

# The Role of Supervision in Improving the Performance of Islamic Education Teachers in Special Regions: A Structural-Functional Perspective

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of supervision in improving the performance of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in special regions, focusing on Sebangau Kuala Subdistrict, Pulang Pisau Regency. The study responds to the limited empirical research on supervision in geographically isolated contexts and the insufficient integration of social theory in Islamic educational supervision studies. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation involving IRE teachers, the school principal, and the supervisor. Data were analyzed thematically and interpreted through a structural-functional perspective. The findings indicate that supervision performs a dual role: first, as a professional development mechanism that enhances teachers' pedagogical competence, instructional practices, and reflective capacity; and second, as an integrative mechanism that aligns curriculum standards, school policies, and classroom implementation. However, its effectiveness is constrained by structural challenges, including geographical limitations, shortages of supervisory personnel, formalistic approaches, and lack of follow-up. These findings position supervision as a structural component essential for maintaining systemic balance in education and highlight the need for adaptive and sustainable supervision models in resource-constrained regions.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Improving the quality of education remains a strategic priority in global human resource development, particularly in the context of 21st-century demands that require the integration of cognitive, social, and moral competencies. In Islamic Religious Education (IRE), educational quality is not measured solely by academic achievement but also by the successful internalization of spiritual values, character formation, and ethical integrity. In this regard, teachers play a central role as the primary agents in transmitting knowledge, values, and religious practices within the learning process. Teacher performance therefore becomes a key indicator of educational quality, as classroom effectiveness directly influences both student achievement and value formation (Darling-Hammond, 2021; Hattie, 2020). Various studies emphasize that improving teacher performance cannot be separated from a comprehensive support system that includes leadership, professional development, and educational supervision. The OECD (2022) highlights that effective teacher evaluation and coaching systems significantly contribute to improving instructional quality and student learning outcomes. Similarly, UNESCO (2023) reports that limited access to professional development—particularly in remote areas—negatively affects educational quality. Within this framework, supervision is increasingly understood not merely as administrative oversight but as a reflective, collaborative, and continuous professional development process (Hallinger, 2021;

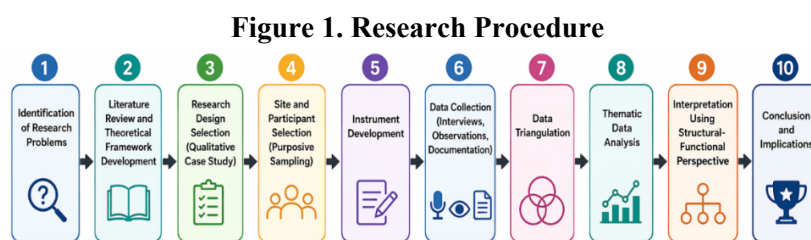
Zepeda, 2017). Coaching-based supervision has been shown to improve teaching practices and student achievement (Kraft et al., 2018), strengthen teacher self-efficacy (Liu & Hallinger, 2020), and foster collaborative school cultures that support sustained professional learning (Leithwood et al., 2020; Keddie, 2016). Thus, supervision functions not only as an evaluative mechanism but also as a strategic instrument for strengthening the education system. However, despite the growing body of literature on supervision and teacher performance, several critical gaps remain insufficiently addressed. First, most empirical studies have been conducted in urban or relatively well-established educational systems where infrastructure, access, and human resources are adequate. Research focusing specifically on supervision practices in special or remote regions where geographical isolation and limited resources pose structural constraints remains relatively limited. Consequently, the contextual dynamics and challenges affecting supervision effectiveness in such regions are not yet fully understood.

