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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Hybrid Governance in Child Welfare: Negotiating State and Faith-Based Policy Regimes in Indonesia

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Abstract: This article examines how child welfare in Indonesia is governed through the interaction of state regulation and faith-based welfare provision. Focusing on Muhammadiyah, one of the country's largest Islamic organizations, it argues that child welfare institutions are best understood as hybrid governance arrangements rather than as mere extensions of the state or purely charitable entities. The study uses a qualitative document-based case study drawing on Indonesian laws and regulations, Muhammadiyah's child care guidelines, organizational rules, and institutional data. Guided by hybrid governance and institutional logics perspectives, the analysis identifies the intersection of state, religious, professional, and community-philanthropic rationalities in the organization of care. The findings show that national policy and Muhammadiyah's internal framework converge in prioritizing family-based care and positioning residential care as a last resort. At the same time, Muhammadiyah translates public policy into its own Islamic organizational language while retaining internal authority, moral legitimacy, and philanthropic capacity. The main tension lies not in ideological conflict between religion and the state, but in the practical governance of transformation, especially professionalization, accountability, coordination, and the shift from institution-centered provision toward family support. The article contributes to debates on child welfare reform, faith-based organizations, and hybrid governance in the Global South.

Keywords: Hybrid Governance, Child Welfare, Faith-Based Organizations, Muhammadiyah, Indonesia

1. Introduction

Across the global child welfare field, the normative centre of gravity has shifted over the last two decades. Residential institutions, once treated as a practical answer to poverty, abandonment, and family disruption, are increasingly regarded as an option of last resort (Haw & Henriques, 2021). Comparative research has shown that long-term institutional care is often poorly aligned with children's developmental, relational, and psychosocial needs, especially when it substitutes for support that could have been delivered to families and kin networks in the first place (Li et al., 2022; Nurul Aisyah & Hendra Saputra, 2024; Qian et al., 2018). This shift has generated an international policy preference for family strengthening, kinship care, foster care, reunification, and stronger state stewardship of alternative care systems. The movement away from institution-centred welfare is therefore not only a



technical reconfiguration of services; it is also a redefinition of who governs child welfare, by what standards, and through which forms of legitimacy (Tandos, 2025; Tripathi, 2025; Varga-Atkins et al., 2021).

Indonesia offers a compelling setting in which to analyse that shift. On paper, the regulatory architecture of child welfare has moved decisively toward family-based care. Law No. 11/2009 frames social welfare as a planned, integrated, and sustainable responsibility shared by government, local government, and society, while also requiring partnership, openness, accountability, participation, professionalism, and sustainability as governing principles. Ministerial Regulation No. 30/2011 deepens that orientation by defining the prevention of family separation as the primary goal of child welfare services, by insisting that poverty alone cannot justify institutional placement, and by treating residential care as part of a broader continuum of care rather than as the default response to vulnerability. In the same direction, Ministerial Regulation No. 16/2017 and Law No. 14/2019 strengthen the professional infrastructure of the system through standards for human resources, certification, case management, and social work practice. Taken together, these instruments present child welfare as a field that should be governed through assessment, review, licensing, professional competence, and child rights rather than through charitable custodial care alone.

Yet child welfare in Indonesia cannot be understood by examining the state alone (Agastya et al., 2024; Mareta, 2025). A large share of welfare provision is undertaken by civil society, especially religiously rooted organizations whose legitimacy derives not merely from statutory authorization but also from moral standing, social embeddedness, and philanthropic mobilization (Borchgrevink, 2020; Göçmen, 2013). Muhammadiyah occupies a particularly important position in this landscape (Sahrul et al., 2026). Its welfare mission is not incidental to its organizational identity; it is part of the movement's long-standing commitment to social service, education, health, and humanitarian action (Burhani, 2020; Gunawan & Syamsudin, 2023; Sahrul et al., 2026). The organization's child care guideline explicitly prioritizes support to children within families and identifies family-based care as the preferred orientation of service. Its 2023 regulatory framework further classifies Muhammadiyah Children Center (MCC/LKSA) as a last-resort model for institutional child care and simultaneously creates organizational pathways for family support, kin and foster arrangements, case assessment, reunification, reporting, and accreditation. An infographic circulated by Muhammadiyah's social service leadership also indicates the scale of this infrastructure, reporting 201 Muhammadiyah Children Center units and thousands of beneficiaries and staff within the child welfare network.

