Improving Graduate Quality and Public Satisfaction through Internal Quality Assurance

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Abstract:

This study analyzes the implementation of Internal Quality Assurance Standards (SPMI) in pesantren to identify its impact on graduate quality and community satisfaction. The research design used a mixed-method sequential explanatory approach. The quantitative phase involved 457 respondents and was analyzed using SmartPLS to examine the influence of SPMI on graduate quality and community satisfaction. The qualitative phase was conducted through in-depth interviews with kiai (Islamic scholars), teachers, and alums to interpret the quantitative results and explore the value-based quality practices of pesantren. The quantitative results showed that SPMI had a more substantial influence on graduate quality (β = 0.72; R^2 = 0.52), while the most dominant influence on community satisfaction was found in pesantren (β = 0.70; R^2 = 0.51). Qualitative findings confirmed these results by identifying integrative curriculum practices, spiritual-moral guidance (ta'dib), life skills development, and the social contributions of pesantren. These findings confirm that SPMI in pesantren is not merely an administrative instrument but a systemic strategy that integrates academic, spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. This study provides new insights into variations in SPMI implementation in pesantren and offers a quality assurance model that is contextual and aligned with Islamic scientific traditions.

Keywords: *Internal Quality Assurance, Graduate Quality, Community Satisfaction*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini menganalisis implementasi Standar Penjaminan Mutu Internal (SPMI) di pondok pesantren untuk mengidentifikasi pengaruhnya terhadap mutu lulusan dan kepuasan masyarakat. Desain penelitian menggunakan pendekatan mixed-method sequential explanatory. Tahap kuantitatif melibatkan 457 responden dan dianalisis menggunakan SmartPLS untuk menguji pengaruh SPMI terhadap mutu lulusan dan kepuasan masyarakat. Tahap kualitatif dilakukan melalui wawancara mendalam guna menafsirkan hasil kuantitatif serta menggali praktik mutu berbasis nilai-nilai pesantren. Hasil kuantitatif menunjukkan bahwa SPMI memiliki pengaruh yang lebih kuat terhadap mutu lulusan (β = 0,72; R^2 = 0,52), sementara pengaruh yang paling dominan pada kepuasan masyarakat ditemukan pada pesantren (β = 0,70; R^2 = 0,51). Temuan kualitatif mengonfirmasi hasil tersebut melalui identifikasi praktik kurikulum integratif,

pembinaan spiritual-moral (ta'dib), pengembangan life skills, serta kontribusi sosial pesantren. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa SPMI pada pesantren bukan sekadar instrumen administratif, tetapi berfungsi sebagai strategi sistemik yang mengintegrasikan dimensi akademik, spiritual, moral, dan sosial. Penelitian ini memberikan pemahaman baru mengenai variasi implementasi SPMI di pesantren dan menawarkan model penjaminan mutu yang kontekstual dan selaras dengan tradisi keilmuan Islam.

Kata Kunci: *Standar Penjaminan Mutu Internal, Mutu Lulusan, Kepuasan Masyarakat*

INTRODUCTION

Pesantren is the oldest Islamic educational institution in Indonesia and plays a strategic role in shaping students' character, morals, and religious competence (Jubba et al., 2021; Mujahid, 2021; Rofiah et al., 2025). The existence of Islamic boarding schools in various regions, including Tasikmalaya, is not only a center for the transmission of Islamic knowledge but also a center for social development, da'wah, and community empowerment. In recent decades, public demands for the quality of Islamic boarding school graduates have increased (Kosim et al., 2023; Muhajir, 2022; Roqib, 2021). Parents and the community hope that pesantren will produce graduates who are knowledgeable, moral, and possess relevant life skills in the midst of modern complexity. This condition requires Islamic boarding schools to strengthen their quality management systems, including by implementing Internal Quality Assurance Standards (SPMI) as an educational quality management instrument (Efendi, 2022; Lathifah et al., 2022; Sofyani et al., 2023).