Second, previous research tends to emphasize technical and managerial aspects of supervision, such as procedural compliance and evaluation instruments (Glickman et al., 2018; Robinson, 2018), without sufficiently situating supervision within a broader social theoretical framework. From a structural-functionalist perspective, education is understood as a social subsystem that maintains societal stability and the continuity of collective values (Durkheim, 2012; Parsons, 1959). Within this framework, supervision can be conceptualized as a structural mechanism that ensures each component of the education system performs its designated function optimally. Nevertheless, the application of this theoretical lens to Islamic educational supervision remains underdeveloped. Third, although prior studies acknowledge the contribution of supervision to teacher professional development (Hallinger, 2021; Goldring et al., 2019), limited attention has been given to examining how supervision simultaneously functions as a professional development mechanism and as an integrative mechanism that aligns curriculum standards, school leadership policies, and classroom practices. This integrative dimension becomes particularly crucial in special regions, where structural imbalances may disrupt the coherence of the education system. Without effective supervision, disparities in teacher competence and instructional quality may persist, ultimately weakening educational outcomes. These gaps indicate the urgency of conducting a contextual and theoretically grounded study that examines supervision not merely as a technical intervention but as a structural component embedded within the education system. Such an investigation is particularly important in special regions, where limitations in infrastructure, human resources, and access may weaken the functioning of supervision and reduce its potential impact on teacher performance and educational quality (OECD, 2022; UNESCO, 2023). Addressing this issue is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, integrating a structural-functional perspective enriches the conceptual understanding of supervision as a systemic mechanism that maintains equilibrium between structure and agency. Empirically, examining supervision in Sebangau Kuala Subdistrict, Pulang Pisau Regency, expands the geographical and sociological scope of supervision research. Practically, identifying structural constraints and contextual dynamics offers insights for developing more adaptive, collaborative, and sustainable supervision models suited to resource-limited environments. Based on these considerations, this study seeks to answer the following questions: How does supervision function as a professional development mechanism in improving the performance of Islamic Religious Education teachers in special regions? How does supervision function as an integrative mechanism that aligns structural components of the education system, including curriculum, school leadership, and classroom practice? What structural challenges hinder the effective implementation of supervision in Sebangau Kuala Subdistrict, and how do these challenges affect teacher performance? By addressing these questions, this study aims to contribute to a deeper

understanding of the role of supervision within the broader social and structural context of Islamic education.

## 2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of supervision in improving the performance of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in real-world contexts, particularly in special regions. The qualitative approach was chosen because it enables a holistic and contextual exploration of social phenomena, while the case study design allows for a comprehensive examination of supervision dynamics within a specific setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). This approach is aligned with the structural-functional perspective, which emphasizes the interrelationships among components within the education system; therefore, understanding the interaction between supervisors, school principals, and teachers is essential to analyzing how supervision functions within the broader educational structure. This study was conducted at an elementary school located in Sebangau Kuala Subdistrict, Pulang Pisau Regency, which is categorized as a special region characterized by geographical isolation, limited infrastructure, and restricted educational resources. The research site was selected through purposive sampling based on its contextual relevance to the research objectives. The participants consisted of Islamic Religious Education teachers, the school principal, and the Islamic Religious Education supervisor. Informants were selected using purposive sampling techniques with specific criteria, including direct involvement in supervision activities and sufficient professional experience to provide rich and relevant data (Palinkas et al., 2015). The research was carried out systematically through several stages, beginning with the identification of research problems and a review of relevant literature to construct the theoretical framework. This was followed by the selection of the qualitative case study design, determination of research location and participants through purposive sampling, development of research instruments, and data collection through interviews, observations, and documentation. After data collection, triangulation was conducted to ensure data credibility, followed by thematic data analysis, interpretation using a structural-functional perspective, and formulation of conclusions and implications. The sequence of these stages is illustrated in the following research procedure diagram:



Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations regarding supervision practices and their impact on teacher performance (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Observations were carried out to obtain empirical evidence of supervision implementation and classroom instructional practices, including teaching strategies, teacher-student interactions, and feedback mechanisms (Angrosino, 2016). Documentation analysis was conducted on supervision reports, lesson plans, and teacher performance evaluation documents to strengthen contextual understanding. The use of multiple data collection techniques was intended to enhance validity through triangulation of methods and sources (Patton, 2015). The primary research instrument was the researcher, supported by interview guidelines, observation sheets, and

documentation analysis formats developed in accordance with the research objectives. The details of these instruments are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Research Instruments**

