

Beyond Technocratic Quality: Toward an Islamic TQM Model for Holistic Educational Management

Tobroni¹, Kadar Risman^{2*}, Faridi³, Ahmad Saefullah⁴

^{1,2,3}Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia

⁴Universitas Palangka Raya, Indonesia

*Email Corresponding author: rysmanqadha@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the integration of *Total Quality Management* (TQM) and Islamic spiritual values in educational quality management. The study aims to develop a conceptual model of Islamic TQM as a holistic quality management framework for Islamic educational institutions. A qualitative approach with a *library research* design was employed. Data were collected from reputable journal articles, academic books, and scientific publications related to TQM, spiritual leadership, Islamic quality management, and Islamic education management. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis through four stages: data extraction, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The findings reveal four major themes: (1) the dominance of a technocratic TQM paradigm focused on efficiency and standardization; (2) spirituality as an internal dimension that enhances organizational commitment and performance; (3) Islamic values such as *tauhid*, *amanah*, *ihsan*, and *itqan* as normative foundations of quality management; and (4) the integration of TQM principles and Islamic values into a holistic management model. The study concludes that the proposed Islamic TQM model provides a more comprehensive framework by combining managerial effectiveness, moral responsibility, and spiritual orientation. This model is relevant for madrasah, pesantren, and Islamic higher education institutions in responding to contemporary educational challenges.

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INTRODUCTION

Educational quality is a central issue in the development of educational institutions at the global level, as the quality of educational institutions significantly determines the competitiveness of human resources and the sustainability of social development (Amin et al., 2021; Assefa, 2024; Carvalho et al., 2024). In this context, various educational institutions have adopted the Total Quality Management (TQM) approach as a quality improvement strategy based on continuous improvement, strategic leadership, customer satisfaction, and the involvement of all organizational members (Darojah et al., 2025; Sallis, 2014). TQM is considered effective in improving organizational efficiency, accountability, and the quality of educational services (Darojah et al., 2025). Therefore, this approach has been widely applied in the management of schools, higher education institutions, and other public institutions. However, the implementation of TQM in education has also been criticized for placing excessive emphasis on technical and administrative aspects, thereby reducing quality to

quantitative indicators such as academic achievement, accreditation, and user satisfaction (Hadi, 2018; Iyer, 2018; Qurtubi, 2022).

This criticism becomes increasingly relevant when TQM is implemented in Islamic educational institutions. Islamic education has broader objectives than general educational institutions, as it seeks not only to produce graduates who are intellectually competent, but also to cultivate individuals with good character, spiritual awareness, and an orientation toward divine values (Momen, 2024; Mukhlis et al., 2024; Nadliroh, 2024). Recent studies report that Islamic educational institutions face complex challenges, including globalization, digital transformation, quality competition, and demands for institutional modernization (Abnisa & Azis, 2025; Alawilhuda et al., 2025; Amin et al., 2021; Muttaqin et al., 2025). On the other hand, many Islamic educational institutions continue to adopt modern management models partially, without reconstruction based on Islamic epistemology. This condition creates tension between the need for institutional professionalization and efforts to preserve the value-based identity of Islamic education.

Previous studies have examined TQM in education from the perspectives of implementation, effectiveness, and challenges in its application (Ahmed & Nahar, 2024; Darojah et al., 2025; Motwani & Kumar, 1997; Sallis, 2014). Other studies have highlighted the importance of spirituality in organizations through the concept of spiritual leadership, which has been shown to influence organizational commitment, proactive behavior, workplace well-being, and trust in leadership (Chen et al., 2019; Fry et al., 2005, 2026; Li et al., 2025; Okan & Okan, 2024). In addition, studies on Islamic Quality Management have begun to develop and emphasize that principles such as amanah, ihsan, and itqan can serve as the foundation of an Islamic-based quality system (Basir et al., 2017; Mokhtar & Ahmad, 2020, 2021; Zein et al., 2022). Nevertheless, these studies tend to remain fragmented and develop independently. Research on TQM primarily focuses on systems and procedures, studies on spirituality emphasize the psychological aspects of organizations, whereas research on Islamic management largely operates at the normative level and has not yet been integrated into an operational model of educational quality.

The previous studies discussed above reveal a significant research gap in the literature on Islamic educational management, namely the absence of a conceptual model that systematically integrates the strengths of TQM as a modern managerial framework, spirituality as an internal organizational dimension, and Islamic values as the normative foundation of educational quality. Addressing this gap is essential because Islamic educational institutions require a quality management system that is not only efficient and accountable, but also spiritually meaningful and consistent with the objectives of Islamic education. Without such integration, quality management in Islamic education may become trapped between two extreme poles: a bureaucratic-technocratic orientation or a normative-symbolic approach lacking an effective system.

