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**COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ARABIC LANGUAGE EDUCATION MODELS IN
INDONESIA AND MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES: POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

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Penelitian ini membandingkan model pendidikan bahasa Arab di Indonesia dan negara-negara Timur Tengah. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif komparatif berbasis studi literatur, analisis ini mengeksplorasi perbedaan mendasar dalam kebijakan, pedagogi, dan hasil pembelajaran. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa di Indonesia, pendidikan bahasa Arab sangat berorientasi pada teks keagamaan dan gramatika, yang membatasi kemampuan komunikasi praktis siswa. Sebaliknya, model di Timur Tengah memanfaatkan lingkungan penutur asli yang imersif, didukung oleh kebijakan yang kuat untuk mengembangkan kemahiran komunikatif. Disimpulkan bahwa Indonesia dapat meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan bahasa Arab dengan mengadopsi elemen-elemen dari model Timur Tengah, seperti pedagogi interaktif dan dukungan kebijakan yang lebih baik, sambil tetap menyesuaikan dengan konteks lokal. Rekomendasi praktis mencakup reformasi kurikulum, pelatihan guru yang berkelanjutan, dan penguatan kemitraan lintas budaya untuk menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang lebih efektif.

Kata kunci: Pendidikan Bahasa Arab, Studi Komparatif, Indonesia, Timur Tengah, Pedagogi, Kebijakan.

Abstract

This study compares Arabic language education models in Indonesia and Middle Eastern countries. Using a comparative qualitative approach based on a literature review, the analysis explores fundamental differences in policy, pedagogy, and learning outcomes. Findings reveal that in Indonesia, Arabic education is heavily oriented toward religious texts and grammar, which limits students' practical communicative abilities. In contrast, the Middle Eastern model leverages an immersive native-speaking environment, supported by strong policies to develop communicative proficiency. It is concluded that Indonesia can improve its Arabic education quality by adopting elements from the Middle Eastern model, such as interactive pedagogy and better policy support, while adapting them to the local context. Practical recommendations include curriculum reform, continuous teacher training, and strengthening cross-cultural partnerships to create a more effective learning environment.

Keywords: Arabic Language Education, Comparative Study, Indonesia, Middle East, Pedagogy, Policy.

INTRODUCTION

Arabic is an important global language that is deeply connected to Islamic education and culture (Daryabaeva, 2025; Sekarsari et al., 2024). It is the language of the Quran and Hadith, making it essential for Muslims to understand their religious texts and practices. Beyond its religious significance, Arabic also serves as a crucial language for international communication, diplomacy, and cultural exchange. This underscores the need for continuous evaluation of how

Arabic is taught, particularly in Muslim-majority countries like Indonesia (Sekarsari et al., 2024).

Indonesia has a long history of Arabic education, which began with the spread of Islam in the 7th century CE. The language was introduced by missionaries and traders and became a vital part of religious and educational life (Azizah et al., 2024). Because Indonesia has the world's largest Muslim population, Arabic is widely used in both religious worship and education. This positions Arabic education in Indonesia uniquely when compared to native-speaking Middle Eastern countries, where the language's educational systems have been established over centuries (Daryabaeva, 2025; Sekarsari et al., 2024).

Contemporary Arabic education faces several challenges and evolving trends (Arifin et al., 2024). In Indonesia, teaching methods have shifted from traditional approaches to more modern techniques, including technology integration such as e-learning and gamification (Fitrianto, 2024). However, issues such as insufficient teaching resources, a lack of digital infrastructure, and low student motivation persist. Similarly, while Middle Eastern countries have well-established curricula, they also face challenges in modernizing their pedagogical methods. This highlights a notable disparity in the effectiveness of Arabic education models between Indonesia and native-speaking countries (Alharbi & Albidewi, 2024; Sekarsari et al., 2024).

Given the importance of Arabic, there is a need to compare Arabic language education models in Indonesia with those in native-speaking countries. Limited research has comprehensively compared these models and their outcomes. The objective is to analyze the similarities, differences, and challenges of these educational models and to identify policy implications that could improve Arabic education in Indonesia. The findings would be useful for educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders, as they could help improve educational outcomes and strengthen cultural and religious identities through enhanced Arabic proficiency.

METHOD

The study uses a qualitative comparative design with a literature-based approach to analyze educational systems in Indonesia and the Middle East (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This method is well-suited for understanding educational phenomena within their specific social and cultural contexts. The research relies on a systematic review of secondary sources, including academic journals, government reports, and institutional case studies, to gather data on Arabic language education policies and practices. By selecting representative countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the UAE, the study provides a focused comparison between native

Arabic-speaking contexts and Indonesia's unique educational environment (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Tisdell et al., 2025).

