

| 05/05/2026 | 15/06/2026 | 29/07/2026 |

MADRASAH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AT THE MINISTRY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS OF SOUTH HALMAHERA REGENCY, NORTH MALUKU PROVINCE

Madrasah Development Strategy at the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office of South Halmahera Regency, North Maluku Province

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Abstract:

This research aims to analyze the existing conditions of madrasas, identify internal and external factors that affect their development, evaluate development strategies implemented by the Ministry of Religion of South Halmahera Regency, and formulate madrasah development strategies that are adaptive to the characteristics of the archipelago. The research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies of seven categories of informants, namely the Head of the Office of the Ministry of Religion of South Halmahera Regency, the Head of the Madrasah Education Section, the Chairman of the Madrasah Supervisory Working Group, the head of the madrasah, teachers, the chairman of the madrasah committee, as well as community leaders and religious leaders. The data were analyzed thematically through the process of reduction, categorization, interpretation, and conclusion drawing with validity tests using triangulation of sources, techniques, and time. The results of the study show that the development of madrassas in South Halmahera Regency still faces a significant gap between public and private madrassas as well as between madrassas in the central government area and remote island areas. The geographical factor of the archipelago is the most dominant external determinant, while low human resource competence, weak data-based governance, limited funding, and lack of optimal use of digital technology are the main obstacles in the internal aspect. The development strategies that have been implemented include strengthening the curriculum and learning, improving the competence of educators and education personnel, developing facilities and infrastructure, strengthening institutional governance, and partnerships with the community. This study formulates a madrasah development strategy based on archipelago characteristics through an *equitable digitalization* approach that integrates strengthening human resource capacity, data-based governance, policy affirmation for 3T areas, and multi-stakeholder collaboration to realize adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable madrasah development.

Keywords: Madrasah development strategy; education governance; equitable digitalization; archipelago; Ministry of Religious Affairs.

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1. Introduction

Education is one of the fundamental pillars in the development of quality human resources. In the context of Indonesia as a country with a majority Muslim population, madrassas have a strategic role in shaping a generation that not only excels academically, but also has strong Islamic character and values. Madrassas as formal Islamic educational institutions have become an integral part of the national education system since the enactment of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System which places madrassas on an equal footing with public schools. The strategic role of madrassas in improving the quality of Islamic education while strengthening character development has been the focus of various international studies on the transformation of Islamic education and the governance of religious educational institutions (Huda et al., 2023; Suhayib & Ansyari, 2023).

The history of the development of madrassas in Indonesia shows that there has been a significant institutional transformation. Madrasah which was initially more oriented towards traditional religious education has now developed into a modern educational institution that integrates Islamic sciences with general science, technology, and 21st century competencies. These changes are a form of adaptation to global developments without eliminating the identity and values of Islam as the main character of the madrasah. Various studies show that the modernization of Islamic education is an important factor in increasing the competitiveness of graduates while strengthening the contribution of madrasahs to the development of national education (Mudiono & Mudzakkir, 2025; Huda et al., 2023).

In the era of globalization and the Industrial Revolution 4.0, madrassas face increasingly complex challenges. Competition between educational institutions is no longer only determined by institutional identity, but also by the quality of learning, teacher competence, leadership of madrasah heads, organizational governance, learning innovation, and the use of digital technology. Therefore, madrasahs need adaptive and sustainable development strategies to be able to produce competitive graduates at the national and international levels. Recent research shows that educational leadership, organizational capacity, and institutional innovation are key determinants of successful school transformation in the face of changing global environments (Hallinger, 2023; Bush, 2025).