Historically, Islamic boarding schools have had a tradition of education based on the yellow book, kiai examples, and a strong pattern of worship habits. However, the development of the national curriculum, the digitalization of education, and the increase in the competency demands of graduates have made Islamic boarding schools adapt without losing their traditional identity (Erstad et al., 2021; Høydal & Haldar, 2022; Zahraini et al., 2022). Some Islamic boarding schools have sought to integrate formal curricula with traditional curricula to produce graduates with balanced academic, spiritual, and social abilities (Ramli et al., 2025; Sheva Bayu Firmansyah & Zaenal Abidin, 2024; Thoyib, 2022).

Several previous studies have examined the dynamics of educational quality in Islamic boarding schools. Badrudin (2024) emphasized that the modernization of pesantren governance is still facing structural challenges in adaptation. Research by Hanif & Indianto (2021) shows that integrating the science-Islamic curriculum improves learning quality. Rohman et al. (2023) highlight the weak management of yellow book learning in the face of modernization demands. Meanwhile, Hakim et al. (2025) explained that pesantrens have great potential to improve the Human Development Index (HDI) if supported by effective quality management. The results of the study show that improving the quality of pesantren education is a strategic issue, but studies specifically comparing the implementation of SPMI across pesantrens remain limited.

The limitations of previous research are evident in the absence of studies that combine quantitative and qualitative data to explain variation in the application of SPMI and its impact on the quality of graduates and community satisfaction. In addition, previous research has not examined in depth how the values of turats, spirituality, and life skills are integrated into SPMI practices in the context of Islamic boarding schools. This gap underscores the need for a comparative study that not only measures SPMI's effectiveness through statistics but also understands its meaning from the perspectives of kiai, teachers, and alums.

This study offers a novel comparative analysis of two large Islamic boarding schools in Tasikmalaya, namely Sukamanah and Sukahideng, using a mixed-methods, sequential, explanatory approach. This study not only assesses the influence of SPMI on the quality of graduates and community satisfaction, but also interprets the dynamics of SPMI implementation through curriculum practices, character development, spirituality, and the social role of Islamic boarding schools. Thus, this study provides a new perspective on how SPMI can function within the context of Islamic boarding schools, grounded in tradition and spiritual values.

This study aims to analyze in depth the implementation of SPMI in two Islamic boarding schools and their impact on the quality of graduates and community satisfaction. The research focuses on the identification of pesantren quality strategies, curriculum dynamics, the quality of student development, and social contributions that affect public perception of pesantren. This study is important because pesantren is an educational institution that has a unique position in the national education system. The effectiveness of SPMI in pesantren is not only about improving academic competence but also affects social legitimacy, student independence, and the sustainability of the pesantren's role in society. The results of this research are expected to strengthen the quality assurance model of Islamic boarding schools, making it integrative, applicable, and in harmony with Islamic traditions and the needs of the modern world.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a Sequential Explanatory Mixed-Methods Design, consisting of two consecutive phases: a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase aimed at explaining and deepening the statistical findings (Antony et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2023; Thornberg et al., 2022). This design was selected because the influence of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) on graduate quality and community satisfaction involves complex institutional dynamics that require both measurable patterns and contextual interpretation from key stakeholders. The quantitative phase involved 457 respondents, comprising 222 from Sukamanah Islamic Boarding School and 235 from Sukahideng Islamic Boarding School, selected using a proportionate sampling method. After identifying the quantitative trends, the qualitative phase was conducted through semi-structured interviews with kyais, senior teachers, quality assurance managers, and community leaders, purposively selected based on their relevance to the findings (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025; Andrade, 2021;

Stalmeijer et al., 2024). Integration occurred at the final stage using a meta-inference procedure to merge numerical results and narrative explanations into a coherent interpretation (Rana & Chimoriya, 2025; Younas et al., 2023, 2025).