For data analysis, the study employs a thematic analysis to identify key themes related to curriculum, teaching methods, teacher training, and policy frameworks (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This qualitative approach helps extract patterns, similarities, and differences across the collected literature, highlighting convergences and divergences in educational models. A comparative framework is then used to organize and contrast these findings, which helps in evaluating how different contextual factors shape Arabic language education. This dual method of systematic literature review and qualitative thematic analysis provides nuanced, evidence-based insights, and supports the development of recommendations for improving Arabic education in Indonesia (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Elo et al., 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

Curriculum and Pedagogy

In Indonesia, the curriculum for Arabic language education is heavily concentrated within Islamic schools, pesantren, and universities, reflecting its primary function as the language of religious texts (Hanani et al., 2024). This emphasis leads to a strong focus on grammar-translation and the reading of religious documents, often at the expense of developing communicative skills. Traditional rote-learning and memorization are commonplace, limiting students' ability to engage in practical conversation (Basyar et al., 2024). In contrast, Middle Eastern countries benefit from an immersion-based approach, where Arabic is the language of daily life and formal education. This natural exposure, combined with increasingly state-driven policies that promote communicative competence, results in a more dynamic and interactive learning environment. Modern pedagogical approaches are being integrated, although challenges with teacher preparedness and the need for continuous training still exist (Thomure, 2019).

Policy and Outcomes

The policy frameworks governing Arabic education also differ significantly. In the Middle East, such as in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, national governments actively reinforce Arabic proficiency through robust policies and standardized curricula (Thomure, 2019). The language is integral to national identity and public life, with educational policies designed to ensure a high level of literacy and fluency among citizens. Conversely, while Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs oversees a vast network of Islamic educational institutions, policies

often lead to fragmented regulations and disparities in quality, particularly between urban and rural areas (Kholis, 2025). This lack of a unified, comprehensive policy framework contributes to a key outcome disparity: students in Middle Eastern countries consistently demonstrate higher fluency and communicative skills compared to their Indonesian counterparts, whose proficiency is often limited to reading and understanding religious texts (Basyar et al., 2024).

B. Discussion

Interpretation of Findings

The key challenge for Indonesia lies in the text-oriented and religiously driven nature of its Arabic education, which limits students' practical application of the language. This stands in stark contrast to Middle Eastern models, which benefit from native-speaker exposure and a strong policy foundation that treats Arabic as a living, functional language. The focus on grammar and recitation in Indonesia often results in low student motivation and an inability to use Arabic for everyday communication, diplomacy, or academic research outside of religious studies (Arifin et al., 2024). In essence, Indonesia has focused on Arabic for religion, while the Middle East naturally fosters Arabic for life.

Table 1. Comparison between Indonesia and Middle Eastern Countries

Aspect	Indonesia	Middle Eastern Countries
Primary Goal	Access to religious texts	Communicative and academic fluency
Curriculum Focus	Grammar-translation, reading	Immersion, all four skills
Pedagogical Approach	Traditional, teacher-centered	Interactive, communicative
Outcomes	Limited communicative skills	High fluency and proficiency

Implications for Indonesia

To improve educational outcomes, Indonesia must actively work to balance its religious goals with the development of communicative competence. This requires a curriculum reform that integrates the four essential language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—with a balanced approach (Amar, 2023). Teacher training is also critical; educators need to move beyond traditional methods and embrace modern pedagogical approaches, including technology integration and interactive learning (Arifin et al., 2024). Additionally, government policy should support Arabic immersion by promoting exchange programs, strengthening

partnerships with Middle Eastern institutions, and encouraging the use of digital tools to enhance language exposure (Rivera et al., 2025).

Practical Recommendations

Based on this comparative analysis, several practical steps can be taken to enhance Arabic education in Indonesia. Firstly, curriculum developers should reform the curricula to include more interactive, student-centered activities that promote speaking and listening skills. Secondly, there is a clear need to strengthen teacher qualifications through continuous professional development that focuses on modern language teaching methodologies (Arifin et al., 2024). Finally, state support must be enhanced to create a more integrated and standardized system, including the promotion of cross-cultural partnerships that provide authentic language experiences. These changes would not only improve students' Arabic proficiency but also better prepare them to engage with the global community.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this comparative study reveal a clear contrast between Arabic language education in Indonesia and that in Middle Eastern countries, particularly in terms of policy support, pedagogy, and educational outcomes. While Indonesia's approach effectively serves its religious goals, it often falls short in developing practical, communicative language skills. Conversely, Middle Eastern models benefit from being native contexts, which naturally promotes an immersive and communicative learning environment, bolstered by strong governmental policies.

For Indonesia, the most critical takeaway is the need to integrate the strengths of Middle Eastern models while remaining true to its unique cultural and religious context. This does not mean simply copying and pasting foreign educational frameworks. Instead, Indonesia should adapt selective elements from the Middle Eastern approach, such as a greater emphasis on communicative skills and a more robust, standardized curriculum. For instance, policymakers could encourage schools to incorporate interactive, student-centered activities and leverage technology to create a more immersive learning environment, even outside of a native-speaking context. Simultaneously, the government should strengthen its role in overseeing and standardizing Arabic education to ensure consistent quality across the country.

This study, being literature-based, highlights the need for further, on-the-ground research to deepen our understanding of this topic. Future studies should focus on empirical classroom-based research to evaluate the effectiveness of current teaching methods and to test new pedagogical approaches. It is also crucial to explore student perspectives to understand

their motivation, challenges, and how they perceive the relevance of Arabic in their lives. Finally, longitudinal studies would be valuable in assessing the long-term impacts of any policy or curriculum reforms on student proficiency and success.

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