



## Neglected Pathways: Examining the Central Government's Oversight of Madrasah Development

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### Abstract

This study examines the central government's neglect of madrasah development in the Special Autonomous Region of Aceh, which may hinder the achievement of inclusive and equitable education. While previous research has largely focused on normative and descriptive aspects, this study addresses the overlooked implications of this neglect. The purpose of this research is to analyze and evaluate the forms, factors, and impacts of the central government's neglect of madrasah development in Aceh. A descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design is employed to provide a comprehensive analysis of the issue. The findings indicate that government neglect manifests in several ways, including limited routine funding for curriculum development, resulting in inadequate learning materials and compromised educational quality. Furthermore, madrasah infrastructure has not been prioritized, resulting in insufficient facilities that hinder effective teaching. Additionally, low incentives for madrasah educators have negatively affected their welfare and motivation. These findings underscore the need for more equitable educational policies and highlight the urgency of increasing governmental support for madrasah development, particularly in special autonomous regions. The implications of this research emphasize the importance of addressing these systemic issues to promote quality education and improve the overall well-being of educators and students in the region.

**Keywords:** Educational Disparity, Government Neglect, Madrasah, Special Autonomous Region, Aceh.

### Abstrak

*Studi ini mengkaji pengabaian pemerintah pusat terhadap pengembangan madrasah di Daerah Otonomi Khusus Aceh, yang dapat menghambat pencapaian pendidikan yang inklusif dan berkeadilan. Meskipun penelitian sebelumnya sebagian besar berfokus pada aspek normatif dan deskriptif, studi ini membahas implikasi yang terabaikan dari pengabaian ini. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis dan mengevaluasi bentuk, faktor, dan dampak pengabaian pemerintah pusat terhadap pengembangan madrasah di Aceh. Pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan desain studi kasus digunakan untuk memberikan analisis komprehensif terhadap isu ini. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengabaian pemerintah terwujud dalam beberapa hal, termasuk terbatasnya dana rutin untuk pengembangan kurikulum, yang menyebabkan kurangnya materi pembelajaran dan menurunkan kualitas pendidikan. Lebih lanjut, infrastruktur madrasah belum diprioritaskan, sehingga mengakibatkan kurangnya fasilitas yang menghambat efektivitas pengajaran. Selain itu, rendahnya insentif bagi pendidik madrasah telah berdampak negatif terhadap kesejahteraan dan motivasi mereka.*

*Temuan ini menggarisbawahi perlunya kebijakan pendidikan yang lebih berkeadilan dan menyoroti urgensi peningkatan dukungan pemerintah terhadap pengembangan madrasah, khususnya di daerah otonomi khusus. Implikasi dari penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya mengatasi masalah sistemik ini untuk meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan dan meningkatkan kesejahteraan pendidik dan siswa di wilayah tersebut.*

**Kata Kunci:** Kesenjangan Pendidikan, Kelalaian Pemerintah, Madrasah, Daerah Otonomi Khusus, Aceh.

## INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions play a crucial role in shaping students' character and knowledge, especially when grounded in religious values (Aziz et al., 2025; Miftahuddin et al., 2024; Siswadi et al., 2025). Madrasahs, as religious schools, are pivotal in this process, yet they often experience neglect (Bahruddin et al., 2026; Pamuji, 2025), particularly in regions with special autonomous status. This neglect is evident in several areas, including insufficient funding, lack of prioritization in national development frameworks, and limited infrastructure (Mazele & Amoah, 2021; Neill et al., 2023). (Rahman, 2017), emphasizes that this disregard from the central government not only undermines the quality of education but also jeopardizes the long-term sustainability of religious-based institutions. In special autonomous regions, such as Aceh, this issue becomes even more critical due to the unique political and administrative context in which these institutions operate (Ichwan et al., 2025; Shahabuddin, 2025; Suyanta et al., 2024). The neglect directly affects both the welfare of students and educators, necessitating further examination of its underlying causes and consequences.