South Halmahera Regency is one of the districts in North Maluku Province that has the geographical characteristics of an archipelago with a high level of complexity in the implementation of education. The area consisting of a cluster of islands with hilly topography and separated by the sea causes accessibility, resource distribution, and equitable distribution of educational services to be the main challenges. This condition not only affects the effectiveness of supervision and guidance of madrasahs, but also has an impact on the quality of the implementation of Islamic education in various regions. Various studies show that geographical characteristics are one of the factors that affect the equitable distribution of the quality of education, especially in archipelagic and remote areas that face limited infrastructure, transportation, and access to quality education services (UNESCO, 2023; OECD, 2023).

Based on data from the Office of the Ministry of Religion of South Halmahera Regency, there are 96 madrasahs consisting of 31 Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), 47 Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs), and 18 Madrasah Aliyah (MA). Of these, around 91.67% are private madrasahs, while only 8.33% have state status. The dominance of private madrasahs shows the large contribution of the community in the implementation of Islamic education, but at the same time presents challenges in the equitable distribution of quality between educational units. The results of field observations show that there is a quality gap between madrasahs in urban areas and madrasahs in island and remote areas. Madrasahs in the center of the sub-district generally have better access to educators, learning facilities, information technology, and institutional development, while madrasahs in remote areas still face limitations in these aspects. This condition indicates that the madrasah development strategy in South Halmahera Regency needs to be prepared based on geographical characteristics and local needs so that the equitable distribution of the quality of education can be realized.

In addition to geographical factors, the development of madrasahs in South Halmahera Regency is also influenced by limited human resources and educational infrastructure. There are still madrasah teachers who have not met the academic qualifications as mandated in Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, while opportunities to participate in continuous professional training and development are not evenly distributed. On the other hand, some madrasahs still face limitations in learning spaces, libraries, laboratories, as well as adequate information technology facilities and internet access. In fact, the transformation of education in the digital era requires the availability of competent human resources and the support of technology-based learning infrastructure. Recent research shows that the success of technology-based education transformation in archipelagic and remote areas is largely determined by strengthening educator capacity, institutional governance, and the foundation of educational infrastructure (Bush, 2025; Sapiyah et al., 2025). Therefore, a comprehensive, adaptive, and sustainable madrasah development strategy is needed to be able to answer geographical challenges while improving the quality of Islamic education in South Halmahera Regency.

Based on the description of the research background, the development of madrasahs in South Halmahera Regency still faces various problems related to institutional conditions, the quality of human resources, limited facilities and infrastructure, and geographical challenges as an archipelagic area. On the other hand, the Ministry of Religion as a madrasah supervisory agency has implemented various strategies to improve the quality of madrasahs, but the effectiveness of its implementation still needs to be studied in depth. Therefore, this research is focused on answering several problems, namely: (1) how the existing condition of madrasahs under the guidance of the Ministry of Religion of South Halmahera Regency and the internal and external factors that affect its development; (2) how the madrasah development strategy that has been implemented by the Ministry of Religion of South Halmahera Regency along with the obstacles and challenges faced in its implementation; and (3) how to develop ideal, adaptive, and sustainable madrasah development strategies to be implemented in order to improve the quality of madrasahs in South Halmahera Regency, North Maluku Province.

In line with the formulation of the problem, this study aims to obtain a comprehensive overview of the madrasah development strategy in South Halmahera Regency. In particular, this study aims to analyze the existing conditions of madrasahs along with the internal and external factors that affect their development, analyze the madrasah development strategy that has been implemented by the Ministry of Religion of South Halmahera Regency along with the obstacles and challenges in its implementation, and formulate an ideal, adaptive, and sustainable madrasah development strategy based on the results of the analysis of existing conditions, internal and external factors, and the dynamics of policy implementation. The resulting strategy is expected to be a recommendation for the Ministry of Religion of South Halmahera Regency in developing more effective policies to improve the quality and competitiveness of madrasahs in accordance with the characteristics of the archipelago in North Maluku Province.

2. Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative research method with a case study approach. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the madrasah development strategy implemented by the Ministry of Religion of South Halmahera Regency, North Maluku Province. Through this approach, the researcher seeks to comprehensively reveal the existing conditions of madrasahs, internal and external factors that affect their development, the strategies that have been implemented, and the various obstacles and challenges faced in their implementation. The case study approach is used because this research focuses on one specific case, namely the madrasah development strategy under the guidance of the Ministry of Religion of South Halmahera Regency, so that it is possible to conduct an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon researched in a real-life context (Yin, 2018). This research was carried out at the Office of the Ministry of Religion of South Halmahera Regency, North Maluku Province along with several Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs), and Madrasah Aliyah (MA) which were under his guidance for three months, from November 2025 to January 2026. Data collection was carried out through *in-depth interviews*, observations, and documentation studies. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to purposively selected informants, namely the Head of the Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Head of the Madrasah Education Section, madrasah supervisors, madrasah heads, teachers, and other parties related to the development of madrasahs. Observations were carried out to obtain a clear picture of the condition of the madrasah, the management process, and the implementation of development programs, while the documentation study was used to collect various documents related to policies, institutional data, madrasah profiles, program reports, and other supporting documents. Furthermore, the data was analyzed using the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) which included three stages, namely *data condensation*, *data display*, and *conclusion drawing and verification*. To ensure the validity of the data, this study applies source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation, as well as member *checking* informants so that the data obtained has a level of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability that can be scientifically accounted for.

3. Results and Discussion

South Halmahera Regency is one of the districts in North Maluku Province that has the characteristics of an archipelago with an area spread across large and small islands, such as Bacan Island, Obi, Kasiruta, Kayoa, Makian, as well as the West Gane and East Gane areas. These geographical conditions cause the implementation of public services, including madrasah education, to face different challenges compared to the mainland. Inter-regional access is highly dependent on sea transportation, so distance, weather conditions, and high logistics costs are the main obstacles in the equitable distribution of education services. Based on the results of interviews with the Head of the Office of the Ministry of Religion of South Halmahera Regency and the Head of the Madrasah Education Section, the main challenges in the development of madrasahs in this area include aspects of accessibility, connectivity, and retention of human resources, which have an impact on the distribution of teachers, the provision of facilities and infrastructure, and the quality of educational services in the archipelago.

The Office of the Ministry of Religion of South Halmahera Regency as a vertical agency of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia has a strategic role in the development and development of public and private madrasahs through the Madrasah Education Section (Pendis) and the Supervisory Working Group (Pokjawas). In the Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) for

2025–2029 (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024), the direction of madrasah development is focused on the realization of superior madrasahs, with Islamic character, global competitiveness, and based on local wisdom. The policy is realized through improving the quality of education, strengthening character education and religious moderation, equitable access to education for 3T areas, and strengthening data-based governance through optimizing the EMIS and Simpatika systems. Various achievements have shown positive developments, including increasing public interest in madrasahs, improving the quality of private madrasah accreditation, and improving the management of education data as a basis for policy formulation.

This research obtained data from seven informants representing elements of policy makers, supervisors, and implementers of madrasah education. The informants consisted of the Head of the Office of the Ministry of Religion of South Halmahera Regency, the Head of the Madrasah Education Section, the Chairman of the Madrasah Supervisory Working Group, the Head of MTs Negeri 2 South Halmahera, teachers, the chairman of the madrasah committee, and local religious leaders. The diversity of informants provides a comprehensive perspective on the madrasah development strategy, starting from the level of policy formulation to its implementation in educational units. Field data obtained through case studies at MTs Negeri 2 South Halmahera is used as a complement to understand more deeply the dynamics of the implementation of madrasah development strategies in the context of the South Halmahera Regency archipelago.

