 4) Challenges of technology, information media, and entertainment. Some parents complain that their children don't learn to read and write the Quran when there's an interesting television show. Their children prefer to watch television and postpone their lessons. A similar situation is experienced by religious teachers (ustadz). According to the ustadz, some children miss Al-Qur'an reading and writing lessons on certain days because of an interesting television program. However, the ustadz believes that these children are still willing and ready to continue learning.
- 5) Parents' mental attitude and economic situation. Some parents whose children are still not fluent and have not yet received a Al-Qur'an reading and writing certificate sign a statement of commitment and willingness before the school principal or Islamic religious teacher to guide their children until they are proficient. However, parents' busy schedules prevent them from diligently supervising their children's Al-Qur'an reading and writing.
- 6) Community participation. Most cases encountered at the research sites indicate that the provision of learning spaces, resources, and learning media is provided voluntarily by the community. Some teachers also stated that they teach Al-Qur'an reading and writing not solely because they receive incentives or assignment letters from the government or the school. Some teachers stated that they have been teaching Al-Qur'an reading and writing since before the implementation of the Al-Qur'an reading and writing policy in the area. Several school

principals also stated that the obligation to learn the Quran for students had been implemented before the issuance of the local government policy. They argued that without the local government policy on Al-Qur'an reading and writing, Al-Qur'an reading and writing activities could have been carried out smoothly.

3.5. Political Implications of Religious Education of the Al-Qur'an Reading and Writing Learning Program in Prabumulih City

Education is fundamentally not solely the responsibility of the government but also requires the active involvement of the wider community. This awareness is growing with the understanding that improving the quality of education cannot be achieved without collaboration between the government, schools, parents, and the community (Basri & Chasanah, 2023). Community participation extends beyond financial support to include involvement in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of education policies. However, research findings indicate that the role of parents and guardians remains limited and focuses more on financial aspects than on substantive contributions to the formulation of educational goals (Hartati & Supriyoko, 2020).

In this context, School-Based Management (SBM) is seen as a strategic approach to improving the quality of education through broader community involvement. SBM emphasizes decentralized education management, school empowerment, and participatory decision-making involving teachers, parents, students, and the community (Saputra, 2021; Ilham & Syamsuddin, 2021). This model is expected to erode the outdated view that schools and the government must bear the entire burden of education, while simultaneously positioning schools as the primary actors of change (Nurkholis, 2006).

Theoretically, SBM is understood as a framework that encourages school autonomy, community involvement in planning, partnerships, and efficient collaboration between principals and teachers (Abu, 2002; Danim, 2007). This approach also allows schools to have a greater say in resource management, including personnel, funding, and infrastructure (Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1994). Thus, SBM is oriented not only toward school performance but also toward school accountability to the community (Emzir, 2010).

The implementation of SBM in the Al-Qur'an Reading and Writing Program (BTQ) in Prabumulih City demonstrates collaborative practices between the local government, schools, and the community. The Prabumulih City Government requires educational units to submit funding proposals accompanied by a budget plan (RAB), which is prepared through participatory planning involving teachers, school committees, parents, and the surrounding community. This mechanism demonstrates that the BTQ program is not merely top-down but integrated with participatory school governance.

The role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) supervisors is also crucial in maintaining program accountability. PAI supervisors conduct surveys and verification at madrasahs to ensure the validity of participation data and the use of grant funds (Sumiyati, 2022). In addition to being involved in proposal preparation, PAI supervisors also review accountability reports (SPJ), ensuring that collaboration between religious education stakeholders remains maintained within a transparent and open management framework (Wiratno, 2016).

Interviews with officials from the Prabumulih City Education and Culture Office, MUI figures, the Majelis Taklim Forum, and members of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) indicate that the BTQ Program is viewed as a political education policy rooted in the needs of the religious community. The local government acts as a policy initiator, prioritizing religious character education through a collaborative approach, while religious leaders provide moral legitimacy and serve as strategic partners in policy implementation. Community participation is considered crucial for building public trust and maintaining the program's legitimacy.