This institutional setting produces an analytical puzzle. If the state now asserts a child-rights-oriented and family-based policy regime, and if Muhammadiyah simultaneously claims a faith-based yet increasingly professionalized care mission, how exactly are these regimes brought into relation? The easy answer would be to describe faith-based providers as either compliant partners of the state or autonomous charitable actors filling gaps left by government. Muhammadiyah's internal documents do not simply reproduce state regulation verbatim, nor do they reject the regulatory turn toward family-centred care. Instead, they translate national standards into an internal organizational vocabulary rooted in Islamic duty, Muhammadiyah governance, community trust, and institutional discipline. What emerges is neither full convergence nor clear separation, but a negotiated arrangement in which different sources of authority coexist and are made operational within the same welfare field.

To capture this process, this article uses the concept of hybrid governance. Hybridity refers to organizational and governance arrangements in which multiple institutional logics, authority claims, and value systems coexist rather than collapse into a single rationality (McMullin & Skelcher, 2018; Skelcher & Smith, 2015). The concept is especially useful where welfare provision is shared across state, nonprofit, professional, market, and community domains, and where organizations must respond to more than one normative order at the same time (Busso & De Luigi, 2019; Coule & Bennett, 2016; Schram, 2018). Hybrid governance is not simply mixture, it involves the practical work of translation, selective

coupling, boundary maintenance, adaptation, and sometimes tension management. In the Indonesian child welfare context, the term helps explain how formal state regulation, Islamic organizational mission, professional social work norms, and philanthropic community networks are assembled into an operational system.

The contribution of the article is threefold. First, it contributes to child welfare scholars by showing that the move from institutional care to family-based care must be analysed not only as a normative or programmatic shift, but also as a transformation in governance. Second, it contributes to the literature on faith-based organizations by demonstrating that religious welfare providers in Indonesia function not merely as service delivery organizations but as governance intermediaries that translate public policy into morally authorized and organizationally durable forms. Third, it contributes to hybridity theory by grounding abstract debates on institutional logics in a concrete welfare field where legal rules, religious mission, professional expertise, and social legitimacy must be made compatible in everyday organizational design. The article does not claim that document analysis alone can reveal lived practice in all its complexity. Rather, it argues that governing texts matter because they reveal the distribution of authority, the classification of legitimate care, the expected role of organizations, and the institutional conditions under which practice becomes thinkable.

2. Literature Review

2.1. *Hybrid governance and the pluralization of welfare authority*

The concept of hybrid governance emerged from dissatisfaction with models that assumed welfare could be understood through single-sector control (Ebrahim et al., 2014; Schmitz & Glänzel, 2016; Then & Mildenerger, 2022; Torfing et al., 2025). In public services and nonprofit studies, organizations increasingly operate across boundaries once treated as distinct: state and voluntary sector, charity and profession, mission and management, or public accountability and community legitimacy. Hybridity captures this condition, rather than assuming one dominant institutional logic, the literature views hybrid organizations as sites where multiple logics coexist and where governance arrangements are shaped by attempts to accommodate different expectations simultaneously. Skelcher and Smith (2015) argue that institutional logics offer a particularly useful framework for explaining why hybrids arise and how they evolve, because organizations are exposed to plural normative frames that cannot be fully reduced to transaction costs or structural design. McMullin and Skelcher (2018) extend this argument by showing that societal-level logics matter: organizations do not hybridize in a vacuum, but within broader cultural and institutional environments that shape what counts as legitimate compromise.

The concept of hybrid governance has emerged as a crucial analytical lens for understanding contemporary welfare arrangements in which state, nonprofit, community, and market actors jointly participate in public service delivery (Benish & Mattei, 2020; Vickers et al., 2017). Traditional public administration models often assumed relatively stable boundaries between the state and civil society, with the state positioned as the principal holder of authority and non-state actors treated as either supplementary or subordinate (Peters, 2021). However, the restructuring of welfare systems, the decentralization of service delivery, and the growing role of nonprofit and community organizations have blurred these distinctions (Martinelli, 2017). In such contexts, governance increasingly occurs through organizational forms that combine multiple principles of coordination, legitimacy, and accountability. Hybrid governance, therefore, does not merely refer to institutional diversity; it refers to the structured coexistence of partially overlapping normative and organizational orders within the same field of service provision.

Skelcher and Smith's influential theorization is especially relevant here. They argue that hybridity should not be understood only as a structural mixture of forms, but as a condition in which organizations face a plurality of institutional logics. These logics provide distinct normative frames that shape values, authority relations, strategies, and claims to legitimacy.

Hybrid organizations are thus not simply “mixed” entities in a descriptive sense; they are organizations that must continuously negotiate the coexistence of divergent expectations. Such negotiations may produce different modes of hybridity, including segmentation, assimilation, blending, or blocked organizational integration. This framework is particularly powerful for analyzing welfare organizations because it foregrounds agency, contradiction, and the politics of organizational survival rather than assuming institutional coherence.

