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From Mandate to Acceptance: The Role of Principals and Policy Communication in Islamic School Digitalization

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze policy communication and acceptance in the implementation of school digitalization in Islamic educational institutions (madrasas). This study used a qualitative case study design. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. The results indicate that the acceptance of digitalization policies is significantly influenced by how policy messages are communicated, understood, and interpreted by implementers at the school level. Policy communication is more effective when principals provide clear directions, practical explanations, and ongoing support throughout the implementation process. However, policy acceptance still faces several obstacles, such as limited training, unstable digital infrastructure, and disparities in digital competency among policy implementers. Furthermore, this study found that educational actors in madrasas assess digitalization not only from a technical and efficiency perspective, but also from the perspective of its alignment with Islamic values and school culture. These considerations influence policy acceptance and implementation in the field. The implementation of digitalization in madrasas requires dialogic policy communication, institutional readiness, and leadership capable of bridging policy with contextual educational practices. These findings contribute to the development of digitalization policies in Islamic educational units that are more adaptive and sensitive to local values.

Keywords: *Policy Communication, Policy Acceptance, Madrasah Digitalization*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis komunikasi kebijakan dan penerimaan kebijakan dalam implementasi digitalisasi sekolah pada satuan pendidikan Islam (madrasah). Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerimaan kebijakan digitalisasi sangat dipengaruhi oleh cara pesan kebijakan dikomunikasikan, dipahami, dan diterjemahkan oleh para pelaksana di tingkat sekolah. Komunikasi kebijakan berjalan lebih efektif ketika kepala sekolah memberikan arahan yang jelas, penjelasan yang bersifat praktis, serta pendampingan secara berkelanjutan selama proses implementasi. Namun demikian, penerimaan kebijakan masih menghadapi sejumlah kendala, seperti keterbatasan pelatihan, infrastruktur digital yang belum stabil, serta ketimpangan kompetensi digital di antara pelaksana kebijakan. Selain itu, penelitian ini menemukan

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bahwa aktor pendidikan di lingkungan madrasah tidak hanya menilai digitalisasi dari aspek teknis dan efisiensi, tetapi juga dari kesesuaiannya dengan nilai-nilai Islam dan budaya sekolah. Pertimbangan tersebut memengaruhi penerimaan dan implementasi kebijakan di lapangan. Implementasi digitalisasi di madrasah memerlukan komunikasi kebijakan yang dialogis, kesiapan kelembagaan, serta kepemimpinan yang mampu menjembatani kebijakan dengan praktik pendidikan kontekstual. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan kebijakan digitalisasi pendidikan yang lebih adaptif dan sensitif terhadap nilai lokal di satuan pendidikan Islam.
Kata Kunci: *Komunikasi Kebijakan, Penerimaan Kebijakan, Digitalisasi Madrasah*

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INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation in education has become a fundamental driver of global educational change, reshaping the quality, accessibility, and sustainability of learning systems (Wadi et al., 2023; Bahri & Najiburrahman, 2024; Mukarromah et al., 2025; Mursid et al., 2026). This transformation extends beyond technical innovation and directly influences how educational institutions manage learning processes, administration, and policy communication. UNESCO (2023) emphasizes that technology can expand access and strengthen education systems; however, its effectiveness depends on contextual relevance, institutional readiness, and the socio-cultural environment in which it is implemented. Similarly, the OECD (2023) highlights that an effective digital education ecosystem is not solely determined by digital infrastructure and connectivity but also by coherent governance, organizational capacity, and policy coordination. In this regard, digitalization is no longer merely an administrative option but a strategic component that determines educational quality (Najiburrohman et al., 2026; Rahma et al., 2025; Widat & Kurniawan, 2023). Consequently, the success of digital transformation depends heavily on how policies are communicated, interpreted, and implemented by actors at the school level.

Despite the significant potential of digital transformation in education, its implementation continues to face substantial challenges at the school level. Many educational institutions still experience inadequate digital infrastructure, including unstable internet access, limited technological devices, and fragmented administrative systems. In addition, the uneven distribution of digital competencies among principals, teachers, and administrative staff further constrains effective policy implementation. McCarthy et al. (2023) argue that successful digital transformation requires alignment between policy direction, school leadership, teacher capacity, and everyday institutional practices. In Islamic educational institutions, particularly madrasahs, these challenges are further complicated by the need to align digitalization policies with religious values and institutional culture. As a result, gaps often emerge between top-down policy design and real-world implementation conditions, leading to partial or symbolic adoption rather than substantive transformation. This situation highlights the complexity of policy acceptance in educational digitalization.