3.1. Existing Conditions of Madrasah and Internal-External Factors Affecting Its Development

The existing condition of madrasahs in South Halmahera Regency shows that in terms of quantity, madrasah educational institutions have developed quite well, but their distribution faces challenges that are typical as an archipelagic area. Based on the results of an interview with the Head of the Madrasah Education Section, Anca Sangaji, madrasahs in South Halmahera Regency are dominated by private madrasahs spread from urban areas on Bacan Island to remote island areas such as Obi, Kasiruta, Kayoa, as well as West Gane and East Gane. This spread causes accessibility to be a major challenge because inter-island transportation is highly dependent on sea routes with high logistics costs. As a result, madrasahs in the center of government have faster development than madrasahs in remote areas that still require policy affirmation, both in terms of funding and educational services. This condition shows that geographical factors are external factors that greatly affect the success of madrasah development in South Halmahera Regency.

From the aspect of human resources, the results of the study show that the academic quality of teachers in general has met national standards. More than 85% of madrasah teachers have qualified Strata One (S1) according to the mandate of Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers. The findings were strengthened by the Chairman of the Madrasah Supervisory Working Group (Pokjawas) who stated that most of the teachers he fostered had S1 qualifications and around 70-80% already had an educator certificate. Nevertheless, there is still a competency gap, especially in the mastery of information technology, the implementation of active learning, and the equal distribution of opportunities to participate in education and training. Teachers working in urban areas have greater access to competency improvement programs than teachers working in island areas. These findings indicate that the quality of human resources as an internal factor has developed positively, but is still influenced by external factors in the form of limited access to professional development programs.

The condition of madrasah accreditation also shows that there is a disparity between state madrasahs and private madrasahs. State madrasahs in general have obtained accreditation titles of A and B, while most private madrasahs are still ranked B and C, even some new madrasahs have not obtained accreditation status. According to the research informant, the main obstacle faced by private madrasahs does not lie in the quality of the learning process, but in the limitations of fulfilling the Standards of Facilities and Infrastructure as well as the Standards of Educators and Education Personnel as required in the accreditation instrument. This condition shows that the achievement of institutional quality is not only determined by the quality of learning, but also influenced by the ability of madrasahs to meet national standards of education as a whole. Thus, accreditation is an important indicator that describes the relationship between the internal capacity of the madrasah and policy support and funding from the government.

The results of the study also show that the condition of madrasah facilities and infrastructure still shows a significant gap. State madrasahs generally have relatively complete facilities because they receive financing support through the State Budget, SBSN and Special Allocation Funds (DAK), so that representative learning rooms, computer laboratories, and other supporting facilities are available. On the other hand, most private madrasahs, especially those in islands and remote areas, still face limitations in classrooms, libraries, information technology devices, and internet access. The findings are strengthened by the results of field supervision which show that the basic facilities of state madrasahs are relatively adequate, while private madrasahs still need to improve learning support facilities. This condition confirms that the development of madrasahs in South Halmahera Regency is influenced by the interaction between internal factors in the form of institutional capacity and madrasah management with external factors in the form of geographical conditions, government policies, and education financing support.

The findings of the study show that the development of madrasahs in South Halmahera Regency cannot be separated from the characteristics of the archipelago which are the dominant external factors in the implementation of education. The perspective of

education management explains that geographical conditions are one of the determinants of the strategic environment (*external environment*) that affect the effectiveness of educational organizations (Bush, 2020). Limited access to sea transportation, high logistics costs, and long distances between regions have an impact on the distribution of teachers, the equitable distribution of infrastructure, and the effectiveness of academic supervision. Thus, the strategy for the development of madrasahs in the archipelago cannot be equated with the mainland, but requires an affirmative policy that takes into account the geographical characteristics and the level of affordability of educational services.

In the aspect of human resources, the results of the study show that the academic qualifications of teachers have met the minimum national standards, but the equitable distribution of professional competencies is still a challenge. These findings are in line with *capacity building theory* which emphasizes that the improvement of the quality of education is not only determined by the level of formal education of teachers, but also by the sustainability of professional development, training, mentoring, and teacher learning communities (Fullan, 2020). Therefore, the madrasah development strategy needs to be directed at equitable access to digital-based training and continuous mentoring for teachers on duty in the archipelago so that the competency gap between regions can be minimized.