In welfare sectors, hybridity often emerges because organizations are required to meet public standards while maintaining alternative bases of identity and support. A nonprofit or faith-based provider, for instance, may depend on state recognition, administrative compliance, and professional service norms, while simultaneously drawing legitimacy from religious doctrine, communal trust, volunteer commitment, or philanthropic giving. These conditions do not necessarily produce organizational dysfunction. In many cases, hybridity can foster adaptability, resilience, and contextual responsiveness. Yet it can also create persistent tension, especially when different legitimacy systems define success, accountability, or the purposes of care in incompatible ways. The result is that governance becomes less a matter of command and compliance than of strategic translation, selective adaptation, and negotiated coexistence.

2.2. Faith-based organizations and welfare provision in Indonesia

Faith-based organizations occupy a historically important place in welfare provision across many societies, especially where state capacity is uneven or where religious institutions long predate formal welfare bureaucracies (Göçmen, 2013; Mumtaz & Kühner, 2025; Olarinmoye, 2023). They often provide education, health care, social assistance, shelter, and emergency support, while grounding such services in moral narratives of compassion, stewardship, and collective obligation. However, the role of faith-based organizations should not be romanticized as inherently benevolent or dismissed as merely residual (Ryden, 2017; Sait & Sait, 2021). Their significance lies in their ability to mobilize resources, produce social trust, sustain long-term commitment, and articulate welfare with broader moral and communal identities.

In Indonesia, this role is especially pronounced. Islamic organizations, among others, have developed extensive social infrastructures that include schools, hospitals, orphan care, social assistance networks, and philanthropic mechanisms (Fatah et al., 2023; Kailani & Slama, 2020; Sukmana et al., 2022). Recent scholars underscore the importance of Islamic faith-based organizations in community resilience and social welfare, highlighting their ability to activate voluntary action, local legitimacy, and collective solidarity (Bagasra, 2021; Nurdin, 2024). Islamic philanthropy, in particular, remains a vital resource base for welfare action, channeling religious obligations and charitable practices into organized forms of social support (Ali et al., 2024; Fatah et al., 2023). For child welfare institutions, these religiously structured support systems matter because they can reduce dependence on unstable state funding while reinforcing the institution’s public credibility within local communities (Dettlaff & Boyd, 2020; Katz, 2024).

Yet this strength can also generate friction. Faith-based institutions may define their mission more broadly than the categories used by the state. They may view child welfare not only as the protection of legal rights but also as the moral formation of children, the reproduction of communal ethics, or the cultivation of religious belonging. These additional aims are not necessarily incompatible with child protection, but they can complicate how regulatory standards are interpreted and applied. Administrative reforms designed from a rights-based, professionalized perspective may be experienced by faith-based providers as necessary, intrusive, incomplete, or insufficiently attuned to local moral realities. This is precisely where hybrid governance becomes analytically important: it helps explain how organizations navigate the coexistence of public regulation and faith-based purpose without assuming that one must fully displace the other.

2.3. Child welfare reform, deinstitutionalization, and the Indonesian context

The child welfare field has undergone substantial normative reorientation in recent decades. Internationally, there has been increasing recognition that the unnecessary separation of children from families and prolonged residence in institutions may have adverse developmental, emotional, and protection consequences (Konstantopoulou & Mantziou, 2020; M. Crittenden & Spieker, 2023; Pecora et al., 2018). This has encouraged policies oriented toward prevention, kinship care, foster care, family strengthening, and broader community-based alternatives. The underlying principle is that institutional care should not serve as a routine response to social vulnerability when less restrictive and more relationally grounded alternatives can be developed (Bourgois et al., 2017; Comfort et al., 2015; van Holstein et al., 2023).

Indonesia's policy framework reflects this shift. The Child Protection Law affirms the state's responsibility for child protection, while ministerial regulations on national standards of care seek to define norms, procedures, and criteria for child welfare institutions (Khatani et al., 2025; Lisma & Nikmah, 2021). These measures indicate an attempt to move from ad hoc charitable provision toward more regulated, rights-sensitive systems of care. However, regulatory formalization does not automatically produce systemic transformation. Studies on Bandung demonstrate that the transition toward deinstitutionalization remains incomplete (Sahrul et al., 2022). Residential care continues to occupy a central place in the service ecosystem, and many institutions, especially faith-based providers, continue to rely on institutional models shaped by longstanding expectations from communities, families, and donors (Jahani & Parayandeh, 2024).