Previous studies have examined digitalization in Islamic education from multiple perspectives, particularly focusing on leadership, teacher competence,

and institutional innovation. Tan and Hasman discuss the future-readiness of Islamic education, emphasizing institutional adaptability and value orientation. Ezzani et al. analyze Islamic school leadership through the lens of social justice and moral responsibility. Thohri highlights leadership models required for Islamic schools in the digital era, while Azman et al. examine the impact of digital integration on learning processes in basic Islamic education. Furthermore, Arif et al. emphasize the importance of digital competence among Islamic education teachers, and Shofiyyah et al. highlight innovation in Islamic education management as a key factor for institutional sustainability. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that digitalization in Islamic education has been widely explored from structural, pedagogical, and managerial perspectives.

Although existing studies provide valuable insights, they largely overlook how digitalization policies are communicated, interpreted, and accepted at the school implementation level. Most research tends to focus on structural aspects such as leadership, competence, and institutional readiness rather than on the interpretive processes undertaken by frontline actors. However, Lipsky (2010) argues that policy implementation is fundamentally shaped by street-level bureaucrats, who exercise discretion in interpreting and adapting policies to their working conditions. In Islamic education contexts, this discretion is further influenced by institutional values and religious norms. Schmitz et al. (2023) and Timotheou et al. (2023) also emphasize that digital transformation success depends heavily on how policies are communicated and negotiated within schools. Nevertheless, limited empirical evidence exists on how principals, teachers, and school operators actually interpret and respond to digitalization policies in Islamic educational institutions. This gap highlights the need for a deeper understanding of policy communication and acceptance processes in educational digital transformation.

This study introduces an integrative framework that combines policy communication and policy acceptance to analyze digitalization in Islamic education. Unlike previous research that treats leadership, competence, and innovation as separate analytical domains, this study positions policy acceptance as a central explanatory construct (Adeoye & Ainnubi, 2023; Ratulangi & Piring, 2025; Sartika et al., 2025; Susmiyati, 2025). It integrates the street-level bureaucracy perspective (Lipsky, 2010) with the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) to provide a more comprehensive analytical lens. While TAM emphasizes perceived usefulness and ease of use, in Islamic educational contexts these dimensions are also shaped by institutional values and cultural alignment. OECD (2023) and UNESCO (2023) further reinforce that digital transformation outcomes depend on governance quality, contextual adaptation, and institutional readiness. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its ability to connect policy communication processes, technology acceptance behavior, and Islamic institutional values within a unified analytical framework.

Based on the identified gaps, the main research problem addressed in this study is how policy communication influences policy acceptance in the implementation of digital transformation in madrasahs and Islamic schools. This study argues that the success of digitalization is not determined solely by

technological availability or institutional preparedness, but also by how policies are communicated, understood, and internalized by school actors. Policy acceptance arises from the interaction among communication processes, organizational capacity, leadership practices, and institutional values. Within this framework, school leaders play a crucial role in translating policy directives into practical guidance by clarifying, mentoring, and contextualizing them. Therefore, digitalization should be understood as a socio-technical and interpretive process rather than a purely technical intervention. This study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how digital policies are enacted at the school level in value-based educational systems.

In Islamic educational settings such as madrasahs, digital transformation does not occur under uniform conditions. Variations in infrastructure, organizational capacity, training support, and institutional culture shape how digitalization policies are interpreted and implemented. UNESCO (2023) stresses that technology adoption in education must consider local context, while OECD (2023) highlights the importance of governance and ecosystem readiness in digital transformation. In this regard, madrasahs provide a critical context for examining how global and national digitalization agendas are localized within religious educational institutions. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on policy communication and acceptance as central mechanisms in explaining implementation outcomes. Accordingly, this research aims to analyze how digitalization policies are communicated, interpreted, accepted, and operationalized by principals, teachers, and administrative staff, and the factors influencing these processes. The study is expected to contribute theoretically, empirically, and practically to the development of more adaptive and context-sensitive digital education policies in Islamic educational institutions.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative case study approach to analyze the acceptance of digitalization policies for Islamic education in Samarinda State MI, Samarinda State MTs, and Samarinda State MA. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research aims to gain a deep understanding of how digitalization policies are received, understood, and translated by school principals, teachers, and madrasah operators. According to Creswell & Poth (2016), the qualitative approach allows researchers to collect data more descriptively to understand complex social phenomena in a specific context. The case study approach is also relevant because it enables an in-depth, contextual examination of complex phenomena in real-life settings (Baxter & Jack, 2015; Crowe et al., 2011). Using case studies, this study can map the dynamics of acceptance of digitalization policies across three levels of education in the context of Islamic education. This design supports the analysis of contextual variation, institutional dynamics, and actors' interpretations of policy implementation (Priya, 2021; Rashid et al., 2019).