<b>Instrument Type</b>	<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Focus of Data</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Semi-Structured Interview Guide	IRE Teachers	Experiences of supervision, changes in instructional practices, perceived impact on performance	To explore the professional development function of supervision
Semi-Structured Interview Guide	Principal	Supervision policies, coordination mechanisms, monitoring processes	To examine supervision as a system integration mechanism
Semi-Structured Interview Guide	IRE Supervisor	Supervision strategies, challenges, follow-up mechanisms	To analyze structural and functional aspects of supervision
Observation Sheet	Classroom Learning	Teaching strategies, student engagement, instructional variation	To validate interview data and examine changes in teacher performance
Observation Sheet	Supervision Activities	Interaction patterns, feedback processes, reflective dialogue	To assess the quality of supervision implementation
Documentation Analysis Format	Supervision Reports, Lesson Plans, Evaluation Documents	Alignment between policy, supervision process, and classroom implementation	To strengthen triangulation and contextual analysis

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, involving iterative stages of data reduction, open coding, categorization, theme development, and interpretative synthesis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis was guided by a structural-functional framework to examine how supervision operates as both a professional development mechanism and an integrative component within the education system. To ensure trustworthiness, this study applied credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ethical considerations were addressed by obtaining informed consent from participants, maintaining anonymity, and ensuring that all data were used exclusively for academic purposes (Orb et al., 2001).

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Supervision as Professional Development for Teachers

Research findings indicate that supervision plays a significant role in enhancing the pedagogical and professional competencies of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers. Teachers who receive ongoing supervision demonstrate improvements in various aspects of performance, particularly in lesson planning, teaching strategies, and assessment of learning outcomes. These changes are not merely technical but also reflect an increased capacity for reflective practice in teaching. This is reinforced by a statement from one IRE teacher: *“Since receiving supervision, I’ve gained a better understanding of how to create appropriate lesson plans, and my teaching methods have become more varied than before.”* These findings confirm that supervision serves as a means of professional learning that promotes the practical development of teachers’ competencies. The school principal also emphasized that supervision is not merely an evaluation but a coaching process: *“Supervision is not just about assessing, but about guiding. Teachers who were initially less active become more developed after receiving guidance.”* Thus,

supervision can be understood as a mechanism that drives the transformation of teaching practices through feedback, reflection, and continuous mentoring. From a structural-functional perspective, these findings indicate that supervision acts as a mechanism ensuring teachers perform their professional functions optimally within the education system. Education, as a social subsystem, functions to maintain the stability and continuity of values in society through the process of internalizing norms and roles (Durkheim, 2012; Parsons, 1959). In this context, supervision serves as an instrument linking structure (policies and curriculum) and practice (classroom learning), thereby creating a balanced educational system. These findings are also consistent with various studies showing that instructional supervision contributes to improvements in teaching quality and student learning outcomes (Hallinger, 2021; Liu & Hallinger, 2020; Hattie, 2020). Furthermore, a coaching-based supervision approach has proven effective in continuously enhancing teachers' pedagogical competencies and reflective practices (Kraft et al., 2018; Timperley, 2019; Zepeda, 2017). This indicates that supervision impacts not only the technical aspects of teaching but also teachers' ongoing professional development. However, the effectiveness of supervision does not always run optimally. Some informants revealed that the implementation of supervision still tends to be formalistic and lacks depth. One teacher stated: *"Sometimes supervision just comes, looks for a moment, and then it's over. There is no in-depth discussion."* This statement indicates that supervision not accompanied by reflective dialogue and constructive feedback tends to have little significant impact on improving teacher performance. To clarify these findings, the following presents a comparison of teachers' performance before and after supervision:

**Table 2. The Impact of Supervision on Teacher Performance**

Teacher Performance Aspects	Before Supervision	After Supervision
Instructional Planning	Less systematic	More structured
Teaching Methods	Monotonous	More varied
Learning Assessment	Simple	More comprehensive
Teaching Reflection	Minimal	Improved

The data in the table indicate that supervision contributes to an overall improvement in the quality of learning. Teachers become more focused in designing lessons, more creative in selecting methods, and more systematic in conducting evaluations. Increased reflection also suggests that supervision plays a role in fostering continuous professional learning. From a structural-functional perspective, formalistic supervision can be understood as a form of dysfunction within the educational system, specifically when the structure fails to perform its functions optimally (Parsons, 1959; Merton, 1968). This aligns with previous research findings indicating that administrative and non-sustained supervision tends not to have a significant impact on improving teacher performance (Robinson, 2018; Goldring et al., 2019). Furthermore, the effectiveness of supervision is largely determined by the quality of interactions, the approaches used, and the continuity of follow-up. Collaborative and reflective supervision has proven to be more effective than top-down approaches, as it fosters professional learning through dialogic and participatory interactions (Timperley, 2019; Leithwood et al., 2020). Additionally, effective supervision contributes to strengthening a collaborative culture and a learning organization within schools (Keddie, 2016; Sergiovanni, 2015). Overall, these findings confirm that supervision is a strategic instrument in teacher professional development as well as a crucial mechanism for maintaining the balance of the education system. However, the success of these functions heavily depends on the quality of implementation, the approaches used, and the available structural support, particularly in the context of regions with limited resources (OECD, 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

### Supervision as a Mechanism for Integrating the Education System

In addition to serving as a means of professional development, research findings indicate that supervision plays a strategic role as an integration mechanism within the education system. In this context, supervision not only focuses on enhancing individual teachers' competencies but also contributes to aligning various components of the education system, such as the curriculum, school policies, and classroom teaching practices. Field findings indicate that supervision helps ensure that the learning processes conducted by IRE teachers remain within the established standards. This is reflected in the statement of one IRE supervisor: *"Supervision ensures that teachers teach according to the curriculum, but also instills Islamic values in learning."* This statement indicates that supervision functions as both a control and a guidance instrument that bridges the gap between educational policy and its implementation at the classroom level. Furthermore, teachers also feel that supervision provides clearer guidance in carrying out their professional duties. One teacher stated: *"With supervision, we know the standards we must meet, so we don't just teach haphazardly."* This indicates that supervision serves as a normative reference that helps teachers understand the expectations of the education system more concretely. With clear standards, teachers can adjust their teaching practices to be more focused and aligned with the intended educational goals. Additionally, supervision contributes to strengthening relationships and coordination among stakeholders within the education system. The school principal emphasized: *"Supervision makes communication between teachers, the principal, and the supervisor more focused."* This finding indicates that supervision functions not only vertically as a monitoring mechanism but also horizontally as a means of coordination and communication. The interactions fostered through supervision facilitate the exchange of information, clarification of policies, and alignment of roles among education stakeholders. To clarify this integrative function, the following outlines the role of supervision in connecting various components of the education system:

**Table 3. The Integrative Role of Supervision in the Education System**

System Components	The Role of Supervision
Teachers	Guiding and improving the quality of instruction
Principals	Monitoring and supporting the implementation of instruction
Supervisors	Ensuring that educational standards are met
Curriculum	Serving as a guide for the implementation of instruction

The data in the table indicate that supervision serves as a linking mechanism that maintains the functional coherence among components within the education system. Through supervision, each element can perform its role in a harmonious and mutually supportive manner, thereby creating a more integrated education system. From a structural-functional perspective, these findings reflect the function of education as a social system that relies on the integration of its components to maintain the stability and sustainability of its values (Durkheim, 2012; Parsons, 1959). Supervision acts as a mechanism ensuring that the relationship between structure (policies, curriculum) and agents (teachers, school principals, supervisors) operates harmoniously. When this function operates optimally, a balanced educational system is created, characterized by consistency between planning and the implementation of learning. These findings are also consistent with previous research indicating that supervision contributes to strengthening coordination, communication, and school organizational culture (Leithwood et al., 2020; Keddie, 2016). Effective supervision can create a learning environment that supports teachers' professional development and improves the overall quality of learning (Zepeda, 2017; Glickman et al., 2018).