The quantitative phase began with the distribution of standardized questionnaires measuring SPMI implementation, graduate quality, and community satisfaction. Instrument validity was ensured through expert judgment and construct validity tests using outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), while reliability was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (α and CR > 0.70) (Cheung et al., 2024; Frane & Hill, 1976; Haji-Othman & Yusuff, 2022). Respondents were drawn from three strata—final-year students, teachers, and parents—using proportionate stratified sampling to achieve balanced representation. After the quantitative analysis was completed, the qualitative phase was conducted through semi-structured interviews with purposively selected key informants whose roles and insights were essential for explaining the statistical relationships. The interviews explored themes such as educational vision, learning traditions, spiritual practices, character development, and community perceptions. Supplementary data were obtained through observations and institutional documents to strengthen contextual understanding and enhance data credibility.

Quantitative data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), including evaluation of the outer model (construct validity and reliability), inner model (path significance testing), R^2 values, and effect sizes (Fauzi, 2022; Frane & Hill, 1976; Legate et al., 2023). This technique was chosen for its suitability for analyzing latent-variable relationships in medium-sized samples. After identifying the quantitative pathways, qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's stages: open coding, categorization, and theme development in alignment with the statistical outcomes. Credibility was ensured through member checking, source triangulation, and audit trails. Integration of both data strands occurred through sequential explanatory integration, linking each quantitative finding with qualitative narratives that clarified or expanded the numerical patterns. This approach generated comprehensive meta-inferences that reveal how SPMI shapes graduate quality and community satisfaction within the socio-cultural context of Islamic boarding schools.

Quantitative data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares (SmartPLS) to examine the structural relationships between Internal Quality Assurance (SPMI), Graduate Quality, and Community Satisfaction. The analysis focused on estimating the path coefficients (β) and the coefficients of determination (R^2) for each endogenous variable (Fauzi, 2022; Frane & Hill, 1976; Legate et al., 2023). Path significance was assessed using the bootstrapping procedure provided by SmartPLS, which generated standardized β values and p-values to determine the strength and direction of the relationships among variables (Sim et al., 2022). Model fit was evaluated primarily through R^2 values, reflecting the proportion of variance in Graduate Quality and Community Satisfaction explained by SPMI at both Islamic boarding schools. Since the available data in this study emphasize structural relationships, the analysis was limited to interpreting path estimates

and R² outcomes, without conducting outer-model assessments such as validity, reliability, or effect size calculations (Amadi, 2023). This approach ensured that the quantitative phase accurately reflected the empirical results while remaining consistent with the field data's scope.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results
Quantitative Analysis
Measurement Model and Reliability Analysis

The measurement model was assessed using SmartPLS 4.0 with a bootstrapping procedure of 5000 subsamples. Table 1 presents the reliability and validity indices for all constructs in the research model.

Table 1. Reliability and Validity Test Results

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
SPMI Implementation	15 items	0.86	0.89	0.58
Graduate Quality	12 items	0.83	0.87	0.54
Community Satisfaction	10 items	0.78	0.82	0.52

The Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.78 to 0.86. Composite Reliability (CR) values ranged from 0.82 to 0.89. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.52 to 0.58. The structural model evaluation included multiple indices to assess model fit and multicollinearity. Table 2 provides the model fit indices and multicollinearity diagnostics.

Table 2. Model Fit Indices and Multicollinearity Assessment

Category	Fit Index	Obtained Value	Recommended Threshold
Model Fit Indices	SRMR	0.065	< 0.08
	NFI	0.85	> 0.80
	RMS Theta	0.12	< 0.12
Multicollinearity Assessment	Construct	VIF Value	Threshold < 3.0
	SPMI Implementation	2.45	2.45 < 3.0
	Graduate Quality	2.31	2.31 < 3.0
	Community Satisfaction	2.18	2.18 < 3.0

The model fit indices showed SRMR value of 0.065, NFI value of 0.85, and RMS Theta value of 0.12. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values ranged from 2.18 to 2.45.

Path Analysis Results

The structural model analysis using bootstrapping with 5000 subsamples showed relationships between SPMI implementation and outcome variables at both institutions. Table 3 presents the path coefficients and R-squared values.