Previous studies on madrasah development have primarily focused on three main areas: governance and institutional status, curriculum implementation, and survival strategies against modern schools (Ismail, 2025; Khalek, 2025; Sintasari et al., 2026). Several studies highlight challenges related to inconsistent regulations affecting madrasah governance (Bashir & Ul-Haq, 2019; Ihsan et al., 2024; Zainuddin, 2020). Additionally, much of the research has concentrated on the balance between religious and national curricula and how madrasahs manage these competing demands (Ahmad Salim et al., 2024; Ainissyifa et al., 2024; Mareta et al., 2024). Lastly, studies have addressed how madrasahs adapt to the growing influence of modern schools, particularly in terms of technology integration (Abedi, 2024; Mogas et al., 2022; W et al., 2024; Yuliana et al., 2025). While these studies provide valuable insights, they fail to comprehensively explore the specific neglect faced by madrasahs in special autonomous regions, particularly in terms of socio-political and administrative challenges.

The purpose of this paper is to fill this gap by analyzing the forms, factors, and impacts of the central government's neglect towards madrasah development in special autonomous regions. While previous studies have largely focused on normative and descriptive aspects, this paper takes a critical approach, examining the power dynamics and policy imbalances between central and regional governments. The aim is to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how neglect manifests in these regions and how it affects madrasahs' ability to provide quality education.

This study tests the hypothesis that the central government's neglect extends beyond physical infrastructure and funding, affecting the broader educational system. Specifically, this paper seeks to examine the extent to which the government's neglect manifests in limited funding for curriculum development, insufficient infrastructure, and low incentives for

educators. By exploring these systemic issues, the study will demonstrate how neglect weakens the resilience of madrasahs, making them more vulnerable to the dominance of modern schools and contributing to educational disparities between central and peripheral regions.

Through this research, the paper aims to contribute to the broader discourse on educational equity, offering valuable policy implications for improving the development of madrasahs in special autonomous regions. The findings will highlight the need for a more inclusive and equitable approach to education policy, ensuring that madrasahs receive the necessary support to thrive alongside other educational institutions.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to explore the central government's neglect of madrasah development in the Special Autonomous Region of Aceh. The research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of how neglect manifests in the form of limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and low educator incentives, which collectively exacerbate the challenges faced by madrasahs in Aceh (Bano, 2014). The region was chosen due to its unique political and administrative context, where madrasahs are heavily impacted by government policies and resource distribution.

Data collection techniques include field observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Observation is used to assess the physical condition of madrasahs, the involvement of the central government in their development, and the impact of limited attention on the sustainability and quality of education. In-depth interviews are conducted with key informants, including government officials involved in educational policy and madrasah educators, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the causes and implications of this neglect. Additionally, document analysis involves reviewing books, academic articles, and official policy documents issued by central government agencies, particularly those available in digital form.

In this study, the data collection method follows Robert K. Yin's case study approach, which emphasizes the use of multiple sources of evidence through data triangulation to enhance the validity and reliability of the research findings (Yin, 2018). Data were collected through in-depth interviews with purposively selected key informants to obtain a comprehensive contextual understanding, direct observations of the research setting and activities to capture empirical conditions and subtle aspects that may not always emerge in interviews, as well as documentation to corroborate and examine the consistency of the data. All data sources were analyzed in an integrated manner using the principle of triangulation, whereby consistent findings reinforce one another, while inconsistencies across sources serve as a basis for further exploration and deeper analytical inquiry. The verification process develops preliminary conclusions from the classified data, while the presentation phase uses thematic descriptions, including direct quotes from interviews. The final analysis is inductive, contextualizing the findings through reflection on patterns, ideas, and socio-cultural context. This method ensures that the research findings are meaningful and scientifically grounded (Fernando et al., 2025); (Fernando et al., 2023).