The research sites were selected using purposive sampling because MI Negeri Samarinda, MTs Negeri Samarinda, and MA Negeri Samarinda represent different levels of Islamic education with distinct organizational structures, administrative needs, and digitalization contexts. The selection aimed not at

statistical representation but at providing a contextual understanding of how digitalization policy communication and acceptance operate across madrasah levels. MI Negeri Samarinda focuses on primary education, emphasizing learning support and teacher guidance; MTs Negeri Samarinda focuses on lower secondary education, emphasizing learning management and administration; while MA Negeri Samarinda focuses on upper secondary education, emphasizing academic management and institutional accountability. This selection enables the study to examine how differences in educational level, institutional capacity, infrastructure readiness, and human resource competence influence policy understanding and acceptance. According to Patton (2015), purposive case selection in qualitative research enables researchers to obtain rich information from cases relevant to the phenomenon under study. The study involved nine key informants consisting of three principals, three teachers, and three madrasah operators selected purposively due to their direct involvement in communicating, implementing, and managing digitalization policies. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation of the implementation of digitalization in learning and administrative activities.

To ensure the validity and credibility of the data, this study uses triangulation by combining multiple data sources and data collection methods. Triangulation was conducted by comparing interview data with observation results and documentation related to the digitalization policies implemented in each school. This procedure follows Denzin's view that triangulation can strengthen data reliability and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Denzin, 2017).

The collected data were then analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis began with data familiarisation, in which the researcher repeatedly read interview transcripts, observation notes, and relevant documents to gain an initial understanding of the data. After that, coding was conducted by marking important words, phrases, statements, and patterns related to the acceptance of digitalization policies, implementation challenges, and factors influencing policy implementation in Islamic madrassas and schools. The codes were then grouped into broader categories based on conceptual similarities, including policy support, teacher readiness, infrastructure limitations, leadership roles, digital literacy, and institutional responses. These categories were further examined and refined to identify major themes that capture the study's central findings. Through this process, thematic analysis enabled the researcher to systematically interpret the data and identify the key patterns underlying the implementation of digitalization policies in Islamic educational institutions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Communication and Understanding of Digitalisation Policy

Communication and understanding of digitalization policy refer to the process through which digital transformation policies are delivered, interpreted, and internalized by school actors in madrasahs, namely principals, teachers, and administrative staff. Operationally, this concept emphasizes clarity, consistency, and contextual understanding of policy messages on digitalization in education.

In this study, understanding is not limited to cognitive awareness of policy content but also includes how actors translate policy objectives into practical actions within administrative and instructional settings. Therefore, policy communication is considered effective when it produces shared understanding among institutional actors and enables the coherent implementation of digitalization programs in daily school practices.

The first interview with the principal of MTs Negeri Samarinda reveals that digitalization is generally understood as an effort to improve educational management and learning efficiency. The principal stated: "We strongly support the digitalization policy, but our biggest obstacle is the lack of training for teachers to use this technology to the fullest. Even though the device already exists, not all teachers feel comfortable using it in the learning process." (Interview with the Head of MTs Negeri Samarinda, 2026). This statement indicates that, at the leadership level, digitalization policy is well received and is understood conceptually as an institutional improvement strategy. However, the interpretation of implementation challenges highlights a gap between policy acceptance and user readiness, particularly in teacher competency and access to training.

The second interview was conducted with a school operator at MAN Samarinda, who explained that digitalization policies are primarily understood as administrative modernization rather than pedagogical transformation. The operator stated that most of the school's digital systems focus on data management, attendance, and reporting. According to the researcher's interpretation, this indicates that operators tend to view digitalization through a technical-administrative lens rather than as a comprehensive educational transformation. This narrow interpretation reflects the functional role of operators, who interact more frequently with system-based tasks than with instructional processes, thereby shaping their understanding of policy in more operational terms.