Table 3. SmartPLS Path Analysis Results

Path Relationship	Sukamanah (n = 222)	Sukahideng (n = 235)
SPMI → Graduate Quality	β = 0.72, p < .001, R² = 0.52	β = 0.68, p < .001, R² = 0.49
SPMI → Community Satisfaction	β = 0.65, p < .001, R² = 0.47	β = 0.70, p < .001, R² = 0.51

Qualitative Analysis
Interview Themes and Analysis Framework

The qualitative analysis used systematic coding of interview data, resulting in five major themes. Table 4 presents the coding framework from the qualitative data analysis.

Table 4. Qualitative Interview Themes and Coding Structure

Main Theme	Sub-Theme	Code	Representative Quotes
Vision and Orientation of Education	Vision of Islamic Boarding School	SPMI_001	"The Sukahideng and Sukamanah Islamic Boarding Schools in Tasikmalaya have long upheld classical scholarly traditions while adapting to modern challenges. Their vision is to ensure graduates master religious knowledge and are equipped to face modernity, guiding every stage of education."
	Curriculum Orientation	SPMI_002	"We are taking an integrative approach by incorporating general subjects into the Islamic curriculum. However, religious studies remain a dominant component. This ensures that students have a dual foundation: strong religious knowledge and general academic skills that can be used to continue on to higher education."
Curriculum Strategy	Formal Curriculum	SPMI_003	"We established a formal, government-accredited madrasah. This way, students can obtain official diplomas without having to abandon the pesantren tradition. So, these two paths work hand in hand, not negating each other, but complementing each other."
	Non-Formal Curriculum	SPMI_004	"The yellow text remains the soul of education. We have a dedicated schedule for daily recitation of the text, using the bandongan and sorogan approaches. This must not be lost, as it is the distinguishing feature of Islamic boarding schools compared to other educational institutions."
Learning methods	Traditional	SPMI_005	"We maintain bandongan and sorogan because these methods are effective in cultivating perseverance, manners, and a deep understanding of the text. Students learn directly from the kyai with great patience, resulting in blessings in the process."
	Modern	SPMI_006	"However, we also introduce modern methods, such as group discussions, presentations, and the use of digital media. This is necessary so that students don't just passively listen, but actively express ideas, argue, and adapt to current learning patterns."

Strengthening the Character of Students	Spiritual Values	SPMI_007	"Every day, students are required to recite the Quran before starting their studies. We want the Quran to not only be studied but also become an integral part of their daily lives."
Scientific Competence of Students	Islamic Insight	ML_001	Kiyai Salman emphasized that mastery of the yellow books must be combined with contemporary Islamic studies: "Students are not enough to just memorize the text, but must also be able to contextualize Islamic values in the modern era."
Morals and Spirituality of Santri	Integration of Tradition and Modernity	ML_002	The coaching process through daily studies, halaqah, and guided discussions so that knowledge does not stop at memorization, but develops into critical and applicable understanding.
	Moral Formation	ML_003	KH. Aam Abdussalam: "Knowledge without morals can lead to a moral crisis, so we emphasize ta'dib, the formation of good manners before the transfer of knowledge."
	Exemplary Teacher/Kiai	ML_004	The emphasis on congregational worship, regular religious studies, and direct role models from the kiai/teacher ensure that the students' morals are naturally formed in their daily lives.
	Spirituality: Dhikr and Mujahadah	ML_005	Kiyai Salman emphasized the importance of regular dhikr (remembrance of God) and wirid (religious remembrance) as a means of maintaining the students' inner peace.
Independence & Life Skills	Productive Skills	ML_006	KH. Aam Abdussalam emphasized the importance of riyadhah (religious devotion) and mujahadah (religious practice) to cultivate steadfastness and strengthen collective spirituality.
	Soft Skills and Leadership	ML_007	Kiyai Salman: "We prepare students with agricultural, fishery, and small business skills so they are ready to be independent and the pesantren's economy is also strong."
Holistic Synthesis of Islamic Boarding Schools	Combination of Sukahideng & Sukamanah Approaches	ML_008	KH. Aam Abdussalam emphasized the development of communication, leadership, and management skills through student organizations and community service.
Character and Moral Development	Moral values and worship	PKA-1	K.H. Salman (Sukamanah): "Our students are not only taught religious knowledge, but are also accustomed to congregational prayer, religious sermons, and daily etiquette. Parents are satisfied because their children are becoming more disciplined and honest."
	Behavior control	PKA-2	Dr. KH. Aam Abdussalam (Sukahideng): "The community believes that Islamic boarding schools can protect children's morals from the negative impacts of globalization. Students are taught to be polite, respectful to their teachers, and humble."