Based on this background, the present study aims to thematically analyze the literature on TQM, spiritual leadership, Islamic Quality Management, and Islamic educational management in order to construct the Islamic TQM model as a new paradigm of educational quality management. This model integrates three main dimensions: Islamic core values as input, TQM principles as the process, and holistic educational quality as the output. Accordingly, the novelty of this study lies in the development of a conceptual model of educational quality management that comprehensively synergizes modern systems with Islamic spiritual values. Theoretically, this study extends the discourse of TQM into the context of Islamic education; practically, it offers a quality governance framework relevant to madrasah, pesantren, integrated Islamic schools, and Islamic higher education institutions in responding to the challenges of the global era.

RESEARCHS METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a library research design (Isik, 2025) to examine the integration of Total Quality Management (TQM) and Islamic spiritual values in educational management. The qualitative approach was selected to enable an in-depth exploration and interpretation of conceptual frameworks derived from scholarly literature. This study did not involve field participants; instead, its primary focus was on academic texts as the unit of analysis. The study adopted a conceptual orientation aimed at constructing a theoretical model of Islamic-based quality management grounded in the existing body of literature.

The data used in this study consisted of secondary sources, including reputable journal articles, academic books, and scholarly publications relevant to TQM, spiritual leadership, Islamic quality management, and Islamic educational management. The selection of literature was based on specific inclusion criteria, namely relevance to the research topic, publication in credible academic sources, and contribution to both theoretical and empirical discourse in the field under study. Data collection was conducted through documentation techniques, which included systematic searching, selection, organization, and extraction of key concepts from the literature. This process ensured that the analyzed data possessed a high level of credibility and relevance in accordance with the objectives of the study.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis through a systematic procedure adapted from Clarke & Braun (2017). The analytical process consisted of four main stages: data extraction, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Clarke & Braun, 2017). In the initial stage, key concepts and major findings were identified from the selected literature. Subsequently, open coding was performed to generate initial codes representing recurring ideas. The next stage involved axial coding, in which the codes were organized into broader conceptual categories, such as TQM principles, dimensions of spirituality, Islamic values, and critiques of conventional management. The final stage was selective coding, in which the categories were synthesized into major themes that were subsequently used to construct the conceptual model of Islamic Total Quality Management (Islamic TQM). To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied the criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability throughout the entire analytical process (Isik, 2025; Sugiono, 2015).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Based on the thematic analysis of the literature, this study identified conceptual patterns indicating fragmentation in approaches to educational quality management. The analyzed literature encompassed four major clusters: Total Quality Management (TQM), organizational spirituality, Islamic Quality Management, and Islamic educational management. Each cluster has developed partially and independently, and therefore has not yet produced an integrative and holistic quality management model. To provide an initial overview of the research landscape, a primary literature extraction was conducted, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Primary Literature Extraction

No	Author (Year)	Cluster	Focus of Study	Main findings
1	Sallis (2014)	TQM Education	TQM Implementation	Customer-based quality and continuous improvement
2	Hackman & Wageman (1995)	TQM Criticism	TQM Evaluation	Mechanistic and limited in value

3	Fry (2003); Fry et al (2005), 2026)	Spirituality	Spiritual leadership	Meaning and vision of improving performance
4	Chen et al (2019)	Spirituality	Organizational behavior	Spirituality enhances proactive performance
5	Mokhtar & Ahmad (2020, 2021)	Islamic QM	Islamic quality principles	<i>Amanah</i> and <i>ihsan</i> as the basis of quality
6	Ahmed & Nahar (2024)	Islamic & TQM	Paradigm comparison	Islamic TQM based on spiritual values
7	Zein et al (2022)	Islamic QM	Quality system	Integration of quality with Islamic values
8	Abnisa & Azis (2025)	MPI	Challenges of Islamic education	Adaptation to modernization
9	Pujianto et al (2025)	Integration	Values & management	Integration of Islamic values and modern theory

Table 1 above shows a conceptual separation between the systems-based approach (TQM), the values-based approach (Islam), and the psychological approach (spirituality). This indicates a significant research gap in the development of a comprehensive educational quality management model.

The Technocratic TQM Paradigm

The findings indicate that the Total Quality Management approach in education is still dominated by a technocratic paradigm that focuses on efficiency, standardization, and customer satisfaction. Principles such as continuous improvement and quality assurance constitute the main pillars of this approach. Conceptually, TQM was developed from the tradition of industrial management, which emphasizes efficiency, productivity, and quality control based on operational standards. Nevertheless, several studies reveal that TQM tends to be mechanistic and reductionist because it views quality as something that can be measured quantitatively without considering the dimensions of values and meaning. This has become a major criticism of TQM, in which quality is narrowed to empirically measurable indicators without adequate attention to ethical and spiritual aspects.