## RESULTS

### **Bridging the Gap: Addressing the Educational Challenges of Madrasas in Aceh Through Targeted Government Investment**

Madrasas in Aceh, a region with unique cultural and educational challenges, are grappling with significant obstacles related to government investment in key areas such as digitalization, teacher training, and curriculum development (Zailani et al., 2022). These challenges are not just operational; they have far-reaching consequences for the future of education in the region (Hariyani et al., 2025; Jauhari et al., 2025; Rd et al., 2023), affecting both the quality of education and the ability of students to compete in an increasingly digital world.

One of the most pressing issues identified in the research is the lack of government investment in digital infrastructure, particularly in remote regions like Aceh and North Maluku (Zailani et al., 2022). While the global educational landscape is rapidly shifting towards digital learning, these regions have not received adequate support to modernize their educational environments (Juliana et al., 2026; Qolbi, 2025; Srinio et al., 2025). The absence of digital tools in classrooms creates a severe disadvantage for students, as access to technology is increasingly vital for academic success (Ahadiyah et al., 2024; Cramarenco et al., 2023; Happyana et al., 2025; Mhlanga, 2024). Digitalization is not just a luxury; it is a necessity in the modern educational framework.

The failure to allocate specific funds for digitalization exacerbates existing educational inequalities, leaving students in these regions unable to access the same educational resources as their counterparts in more developed areas (Azhari, 2024). This digital divide impedes the ability of madrasas to keep up with national education standards, further deepening disparities. The study underscores the importance of digital tools in shaping future-ready students and calls for immediate government intervention to address this gap. Only by ensuring that digital infrastructure is available to all students, regardless of their location, can the government help level the playing field and offer every student an equal opportunity to succeed (Azhari, 2024).

Anwar Fadli (Fadli, 2025), Head of the Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Aceh Tamiang Regency, explained that the availability of teachers and educational personnel in madrasahs continues to face various limitations. He stated:

“In Aceh, the availability of teachers and educational staff in madrasahs remains insufficient to this day. Needs assessment data indicate a fairly significant shortage. Therefore, we have made efforts to improve both the quantity and quality of human resources namely teachers and educational personnel through various training programs and competency development initiatives.”

Another critical issue highlighted by the research is the struggle to preserve local culture through curriculum development. In Aceh, madrasas face significant challenges in integrating local languages, such as Acehese, and cultural values into their teaching materials. This is due to a lack of financial resources, which leaves these essential cultural elements marginalized in the educational system (Azhar, 2025).

The integration of local culture into the curriculum is vital for maintaining Aceh's unique Islamic heritage. Yet, without adequate support, these cultural aspects remain underrepresented, risking the loss of valuable traditions that form the core of the region's identity. The study stresses the importance of incorporating local languages and cultural values into the curriculum

as a means of preserving the region's history and fostering a sense of pride and identity among students. If this issue is not addressed, there is a real danger that the educational experience will become homogenized, overlooking the richness and diversity of Aceh's local culture.

The research findings paint a picture of systemic failure in the funding and resource allocation for madrasas, especially in special autonomous regions like Aceh. Key areas such as teacher training, curriculum development, digitalization, and the preservation of local culture are all suffering due to a lack of adequate government support. This neglect highlights a broader issue of regional inequality in funding, particularly in areas with special autonomy.

The central government must recognize the unique educational needs of regions like Aceh and allocate targeted, context-specific investments. Without these investments, madrasas in Aceh will continue to struggle in providing education that is relevant, culturally appropriate, and modern. The failure to address these needs will hinder not only the region's educational standards but also the ability to meet national goals for educational equity and quality (Zainuddin, 2025). The study calls for a significant shift in government priorities regarding educational investments in Aceh and similar regions. It is only through targeted financial support in digitalization, teacher training, curriculum development, and cultural preservation that the government can ensure that madrasas in these regions provide an education that equips students with the skills, knowledge, and cultural grounding needed for the future.