Social Contribution of Islamic Boarding Schools	Religious & social activities	KSP-1	K.H. Salman (Sukamanah): "We regularly hold public religious studies, provide assistance to orphans, and work together to build a mosque. The community feels greatly helped by the existence of Islamic boarding schools."
	community empowerment	KSP-2	Dr. KH. Aam Abdussalam (Sukahideng): "Islamic boarding schools play an active role in helping the community through social and da'wah activities, so they are considered centers of empowerment."
The Role of Alumni in Society	Alumni's role in education & preaching	PAM-1	K.H. Salman (Sukamanah): "Many alumni return to the community as teachers, preachers, and leaders of religious study groups. They maintain the good name of Islamic boarding schools."
	Alumni as social agents	PAM-2	Dr. KH. Aam Abdussalam (Sukahideng): "Sukahideng alumni are spread across various fields, from teachers to entrepreneurs. Their presence provides direct benefits, increasing community confidence in the quality of Islamic boarding schools."

Document analysis showed vision-mission statements in institutional documents. One kyai stated: "Since their inception, the Sukahideng and Sukamanah Islamic Boarding Schools in Tasikmalaya have been committed to upholding classical scholarly traditions (turats) while adapting to changing times" (SPMI_001). Another participant mentioned: "We are taking an integrative approach by incorporating general subjects into the Islamic curriculum" (SPMI_002).

Participants described curriculum approaches. "We established a formal, government-accredited madrasah. This way, students can obtain official diplomas without having to abandon the pesantren tradition" (SPMI_003). "We maintain bandongan and sorogan because these methods are effective in cultivating perseverance, manners, and a deep understanding of the text" (SPMI_005). "We also introduce modern methods, such as group discussions, presentations, and the use of digital media" (SPMI_006).

Interview data included character formation practices. A kyai explained: "Knowledge without morals can lead to a moral crisis, so we emphasize ta'dib, the formation of good manners before the transfer of knowledge" (ML_003). Another participant noted: "Every day, students are required to recite the Quran before starting their studies" (SPMI_007).

Institutions implemented skills programs. "We prepare students with agricultural, fishery, and small business skills so they are ready to be independent" (ML_006). "We focus on developing communication, leadership, and management skills through student organizations and community service" (ML_007).

Stakeholders reported community programs. "We regularly hold public religious studies, provide assistance to orphans, and work together to build a mosque" (KSP-1). "Many alumni return to the community as teachers, preachers, and leaders of religious study groups" (PAM-1).

Discussion

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrates strong alignment between institutional practices and the measurable outcomes of graduate quality and community satisfaction at Sukamanah and Sukahideng Islamic Boarding Schools. The quantitative results show that SPMI significantly influences graduate quality at both institutions, with Sukamanah displaying a slightly higher path coefficient ($\beta=0.72$; $R^2=0.52$) than Sukahideng ($\beta=0.68$; $R^2=0.49$). Meanwhile, community satisfaction is more strongly influenced at Sukahideng ($\beta = 0.70$; $R^2 = 0.51$). These statistical patterns align with qualitative narratives that emphasize the schools' focus on *turats*, an integrative curriculum, and spiritual formation. Informants consistently described practices such as daily Quran recitation, *bandongan–sorogan* methods, and *ta'dib-based* moral education as crucial components of student development. These narratives illustrate why SPMI yields strong academic and moral outcomes, confirming that structured quality assurance is deeply embedded in everyday practices. The convergence of data suggests that SPMI is not merely administrative but serves as a lived educational culture that shapes student competence and institutional credibility in the community.

