



Implementation of Total Quality Management in Islamic Educational Institutions: A Narrative Review of Practices, Obstacles, and Success Factors

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Abstract: Total Quality Management (TQM) has increasingly influenced quality assurance in Islamic educational institutions, including *madrasahs*, *pesantren*, and Islamic universities, yet existing research remains fragmented and lacks comprehensive synthesis. This narrative review aims to consolidate findings on TQM implementation in Islamic education, specifically examining its practices, barriers, and success factors. A literature search was conducted through Google Scholar, targeting peer-reviewed articles published between 2020 and 2025. After screening, 46 articles were retained for thematic analysis. The findings reveal three core practice domains—leadership commitment, continuous pedagogical improvement, and stakeholder engagement—constrained by cultural resistance, limited resources, and regulatory overlaps. Success is primarily driven by spiritual leadership and the internalization of Islamic values such as *ihsan* (excellence) and *amanah* (trustworthiness), which legitimize quality reforms within religious contexts. An integrative framework is proposed to guide institutional leaders and policymakers in aligning TQM with the spiritual mission of Islamic education. The review recommends future longitudinal and cross-country studies to test and refine this framework. Ultimately, contextual adaptation rather than technical replication is essential for sustainable quality improvement in Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: Total Quality Management, Islamic education, narrative review

Introduction

The global education landscape has witnessed a paradigm shift toward systematic quality assurance, driven by increasing accountability demands and the need to produce competitive graduates (Kayyali, 2024; Zajda & Jacob, 2022). This trend has significantly influenced Islamic educational institutions, including *madrasahs*, *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), and Islamic universities, which are now expected to meet national education standards while preserving their distinctive religious identity

(Achmadin et al., 2024; Nurtawab et al., 2022; Sumanti et al., 2024). In Indonesia, the dual regulatory framework under the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs has further intensified the pressure on these institutions to demonstrate measurable quality outcomes (Nawas et al., 2024; Tamami et al., 2025; Tobroni et al., 2024). Consequently, the adoption of structured management frameworks has become not merely an option but a strategic necessity for the sustainability

and credibility of Islamic education (Darwanto et al., 2024).

Among the various management approaches, Total Quality Management (TQM) has emerged as one of the most widely discussed frameworks in educational settings. Rooted in the principles of continuous improvement, customer focus, employee involvement, and data-driven decision making, TQM provides a holistic mechanism for enhancing institutional performance (Aithal & Maiya, 2023; Waheed & Abbas, 2024). In education, TQM has been applied to improve curriculum design, teaching-learning processes, administrative efficiency, and stakeholder satisfaction (N. Efendi, 2022). However, scholars have noted that the transposition of TQM from industrial to educational contexts requires substantial adaptation, particularly in institutions with strong cultural and spiritual foundations (Ozsen et al., 2023).

Islamic educational institutions present a unique context for TQM implementation due to their deeply embedded religious values, hierarchical leadership structures, and community-oriented governance models (Leong et al., 2024). The role of the *kyai* (religious leader) in *pesantren*, for instance, combines spiritual authority with managerial responsibility, creating a leadership dynamic that differs markedly from conventional educational management (Musaddad, 2024; Wajdi et al., 2022). Furthermore, the integration of general academic subjects with Islamic sciences demands a quality framework that accommodates both cognitive and spiritual learning outcomes (Desfita et al., 2024). These contextual specificities suggest that TOM implementation in Islamic education cannot be treated as a straightforward replication of models developed for secular institutions.

Despite the growing body of literature on quality management in Islamic education, existing studies remain largely fragmented. Most publications focus on single-case studies or isolated dimensions of TQM, such as leadership or curriculum management, without providing an integrated view of how practices, barriers, and success factors interact within the Islamic educational ecosystem (Ashok et al., 2021). Moreover, there is a noticeable absence of comprehensive narrative syntheses that consolidate findings across different types of Islamic institutions and geographical contexts (Fuadi, 2024). This gap limits the ability of practitioners and policymakers to draw evidence-based conclusions and to design context-sensitive quality improvement strategies.