### **Madrasah Infrastructure Development Has Not Become a Priority**

The development of madrasah infrastructure in Aceh has not been prioritized within the broader framework of national education policies, despite the region's special autonomy status. This neglect is reflected in the continued use of outdated facilities, inadequate learning spaces, and a severe lack of essential resources needed to support modern educational practices. Despite national education quality standards mandating the provision of adequate infrastructure, many madrasahs still operate in buildings constructed before the era of special autonomy. These structures are no longer suitable for contemporary teaching and learning, either structurally or functionally, creating significant challenges for educators and students alike. Anwar Fadli (Fadli, 2025) as Head of the Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Aceh Tamiang Regency explained:

“The funding sources for madrasahs in Aceh come from the Regency Budget (APBK), the Provincial Budget (APBD), and the State Budget (APBN). In addition, funding for the certification of religious teachers is provided directly by the madrasahs themselves. Madrasahs also receive School Operational Assistance (BOS) funds from the national government. Furthermore, local content programs such as tahfiz and English are organized by the madrasahs in accordance with community demand, with a maximum allocation of six hours per week.”

The physical condition of madrasah buildings, particularly classrooms, is a major concern. Many classrooms are small, poorly maintained, and physically deteriorated, with issues such as leaking roofs, cracked walls, and uneven floors. These conditions are far from conducive to modern learning, especially when compared to the standards set by the Merdeka Curriculum, which promotes active, collaborative, and flexible learning environments. Such outdated facilities limit the ability of teachers to implement interactive and student-centered teaching methods, hindering the educational experience and student engagement.

Furthermore, the lack of appropriate infrastructure also affects the integration of technology in education. Many madrasahs lack basic digital equipment and specialized learning spaces such as science laboratories and multimedia rooms. This shortage of resources severely limits the ability of teachers to incorporate technology-based and experimental learning methods, which are emphasized by the new curriculum. Without proper facilities to support these approaches, teachers face significant challenges in engaging students in hands-on experimentation and fostering digital literacy (Supriyanto et al., 2025). As a result, students in these madrasahs are deprived of the tools they need to thrive in a technology-driven world.

In addition to physical and technological infrastructure deficiencies, the lack of proper literacy facilities remains a major issue. Many madrasahs lack adequate libraries, and in some cases, even basic reading rooms are unavailable. This deficiency undermines efforts to cultivate a strong literacy culture, a central component of the current curriculum. Without proper spaces dedicated to reading and research, students are denied the opportunity to engage with literature and develop critical thinking skills, which are essential for their academic success.

Religious facilities, particularly prayer rooms, also face neglect. In several State Islamic Senior High Schools (MAN), prayer rooms are small and outdated, failing to accommodate the entire student body for congregational prayers. This is a significant issue, as prayer facilities play a central role in the character and spiritual development of students in madrasahs. Although renovation proposals have been submitted, the improvement of these facilities has not been prioritized by the central government, despite their importance to the overall educational experience.

The findings indicate a systemic failure in the development and allocation of resources for madrasah infrastructure, particularly in special autonomous regions like Aceh. The central government's lack of attention to the infrastructure needs of madrasahs has created a gap between the progressive curriculum policies and the actual readiness of these institutions to implement them. This gap highlights a broader issue of regional inequality, particularly in areas with special autonomy rights. Despite the fact that Aceh, as a special autonomous region, should benefit from targeted policy initiatives and investments, madrasahs in the region continue to struggle with outdated facilities and inadequate resources. This situation reflects a weak integration of madrasah infrastructure policies within the national education development framework. As a result, the educational experience in madrasahs remains suboptimal, limiting students' access to quality education and preventing them from fully benefiting from the modern curriculum.

The development of madrasah infrastructure in Aceh has not been positioned as a strategic priority within the national education agenda. The physical condition of buildings, lack of essential learning facilities, and insufficient religious and literacy spaces all contribute to a subpar educational environment. These challenges underscore the need for immediate government intervention to address the infrastructure gap, particularly in special autonomous regions like Aceh. Only by prioritizing infrastructure development can the government ensure that madrasahs provide a modern, relevant, and culturally appropriate education that meets the demands of the Merdeka Curriculum and prepares students for success in the 21st century.