Observation findings show that principals actively communicate digitalization policies through structured meetings, technical briefings, and informal mentoring sessions with teachers and administrative staff. In addition, schools have implemented several digital platforms for academic administration, student data management, and blended learning support systems. However, teacher engagement varies significantly during implementation activities. According to the researcher's interpretation, this suggests that communication efforts are ongoing but uneven in effectiveness due to differences in digital literacy and individual adaptation capacity among school actors.

Based on the overall data, digitalization policy communication in madrasahs can be restated as a process that has been institutionally disseminated but unevenly internalized at the operational level. While principals demonstrate strong conceptual understanding and commitment, teachers and operators tend to interpret digitalization in terms of functional and practical constraints rather than strategic educational transformation. This condition indicates that policy acceptance is partially achieved at the structural level but still requires strengthening at the behavioral and competency level of implementers.

The data show a consistent gap between policy comprehension at the leadership level and its practical execution at the operational level. Three dominant patterns are identified: (1) high policy acceptance at the principal level, (2) technical-functional interpretation among operators, and (3) implementation constraints among teachers related to training and digital competency. This pattern indicates that communication of digitalization policy is top-down and relatively effective in dissemination, but less effective in generating uniform understanding and readiness across all school actors. Consequently, policy understanding becomes fragmented, which directly influences the consistency and effectiveness of digital transformation in madrasahs.

Policy Acceptance among Principals, Teachers, and School Operators

The sub-finding of policy acceptance refers to the degree to which principals, teachers, and school operators in madrasahs accept, support, and implement digitalization policies in their respective roles. Operationally, policy acceptance in this context is reflected in attitudes, willingness, and behavioral engagement of school actors toward digital transformation initiatives, including administrative systems, instructional practices, and data management. Acceptance is not uniform across roles, as differences in responsibilities, digital competencies, and exposure to technology in daily work practices shape it.

The first interview with a teacher at MA Negeri Samarinda indicates moderate policy acceptance, particularly at the pedagogical level. The teacher stated: "I personally support digitalization, but our learning process in the classroom is still very dependent on traditional methods. We are trained, but it still feels difficult to use digital devices optimally, especially due to the limited time and resources available." (Interview with Teacher of MA Negeri Samarinda, 2026). This statement reflects that teachers acknowledge the importance of digitalization; however, their acceptance is constrained by practical limitations such as time constraints, training effectiveness, and classroom readiness. According to the researcher's interpretation, this indicates a gap between normative acceptance of policy and its actual implementation in teaching practices.

The second interview was conducted with a school operator at MI Negeri Samarinda, who demonstrated a relatively higher level of policy acceptance due to the direct relevance of digital systems to administrative work. The operator stated: "The acceptance of digitalization in our schools is quite good, but existing data management still requires a more integrated system. Sometimes we have difficulty managing existing platforms due to a lack of technical support and frequent system outages." (Interview with School Operator of MI Negeri Samarinda, 2026). From the researcher's interpretation, this indicates that operators tend to accept digitalization more readily because it aligns with their core responsibilities in managing data systems. However, their acceptance is accompanied by operational challenges, particularly related to system stability and technical support.

Observation findings reveal that principals consistently demonstrate high acceptance of digitalization policies by actively promoting their implementation through strategic direction, supervision, and encouragement to staff. Teachers

have begun integrating digital tools into instructional activities, although the intensity and consistency of use vary significantly among individuals. Operators, on the other hand, are more engaged in digital systems due to administrative requirements, yet they frequently encounter technical disruptions and system integration issues. According to the researcher's interpretation, this indicates that acceptance is behaviorally visible across all actors, though with different motivations and levels of consistency.

Based on the overall findings, policy acceptance in madrasahs can be restated as a stratified phenomenon in which principals exhibit strategic acceptance, teachers demonstrate conditional pedagogical acceptance, and operators show functional administrative acceptance. Although all actors generally support digitalization policies, the depth of acceptance differs according to role expectations, competency levels, and practical constraints in implementation.

The emerging pattern shows a clear role-based differentiation in policy acceptance. Principals function as policy drivers with strong strategic commitment, teachers act as adaptive implementers with moderate and conditional acceptance, and operators serve as technical executors with high functional dependence on digital systems. This pattern indicates that policy acceptance in digitalization is not homogeneous but distributed across institutional roles with distinct rationales. Consequently, successful digital transformation in madrasahs requires not only policy endorsement at the leadership level but also sustained capacity building and technical support to ensure consistent acceptance and implementation across all school actors.

