Optimizing Resources in the Implementation of Internal Quality Assurance Systems: An Exploratory Study in Islamic Educational Institutions

Nispi Ani Barus[*1], Alma Vorfi Lama[2]

[1]Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Indonesia

[2]University of Business and Technology, Serbia

*Email Corresponding author : nispiani533@gmail.com

Abstract
This study focuses on the implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) in Islamic Education Institutions (LPI) and aims to identify the main challenges faced as well as the key factors that can improve the effectiveness of SPMI implementation in these institutions. The research method used is qualitative with a case study approach, where data is collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis from two LPIs in Yogyakarta. The results show that the gap between SPMI implementation policies and practices in LPI is mostly due to limited resources and low commitment from stakeholders. In addition, strong leadership and continuous support have proven to be important factors in building a sustainable quality culture. The implications of this study emphasize the need for a more holistic management strategy and adequate resource support to ensure that SPMI can function as an effective tool in improving the quality of education in LPI.

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INTRODUCTION

The Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) is a vital element in the management of quality education in Indonesia, especially in the context of Islamic Education Institutions (LPI) (Hussain et al., 2021; Ma et al., 2021; Siddiqui et al., 2022; Rusdi et al., 2022). In this era of globalization, the demands on the quality of education are getting higher, not only in terms of academic outcomes but also in terms of the process and management of education itself (Johnson & Brown, 2021; Lee et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022; Susilawati & Astuti, 2022). LPI, as an institution that has a strategic role in character formation and moral development, faces a great challenge to remain relevant and competitive in the ever-changing educational landscape (Ahmed & Nasir, 2022; Wilson, 2021; Zhao & Liu, 2021; Chuanchen, 2023).

SPMI, as a mechanism designed to ensure the quality of education on a sustainable basis, requires consistent and adaptive implementation to be able to meet societal expectations and national and international standards (Kim & Lee, 2021; Munir & Ahmed, 2021; Sun & Liu, 2022; Wijaya & Khoir, 2022). However, the reality on the ground shows that the implementation of SPMI in LPI often encounters various obstacles, ranging from limited resources to low commitment from stakeholders (Hassan et al., 2022; Ibrahim & Yahya, 2021; Park & Jeong, 2021; Norman & Paramansyah, 2024). This condition indicates that there is a significant gap between the quality assurance theory and its implementation practice, which raises questions about the effectiveness of SPMI in the context of LPI (Chen & Li, 2022; Miller & Davis, 2021; Zhang & Kim, 2022; Hasanah & Hefniy, 2023).

This research topic is very important to be discussed academically because it provides a more in-depth picture of the specific challenges faced by LPI in implementing SPMI (Omar & Rahim, 2021; Patel & Singh, 2021; Wang & Chen, 2022; Hamidah, 2023). In the midst of the efforts of the government and the community to improve the quality of education, especially in Islamic-based institutions, understanding how SPMI is implemented and faced by LPI is crucial (Liu & Zhang, 2021; Nordin & Zakaria, 2021; Roberts & Taylor, 2022; Maulidah et al., 2023). This is not only related to improving the quality of education in general, but also related to the sustainability of LPI as an institution that must be able to compete with other more established educational institutions (Ghani et al., 2021; Huang & Li, 2022; Yang & Zhao, 2021; Ansori et al., 2023). This research is expected to make a real contribution in identifying the obstacles faced by LPI, as well as offering solutions based on in-depth analysis of best practices in the implementation of SPMI (Zhang et al., 2021; Ali & Hossain, 2022; Yoon & Kang, 2021; Hamidah, 2023).

The main problem faced by LPI in the implementation of SPMI is the gap between policy and implementation. SPMI, which is supposed to be a strategic tool for quality improvement, is often seen as an administrative burden by many stakeholders in LPI. This gap results in a lack of commitment and support needed to optimize the benefits of SPMI. Limited resources, both in terms of finance and manpower, further exacerbate this situation, making it difficult for LPI to implement SPMI effectively and sustainably. This issue is not only about resource management, but also reflects a deeper challenge related to the organizational culture and leadership at LPI, which has not fully supported the principles of quality education.

In the previous literature, research on the implementation of SPMI has been carried out a lot, but most studies still focus on the context of general education or higher education, while studies that specifically examine LPI are still limited. For example, research by Wahyuni et al. (2020) found that the success of SPMI implementation is greatly influenced by management commitment and active involvement of all members of the organization. Meanwhile, a study by Liu and Qi (2021) highlights the importance of effective leadership in building a sustainable culture of quality. Research by Anderson and Adams (2022) revealed that limited resources and management support are the main factors that hinder the effectiveness of SPMI. However, none of these studies specifically address the context of LPI, which has unique characteristics in terms of culture and management that differ from other educational institutions.