From a regulatory perspective, Prabumulih Mayoral Regulation No. 42 of 2016 was drafted collaboratively in accordance with statutory provisions and serves as the formal basis for the BTQ Program's implementation. This policy reflects the local government's political will to strengthen religious education as part of human resource development. The implications of this policy are clearly

evident in strengthening religious educational institutions, particularly in efforts to address Al-Qur'an illiteracy and strengthen students' faith and piety (Ismail & Fahrudin, 2021).

The strengthening of religious education institutions is also influenced by ideological and historical considerations, where Islamic education is seen as having a strategic position in Indonesian society (Ismail, 2018a). The Prabumulih City Government has demonstrated its appreciation for the sustainability of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and Islamic schools (*madrasah diniyah*) as vehicles for regional development. Although it lacks direct control over their management, this policy attention provides moral and institutional support for the sustainability of religious education amidst social and technological change.

In addition to institutional strengthening, the BTQ policy has resulted in improved learning processes and outcomes. Improvements have been made to the curriculum, teacher professionalism, learning management, and evaluation of learning outcomes (Gemnafle & Batlolona, 2021). Principals act as learning leaders, encouraging teachers to implement effective learning strategies, while teachers are positioned as central actors in instilling values and building educational quality (Haryati & Rochman, 2012; Sakdiah, 2019).

Practically, the policy's impact is seen in improving teacher competency through regular training, providing learning resources, strengthening collaborative learning evaluations, and improving educational administration. Schools have become more disciplined in documenting their curriculum, finances, and learning processes. Thus, Prabumulih Mayoral Regulation No. 42 of 2016 focuses not only on improving Al-Qur'an literacy but also on developing a religious, moral, and qualified generation, while simultaneously making schools a strategic instrument for community development (Junaidi, 2019).

4. CONCLUSION

The dynamics of religious politics within the Al-Qur'an Reading and Writing (BTQ) Program in Prabumulih City demonstrate the close relationship between the community's spiritual needs and the local government's political strategy. This policy, institutionalized through Prabumulih Mayoral Regulation No. 42 of 2016, emerged from the intersection of community religious aspirations, local political interests, and the roles of religious elites and religious organizations. The BTQ Program not only aims to improve students' Al-Qur'an literacy but also serves as a symbolic political instrument to strengthen government legitimacy within the religious community. Its implementation is carried out through the integration of BTQ into the school curriculum, the establishment of a Al-Qur'an literacy certificate as a specific administrative requirement, and collaboration with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Indonesian Center for Religious Affairs (BKPRMI), and formal and non-formal educational institutions. Based on George C. Edwards III's policy implementation theory, the program's success is influenced by relatively effective policy communication, the availability of resources, the disposition of implementers aligned with the community's religious values, and a coordinated bureaucratic structure.

Theoretically, the case study of the BTQ Program in Prabumulih provides an important contribution to the development of studies on the implementation of religious education policies. The findings of this study confirm that religion-based education policies cannot be separated from the local social, cultural, and political context. The legitimacy of religious values has been shown to function as a factor strengthening public acceptance and commitment to policy implementers, thus enriching the understanding of implementation theory, which has traditionally emphasized administrative and technical aspects. Thus, the Prabumulih case demonstrates that integrating religious values into public policy can increase implementation effectiveness while strengthening the relationship between the state and society in the field of religious education.

The implications of the BTQ Program encompass religious, social, and educational aspects. However, this study has limitations due to its focus on a single region and a qualitative approach. Therefore, policymakers in other regions can learn from the importance of designing religious education policies that are contextual, collaborative, and responsive to local values. Further research is

recommended to conduct comparative studies across regions and longitudinal research to assess the program's long-term impact on improving Al-Qur'an literacy and developing students' religious character, thus providing a more comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of religious education policies in Indonesia.

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