In the educational context, this approach has been adopted with an orientation toward improving learning outcomes, accreditation, and stakeholder satisfaction. The review further shows that many contemporary Islamic educational management practices still adopt modern management models partially, without systematically integrating spiritual values. This becomes problematic in the context of Islamic education, whose objectives are not limited to academic achievement; more importantly, Islamic education prioritizes the formation of character and spiritual consciousness. Therefore, the dominance of the technocratic paradigm in TQM requires a redefinition of the concept of quality toward a more holistic and universal perspective.

The findings of this theme confirm that although TQM makes a significant contribution to improving efficiency and educational quality standards, this approach still has fundamental limitations, particularly in accommodating spiritual and value-based dimensions. These limitations open space for the development of an alternative quality management model that is more holistic and value-based, particularly within the context of Islamic education.

Spirituality as an Internal Dimension in Quality Management

The subsequent analysis focused on the spiritual dimension. The findings indicate that spirituality plays a significant role in improving organizational performance quality. The reviewed literature on spiritual leadership emphasizes that aspects such as

meaningful work, life purpose, and intrinsic motivation contribute to greater individual commitment and productivity within organizations. This model emphasizes that leadership grounded in spiritual values, such as vision, hope, and altruistic love, has a positive impact on organizational commitment and work productivity. The findings further strengthen the position of spiritual leadership as a factor contributing to proactive behavior through the mediation of organizational identification and psychological safety.

In the educational context, the analysis shows that spirituality has been proven to enhance teacher well-being and the quality of organizational interactions. This indicates that spirituality functions not only as a normative value, but also as a psychological and social mechanism that strengthens the quality of interactions within educational organizations. Further review suggests that organizations integrating spiritual values tend to have higher levels of work meaningfulness, which directly contribute to improved individual and collective performance. This confirms that the spiritual dimension cannot be ignored in the management of modern organizations, including educational institutions. Unlike the conventional TQM approach, which focuses on systems and procedures, a spirituality-based approach offers an internal orientation that emphasizes awareness, values, and meaning as the primary foundation for achieving organizational quality.

The findings of this theme confirm that integrating the spiritual dimension into educational management, particularly Islamic education, is not merely normative, but is also supported by strong empirical and theoretical foundations for improving organizational performance quality. Therefore, in developing a quality management model for Islamic education, incorporating spirituality as a core element is essential rather than merely supplementary. Accordingly, spirituality may function as an internal mediator that bridges management systems and organizational performance.

Islamic Values as the Normative Foundation of Quality Management

Within this theme, the thematic analysis reveals that the literature on management from an Islamic perspective positions spiritual values as ontological and normative foundations for all organizational activities, including the management of educational quality. Unlike conventional management approaches that are value-neutral, management in Islam is rooted in a value system derived from theological principles and Islamic ethics. Values such as tauhid, amanah, ihsan, and itqan function not only as ethical norms, but also as operational principles in organizational management.

A major finding from the reviewed literature is the centrality of the values of ihsan, amanah, and itqan. In the context of Islamic educational quality management, these values are fundamental. The value of ihsan emphasizes the importance of achieving the highest quality in management practices as a form of devotion to Allah. This principle bears substantive similarity to the concept of excellence in TQM, yet with a stronger transcendental dimension. The value of amanah serves as the foundation for accountability and integrity in managing educational institutions, which are responsible not only to stakeholders, but also to the transcendental authority of God.

Furthermore, the value of itqan, which refers to precision and professionalism in work, also constitutes an important element within the framework of Islamic quality management. This value emphasizes that every activity should be carried out optimally and with full dedication, which is conceptually aligned with the principle of continuous improvement in TQM. These three values ultimately lead to the attainment of *maslahah* (public benefit), which represents the ultimate objective of all organizational activities

from an Islamic perspective. In addition, these values affirm a transcendental dimension that is absent from conventional TQM approaches. Accordingly, they can be positioned as a normative foundation for the development of educational quality management. In the context of contemporary Islamic education, these values are highly relevant given the challenges of globalization, which demand efficiency while simultaneously preserving Islamic identity. These findings confirm that Islamic values function not only as ethical norms, but also possess the conceptual capacity to serve as the foundation for developing a holistic quality management system. Values such as *ihsan*, *amanah*, and *itqan* are not merely compatible with TQM principles, but are also capable of enriching and transforming the approach into a more meaningful and transcendence-oriented framework.