### **The Incentives for Madrasah Educators Remain Very Low**

The low incentives for non-permanent and contract-based educators (non-ASN and P3K) in madrasahs in special autonomous regions reflect a form of structural neglect towards the welfare of teachers, who are a key pillar in the educational process. Despite their vital role in shaping the quality of learning, non-ASN and P3K teachers in madrasahs still face the reality of incentives that are far from adequate, not commensurate with the workload and responsibilities they bear. This disparity highlights the unequal treatment compared to teachers in public educational institutions, both in terms of honoraria, allowances, and opportunities for capacity building. The lack of attention to the welfare of non-ASN and P3K teachers in madrasah not only affects work motivation but also strengthens the cycle of stagnation in improving the overall quality of madrasahs.

The incentives for non-permanent (non-ASN) and contract-based (P3K) teachers in madrasahs in special autonomous regions, particularly in Aceh, are at very low and inadequate levels. Several non-ASN and P3K madrasah teachers, even those who teach core subjects such as Aqidah Ahklaq and Fiqh, only receive an incentive of around Rp. 400.000 per month without additional allowances from the central government. In addition to the low value of incentives, teachers working in 3T (underdeveloped, frontier, outermost) areas also do not receive special allowances as public school teachers do. This reflects systemic inequality. Furthermore, achievement-based recognition is absent, even though some teachers have successfully innovated with culturally-based teaching methods. Non-ASN and P3K teachers also face delays in the periodic disbursement of incentives, adding psychological and economic pressure. In the long term, this lack of financial and non-financial support has the potential to reduce motivation and the quality of teaching, ultimately impacting the stagnation of educational quality in madrasahs in special regions such as Aceh.

Three main issues in providing incentives for non-ASN and P3K teachers in madrasahs in Aceh. First, the low routine incentives represent the most fundamental issue. Teachers of core subjects only receive Rp. 400.000 per month without additional allowances, far below the regional minimum wage. Second, the unequal treatment between non-ASN and P3K madrasah teachers and public school teachers in 3T areas are clearly evident. Although working in remote areas with limited access, madrasah teachers do not receive special allowance from the central government, unlike their counterparts in public schools. Third, recognition of achievements and career development for non-ASN and P3K teachers in madrasahs is very limited. The teaching innovations developed by teachers in special autonomous regions are not nationally recognized, and opportunities for training, further studies, or career promotion are also scarce. These three aspects reveal a pattern of structural neglect, where non-ASN and P3K teachers in madrasahs are positioned within an equal policy framework are actually and socially strategic.

### **DISCUSSION**

The development of religious educational institutions such as madrasahs in the special autonomous regions of Aceh has often been neglected by the central government. This study reveals three main findings that reflect the concrete forms of this neglect. First, the limited allocation of routine funding for curriculum development in madrasahs indicates a lack of support for improving the quality of education (Haddade et al., 2024). Second, the development

of madrasah infrastructure has not been prioritized in educational development policies, leading to facility disparities compared to public schools. Third, the low incentives for madrasah educators reflect minimal attention to the welfare of teachers, who are key actors in the educational process. These three findings demonstrate that the central government's neglect is not only administrative but also structural and systemic. This further emphasized that the state's absence in supporting madrasahs in special autonomous regions contributes to the weakening of madrasah competitiveness and deepens the educational gap between central and peripheral regions.

The studies reflect the neglect of the central government in the development of religious educational institutions, particularly madrasahs, is not only caused by regulatory constraints but is also influenced by a centralistic development paradigm (Patria, 2023). Centralization in the formulation and implementation of educational policies has created inequalities in setting priorities for educational sector development, often favoring state-owned formal institutions (Efriandi et al., 2020). On the other hand, madrasahs, which are generally managed by private or local community entities, are often perceived as institutions outside the direct responsibility of the central government. This perception further strengthens the structural neglect of madrasahs, particularly in special autonomous regions like Aceh. This context explains the low level of state commitment to ensuring equitable education quality across all region of Indonesia.