The difference in accreditation achievement between public madrasahs and private madrasahs shows that the success of madrasah development is greatly influenced by institutional capacity and resource support. From the perspective of the National Education Standards, accreditation is a quality assurance instrument that comprehensively assesses the fulfillment of eight education standards (Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 38 of 2023). The findings of the study indicate that the low accreditation of private madrasahs is more due to the limited infrastructure and education personnel than the quality of the learning process. This shows the need for more proportionate government policies in providing facility assistance, strengthening governance, and accreditation assistance for private madrasahs, so that the gap in quality between types of madrasahs can be reduced.

Overall, the results of the study show that the madrasah development strategy in South Halmahera Regency must be built through a systemic approach by paying attention to internal and external factors at the same time. Internal factors include the quality of human resources, the leadership of madrasah heads, institutional governance, and quality culture, while external factors include the geographical conditions of the archipelago, government policy support, education financing, and community participation. These findings are in line with the *systems thinking* approach in education management which views that the success of the development of educational institutions is the result of the interaction of various components that affect each other (Senge, 2006). Therefore, the development of madrasahs in South Halmahera Regency requires synergy between the Ministry of Religious Affairs, local governments, the community, and educational units so that the equitable distribution of the quality of madrasah education can be realized in a sustainable manner.

3.2. Madrasah Development Strategies that Have Been Implemented and Obstacles and Challenges in Their Implementation

The strategy for the development of madrasahs in South Halmahera Regency in the aspects of curriculum and learning is directed at the implementation of the Independent Curriculum which is adjusted to the characteristics of the archipelago. Based on the results of an interview with the Head of the Madrasah Education Section, the strategy implemented no longer uses a uniform approach (*one-size-fits-all*), but is based on regional clusters, namely Bacan, Obi, Gane, and Kayoa. Each madrasah is encouraged to develop a Educational Unit Operational Curriculum (KOSP) that is contextual with local potential through the development of the Pancasila and Rahmatan lil 'Alamin Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5RA), especially on the themes of maritime, environment, and local entrepreneurship. In addition, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of South Halmahera Regency implements a learning digitization strategy through an *offline to online integration* model for madrasahs in areas with limited internet networks. At the education unit level, the implementation of the strategy is realized through the Madrasah Literacy Movement (GALATAMA) program, the use of the *Problem Based Learning* (PBL) model, and the use of artificial intelligence technology (*Artificial Intelligence*) as a learning medium, although it still faces limitations of supporting devices such as LCD projectors and internet networks.

The human resource development strategy is focused on equitable distribution of teacher competency improvement through a decentralized training approach. Based on the results of the interviews, teacher development is no longer centered in the district capital, but is carried out through the establishment of competency development zoning in the Bacan, Obi, Gane, and Makian-Kayoa areas. This strategy is supported by strengthening the Teacher Working Group (KKG), the Subject Teacher Conference (MGMP), and the *resource sharing program* through the assignment of outstanding teachers from the supervisory madrasahs to assist teachers in madrasahs in the archipelago. In addition, the placement of PPPK teachers and civil servants is prioritized in madrasahs that experience a shortage of educators in the 3T area. In terms of academic supervision, supervision is carried out periodically, although the frequency of direct visits to the archipelago is still limited due to high transportation costs and

geographical conditions. Teachers are also encouraged to take part in various online trainings organized by the Ministry of Religion and the Education and Training Center as an alternative to sustainable competency development.

In terms of facilities and infrastructure, the development strategy is directed at equitable access to educational facilities by taking into account the geographical characteristics of the archipelago. The priority of facility development is based on EMIS and SIMSARPRAS data so that government assistance is more targeted based on the real needs of each madrasah. For areas that have not been reached by the electricity grid, the government has begun to develop the provision of alternative energy in the form of solar panels and satellite-based internet as a solution to the limitations of digital infrastructure. At the madrasah level, some facilities such as computer laboratories, science laboratories, libraries, prayer rooms, and learning rooms have been available and used in the learning process. However, the increase in the number of students causes the need for learning rooms, reading corners, information technology devices, and other learning support facilities to be a development priority.