This gap between policy aspiration and organizational practice is theoretically significant. It suggests that child welfare reform cannot be understood solely as a matter of improving implementation capacity or extending bureaucratic supervision. Reform is also mediated by moral infrastructures, historical organizational identities, and the practical economies of care provision. Where residential care is embedded within religious philanthropy, donor expectations, and community understandings of assistance, deinstitutionalization may be perceived not simply as technical modernization but as a redefinition of what a child welfare institution fundamentally is. The governance question, then, is not only whether institutions comply with new standards, but how they negotiate the meaning and legitimacy of change itself.

Research has shown that child welfare systems are becoming more rights-based, that faith-based organizations remain influential welfare providers, and that hybrid organizations operate under multiple institutional logics. What is less developed is an account of how these dynamics converge within Indonesian child welfare institutions as a governance process. Specifically, we still know too little about how faith-based child welfare institutions interpret state regulation, how they reconcile professional standards with religious mission, and how they build legitimacy across multiple and potentially contradictory constituencies.

This article addresses that gap by proposing the concept of negotiated care legitimacy. The concept captures the process through which child welfare institutions secure organizational viability and moral authority by selectively aligning state standards, professional care norms, and religious commitments. Unlike rigid models that classify organizations as either compliant or resistant, secular or religious, public or nonprofit, this concept emphasizes the interpretive and relational work through which hybrid governance is stabilized. Its value lies not only in describing organizational complexity, but in offering an explanatory mechanism for how hybridity endures within a plural welfare regime.

3. Research Method and Materials

This study uses a qualitative document-based case study design. The case is not a single institution but a governance configuration: the relationship between the Indonesian state's child welfare regime and Muhammadiyah's internal child welfare regime. A document-based

design is appropriate because the central research question concerns how authority, responsibility, and legitimate forms of care are structured in policy and organizational texts. Governing documents do more than record intentions. They define categories, allocate roles, establish procedural expectations, and authorize particular responses to children and families. In a field such as child welfare, where classification and procedure are fundamental to intervention, documentary analysis is therefore a substantive empirical method rather than a merely descriptive one.

The empirical corpus consists of two clusters of documents. The first cluster comprises state legal and regulatory texts that structure social welfare and child care in Indonesia: Law No. 11/2009 on Social Welfare, Ministerial Regulation No. 30/2011 on National Standards of Care for Child Welfare Institutions, Ministerial Regulation No. 16/2017 on National Standards for Human Resources in Social Welfare, and Law No. 14/2019 on Social Workers. These documents define the principles of welfare governance, the place of LKSA within the continuum of care, the standards for assessment and review, and the professional infrastructure expected in social welfare practice.

The second cluster consists of Muhammadiyah documents that regulate or guide its welfare institutions: the Anggaran Dasar/Anggaran Rumah Tangga (AD/ART) Muhammadiyah, the Pedoman Pengasuhan Anak Muhammadiyah, and the 2023 Ketentuan Majelis Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Sosial tentang Amal Usaha Muhammadiyah bidang pelayanan sosial. These materials are important because they show how Muhammadiyah defines organizational authority, classifies welfare institutions, articulates child care priorities, regulates staffing and finance, and links service provision to its broader religious and organizational mission. They also illuminate whether Muhammadiyah conceives residential care as primary, residual, or transitional within its own internal policy order.

The analysis proceeded in three stages. First, the documents were read closely to identify the explicit principles that structure each regime. In the state corpus, particular attention was paid to references to family preservation, alternative care, licensing, accreditation, professional standards, review, participation, and accountability. In the Muhammadiyah corpus, attention was directed to language concerning family support, Islamic duty, institutional purpose, organizational hierarchy, staff roles, financial accountability, and reunification. Second, these principles were grouped into four analytical coding families derived from the institutional logics framework: state-regulatory, faith-based, professional, and community-philanthropic. Third, the documents were compared to identify areas of convergence, translation, selective adaptation, and unresolved tension. The aim was not to count word frequencies but to interpret how different logics are assembled into a workable governance arrangement.

This approach treats documents as active instruments of governance. For example, when the 2011 national standards redefine Lembaga Kesejahteraan Sosial Anak as part of a continuum of care and emphasize family support, they do more than state a preference. They alter the category of a legitimate institution. Likewise, when Muhammadiyah's regulations create organizational forms such as Pusat Santunan Keluarga Muhammadiyah, Pusat Asuhan Keluarga Muhammadiyah, and MCC/LKSA, they classify care in a way that embeds family support, kin-based care, and institutional care within an internal service architecture. The analytical task is therefore to explain what kinds of organization become thinkable and legitimate within each regime, and how those classifications are made compatible.