The research gap identified is the lack of studies that specifically explore the application of SPMI in LPI, especially in the context of Indonesia. While previous research has provided important insights into the factors influencing the implementation of SPMI in general, the context of LPI requires a more in-depth analysis given the cultural complexity and organizational structure it has. This study aims to fill the gap by presenting specific findings regarding relevant challenges and strategies for LPI. The novelty of this study lies in its unique focus on LPI, which has not been explored much in previous studies. In addition, this study also introduces a more holistic approach in analyzing the relationship between leadership, organizational culture, and SPMI effectiveness in LPI.

The main objective of this study is to explore and analyze the main challenges in the implementation of SPMI in LPI as well as identify the key factors that can improve the effectiveness of SPMI implementation in these institutions. The urgency of this research lies in the urgent need to improve the quality of education at LPI, which plays an important role in shaping the young generation with strong moral and intellectual values. By understanding the existing obstacles and offering practical solutions, this research is expected to make a real contribution to improving the quality of education at LPI and, ultimately, strengthening LPI's position in the national and international education system. This research is not only relevant for education practitioners at LPI, but also for policymakers who are responsible for ensuring that SPMI is effectively implemented in all types of educational institutions in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research method with a case study approach. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply explore the experiences, understandings, and perceptions of stakeholders related to the implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) in Islamic Education Institutions (LPI). Case studies are considered the most appropriate because the focus of this research is to understand certain phenomena in the specific context that occur in the LPI environment, which cannot be fully explained through quantitative or survey approaches (Thomas, 2021; Baxter & Jack, 2020; Yin, 2020). The use of qualitative methods allows researchers to explore the internal dynamics of educational institutions more comprehensively, as well as provide space to understand the cultural and organizational context that affects the implementation of SPMI.

Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis. This research was carried out in two Islamic Educational Institutions located in Yogyakarta City, namely Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Yogyakarta which is located at Jalan C. Simanjuntak No. 60, Yogyakarta City, and Al-Azhar Islamic Boarding School located at Jalan Kaliurang KM 6, Sleman, Yogyakarta. The selection of this location is based on the characteristics of both which represent variations in the management structure and culture of education quality at LPI. A total of 12 respondents consisting of institution leaders, educators, education staff, and foundation administrators in the two institutions were selected purposively to be interviewed. This amount is considered sufficient to obtain a variety of different views and experiences, but still allows for in-depth analysis according to the research objectives. The interviews were conducted face-to-face with a duration of about 60-90 minutes per respondent, and were recorded and recorded for further analysis.

The data analysis technique used in this study is thematic analysis, which allows researchers to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) in the data in detail. This approach was chosen because of its flexibility in accommodating various forms of qualitative data and its ability to uncover the deep meaning of respondents' experiences related to the implementation of SPMI in LPI (Nowell et al., 2020; Clarke & Braun, 2021; Vaismoradi et al., 2020). Thematic analysis allows researchers to organize data in themes relevant to the research objectives, so that the results of the study can provide richer insights into the implementation of SPMI in different contexts. The data collected from interviews, observations, and documents are analyzed qualitatively by following systematic steps, namely data transcription, initial coding, theme identification, theme mapping, and in-depth interpretation. This analysis process is carried out iteratively, where the researcher continuously returns to the original data to ensure that the identified themes truly reflect the meaning expressed by the respondents. To improve the validity and reliability of the analysis, the researcher also triangulated the data by comparing the results of the interview with the available observation data and documents. This technique ensures that the resulting interpretation is not only accurate but also relevant to the context of SPMI implementation in LPI.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study describe how the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) is implemented in various Islamic Educational Institutions (LPI) and the challenges and successes that accompany it. These findings are based on the results of in-depth interviews with stakeholders, including institutional leaders, educators, and education staff. In addition, direct observation of the implementation of SPMI was also carried out to provide a more comprehensive picture.

Awareness and Understanding of SPMI at LPI

The first finding reveals that awareness and understanding of SPMI are still very diverse among stakeholders in Islamic Education Institutions (LPI). Most of the leaders and educators show a fairly good understanding of the importance of SPMI as a tool to improve the quality of education. However, even though they recognize its importance, the application of this concept in the field is often still limited to the level of administrative formality without in-depth and sustainable implementation. Many of them consider SPMI as an additional burden that focuses more on reports and documents than on strengthening the educational process in real terms. Therefore, there is a significant gap between the theoretical understanding of SPMI and its actual practice, which indicates the need for a more holistic approach and ongoing support to improve the effectiveness of SPMI implementation in LPI.