Strengthening management, governance, and financing is carried out through the implementation of a data-based management system and accountability. All madrasahs are directed to use the e-RKAM application which is compiled based on the results of the Madrasah Self-Evaluation (EDM), so that the preparation of programs and the use of the budget are more oriented towards fulfilling the National Education Standards. Funding for the development of madrasahs comes from various sources, namely the State Budget through the Ministry of Religion's DIPA, SBSN, deconcentration funds and APBD, contributions from committees and foundations, as well as Islamic philanthropic funds in the form of zakat, infaq, and alms. However, the implementation of the strategy still faces various obstacles, including budget limitations, high development logistics costs, uneven distribution of teachers, limited internet networks, and geographical conditions of the archipelago that affect the effectiveness of supervision, monitoring, and equitable distribution of the quality of madrasah education.

The results of the study show that the madrasah development strategy in South Halmahera Regency has led to an adaptive approach to the characteristics of the archipelago. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum through a cluster-based approach and the development of a contextual Education Unit Operational Curriculum (KOSP) shows that education policies have considered local needs as the basis for improving the quality of learning. This finding is in line with UNESCO (2024) which emphasizes that educational transformation will be effective if the curriculum is developed in a contextual manner, flexible, and able to respond to the social, cultural, and environmental needs of the local community. Strengthening literacy, project-based learning, and the use of digital technology also shows that madrasahs have begun to adapt to the 21st century learning paradigm, although their implementation is still influenced by the limitations of digital infrastructure in the archipelago.

The human resource development strategy shows a paradigm shift from centralistic training to regional-based competency development (*decentralized professional development*). The establishment of KKG and MGMP zoning and the use of online learning are relevant solutions in overcoming the geographical constraints of South Halmahera Regency. These findings are in line with the OECD's (2023) recommendation that improving the quality of education requires a sustainable teacher professional development system that is accessible, and supported by collaboration between teachers. *The resource sharing* program implemented through the coaching madrasah also reflects the practice of *professional learning community* which has been proven to be able to improve teacher competence collectively and accelerate the equitable distribution of education quality.

In terms of facilities and infrastructure, the results of the study show that development policies have applied the principle of geographical justice through the use of EMIS and SIMSARPRAS data as the basis for decision-making. The strategy reflects the implementation of *evidence-based* education governance, where development priorities are determined based on the real needs of each educational unit. Efforts to provide solar panels and satellite internet for madrasahs in remote areas are also a form of policy innovation to reduce the gap in access to educational technology. However, budget limitations and high logistics costs are still the main challenges in the equitable distribution of educational facilities. Findings in other archipelago regions in Indonesia also confirm that the success of technology-based education transformation in remote areas is determined more by stakeholder trust and the strength of the educational foundations — infrastructure, policies, and governance — than the availability of technological tools alone (Sapiah et al., 2025).

From the perspective of education management, the madrasah development strategy in South Halmahera Regency has integrated aspects of planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling through the implementation of e-RKAM and Madrasah Self-Evaluation (EDM). The system strengthens transparency, accountability, and the effectiveness of the use of the budget so that development programs are more oriented towards improving the quality of education. However, this study shows that the success of strategy implementation is still influenced by external factors, such as geographical conditions, financing limitations, teacher distribution, and uneven digital infrastructure. Therefore, the strategy for developing madrasahs in the future requires stronger collaboration between the Ministry of Religious Affairs, local governments, the community, and various stakeholders so that the transformation of the quality of madrasahs in the archipelago can take place in a sustainable manner.