Additionally, supervision plays a role in ensuring that curriculum implementation aligns with established standards, thereby enhancing the consistency and quality of education (OECD, 2022).

However, the effectiveness of supervision's integrative function still faces various structural obstacles. Geographic access limitations, a shortage of human resources, and a supervisory approach that tends to be formalistic indicate the potential for dysfunction within the education system. From a structural-functional perspective, these conditions reflect an imbalance between structure and function that can hinder optimal system integration (Parsons, 1959; Merton, 1968). This is also consistent with research findings indicating that resource constraints and geographical context are the primary factors influencing the effectiveness of supervision, particularly in remote areas (UNESCO, 2023; Robinson, 2018). Furthermore, the results of this study indicate that effective supervision must be contextual and adaptive to local conditions. In the context of special regions, supervision cannot be conducted using a uniform approach as in urban areas.

More flexible, collaborative, and innovative strategies are needed to address limitations in access and resources (Bush, 2020; Sergiovanni, 2015). Additionally, dialogic and participatory approaches to supervision have proven more effective in strengthening the integration of the education system compared to top-down approaches (Timperley, 2019). Overall, these findings confirm that supervision plays a strategic role as an integration mechanism within the education system. Supervision not only contributes to improving the quality of individual teachers but also ensures that all components of the education system function harmoniously. However, the success of this function depends heavily on the consistency of implementation, the quality of communication, and the availability of structural support, particularly in the context of special regions.

### **Structural Challenges in the Implementation of Supervision**

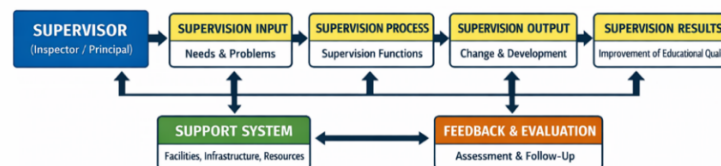
Although supervision plays a strategic role in the professional development of teachers and the integration of the education system, research findings indicate that its implementation in specific regions, such as Sebangau Kuala Subdistrict, still faces significant structural challenges. These challenges not only affect the frequency of supervision but also the quality of interactions and its impact on teacher performance. One of the main obstacles is limited geographical access. The remote nature of the area makes it impossible to conduct supervision on a regular and sustained basis. This was highlighted by a IRE supervisor: *"The distance between schools is very far; sometimes we have to travel by river. So we can't conduct supervision frequently."* Consequently, the intensity of professional development is limited, as a teacher noted: *"We rarely receive supervision because access is difficult, so professional development is also limited."* In addition to geographical factors, limited human resources also pose a critical challenge. The number of supervisors is not proportional to the number of schools, preventing supervision from reaching all teachers equally. The school principal stated: *"The number of supervisors is not proportional to the number of schools, so not all teachers can receive maximum guidance."* This situation indicates an imbalance in the distribution of supervision services, which results in uneven improvements in teacher competencies. This study also found that a supervisory approach that remains largely formalistic acts as a barrier to improving the effectiveness of supervision. In some cases, supervision is carried out merely as an administrative formality without being followed by deep reflection and constructive dialogue. One teacher stated: *"Supervision is sometimes just a formality, they come to observe, and then it's over. There's no follow-up."* This lack of follow-up results in unsustainable supervision outcomes and fails to produce significant changes in teaching practices.