Integration of TQM and Islamic Spiritual Values: A Holistic Quality Management Model

The thematic analysis presented above indicates that integrating the Total Quality Management (TQM) approach with Islamic spiritual values has become an urgent necessity to overcome the limitations of the technocratic quality management paradigm. This is because both approaches continue to develop separately within the existing literature. Therefore, their integration can create mutual complementarity, in which TQM offers strengths in systems, procedures, and quality control, while Islamic spiritual values provide dimensions of meaning, ethics, and transcendental orientation.

Based on the analysis of the literature presented in Table 1, the integration between TQM and Islamic values is not only conceptually feasible, but also supported by emerging empirical evidence in studies on Islamic Quality Management. In these findings, integration is understood as a process of reconstructing the quality management paradigm through a holistic approach encompassing three main dimensions: structural, cultural, and spiritual. Within the structural dimension, TQM principles such as continuous improvement, quality assurance, and customer satisfaction are retained as the operational framework. Within the cultural dimension, organizational values are constructed upon the principles of collectivism, responsibility, and work ethics. Meanwhile, within the spiritual dimension, Islamic values such as *tauhid*, *amanah*, *ihsan*, and *itqan* serve as the philosophical foundation guiding all organizational activities. In the context of Islamic education, this integrative model generates a holistic conception of educational quality management, in which quality is measured not only by academic achievement, but also by character formation, moral integrity, and students' spiritual awareness. Conceptually, the Islamic TQM model produced in this study can be seen in Table 2 and Figure 1 below:

Table 2. Conceptual Model of Islamic TQM

Component	Element	Function
Input	<i>Tauhid, amanah, ihsan, itqan</i>	Value foundation and quality orientation
Proses	Customer focus, continuous improvement, total involvement, process approach, fact-based decision making, dan strategic leadership	Quality management system
Output	Academic, moral, spiritual quality	Holistic education outcomes

Table 2 and Figure 1 above illustrate the Islamic TQM Model as an educational quality management framework that integrates the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM) with Islamic spiritual values. This model consists of three main components: input, process, and output. In the input aspect, core Islamic values in the form of *tauhid*, *amanah*, *ihsan*, and *itqan* function as ethical and spiritual foundations

for all educational management activities. In the process aspect, TQM principles such as customer focus, continuous improvement, total involvement, process approach, fact-based decision making, and strategic leadership are implemented within the framework of Islamic values, ensuring that the management system is oriented not only toward efficiency, but also toward service, justice, responsibility, and blessing. In the output aspect, the model generates holistic educational quality encompassing academic, moral, and spiritual excellence. Accordingly, the Islamic TQM Model affirms that the success of Islamic education cannot be measured solely by academic achievement, but also by its ability to cultivate a generation that is knowledgeable, morally upright, and guided by a life orientation rooted in the pleasure of Allah.

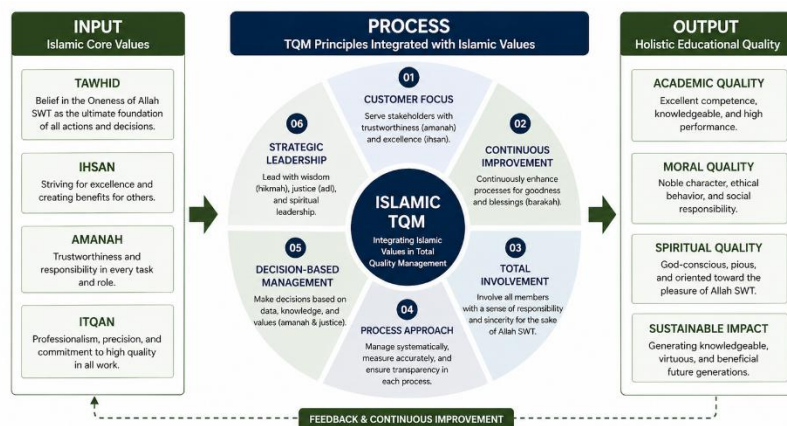


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of TQM Islamic

Discussion

The analysis conducted in this study points to a recurring pattern in how educational quality is approached within Islamic educational institutions. Quality management is still largely framed through a technocratic perspective, where efficiency, standardization, and measurable outputs dominate institutional priorities. While this approach has contributed to strengthening administrative systems, it appears insufficient to capture the broader aims of Islamic education. The findings indicate that dimensions such as spirituality and value orientation are often acknowledged at the conceptual level but remain weakly embedded in operational practices. This creates a disconnect between what institutions claim to value and how quality is actually managed in everyday processes. More importantly, the study reveals that Islamic education cannot be meaningfully reduced to performance indicators alone. It involves the cultivation of character, ethical awareness, and spiritual consciousness. The Islamic TQM model proposed in this study emerges from this tension, offering a way to reconnect managerial processes with the deeper purposes of education.