> One of the speakers, a madrasah head, stated, "We are aware of the importance of SPMI, but there are still many of us who feel that this is an additional administrative burden, not an effort to improve the actual quality (I_24)."
> A senior teacher at another madrassa added, "SPMI is often considered a mere formality, even though if applied correctly, it can be a very effective tool to improve the quality of learning (I_24)."
> From another interview with education staff, there was an opinion that, "We need more training and guidance to really understand SPMI properly. Without a deep understanding, it is difficult for us to execute this to the maximum (I_24)."

The interpretation of the results of the interview shows that although there is awareness about the importance of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) among stakeholders in Islamic Educational Institutions, its implementation is still faced with a number of challenges. One of the main challenges is the perception that SPMI is more of an administrative burden than a tool for improving the quality of education. This shows that there is resistance or lack of motivation in implementing SPMI seriously, which can hinder the effectiveness of this program. In addition, the view that SPMI is considered a formality also reflects the gap between the concept of SPMI and daily practice in the field. The need for more intensive training and guidance is also an indication that the understanding and skills in implementing SPMI are still lacking, which ultimately reduces the potential for the success of this program in improving the quality of education. Overall, this interpretation shows the need for a more strategic approach in the socialization and implementation of SPMI to overcome existing obstacles and ensure that SPMI truly functions as a tool for improving the quality of education in LPI.

This finding is consistent with the literature that states that the implementation of SPMI is often constrained by low understanding and lack of support from management (Pater, Yudana, & Natajaya, 2020). Successful implementation requires organizational culture change driven by strong leadership and ongoing support. There needs to be a training and development initiative to deepen the understanding of SPMI among educators and education personnel.

Challenges in SPMI Implementation: Resources and Commitment

These findings reveal that limited resources, both financial and human, are a significant obstacle in the implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) in Islamic Educational Institutions (LPI). Difficulties in allocating the budget often result in SPMI programs not being implemented optimally, with many programs that must be postponed or implemented with minimal resources. In addition, low commitment from various parties, including management and educators, has exacerbated the situation, where they tend to prioritize other activities that are considered more urgent than quality improvement efforts through SPMI. The limited time to explore and implement SPMI is also an obstacle, especially due to the already high workload among education staff. Therefore, despite the good intentions to improve the quality of education through SPMI, these challenges in terms of resources and commitment often hinder the full realization of the program. This indicates the need for a more appropriate realignment of priorities and allocation of resources to ensure that SPMI can be implemented effectively and sustainably in LPI.

> *A resource person from the institution's finance department said, "The budget for the SPMI program is often marginalized because we focus more on daily operational needs. This makes it difficult for us to develop a sustainable quality assurance program."*
> *An agency leader also said, "We would love to run SPMI well, but the commitment from staff and teachers is often low because they feel that the program does not provide clear direct benefits."*
> *In an interview with a young teacher, it was revealed that, "We have tried several times to integrate SPMI into daily activities, but the lack of support from management and facilities makes it difficult for us."*

This challenge shows the need for a better strategy in resource management in LPI. Low commitment and limited budget allocation are common obstacles found in the literature related to the implementation of quality management systems in the education sector (Handayani, Radiana, Junanto, & Efendi, 2022). To address this, a more holistic approach is needed, including thorough strategic planning and increased management commitment.

The Role of Leadership in Building a Quality Culture

The next findings show that leadership has a crucial role in building a quality culture in LPI. Leaders who have a clear vision and a strong commitment to quality assurance tend to succeed in mobilizing all elements of the institution to support SPMI.

> *A school principal said, "I always emphasize the importance of quality in every meeting and meeting. We try to make quality a part of the daily culture at this school." This statement emphasizes the importance of the role of leaders in socializing quality values.*
> *An administrative staff member added, "Under the leadership of the new principal, we feel a big change. A culture of quality is starting to take shape and we all feel more involved in the process of quality improvement." This shows that effective leadership can trigger positive changes in organizational culture.*
> *In addition, a teacher also commented, "When our leaders show commitment to SPMI, it makes us feel motivated to contribute more. Strong leadership really has an effect on the success of this program." This quote underscores the importance of inspirational leadership in building a collective commitment to quality.*

The interpretation of the results of this interview shows that one of the main obstacles in the implementation of SPMI in Islamic Educational Institutions is inadequate budget allocation, where the budget for SPMI programs is often considered less priority than daily operational needs. This reflects an imbalance in the institution's financial management priorities, which ultimately hampers efforts to develop a sustainable quality assurance program. In addition, the low commitment from staff and teachers is also a significant challenge. Many of them feel that SPMI does not provide obvious direct benefits, so they are less motivated to support its implementation. This low commitment can hinder the integration of SPMI into daily practices in institutions. What's more, efforts to integrate SPMI are often hampered by a lack of management support and limited facilities, which further complicate the implementation of these programs. Overall, this interpretation indicates that these challenges must be addressed through better management strategies, more appropriate resource allocation, and increased commitment across the ranks of the institution to ensure the successful implementation of SPMI.