The neglect of the central government in the development of madrasahs in the special autonomous region of Aceh should be understood as a strategic issue with broad implications, not only for the effectiveness of classroom learning but also for the increasing educational disparity between central and peripheral regions (Zainuddin, 2020). According to (Faisal et al., 2018) the central government's role in creating a fair education system and institution is crucial, as disparities in access and educational quality can lead to imbalance in human resource quality across regions. When educational policies are exclusive and do not take into account regions like Aceh (Rohidin et al., 2023), impact is not only the weakening of the teaching and learning systems in madrasahs but also the diminishing competitiveness of the region's youth in both national and global contexts (Kultsum et al., 2022). Therefore, this neglect cannot seen merely as a sector issue, but rather as a structural problem that threatens the principles of justice and the equitable distribution of education across the nation.

The central government's neglect of madrasah development, particularly in terms of funding and strategic policies, has serious implications for the quality and direction of education at these institutions (Setyawan, 2019). The lack of support causes madrasahs to operate sub optimally, focusing solely on fulfilling the formal curriculum without addressing the substance of religious values and local wisdom, which should be the essence of madrasah education. The state's absence in strengthening the position of madrasahs as institution of Islamic education and local culture risks eroding their role in social and moral transformation, which forms the foundational purpose of madrasahs (Hanafi et al., 2021).as a result, students do not receive a holistic educational that integrates cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects. In the long run, this may weaken the religious and national identity of younger generation. Therefore, state intervention in the form of adequate policies and funding is a strategic urgency for the sustainability and revitalization of madrasahs' role in the national education system.

The findings in this study show a significant difference compared to previous studies, which have been more descriptive and normative in addressing madrasah development issues. This research identifies the neglect by the central government toward the development of madrasahs in the special autonomous region of Aceh, which could potentially exacerbate the educational gap between central and peripheral areas. This neglect leads to the creation of a centralistic educational system, where educational policies and development priorities are more focused on regions that are more advanced and integrated with the central government's policies. (Silahuddin et al., 2025) assert that educational disparities between central and peripheral areas may create a generation that is unprepared to compete at the national or international level. The findings in this study are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the impacts of central government policies, particularly in the development of madrasahs in special autonomous regions, and encourage policy renewal to reduce educational disparities.

The central government's neglect of madrasah development in the special autonomous region of Aceh is not only influenced by structural factors but also has significant implications for the growing educational gap between central and peripheral regions. According to (Arbain Nurdin et al., 2024), this gap is a crucial issue that must be addressed promptly, as it can hinder the equitable distribution of human resources needed for the future of the nation. This educational gap affects the quality of education received by the younger generation, which, in turn, impacts their ability to compete at the national and global levels. The central government must have a clear commitment to formulating policies that support educational development in regions, especially schools located in areas with a limited access. The findings of this study can be used as a basis for evaluating and formulating more equitable educational policies, involving both formal and informal institutions. In line with this, the development of regional schools requires structural and infrastructure support from the central government.

### **Comparison of Facilities Between Religious Affairs and Ministry of Education and Culture in Aceh**

Aspect	Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag)	Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemdikbud)
Facilities	Many madrasahs still use old buildings that are unsuitable for modern teaching.	Schools generally have more complete and modern facilities.
Infrastructure	Facilities in madrasahs tend to be limited, such as the lack of multimedia rooms, laboratories, and digital equipment.	Kemdikbud schools have more complete facilities, such as basketball courts, multimedia rooms, and laboratories.
Access to Government Aid	Assistance is limited to institutions under Kemenag, and the grant process is complex.	Kemdikbud schools have easier access to direct assistance from local governments.
Improvement Efforts	Infrastructure improvements rely on limited funding (BOS, community contributions, teacher donations).	Facility improvements are more consistent and supported by larger funding allocations.