The study is interpretive rather than evaluative in a narrow compliance sense. It does not ask whether every Muhammadiyah institution fully complies with state standards in practice, nor does it assess child outcomes through interviews or quantitative indicators. Such questions are important, but they require different data. The present article instead examines the governing architecture within which compliance, non-compliance, adaptation, and reform would occur. This focus is especially valuable because policy reform is often assessed only in terms of implementation gaps, without sufficient attention to the documentary field through which organizations learn what counts as legitimate care.

There are three limitations to acknowledge. First, document analysis cannot capture frontline practice, children's lived experiences, or local variation across the entire Muhammadiyah network. Second, documentary congruence does not automatically imply operational congruence. An organization may adopt rights-based language while continuing older routines in practice. Third, because this is a single-case study centred on Muhammadiyah, the analysis does not claim that all faith-based providers in Indonesia respond in the same manner. Nevertheless, the case is analytically significant. Muhammadiyah is one of the country's largest and most institutionalized faith-based welfare actors, and its documentary corpus is unusually rich. Studying it allows a theoretically informed account of how hybrid governance is assembled in a major non-state welfare system under conditions of policy transition.

Finally, the study uses documentary evidence in conjunction with peer-reviewed international scholars not to force local experience into imported categories, but to place the Indonesian case into wider conversations on child welfare transformation and nonprofit hybridity. This comparative move matters because Indonesia is often treated as a policy recipient rather than as a site from which generalizable insights can be drawn. By showing how child welfare reform is negotiated through a large Islamic civil society organization, the article argues that hybrid governance in the Global South deserves to be theorized on its own terms, while remaining connected to international debates on deinstitutionalization, alternative care, and welfare pluralism.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. *From placement to stewardship: the state's reframing of child welfare*

The first major finding is that Indonesian regulation no longer conceptualizes child welfare primarily as the provision of residential placement. Instead, it increasingly frames welfare as stewardship over a differentiated care system. Law No. 11/2009 is foundational here. It defines social welfare as a planned, integrated, and sustainable effort conducted by government, local government, and society, while grounding the field in principles of partnership, openness, accountability, participation, professionalism, and sustainability. In other words, the law already imagines welfare as a governed field of plural actors rather than as a state monopoly or a charitable residual. The significance of this legal framing is substantial. Once welfare is defined as integrated and participatory, non-state actors such as religious organizations are not external to the system. They are part of the system, but under principles that also permit the state to steer, standardize, and monitor.

Ministerial Regulation No. 30/2011 advances this steering role by redefining the legitimate place of child welfare institutions. The regulation states that preventing family separation should be the primary objective of services for children, that the main goal of social services is to strengthen parental and family capacity, and that family-based alternatives such as fostering, guardianship, and adoption should be prioritized when parental care is not possible. It also states clearly that economic hardship should not be the primary reason for separating children from families and placing them in institutional care. Further, the regulation presents LKSA as part of a continuum of care, not as an isolated or default destination. These provisions mark a fundamental policy shift. Residential care is recoded from ordinary charity into residual intervention, one that must be justified against the benchmark of family preservation and the child's best interests.

This regulatory reframing is accompanied by a stronger procedural imagination of welfare governance. The 2011 standards call for referral, assessment, planning, implementation, review, evaluation, licensing, monitoring, and accreditation. They also require periodic review of children's placement, explanation of review processes to children, and the return of children to families when conditions improve. Child participation is not treated as decorative rhetoric but as part of legitimate decision making. The state therefore does not simply say that family care is normatively preferable; it attempts to create an administrative technology

through which institutions can be governed toward that end. This is why the concept of stewardship is useful. The state is repositioning itself as the actor that defines proper sequencing, authorized procedures, and the evidentiary basis for intervention.

The background section of the national standards makes this shift even more explicit. It notes that previous studies found many institutions functioning mainly as providers of access to education rather than as last-resort alternative care, that around ninety per cent of children in institutions still had living parents, and that institutions often lacked adequate knowledge about which children should be in residential care and what kind of care they should receive. The standards were explicitly designed to transform the role of *panti asuhan* and to reposition them as service centres for children and families rather than automatic destinations for children from poor households. Here the state is not merely regulating existing institutions. It is reclassifying the meaning of those institutions in response to an earlier welfare model in which institutionalization had become normalized.