These findings resonate with, yet also extend, existing discussions on quality management in education. Previous studies have emphasized the effectiveness of TQM in improving institutional performance through structured processes and continuous improvement (Mukhlis et al., 2024). However, critical scholarship has long warned that such approaches risk becoming overly procedural, reducing education to a set of measurable outputs while overlooking its human and cultural dimensions (Crawford & Shutler, 1999; Hadi, 2018). This study reinforces that concern, particularly in the context of Islamic education, where the purpose of education is inherently tied to moral and spiritual formation (Momen, 2024; Mukhlis et al., 2024). At the same time, prior research on Islamic Quality Management and spiritual leadership has tended to develop

in parallel rather than in dialogue (Ahmed & Nahar, 2024; Chen et al., 2019). By bringing these strands together, this study addresses a gap that has persisted in the literature. It suggests that improving educational quality is not simply a matter of refining systems, but of rethinking the relationship between systems, values, and human development.

What becomes increasingly clear from this study is that quality in education cannot be sustained by systems alone. Procedures may regulate practice, but they do not necessarily inspire commitment. The findings show that spirituality plays a more active role than often assumed. It shapes how individuals interpret their work, how they relate to institutional goals, and how they sustain motivation over time. This aligns with studies on spiritual leadership that highlight its influence on trust, well-being, and proactive engagement (Okan & Okan, 2024; Li et al., 2025). Yet the present study moves beyond seeing spirituality as an additional layer. It suggests that spirituality forms part of the internal logic of quality itself, especially in Islamic educational contexts. Values such as tauhid, amanah, ihsan, and itqan operate not only as ethical references but also as practical guides for action (Mokhtar & Ahmad, 2021). When these values are internalized, quality is no longer driven solely by compliance, but by a sense of responsibility and purpose. In this sense, quality becomes something lived, not merely measured.

The contribution of this study lies in how it reframes the discussion on quality management within Islamic education. Rather than treating TQM, spirituality, and Islamic values as separate domains, this research brings them into a single analytical frame. This allows for a more coherent understanding of how educational quality can be managed without losing its ethical and spiritual grounding. The Islamic TQM model developed here offers a structured way to think about this integration, linking value foundations with managerial processes and educational outcomes. This is particularly relevant for institutions that are navigating increasing external pressures while trying to maintain their identity (Abnisa & Azis, 2025; Muttaqin et al., 2025). The study also contributes conceptually by challenging the assumption that management systems can remain value-neutral. It shows that, in practice, every system carries implicit values, and that making these values explicit can strengthen rather than weaken institutional coherence. In doing so, the study opens space for a more grounded and context-sensitive approach to educational management.

The findings suggest that the question of quality in education is, at its core, a question about purpose. TQM provides useful tools, but tools alone cannot define what counts as quality. When detached from values, quality management risks becoming procedural and disconnected from the lived realities of education. By integrating Islamic values and spirituality into the structure of quality management, this study offers an alternative that is both systematic and meaningful. The implications extend beyond theory. They point toward the need for institutions to rethink how quality assurance is designed, what indicators are prioritized, and how success is understood. At the same time, the study remains limited by its conceptual nature. Further empirical work is needed to test how the proposed model operates in practice, particularly across different institutional contexts. Future research could explore how teachers and leaders interpret and enact these values in everyday settings, and how such practices shape educational outcomes over time.

CONCLUSION

The central concern of this study has been the growing disconnect between technically driven quality management practices and the deeper educational purposes upheld within Islamic educational institutions. While systems such as Total Quality

Management have been widely adopted to improve efficiency and institutional performance, the findings show that such approaches often fall short when they are detached from value-based and spiritual dimensions. This study has argued that educational quality, particularly in Islamic contexts, cannot be adequately understood through procedural metrics alone. Instead, it must be approached as a holistic construct that integrates managerial effectiveness with ethical responsibility and spiritual awareness. By proposing the Islamic TQM model, this research brings together these dimensions into a coherent framework that aligns institutional processes with the broader aims of human development. The implications are both conceptual and practical. For scholars, the study opens a pathway for rethinking quality management beyond value-neutral assumptions. For practitioners, it offers a direction for designing systems that remain competitive without losing their moral grounding. What ultimately emerges is a reminder that the question of quality in education is inseparable from the question of purpose, and that any effort to improve one must remain attentive to the other.

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