To address this gap, the present study conducts a narrative literature review aimed at synthesizing existing research on TQM implementation in Islamic

educational institutions published between 2020 and 2025. Specifically, this review seeks to answer three research questions: (1) How is TQM practiced in Islamic educational institutions? (2) What are the principal barriers to its implementation? and (3) What factors contribute to its successful adoption? By integrating findings from diverse institutional contexts, this review aspires to offer a consolidated understanding that can inform both theoretical development in Islamic education management and practical decision-making for institutional leaders and policymakers.

Method

This study employed a narrative literature review approach to explore the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in Islamic educational institutions. The literature search was conducted exclusively through Google Scholar, targeting articles published between 2020 and 2025. A combination of keywords was used, including "Total Quality Management," "quality management," "Islamic education," "madrasah," "pesantren," and "Islamic school," searched in both English and Indonesian. Articles were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) the study explicitly addressed TQM or quality management practices within Islamic educational institutions; (2) the article was published in a peer-reviewed journal or indexed conference proceeding; and (3) the full text was accessible. Editorials, opinion pieces, and non-academic publications were excluded. Through this search and screening process, a final set of articles deemed relevant and substantive was retained for in-depth review.

The selected articles were read repeatedly, and key information was extracted into a summary matrix that recorded the author(s), year of publication, type of Islamic institution studied, TQM dimensions examined, and principal findings. Data were then analysed using an inductive thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2021), whereby recurring patterns and concepts were identified, coded, and organised into broader themes. The findings were subsequently synthesised under three overarching categories aligned with the research questions: (1) TQM practices in Islamic educational institutions, (2) barriers to implementation, and (3) factors contributing to successful adoption. The synthesis was conducted in a descriptive-narrative manner, allowing for interpretive comparison across diverse institutional contexts rather than statistical aggregation, which is consistent with the flexible and contextual nature of a narrative review.

Results and Discussion

Overview of the Reviewed Literature

The initial search conducted through Google Scholar yielded a substantial pool of records addressing quality management within Islamic educational contexts across the 2020–2025 window. After removing duplicates and rigorously applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, a final corpus of 46 articles was retained for detailed thematic analysis. The distribution of these articles indicates a steady growth of scholarly interest, with the highest concentration of publications appearing in 2023 and 2024. This upward trend reflects the increasing urgency of quality assurance agendas across Islamic education systems in Southeast Asia and the Middle East (B. Efendi et al., 2025; Kamil et al., 2025). The reviewed corpus comprises predominantly empirical qualitative studies, complemented by conceptual papers and a limited number of mixed-methods investigations.

In terms of institutional focus, the majority of the reviewed studies concentrated on madrasahs and pesantren, while a comparatively smaller proportion examined Islamic higher education institutions. Geographically, Indonesia dominated the corpus, followed by Malaysia, Turkey, and several Middle Eastern countries, indicating that the evidence base is regionally concentrated. This imbalance suggests that the synthesized findings are most generalizable to the Indonesian and Malay contexts, where Islamic schooling is deeply institutionalized and state-recognized. Nevertheless, the thematic consistency observed across these diverse contexts strengthens the credibility and transferability of the conclusions drawn. Table 1 presents the distribution of the reviewed articles by publication year and institutional type.

Table 1. Distribution of Reviewed Articles by Publication Year and Institutional Type

Year	Madrasah	Pesantren	Islamic Higher Education	Total
2020	3	1	1	5
2021	4	2	1	7
2022	4	3	2	9
2023	5	3	2	10
2024	5	3	2	10
2025	3	1	1	5
Total	24	13	9	46

Table 1 illustrates that madrasahs constitute the most frequently studied setting, accounting for more than half of the corpus, whereas pesantren and Islamic higher education remain comparatively underexplored. The concentration of publications in 2023 and 2024 confirms that TQM research in Islamic education is a rapidly expanding yet still young scholarly field. The relatively small number of studies on Islamic higher education indicates a clear empirical gap that future reviews could deliberately address. Overall, the corpus provides a sufficiently diverse and recent evidence base to support the thematic synthesis presented in the following subsections.