From a hybrid governance perspective, the state's documentary strategy is notable for two reasons. First, it does not seek to eliminate non-state provision. On the contrary, it recognizes that institutions may be established by government, local government, or society. Second, it seeks to govern plural provision through standards, accreditation, and professional requirements. This is a classic hybrid move: authority is dispersed, but the terms of legitimacy are increasingly codified. The state claims the right to define the grammar of acceptable care even where it does not directly provide the service. Such a move creates a field in which organizations like Muhammadiyah must either translate those standards into their own policy language or risk being displaced from normative legitimacy.

4.2. Muhammadiyah's internal policy regime: religious mission translated into organizational form

The second finding is that Muhammadiyah responds to child welfare not through informal benevolence but through a highly structured internal regime. Its constitutional and organizational documents show that welfare provision is embedded in a formal governance architecture. The AD/ART defines *majelis* and *lembaga* as assisting structures within Muhammadiyah's organizational order, while the 2023 AUMS regulations identify multiple welfare institutions under the social service field, including family support centres, family care centres, and LKSA. This matters because it means the organization does not approach welfare as a loose moral impulse. It institutionalizes service through categories, offices, chains of responsibility, and rule-bound administrative forms.

The internal child care guideline is especially revealing. Its introductory sections state that one key principle of Muhammadiyah child care is to prioritize children's care within the family, including family support and family-based care. The guideline also presents "santunan keluarga" as the priority model for preventing child-family separation. This is not a trivial echo of state policy. It shows that Muhammadiyah has internalized a substantive preference for family-centred care and has given that preference an organizational expression. Rather than treating institutional care as the centre of gravity, it recognizes several service modalities and orders them normatively.

The 2023 social service regulations sharpen this architecture. They distinguish between Pusat Asuhan Keluarga Muhammadiyah, and LKSA, and define LKSA as a model of care conducted in a residential institution over a limited period and as a last-resort choice for child care. The same regulations require registration, operational licensing, and accreditation, and connect organizational legitimacy not only to Muhammadiyah's internal rules but also to the statutory welfare system. They also establish principles of transparent, accountable, participatory, inclusive, integrative, and sustainable governance. Here, faith-based identity and bureaucratic order are not opposites. Islamic mission is rendered actionable through formal organizational instruments that look recognizably administrative.

The policy detail extends beyond institutional classification. Muhammadiyah's documents include case-based service stages such as initial approach, referral intake, assessment, service

planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, reunification, termination, and post-service follow-up. They regulate data management, financial reporting, staff functions, and publication. The child care manual also contains operational forms for referral, monitoring, reunification, and post-service review. This procedural density indicates that the organization has not merely accepted the broad idea of modernization. It has built an internal administrative repertoire that allows religiously authorized care to be enacted through documentation, coordination, and standardized pathways.

This formalization helps explain why Muhammadiyah should be analysed as a governance actor. Religious legitimacy provides motivation and identity, but it is not sufficient to operate a large welfare system. A system that spans multiple regions and institutions requires budgeting, reporting, staffing, coordination, and mechanisms for internal discipline. Muhammadiyah's policy corpus supplies exactly that. The organization thus appears as a faith-based bureaucracy in the Weberian sense of rule-bound organization, although its legitimacy is not exhausted by bureaucratic form. Its authority also rests on Islamic moral obligation, organizational history, and embeddedness in community networks. That combination is precisely what makes the case hybrid.

4.3. Selective coupling rather than simple compliance

The third finding is that the relationship between the state and Muhammadiyah regimes is best described as selective coupling rather than either full compliance or open contradiction. On the most visible normative points, the two regimes converge strongly. Both privilege the family as the primary locus of care. Both treat institutional care as residual or last resort. Both recognize assessment, documentation, and planned intervention as central to legitimate service. Both include child participation, family reunification, and review as key principles. Both assume that welfare provision must be governed rather than left to moral spontaneity.

Yet the form of that convergence is not mere duplication. Muhammadiyah does not simply copy state terminology. It translates it. For example, the national standards speak in the language of child rights, social welfare administration, and alternative care policy. Muhammadiyah reproduces these substantive commitments but embeds them within its own institutional taxonomy and organizational chains. State regulation asks what an LKSA may legitimately do; Muhammadiyah's regulations ask how a Muhammadiyah welfare institution should be designed and supervised as part of a broader Islamic social service system. The shared concern with family support, professional procedure, and residual institutionalization is therefore mediated through different sources of authorization.

This difference becomes especially clear around organizational legitimacy. Under the state regime, legitimacy is tied to law, licensing, accreditation, and compliance with standards. Under the Muhammadiyah regime, legitimacy also depends on conformity with organizational hierarchy, majelis authority, and the movement's ideological identity. The result is layered legitimacy. A child welfare institution within Muhammadiyah must be acceptable both to the state's regulatory logic and to Muhammadiyah's own internal constitutional order. This is not a marginal point. It means governance is not centralized in a single sovereign source but distributed across overlapping systems of recognition.