Factors Strengthening and Constraining Digitalization Policy Acceptance

Factors that strengthen and constrain digitalization policy acceptance include the conditions, resources, and institutional dynamics that influence how principals, teachers, and school operators accept and implement digitalization policies in madrasahs. Operationally, this concept encompasses enabling factors such as leadership commitment, perceived usefulness of technology, and continuous support, as well as constraining factors such as limited infrastructure, unequal digital competence, and insufficient technical support. These factors collectively shape the extent to which digitalization policies are internalized and translated into practice at the school level, as illustrated in Figure 1.

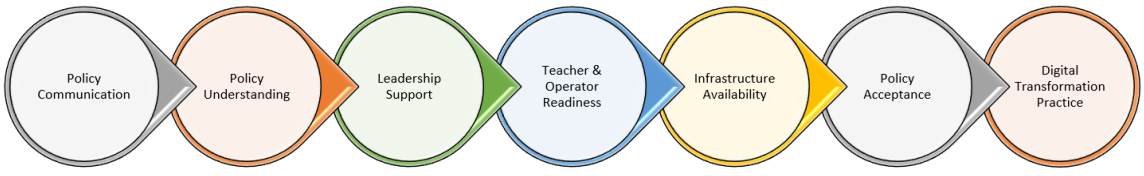

Figure 1. Model of Digitalisation Policy Acceptance in Islamic Education Units

The first interview with the Principal of MTs Negeri Samarinda highlights leadership commitment as a key strengthening factor in policy acceptance. The principal stated: "We continue to strive to facilitate teachers with additional training. Despite the limitations, we believe that digitalization is the future of

education, and we are committed to supporting this transition." (Interview with the Principal of MTs Negeri Samarinda, 2026). This reflects a strong institutional commitment to digital transformation through continuous capacity-building efforts. From the researcher's interpretation, leadership functions not only as a driver of policy acceptance but also as a mediator that bridges policy expectations with teachers' readiness and institutional constraints.

The second interview with the Principal of MA Negeri Samarinda emphasizes infrastructure constraints as a major limiting factor. The principal stated: "We have tried to take advantage of existing devices, but our internet infrastructure has not always been stable. This becomes a big obstacle when students and teachers need a smooth connection for online teaching and learning activities." (Interview with the Principal of MA Negeri Samarinda, 2026). According to the researcher's interpretation, this indicates that even when leadership support is strong, policy acceptance and implementation can still be hindered by infrastructural instability, creating a gap between policy intention and practical implementation.

Observation findings indicate that variations in infrastructure quality, digital devices, and system stability significantly influence the level of acceptance of digitalization policies across madrasahs. Schools with stable internet access and integrated digital platforms demonstrate higher consistency in policy implementation, while schools with weaker infrastructure tend to rely on partial or manual systems. According to the researcher's interpretation, technical readiness plays a critical role in determining whether policy acceptance can be translated into consistent behavioral implementation among school actors.

Based on the overall findings, the data can be summarised as follows: digitalization policy acceptance in Islamic education units is shaped by a dynamic interplay of strengthening and constraining factors. Leadership commitment and continuous training strengthen acceptance, while infrastructure limitations and unequal digital competence constrain implementation consistency. These factors operate simultaneously and determine how policy is interpreted and practiced in madrasahs.

The emerging pattern indicates that digitalization policy acceptance is not a linear process but a multidimensional interaction among leadership, human resource capacity, infrastructure readiness, and perceived usefulness of technology. Strengthening factors are primarily driven by leadership and institutional support, whereas constraining factors are rooted in structural and competency-related limitations. This pattern reinforces the understanding that digital transformation in Islamic education is a context-dependent adaptation process that requires continuous alignment between policy direction and institutional reality.

Discussion

The results of the study show that the acceptance of digitalization policies at MI Negeri Samarinda, MTs Negeri Samarinda, and MA Negeri Samarinda is greatly influenced by the understanding, readiness of human resources, and the infrastructure available in each institution. According to the street-level

bureaucracy theory put forward by Lipsky (2010), Oliveira & Peixoto (2021), and Woltran et al. (2024), the success of policy implementation at the field level is highly dependent on policy implementers, in this case, school principals, teachers, and school operators, who act as interpretation agents. This means that although policies are formally formulated at the central level, their implementation varies significantly depending on how they are interpreted and operationalized at the madrasah level. The findings from interviews indicate that while school actors understand the importance of digitalization, their acceptance is largely shaped by practical considerations such as training availability and infrastructure readiness.