Aspect	Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag)	Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemdikbud)
Facility Shortages	The lack of proper classroom facilities often causes discomfort for students.	Schools are better equipped, supporting student comfort during lessons.
Availability of Worship Spaces	Worship spaces (e.g., prayer rooms) in madrasahs are often small and inadequate.	Kemdikbud schools generally have larger and more comfortable worship facilities.

A comparison of educational facilities between institutions under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) and the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemdikbud) in Aceh reveals a significant structural disparity that directly affects the quality of education in madrasahs and public schools. This gap is not merely technical in nature, but reflects deeper differences in governance patterns, policy priorities, and the effectiveness of institutional support mechanisms available to each type of educational institution.

Madrasahs in Aceh generally continue to operate in older buildings with limited physical conditions. Many of these institutions lack essential learning facilities such as multimedia rooms, adequately equipped science laboratories, and digital infrastructure, all of which have become fundamental components of contemporary education. These limitations restrict pedagogical innovation and reduce students' comfort and engagement in daily academic activities (Ammar et al., 2024; Baars et al., 2023; Muir et al., 2022).

In contrast, schools under the authority of Kemdikbud tend to demonstrate more representative and complete facilities. The availability of laboratories, well-equipped multimedia rooms, and sports facilities such as basketball courts contributes to a more supportive and adaptive learning environment. In addition, access to local government support is relatively more streamlined, allowing improvements in school infrastructure to be implemented in a more responsive and timely manner.

This disparity ultimately produces unequal educational conditions for students. Madrasah students are required to adapt to constrained learning spaces and limited supporting facilities, while students in public schools benefit from environments that are more conducive to both academic and non-academic development (Keim & Lapique, 2025). Such inequality reflects a broader challenge in national education governance, particularly in relation to the distribution of resources and policy attention.

Therefore, affirmative measures and more proportionate policies are necessary to ensure that madrasahs receive equitable institutional support. Strengthening madrasah infrastructure is essential to enable these institutions to fulfill their strategic role in advancing educational quality and contributing meaningfully to the broader goal of national human development.

## CONCLUSION

The findings in this study indicate that the central government's neglect of madrasah development in the special autonomous region of Aceh appears in various complex forms and has significant implications for the sustainability of education. Three main findings underscore this issue. First, the central government's neglect is reflected in the limited routine curriculum development, which hampers the renewal and quality of learning in madrasahs. Second, the development of madrasah infrastructure has not been a priority, resulting in inadequate facilities to support teaching and learning. Third, the low incentives for madrasah educators significantly affect teachers' welfare and their ability to innovate in performing their duties. From these three findings, it can be concluded that the central government's neglect of madrasah development in Aceh creates significant disparities that greatly affect the quality of education in the region. More incentive policies and greater attention from the central government are needed to address this issue.

The findings of this study show a significant difference from previous research, which has generally been descriptive in discussing the development of madrasah schools across various regions. Unlike earlier approaches, this study empirically reveals that the central government's neglect of madrasah development has occurred in various technical and fundamental aspects. This condition has a significant impact on the creation of educational disparities between central and peripheral regions, making the achievement of a fair education concept particularly difficult, especially in regions with special autonomous status. The findings in this study contribute important insights to the development of educational studies in Indonesia, particularly in enriching the dialogue on inclusive and equitable education.

This study has methodological limitations, especially in its data collection techniques, which relied solely on observations and interviews at madrasah schools in the special autonomous region of Aceh. Therefore, the analysis of madrasah development in special autonomous regions is limited to cases in Aceh. While this approach provides a deep understanding of the central government's neglect of madrasah development in the region, it also highlights an important gap in academic study. Specifically, this study has not included perspectives from other special autonomous regions, which is necessary to obtain a more comprehensive view of madrasah development across regions and to enrich understanding of the central government's policy impact on religious education in Indonesia more broadly.

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