Selective coupling is also visible in the way Muhammadiyah retains community-philanthropic and organizationally specific elements that exceed the state's procedural vocabulary. The internal regulations contain extensive provisions on donor reporting, information dissemination, budgeting, bookkeeping, staff roles, and organizational communication. These elements are not incidental add-ons. They are part of what makes a faith-based welfare network operationally viable. The state can require accountability, but it does not itself supply donor trust, grassroots volunteering, or movement-based solidarity. Muhammadiyah's internal regime therefore couples with the state on rights, standards, and family orientation while retaining a distinct logic of organizational reproduction rooted in philanthropy, reputation, and internal discipline.

Seen through hybridity theory, this pattern resembles selective alignment rather than absorption. Skelcher and Smith (2015) suggest that hybrids manage plurality by combining rather than erasing logics, while McMullin and Skelcher (2018) show that societal context shapes which combinations are viable. The Muhammadiyah case exemplifies this. The organization absorbs enough of the state's child-rights and professional vocabulary to remain publicly legitimate, but it does so through an internal grammar that preserves religious mission and organizational autonomy. The resulting arrangement is more stable than a purely external compliance model because it allows public policy to be narrated as congruent with Muhammadiyah's own welfare ethos rather than as an alien imposition.

4.4. Professionalization as the central negotiation site

The fourth finding is that professionalization constitutes the most important arena through which hybrid governance is operationalized. Both state and Muhammadiyah documents repeatedly return to staffing, competence, case handling, and procedural discipline. Ministerial Regulation No. 16/2017 defines categories of social welfare human resources, distinguishes social workers from other personnel and volunteers, and emphasizes competence, certification, training, and management systems. It also explicitly identifies child specialization within social work. Law No. 14/2019 reinforces this professional turn by defining social work practice as planned, integrated, continuous, and supervised professional assistance, and by requiring standards, operating procedures, competence, and registration.

The 2011 child care standards connect this professionalization agenda directly to institutional transformation. They require assessment, planning, review, and documented decision making; they also specify the role of professional social workers in handling children's and families' cases. This is critical because the state's family-based turn cannot be implemented through moral exhortation alone. It depends on personnel capable of conducting psychosocial assessment, making individualized care plans, evaluating risk, coordinating referrals, and planning reunification. Family-centred care, in other words, is not a less professional model than residential care. It is often more demanding because it requires intensive relational and case-based work across family systems.

Muhammadiyah's documents show that the organization has moved toward this professional vocabulary. Its regulations and manuals organize services around assessment, written plans, monitoring, review, reunification, post-service follow-up, and documented information systems. They assign roles to managers, finance staff, information staff, and case-related personnel, and they create forms that make referrals and monitoring legible. In the child welfare field, such proceduralization is not a neutral administrative choice. It is how professional logic enters and stabilizes a faith-based organization. The organization learns to govern itself through records, case files, supervision, and role differentiation.

Professionalization is also where the state and faith-based regimes are most mutually dependent. The state can insist on standards, but it relies on organizations to recruit, finance, and retain competent staff. Faith-based providers can invoke moral commitment, but large-scale care systems cannot depend on moral commitment alone if they are to manage complex child protection cases responsibly. Hence professionalization becomes the hinge of hybrid governance: it is the site where religious mission is translated into credible care, and where regulatory expectation becomes organizational practice. This helps explain why the documents place such heavy weight on staff management, competence, certification, and clear stages of intervention.

At the same time, professionalization does not erase the role of volunteers, donors, or community actors. The regulations explicitly recognize volunteers and other social welfare personnel. This indicates that hybrid governance in child welfare is not achieved by replacing faith-based and community energies with a purely technocratic system. Rather, it requires organizing those energies within professional boundaries. The key governance problem is therefore not how to secularize care but how to professionalize a plural welfare field without

destroying the social legitimacy and community reach that make large faith-based organizations effective providers.

4.5. Scale, philanthropy, and the unfinished character of transformation

The fifth finding is that the very scale of Muhammadiyah's welfare network creates both strength and tension. The infographic included in the document set indicates a large child welfare infrastructure, with 201 LKSA units and thousands of beneficiaries and staff. Scale matters because it gives Muhammadiyah administrative reach, public visibility, and the potential to diffuse policy change rapidly. A network of this size can, in principle, become a powerful vehicle for transforming child welfare away from institution-centred provision. It can embed family support, kin-based care, reunification, and referral systems across a wide organizational field. It can also connect welfare provision with education, health, and community support systems inside the broader Muhammadiyah ecosystem.