In the context of Islamic education, the acceptance of digitalization policy is shaped not only by technical and organizational factors but also by underlying religious and ethical values embedded in the educational system (Fatrisna et al., 2024; López-Nuñez et al., 2024; Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). Thohri (2022) emphasizes that leadership in Islamic education must balance modernization demands with the preservation of Islamic values. This is reflected in the findings of this study, where principals and teachers acknowledge the importance of digitalization while simultaneously emphasizing the need to maintain moral and religious foundations in educational practices. This indicates that technology acceptance in madrasahs is value-sensitive, where digital transformation is filtered through institutional identity and religious considerations.

The study further demonstrates that school leadership plays a central role in shaping acceptance of digitalization policy. As noted by Brooks and Mutohar, leadership in Islamic education must integrate Islamic values with contemporary educational policy implementation (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018; Fernández-Otoya et al., 2024; Galimova et al., 2024; Gallego Joya et al., 2025; Hong et al., 2021). Principals who demonstrate strong vision, effective communication, and active capacity-building strategies are more successful in reducing resistance and enhancing policy acceptance among teachers and operators. Conversely, limited leadership capacity often leads to fragmented implementation. The interview with the principal of MTs Negeri Samarinda, who stated, "We continue to strive to facilitate teachers with additional training," reflects how leadership commitment serves as a driving force in sustaining digital transformation despite institutional constraints.

One of the major constraints identified in this study is limited infrastructure availability, which significantly affects policy acceptance and implementation. This finding aligns with Patton (2015), who argues that policy success depends not only on planning quality but also on the availability of resources for implementation. In MI Negeri Samarinda, for instance, school operators highlighted that "existing data management still requires a more integrated system," indicating structural limitations in digital infrastructure. These constraints reduce the effectiveness of policy execution and often lead to partial or inconsistent adoption of digital systems. As a result, infrastructural inadequacy becomes a key barrier that shapes the uneven acceptance of digitalization policies across institutions.

Despite these challenges, school actors demonstrate continuous adaptation to digitalization policies. Principals generally show strong acceptance because

they view digitalization as institutional improvement and administrative modernization. However, teachers and operators show differentiated acceptance patterns influenced by their digital competencies, training exposure, and daily operational demands. This indicates that policy acceptance is not a uniform outcome but a gradual and negotiated process shaped by communication, experience, and institutional readiness.

Overall, the findings indicate that digitalization policy acceptance in Islamic education units is shaped by the interaction of leadership support, human resource readiness, infrastructure availability, and the quality of policy communication. While strong leadership enhances acceptance, it is insufficient without adequate infrastructure and sustained capacity-building. Therefore, digitalization in madrasahs should be understood not merely as technological adoption but as a socio-institutional transformation process involving continuous interpretation, negotiation, and adaptation.

This study contributes to the development of the digitalization policy literature in Islamic education by demonstrating that policy acceptance at the madrasah level is not solely determined by technological readiness but emerges from the interaction among leadership practices, institutional culture, and Islamic value systems. The findings extend street-level bureaucracy theory (Lipsky, 2010) by illustrating how madrasah actors actively interpret and negotiate policy directives within a value-laden educational environment rather than merely mechanically implement them.

Furthermore, this study enriches the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) by showing that perceived usefulness and ease of use in Islamic education settings are mediated by religious and ethical considerations, which shape how technology is legitimized within institutional practice. In addition, it contributes to leadership theory in Islamic education by reinforcing the argument that effective digital transformation requires value-based, communicative, and capacity-building leadership.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the acceptance of digitalization policies in Islamic education units is shaped not only by technological availability but also by the interplay of policy communication quality, leadership support, human resource readiness, infrastructure conditions, and institutional culture. Digitalization in madrasahs is therefore not merely a technical implementation process, but a socio-institutional transformation in which policy meaning is constructed through interpretation and interaction among school actors. The findings indicate that principals play a pivotal role in facilitating policy acceptance through strategic direction and continuous support. At the same time, teachers and operators demonstrate varying levels of acceptance influenced by their digital competence, training exposure, and operational constraints. Consequently, effective digital transformation requires dialogical and sustained policy communication that enables shared understanding between policymakers and implementers, rather than top-down procedural instruction. The study contributes to Islamic education management literature by positioning policy communication and policy

acceptance as central explanatory mechanisms in school digitalization. However, its scope is limited to selected madrasahs in Samarinda, suggesting the need for broader comparative and mixed-method studies in future research to examine contextual variations and strengthen generalizability.

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