The literature shows that leadership is one of the key factors in the successful implementation of SPMI (Amir, 2019). Quality-focused leadership plays a role not only in strategic planning but also in creating a work environment that supports a culture of quality. This shows that leadership development at LPI must be a priority to support the success of SPMI.

Table 1. Implementation Stages

SPMI Implementation Stages	Supporting Factors	Expected Results
Planning	Strong leadership	Clear quality standards
Implementation	Resource support	Improved learning quality
Evaluation	Strong quality culture	Continuous improvement

Table 1 shows the stages of the implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) in Islamic Educational Institutions, which involves three main stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. At the planning stage, success is largely determined by strong leadership, which is able to set a clear vision and quality standards. This leadership plays an important role in ensuring that all elements of the institution understand and support the quality assurance objectives that they want to achieve. Furthermore, at the implementation stage, adequate resource support—both in the form of finance, facilities, and manpower—is a key factor that allows for the effective implementation of quality improvement programs. This support is very important to improve the quality of learning in the institution, in accordance with the standards that have been set. Finally, the evaluation stage requires a strong culture of quality within the institution, where all members of the organization are committed to continuous improvement. This culture of quality ensures that the results of the evaluation are not only temporary, but are the basis for further development and continuous improvement of the quality of education. This interpretation shows that each stage in the implementation of SPMI is interrelated and requires consistent support to achieve the expected results, namely improving the quality of education holistically and sustainably**.**

The discussion of the results of this study shows that although the implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) in Islamic Educational Institutions (LPI) has been recognized as important, its implementation is still faced with various challenges that reflect the gap between theory and practice. This interpretation can be compared with the findings of previous studies which show that one of the main factors for the success of SPMI is the strong commitment of all stakeholders, including management and educators, as outlined in a study by Wahyuni et al. (2020) which found that the success of SPMI implementation is greatly influenced by the level of commitment and active involvement of all members of the institution. Other research by Liu and Qi (2021) also supports these findings, stating that effective leadership plays a crucial role in building a culture of sustainable quality, especially in the context of education that focuses on holistic quality improvement. On the other hand, research by Anderson and Adams (2022) revealed that a lack of resource support, both in the form of budgets and training, can significantly hinder the effectiveness of SPMI, an issue that was also identified in this study. The clash between the results of this study and previous studies emphasizes that without strong management support, adequate resource allocation, and consistent efforts to build a quality culture, the implementation of SPMI in LPI tends not to reach its full potential in improving the quality of education. Therefore, a more comprehensive and sustainable strategy is needed to address these challenges, with a focus on leadership development and a deeper understanding of the importance of SPMI at all levels of the institution.

This research makes a significant contribution to the field of education management, especially in the context of the implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) in Islamic Education Institutions (LPI). By revealing the challenges faced by LPI in implementing SPMI, such as limited resources, low commitment, and the perception that SPMI is more of an administrative burden, this study highlights the need for a more strategic and holistic approach in education quality management. In addition, this study emphasizes the importance of strong leadership and continuous management support in building an effective and sustainable quality culture in educational institutions. These findings not only enrich the literature on education management in Indonesia, but also offer practical recommendations for educational institutions to improve the quality of education through more effective and results-oriented implementation of SPMI. Thus, this research contributes to the development of better education management policies and practices, especially in creating an educational environment that focuses on continuous quality improvement.

CONCLUSSION

This research succeeded in revealing challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) in Islamic Education Institutions (LPI). The most important finding of this study is that while there is awareness of the importance of SPMI, its implementation is often hindered by misperceptions, limited resources, and low commitment from stakeholders. This research provides new insights into the importance of strong leadership and ongoing support to ensure that SPMI is not only an administrative formality, but also an effective tool for improving the quality of education. From a theoretical perspective, this study strengthens the understanding of the relationship between leadership, resources, and quality culture in the context of education, while from a practical perspective, this research highlights the importance of continuous training and socialization to improve the effectiveness of SPMI in LPI.

This research not only enriches the literature by identifying practical and conceptual challenges, but also proposes a more holistic and directed approach to overcome these barriers. However, this research has limitations, especially in the limited scope of specific cases and the qualitative methods used. The variety of locations, institutional characteristics, and broader methodological approaches need to be explored in further research to provide a more comprehensive picture. In addition, aspects such as gender differences, age, and socio-cultural background may also affect the implementation of SPMI and need to be further researched. Thus, this research paves the way for future studies that can provide deeper and more applicable insights, as well as become a stronger basis for the development of more effective and inclusive education policies.

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