TQM Practices in Islamic Educational Institutions

Leadership commitment emerged as the most consistently reported practice across the reviewed literature, appearing in nearly all retained studies. Heads of madrasahs and rectors of Islamic universities were described as the primary drivers who translate abstract quality visions into actionable institutional policies and routines (Fridiyanto & Firmansyah, 2025). In pesantren, this leadership role is uniquely embodied by the kyai, whose spiritual authority reinforces managerial directives and fosters collective obedience toward quality goals (Halilintar & Rafiqah, 2024; Nawawi, 2025). Several studies reported that institutions with visible and sustained top-management commitment achieved more coherent implementation of quality programs than those relying on middle-level initiative alone (Laureani et al., 2024; Saksono et al., 2025).

Continuous improvement of the teaching–learning process constitutes the second dominant practice cluster identified in the synthesis. Reviewed studies documented the routine use of academic supervision, periodic curriculum review, and internal quality audits as mechanisms for sustaining improvement cycles (Rambe et al., 2025). Some madrasahs institutionalized the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle through semester-based evaluation meetings involving all teaching and administrative staff (Alfaridli et al., 2025). These practices demonstrate that the continuous improvement principle of TQM can be operationalized within the existing administrative rhythms of Islamic schools without disrupting their religious routines (Aini & Julaiha, 2025; Norman et al., 2025).

Stakeholder involvement and data-informed decision making form the third cluster of observed practices. Institutions actively engaged parents, school committees, alumni, and local communities in quality dialogues, open forums, and structured

feedback sessions (Juharyanto et al., 2020). A growing number of madrasahs also adopted simple management information systems to track student achievement, teacher performance, and financial transparency (Rahmatullah & Mubarak, 2025). Such practices align closely with the TQM emphasis on customer focus and evidence-based management while remaining compatible with the communal ethos of Islamic education (Iqbal et al., 2025). Figure 1 synthesizes these three practice domains into a coherent visual representation.

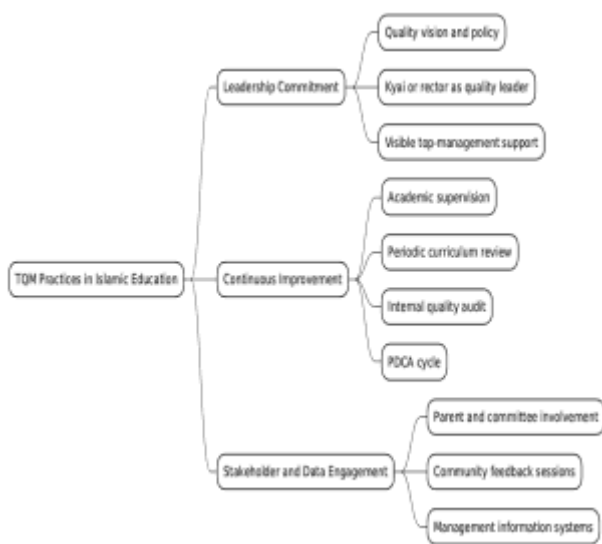


Figure 1. Mind Map of TQM Practice Domains in Islamic Educational Institutions

Figure 1 organizes the identified practices into three interrelated domains, namely leadership commitment, continuous improvement, and stakeholder and data engagement. Each domain branches into specific operational practices that were repeatedly reported across the reviewed studies, illustrating the multidimensional character of TQM implementation. The mind map format emphasizes that these domains are complementary rather than sequential, and that high-performing institutions tend to develop them simultaneously. This visualization therefore provides a compact diagnostic reference for practitioners seeking to identify which practice domains require strengthening in their own institutions.

Barriers to TQM Implementation

Cultural and structural barriers were the most frequently cited obstacles across the reviewed literature. Paternalistic leadership traditions and deep-seated resistance to formalized management systems were reported to slow the adoption of standardized quality procedures, particularly in traditional pesantren (Muis et al., 2025). In some

cases, the spiritual notion of barakah was misinterpreted as a justification for rejecting systematic managerial accountability and external evaluation. These findings collectively indicate that cultural transformation, rather than the mere technical installation of procedures, is the deeper challenge of TQM adoption in religious settings (Alawag et al., 2024).