To clarify these findings, the main obstacles to supervision and their impacts are summarized below:

**Table 4. Structural Obstacles to Supervision and Their Impacts**

Types of Challenges	Impact on Supervision	Implications for Teacher Performance
Geographical access	Supervision is not conducted on a regular basis	Lack of continuity in professional development
Limited human resources	Supervision is not consistent	Disparities in competency development
A formalistic approach	Supervision lacks depth	Limited reflection and improvement
Lack of follow-up	There is no ongoing training	Insignificant changes

The data in the table indicate that structural constraints have a direct impact on the effectiveness of supervision, both as a guidance mechanism and as an instrument for integrating the education system. From a structural-functional perspective, this condition reflects a dysfunction within the education system, specifically when the structure is unable to support the optimal performance of functions (Parsons, 1959; Merton, 1968). To understand the interrelationships among the components of educational supervision, the following presents a structural-functional model of supervision:



**Figure 2. Structural-Functional Model of Educational Supervision**

As shown in Figure 1, the success of supervision is the result of systemic interrelationships among supervisors, supervision inputs, the supervision process, supervision outputs, and supervision results, supported by a support system as well as feedback and evaluation mechanisms. This model emphasizes that supervision is an integrated and continuous cycle, not merely an administrative activity. In the context of the research findings, geographical constraints and human resource limitations indicate weaknesses in the support system component, particularly regarding infrastructure and the availability of supervisors. Meanwhile, a formalistic approach to supervision and a lack of follow-up indicate that the feedback and evaluation functions are not yet optimal. Consequently, the supervision cycle does not operate fully, thereby limiting its impact on improving teacher performance. These findings are consistent with various studies indicating that resource constraints, geographical context, and weak support systems are key factors influencing the effectiveness of supervision, particularly in remote areas (UNESCO, 2023; OECD, 2022). Furthermore, administrative and unsustainable forms of supervision tend not to have a significant impact on improving teacher performance (Robinson, 2018; Goldring et al., 2019). From a structural-functional perspective, an imbalance between structure and function has the potential to disrupt the stability of the education system as a whole. The education system can only function optimally if each component is able to perform its role effectively and complement one another (Parsons, 1959). When supervision does not function optimally, the integration of the education system is disrupted, which ultimately impacts the decline in the quality of learning. Furthermore, the results of this study indicate that effective supervision must be contextual and adaptive to local conditions. In the context of special regions, more flexible and innovative strategies are needed to address limitations in access and resources. Collaborative and reflective approaches to supervision have proven more effective in improving teacher performance compared to top-down approaches

(Timperley, 2019; Bush, 2020; Sergiovanni, 2015). Overall, these findings confirm that structural constraints are a key factor determining the success of supervision. Without adequate structural support, supervision cannot function optimally. Therefore, strengthening the support system and the feedback and evaluation components is a key prerequisite for ensuring that the entire supervision cycle operates effectively and sustainably, thereby improving teacher performance and the overall quality of education.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study addressed three research questions regarding the role of supervision in improving the performance of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in special regions. First, supervision functions as a professional development mechanism by enhancing teachers' pedagogical competence, instructional planning, teaching strategies, and reflective practices. When implemented collaboratively and continuously, supervision contributes to measurable improvements in teacher performance, although formalistic practices limit its impact. Second, supervision serves as an integrative mechanism that aligns curriculum standards, school leadership policies, and classroom practices. From a structural-functional perspective supervision maintains systemic balance by ensuring that each educational component performs its function effectively. Third, significant structural challenges such as geographical constraints, limited supervisory personnel, and lack of follow-up, hinder supervision effectiveness. These conditions reflect structural dysfunctions that weaken the supervision cycle and reduce its impact on teacher performance. Overall, supervision plays a dual strategic role as a professional development and system integration instrument. Its effectiveness in special regions depends on contextual adaptation, structural support, and sustainable implementation.

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