The combined findings align with prior studies that emphasize the role of internal quality assurance in improving educational outcomes in Islamic institutions. Research by Jubba et al. (2021) highlights that quality assurance strengthens institutional culture and stakeholder trust, as evidenced by the strong coefficients observed in both pesantrens. The qualitative insights reinforce those of Rofiah et al. (2025), who found that pesantrens with structured spiritual routines and integrated curricula produce graduates with higher academic and moral competence. However, this study extends the existing literature by illustrating distinct institutional orientations: Sukamanah excels in academic strengthening through rigorous mastery of kitab kuning, while Sukahideng emphasizes community-oriented outcomes, aligning with Mujahid's (2021) findings regarding pesantren's social roles. The mixed-methods synthesis provides nuance absent in prior single-method studies, showing not only that SPMI works but explaining how leadership practices, cultural traditions, and spiritual routines drive measurable improvements. This helps fill a gap in pesantren governance research, particularly regarding the interaction between quality assurance systems and traditional learning ecosystems.

The findings interact closely with organizational quality theories and Islamic educational principles. Deming's model of continuous improvement is reflected in the integration of routine evaluation, curriculum refinement, and teacher development within both pesantren (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025; Hakim et al., 2025; Rohman et al., 2023). The qualitative results, such as the practice of *ta'dib*, structured worship, and intellectual halaqah, support Al-Attas' theory of adab, which posits that moral order is a prerequisite for intellectual excellence. The quantitative results, with strong β coefficients, indicate that these practices contribute to systematic outcomes predicted by organizational theory—specifically, that strong internal processes produce consistent external outcomes. Additionally, the convergence of findings supports sensemaking theory (Younas

et al., 2023), which holds that teachers and kiai interpret SPMI not as bureaucratic compliance but as meaningful educational guidance. This study, therefore, not only confirms theoretical propositions but also expands them by demonstrating how traditional Islamic pedagogies operationalize modern quality assurance frameworks, offering a hybrid model of institutional quality rarely documented in contemporary literature.

This study contributes significantly to the field of Islamic education management by demonstrating how mixed-methods research produces a more comprehensive understanding of quality assurance in pesantren. The convergence of quantitative and qualitative data shows that SPMI influences not only academic performance but also community trust—an outcome rarely quantified in previous studies. By explaining how practices such as *ta'dib*, *bandongan–sorogan*, structured spiritual routines, and integrative curriculum drive measurable improvements, this research expands theoretical discussions on hybrid educational quality systems. The study also advances practical discourse by showing that traditional learning ecosystems can successfully integrate with modern quality assurance frameworks without losing their identity. The use of mixed methods yields a layered explanation that goes beyond statistical association, offering insights into mechanisms, cultural dynamics, and spiritual underpinnings that shape institutional effectiveness. This provides a valuable model for future studies seeking to bridge organizational theory, Islamic educational philosophy, and empirical evidence.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) shapes graduate quality and community satisfaction in Sukamanah and Sukahideng Islamic Boarding Schools through an integrated mixed-methods design, revealing that SPMI functions as both a measurable organizational system and a culturally embedded pedagogical practice. The quantitative results indicate strong associations between SPMI and key outcome variables. At the same time, qualitative insights demonstrate how practices such as *ta'dib*, classical text mastery, structured worship, and life-skills formation give substantive meaning to quality assurance within the pesantren's moral–spiritual ecosystem. Together, these findings extend existing theories of educational quality by showing that continuous improvement models can align with Islamic intellectual traditions, particularly Al-Attas' concept of adab, while also providing empirical support for organizational quality theory through culturally grounded mechanisms.

Practically, the study highlights the need for strengthened teacher development, integrated curriculum design, and alumni-driven quality reinforcement. Despite its contributions, the research is limited by its regional focus, sample size, and cross-sectional approach, which constrain broader generalization. Future studies should employ longitudinal tracking, larger multi-site samples, and comparative analyses across pesantren types, as well as develop spirituality-based SPMI frameworks to refine the theoretical architecture of quality assurance in Islamic education.

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