Resource and human capital constraints formed the second prominent barrier category. Many institutions, especially private madrasahs located in rural areas, struggled with limited budgets, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient formal training in quality management (Wicaksono et al., 2025). Teachers frequently carried dual burdens of instruction and administration, leaving little protected time for systematic quality activities and reflective practice (Gupta & Zhao, 2024). Consequently, TQM initiatives in such settings often depended on external facilitation and remained vulnerable once project funding or external accompaniment ended (Marpaung, 2024).

Regulatory and technological barriers completed the obstacle landscape identified in the synthesis. The dual oversight of education and religious ministries produced overlapping and sometimes contradictory accreditation requirements that confused institutional priorities and diluted improvement efforts (Utomo & Baitussalam, 2025). In addition, low digital maturity limited the use of data-driven quality monitoring and reporting in many pesantren and small madrasahs (Elihami et al., 2024). Table 2 consolidates these barrier categories together with their concrete manifestations and the representative studies reporting them.

Table 2. Categorization of Barriers to TQM Implementation in Islamic Educational Institutions

Barrier Category	Concrete Manifestations
Cultural & structural	Paternalism; resistance to formalization; misread spiritual values
Resource & human capital	Limited budgets; weak infrastructure; untrained staff; heavy workload
Regulatory & technological	Overlapping accreditation; low digital maturity

Table 2 demonstrates that barriers to TQM implementation are multi-layered, spanning cultural, resource, and regulatory-technological dimensions rather than a single isolated cause. The recurrence of cultural barriers across independent studies suggests

that values alignment and cultural legitimacy should deliberately precede procedural reform. Meanwhile, the resource and regulatory barriers highlight the need for supportive policy environments, harmonized accreditation, and sustainable financing mechanisms. Recognizing this layered structure is essential for designing interventions that address root causes rather than merely treating visible symptoms.

Success Factors of TQM Implementation

Top management commitment, when expressed through spiritual leadership, was identified as the most decisive success factor in the reviewed literature. Leaders who personally modeled integrity, accountability, and servant leadership created organizational trust that considerably eased the acceptance of quality reforms (Peyton & Ross, 2022). The integration of spiritual authority with managerial competence allowed kyai and rectors to legitimize TQM as consistent with Islamic ethics rather than as a foreign managerial import (Dinata & Andriani, 2025). This finding resonates with broader international evidence that leadership style strongly conditions the formation of quality culture in faith-based organizations (Wahyuni et al., 2024).

The cultivation of a quality culture grounded in Islamic values constituted the second salient success factor. Studies reported that framing quality through concepts such as *ihsan* (excellence), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and *istiqamah* (consistency) markedly increased staff ownership of quality programs (Zahra et al., 2025). Institutions that embedded these values into daily rituals, appraisal criteria, and reward systems sustained improvement momentum well beyond initial enthusiasm (Akinwalere et al., 2025). This value-based framing effectively reconciles the secular origins of TQM with the religious mission and identity of the institution.

Sustained capacity building and active stakeholder partnership formed the third contributing factor. Regular in-house training, the formation of internal quality assurance teams, and structured collaboration with communities and government agencies strengthened institutional resilience over time (Fauzi et al., 2024). Institutions that diversified funding through productive waqf and community contributions reduced their dependency on unstable external grants and maintained quality activities autonomously (Flores, 2025). Figure 2 depicts the dynamic pathway through which these success factors interact to produce sustained quality performance.