The various obstacles to the implementation of the strategy found in this study show that geographical factors are still the main determinants of the development of madrasas in the archipelago. The limited number of supervisors, high sea transportation costs, low digital connectivity, and uneven distribution of teachers have caused the implementation of academic supervision, teacher competency improvement, and equitable distribution of education quality have not run optimally. This finding is in line with the OECD (2023) which states that geographical disparities are one of the main causes of inequality in the quality of education, especially in remote areas and islands. Therefore, the strategy of equitable distribution of education services requires affirmative policies that take into account regional characteristics and strengthen technology-based support systems.

Overall, the results of the study show that the madrasah development strategy in South Halmahera Regency has moved towards a more adaptive, collaborative, and data-based management model. Various innovations such as the coaching cluster system, digitization of administration through EMIS and e-RKAM, *offline to online* learning, teacher redistribution, and diversification of financing sources are forms of response to the challenges of the archipelago. However, the successful implementation of the strategy requires continuous policy support, human resource capacity building, equitable distribution of digital infrastructure, and strengthening cross-sector partnerships. Thus, the development of madrasas in South Halmahera Regency does not only depend on the internal capacity of madrasas, but also on synergy between the Ministry of Religion, local governments, the community, and the private sector in realizing quality, competitive, and sustainable madrasah education.

3.3. Ideal Madrasah Development Strategy for South Halmahera Regency

The results of the study show that the ideal madrasah development strategy in South Halmahera Regency must be oriented towards transforming the quality of education that is able to answer the challenges of the archipelago. Based on the synthesis of the results of an interview with the Head of the Office of the Ministry of Religion of South Halmahera Regency, the strategy is directed at a paradigm shift from just equal access to accelerating the improvement of the quality of education. The strategy offered includes the development of the Madrasah Island Cyber-Cluster (MICC) as an island-cluster-based digital service center equipped with satellite internet facilities, computer laboratories, and digital learning resource centers that can be used jointly by public and private madrasas. In addition, the Floating Teacher Saruma program was developed, which is a team of core teachers who conduct academic coaching on a regular basis through inter-island visits, as well as the implementation of Integrated Supervisory E-Supervision that utilizes digital technology to strengthen academic and managerial supervision functions without completely relying on face-to-face visits.

The next ideal strategy is the implementation of *affirmative action* policies that are more in favor of madrasas in the archipelago and 3T areas. Based on the results of an interview with the Chairman of the Madrasah Supervisory Working Group, equitable distribution of education quality can only be realized if the government prioritizes budget, increases the intensity of supervision, continues mentoring, and strengthens data-based monitoring systems. Optimizing the use of EMIS as a basis for decision-making is considered very important so that madrasah development policies can be prepared based on the real conditions of each educational unit. Thus, the development strategy is not only oriented towards the equitable distribution of physical assistance, but also on the equitable distribution of the quality of educational services through continuous coaching.

At the level of educational units, the ideal madrasah development strategy also requires strengthening the synergy of all stakeholders. The head of the madrasah expects an increase in support for the provision of facilities and infrastructure as well as the development of teacher and student competencies. Teachers emphasized the importance of providing technology-based learning facilities that are able to support the implementation of innovative learning. On the other hand, the madrasah committee and community leaders consider that the success of madrasah development is highly dependent on collaboration between the government, committees, parents, alumni, the community, and the business world. The use of *corporate social responsibility* programs, especially from the mining, fisheries, and trade sectors that are developing in South Halmahera Regency, is seen as a strategic opportunity to strengthen the financing independence of madrasas. All informants also emphasized that the use of information technology must be balanced with the strengthening of religious education, the formation of moral *karimah*, and the preservation of local wisdom values as the main identity of madrasah education in South Halmahera.