But scale also complicates reform. Large, historically layered organizations rarely transform evenly. Existing buildings, donor expectations, local understandings of orphanages, staffing profiles, and inherited service routines can all slow change. This is precisely what recent empirical research in Indonesia suggests. Agastya et al. (2024) find that the deinstitutionalization process is under way but still incomplete, with limited family support services and uneven transformation among providers. Andrina et al. (2024) similarly show that institutions in West Java continue to be viewed by some caregivers as pathways to educational opportunity. These findings resonate strongly with the Muhammadiyah case. Even where the organization's policy texts clearly prefer family-based care, implementation must still move through institutional histories and social expectations that were formed under an older welfare model.

Philanthropy is another source of ambivalence. It is a strength because it enables independence, responsiveness, and community-rooted service. Yet donor cultures may also favour visible, institution-centred forms of charity over slower and less tangible family-strengthening work. Residential institutions are legible to donors in ways that case management, preventive family support, or reintegration planning often are not. Muhammadiyah's detailed financial and reporting procedures show that it is acutely aware of the importance of transparent management and donor accountability. But those same procedures also remind us that hybrid governance unfolds under material constraints. Organizations do not translate policy in an abstract space; they do so while maintaining operational viability and donor confidence.

This helps explain why the deepest tension in the case is not one of ideology. There is little documentary evidence of a principled conflict between state child-rights standards and Muhammadiyah's stated welfare commitments. The tension lies instead in organizational transformation: how to move from a historically institution-centred service ecology to a genuinely family-centred system without losing legitimacy, resources, or operational continuity. Hybrid governance here should therefore not be romanticized. It can be productive because it joins public regulation, professionalization, and moral commitment. But it can also produce layered accountability and gradualism, where reform is accepted in principle yet uneven in organizational practice.

From a broader theoretical perspective, the Indonesian case suggests that child welfare reform in plural welfare systems depends less on eliminating non-state actors than on reconfiguring their role within a governed continuum of care. Religious organizations are not obstacles simply by virtue of being religious, nor are they automatically vehicles of progressive reform simply by adopting rights-based language. Their significance lies in how they mediate between policy and social worlds. Muhammadiyah's documents show that such mediation can be remarkably sophisticated. The organization has built an internal regime that mirrors many state standards while preserving its own organizational identity. The unfinished question is whether this documentary alignment can be translated consistently into local

practice across a large and diverse network. That question invites future interview-based and multi-site research, but it does not diminish the central conclusion of this study: the governance of child welfare in Indonesia is hybrid all the way down.

5. Conclusion

This article has argued that child welfare in Indonesia is best understood not as a state-centred system with peripheral private providers, nor as a charity field merely tolerated by government, but as a hybrid governance arrangement in which public regulation and faith-based welfare provision are mutually constitutive. The Indonesian state has increasingly redefined child welfare through stewardship, family strengthening, professional standards, review, and accountability. Muhammadiyah, for its part, has translated these priorities into a structured internal care regime that organizes family support, family-based alternatives, institutional care, staffing, documentation, and reunification within its own organizational order. The result is not a simple merger of public and religious authority, but a negotiated settlement among state, faith-based, professional, and community-philanthropic logics.

The article's main substantive finding is that the key issue in reform is not whether faith-based organizations should participate in child welfare; they are already deeply embedded in the field and, in many contexts, indispensable to it. The more important question is how hybrid governance can be aligned with the substantive goals of deinstitutionalization, child participation, safeguarding, and sustainable family reintegration. In the Muhammadiyah case, documentary evidence suggests a high degree of normative alignment with the family-based turn in Indonesian policy. Yet this alignment also exposes the demanding organizational work required to convert rights-based standards into operational routines across a large network. Professionalization, internal coordination, data systems, and the political economy of philanthropy all become decisive.

For policy and scholars alike, the implication is clear. Child welfare transformation should not be imagined as a linear state project imposed on passive providers. It is a negotiated process in which major civil society actors reinterpret and operationalize reform within their own institutional grammars. That process deserves closer comparative study across different faith-based and non-faith-based providers in Indonesia. Future research should therefore move beyond document analysis to include interviews, organizational ethnography, and multi-site comparison so that the relationship between policy design, institutional history, and lived care experience can be examined more fully. Even so, the present case already demonstrates an important point: in plural welfare systems, the future of child welfare depends not only on better rules, but on how hybrid institutions learn to govern care differently.

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