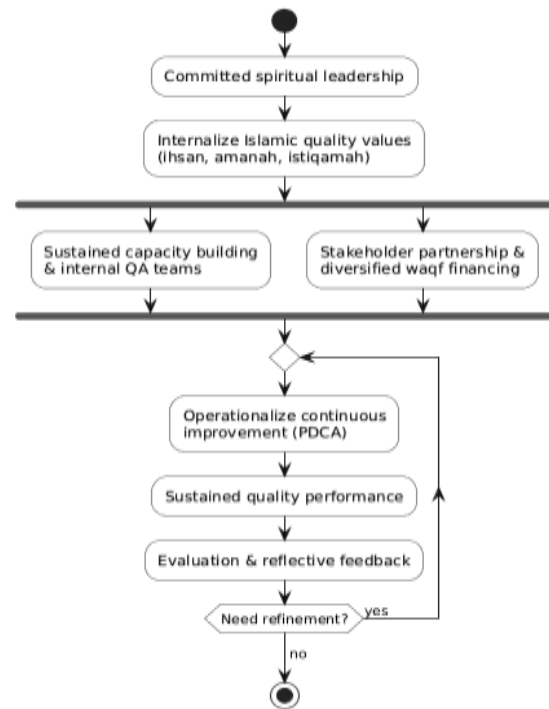


Figure 2. Activity Diagram of the Success Factor Pathway in TQM Implementation

Figure 2 illustrates that successful TQM implementation begins with committed spiritual leadership, which then cultivates a value-based quality culture and invests in parallel capacity building and stakeholder partnership. These intermediate conditions converge to enable continuous improvement routines that ultimately yield sustained quality performance. The embedded feedback loop indicates that evaluation results are systematically used to refine leadership strategies and cultural initiatives rather than being archived. This cyclical representation underscores that success is not a one-time achievement but an iterative organizational learning process.

Toward an Integrative Framework of TQM in Islamic Education

Synthesizing the three thematic strands reveals that practices, barriers, and success factors are mutually conditioning rather than independent phenomena. Effective practices flourish only when relevant barriers are deliberately mitigated and success factors are consciously activated by institutional leaders. For instance, continuous improvement routines succeed where cultural resistance is addressed through value-based framing and where leaders provide consistent visible support. Conversely, even well-designed quality procedures collapse in the absence of committed leadership, adequate resources, or regulatory coherence. This

interdependence justifies an integrative rather than piecemeal approach to quality management in Islamic education.

Building on this synthesis, the review proposes an integrative framework that aligns classical TQM principles with Islamic ethical foundations and contextual enablers. The framework positions leadership commitment and Islamic value internalization as the foundational layer, quality practices as the operational layer, and stakeholder satisfaction together with institutional sustainability as the outcome layer. Enabling conditions such as supportive regulation, digital readiness, and sustainable financing cut across all layers as moderating factors that amplify or constrain implementation. This layered architecture explains why formally identical quality procedures produce divergent results across institutions with different cultural and resource endowments.

The proposed framework also carries an important conceptual implication for the field of Islamic management studies. It suggests that TQM should not be treated as a neutral technical toolkit but as a value-laden practice that must be ethically recontextualized within each institution's religious mission (Wassan et al., 2022). By foregrounding spiritual leadership and value internalization, the framework offers a distinctive contribution that differentiates Islamic educational quality research from mainstream quality management scholarship (Mahmud & Ramli, 2025). Figure 3 visualizes this layered conceptual model for analytical and diagnostic use.

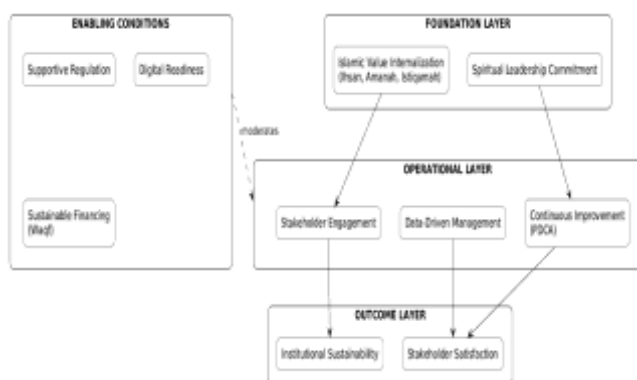


Figure 3. Layered Conceptual Framework of TQM in Islamic Educational Institutions

Figure 3 presents the proposed framework as three stacked layers connected by directional relationships, with enabling conditions shown as a supporting side component that moderates the operational layer. The foundation layer supplies the motivational and ethical energy, the operational layer

converts it into concrete quality practices, and the outcome layer captures the resulting institutional performance. The moderating role of enabling conditions explains why similar practices yield different results across institutions with divergent regulatory and resource contexts. This framework therefore offers both a testable proposition for future empirical research and a practical diagnostic map for institutional self-assessment.