The results of the study show that the ideal madrasah development strategy in South Halmahera Regency must be built through an adaptive approach to the characteristics of the archipelago. The idea of developing Madrasah Island Cyber-Cluster (MICC), Floating Saruma Teachers, and Integrated Supervisory E-Supervision reflects efforts to transform education based on digital innovation as well as equitable distribution of educational services. This strategy is in line with UNESCO (2024) which emphasizes that educational transformation requires innovative leadership, the use of digital technology, and equal access to learning resources so that all students get equal learning opportunities without being influenced by geographical conditions.

The affirmative policy approach recommended in this study shows that equitable distribution of education quality cannot be achieved through uniform policies. Madrasas in the archipelago and 3T areas require special treatment in the form of more proportional budget allocation, increased supervision intensity, teacher redistribution, and continuous mentoring. This finding is in

line with the OECD (2023) which states that a quality education system must be able to provide different support according to the level of needs of each education unit (*equity-based education policy*). Therefore, the use of EMIS data as the basis for policy formulation is a strategic step to ensure that each development program truly answers the real needs of madrasas.

Strengthening synergy between the government, the community, madrasah committees, the business world, and religious leaders is an important component in the ideal madrasah development strategy. The results of the study show that the high public trust in madrasas is social capital that can be developed into productive partnerships, both in the form of moral support, financing, and the development of educational programs. Findings from studies of other archipelagic/remote areas in Indonesia also confirm that the success of technology-based education transformation is greatly influenced by *multi-stakeholder collaboration* between the government, educational institutions, technology providers, and the community, because improving the quality of education is a shared responsibility (Sapiah et al., 2025). In the context of South Halmahera Regency, the potential for partnerships with mining companies, the fisheries sector, and the village government is a strategic opportunity to strengthen the sustainability of madrasah development.

Overall, the ideal madrasah development strategy for South Halmahera Regency is a development model that integrates digital transformation, affirmative policies, data-based governance, human resource strengthening, and multi-stakeholder collaboration while maintaining the characteristics of madrasas as an Islamic educational institution. The strategy not only aims to improve academic quality and institutional governance, but also builds madrasas that are adaptive to technological developments, responsive to the challenges of the archipelago, and able to produce graduates who are superior, have Islamic character, and have global competitiveness without abandoning the values of local wisdom. This development model is expected to be a relevant policy alternative for the development of madrasas in the archipelago, especially in South Halmahera Regency.

4. Conclusion

The existing condition of madrasas in South Halmahera Regency still shows that there is a gap in quality between public madrasas and private madrasas as well as between madrasas in urban areas and island areas. State madrasas generally have better accreditation, infrastructure, and governance, while private madrasas still face limitations in terms of human resources, infrastructure, and compliance with quality standards. The geographical characteristics of the archipelago are factors that reinforce this disparity. Factors that affect the development of madrasas consist of internal and external factors. Internal factors include the quality of human resources, governance, and high public trust in madrasas, while external factors include the geographical condition of the archipelago, limited access to transportation and internet networks, as well as policy support and government financing.

Of all these factors, geographical conditions are the most dominant factor influencing the development of madrasas. The madrasah development strategies that have been implemented include strengthening the curriculum and learning, developing human resources, improving facilities and infrastructure, strengthening data-based management and governance, and developing partnerships with the community. However, its implementation still faces obstacles in the form of budget limitations, uneven distribution of teachers, low digital connectivity, and limited supervision in the archipelago. The ideal madrasah development strategy for South Halmahera Regency is a strategy that is adaptive to the characteristics of the archipelago through digital transformation, affirmative policies for madrasas in the 3T area, strengthening data-based governance, equitable distribution of resources, and collaboration between the Ministry of Religion, local governments, the community, and the business world. This strategy is expected to be able to realize equitable quality and increase the competitiveness of madrasas in a sustainable manner. Overall, this study emphasizes that the development of madrasas in South Halmahera Regency requires an adaptive, affirmative, and data-based strategy, so as to be able to answer the challenges of the archipelago while improving the quality of madrasah education in a sustainable manner.

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