Implications and Future Research Agenda

Theoretically, this review extends quality management scholarship by demonstrating how universal TQM principles are recontextualized within religiously grounded organizations. It contributes to the emerging literature on Islamic management by articulating how spiritual leadership and value internalization function as distinctive quality drivers rather than peripheral cultural ornaments (Munif, 2025). Practically, the findings advise institutional leaders to sequence reforms by first building cultural legitimacy before installing formal procedural systems. Policymakers, in turn, should harmonize accreditation demands and provide targeted capacity-building support for under-resourced madrasahs and pesantren (Firmansyah et al., 2025).

Despite its contributions, this review is limited by its reliance on a single database and by the geographical concentration of the corpus in Indonesia and Malaysia. The predominance of qualitative designs also restricts the generalizability of effect estimates regarding TQM outcomes and their magnitude. Future research should therefore employ multi-database systematic reviews, cross-country comparisons, and longitudinal or quantitative designs to test and refine the proposed integrative framework. Table 3 summarizes the prioritized agenda for future investigations derived from the identified gaps.

Table 3. Future Research Agenda on TQM in Islamic Educational Institutions

Priority	Proposed Focus	Suggested Method
1	Empirical testing of the integrative framework	Quantitative survey / SEM
2	Cross-country comparative studies	Multi-case qualitative
3	Longitudinal impact of TQM on student outcomes	Panel / longitudinal design
4	Digital quality assurance and AI in Islamic schools	Design-based research

5	Financing models (waqf) and quality sustainability	Mixed methods
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Table 3 translates the identified gaps into concrete research priorities, pairing each proposed focus with an appropriate methodological orientation. The agenda deliberately balances theory-testing quantitative studies with context-sensitive qualitative and design-based inquiries to ensure cumulative knowledge development. Pursuing this agenda would progressively elevate the field from descriptive case reporting toward cumulative, theory-building scholarship. Ultimately, such efforts will strengthen both the academic standing and the practical relevance of quality management research in Islamic education.

Conclusion

This narrative review synthesized contemporary literature published between 2020 and 2025 to evaluate how Total Quality Management (TQM) is applied, the obstacles it faces, and the drivers of its success within Islamic educational institutions. The analysis reveals that effective TQM implementation relies on a triad of strong leadership commitment, continuous pedagogical improvement, and active stakeholder engagement. However, these practices are frequently hindered by deep-seated cultural resistance, limited financial and human resources, and overlapping regulatory frameworks. Crucially, the synthesis demonstrates that TQM cannot be applied as a rigid, secular industrial blueprint; rather, it must be organically integrated with Islamic ethical principles such as *ihsan* (excellence), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and *istiqamah* (consistency). This value-based adaptation emerges as the ultimate success factor that transforms quality management from a burdensome administrative requirement into a deeply rooted institutional culture.

Consequently, the practical implication for institutional leaders is to prioritize cultural legitimacy and value-based framing before enforcing formalized quality procedures, ensuring that reforms resonate with the religious mission of the institution. At the macro level, policymakers are urged to harmonize accreditation standards and provide targeted capacity-building support to under-resourced Islamic schools to bridge the quality gap. Theoretically, this review establishes an integrative framework that positions spiritual leadership and value internalization as the foundation of educational quality, offering a novel perspective to the broader field of management studies. Moving forward, future research must transcend descriptive case studies by

employing longitudinal designs, cross-country comparative analyses, and quantitative testing of this proposed framework. Ultimately, when TQM is thoughtfully aligned with the spiritual ethos of Islamic education, it serves not merely as an accountability tool, but as a profound pathway toward holistic institutional excellence.

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