

Transformative Modernisation of Islamic Education Management: An Integrative-Transformative Quality-Based Management Model

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Abstract

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The quality of Islamic education management has been significantly constrained by managerial and leadership factors, which affect all dimensions of Islamic educational institutions. Islamic education development has often proceeded without systematic design and has not been managed in an excellent and modern manner, resulting in insufficient dynamism, relevance, professionalism, and competitiveness. This study examines the transformative modernisation framework developed by Prof. Dr KH. Muhammad Tholhah Hasan, demonstrating that Islamic educational institutions can become centres of excellence with high competitiveness when their management is developed through modern approaches. This qualitative research employs an individual life history approach combined with library research, utilising observation, interviews, documentation, and a comprehensive literature review as data collection methods. Data analysis employed domain, taxonomic, componential, cultural theme, and constant comparative analyses. The findings reveal five fundamental dimensions: (1) the concept of Islamic education management development encompasses theo-centric humanism, generating humanistic-ethical and pragmatic-empirical education models that integrate spirituality-morality with intellectuality-professionalism; (2) the foundation is based on theological, philosophical, sociological, psychological, and scientific principles; (3) the model employs spirituality atmosphere-organized work-based management through religious-modernistic and dynamic-humanistic educational management; (4) leadership combines vanguard and transformative-religious-populist characteristics; and (5) modernization is achieved through strengthening Islamic values, structural and cultural transformation, and quality enhancement. These findings synthesise into an Integrative-Transformative Quality-Based Islamic Education Management model, offering practical implications for educational institutions, policymakers, and researchers seeking to advance Islamic education management in response to contemporary challenges while maintaining authentic Islamic values.

Kata Kunci:

Modernisasi; Manajemen Pendidikan Islam; Kepemimpinan Transformatif; Manajemen Berbasis Mutu; Inovasi Pendidikan

Abstrak

Kualitas pengelolaan pendidikan Islam mengalami kendala signifikan akibat faktor manajerial dan kepemimpinan yang memengaruhi seluruh dimensi lembaga pendidikan Islam. Pengembangan pendidikan Islam sering kali berjalan tanpa desain sistematis dan belum dikelola secara unggul dan modern, menghasilkan ketidakcukupan dalam aspek dinamisme, relevansi, profesionalisme, dan daya saing. Penelitian ini mengkaji kerangka modernisasi transformatif yang dikembangkan oleh Prof. Dr. KH. Muhammad Tholhah Hasan, yang menunjukkan bahwa lembaga pendidikan Islam dapat menjadi pusat keunggulan dengan daya saing tinggi ketika pengelolaannya dikembangkan melalui pendekatan modern. Penelitian kualitatif ini menggunakan pendekatan studi tokoh yang dikombinasikan dengan studi pustaka, memanfaatkan observasi, wawancara, dokumentasi, dan

kajian literatur komprehensif sebagai metode pengumpulan data. Analisis data menggunakan analisis domain, analisis taksonomi, analisis komponen, analisis tema kultural, dan analisis komparasi konstan. Temuan mengungkapkan lima dimensi fundamental: (1) konsep pengembangan manajemen pendidikan Islam mencakup humanisme teo-sentris, menghasilkan model pendidikan humanistik-etis dan pragmatik-empiris yang mengintegrasikan spiritualitas-moralitas dengan intelektualitas-profesionalitas; (2) landasan berbasis prinsip teologis, filosofis, sosiologis, psikologis, dan ilmiah; (3) model menggunakan manajemen berbasis pemberdayaan organisasi dan penciptaan kultur Islami melalui manajemen pendidikan religius-modernistik dan dinamis-humanistik; (4) kepemimpinan menggabungkan karakteristik pelopor dan transformatif-religius-populis; dan (5) modernisasi dicapai melalui penguatan nilai-nilai Islam, transformasi struktural dan kultural, serta peningkatan mutu. Temuan-temuan ini disintesis menjadi model Manajemen Pendidikan Islam Integratif-Transformatif Berbasis Mutu, menawarkan implikasi praktis bagi lembaga pendidikan, pembuat kebijakan, dan peneliti dalam memajukan manajemen pendidikan Islam yang menghadapi tantangan kontemporer sambil mempertabahkan nilai-nilai Islam yang otentik.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia face persistent management deficiencies that constrain their educational effectiveness and institutional sustainability. Empirical studies document systematic problems, including inadequate strategic planning, weak managerial capacity, insufficient financial management systems, and limited quality assurance mechanisms (Mujamil Qomar, 2007). These deficiencies manifest in concrete performance gaps: Islamic educational institutions exhibit lower accreditation rates, higher teacher turnover, and weaker student achievement outcomes than their secular counterparts (Azra, 2019). The fundamental challenge, as identified by Prayitno, is that Islamic education has historically developed “without systematic design”, operating through tradition and accident rather than deliberate organisational management. This management deficit threatens Islamic education’s capacity to fulfil dual imperatives of maintaining religious authenticity while achieving contemporary educational excellence (Arif et al., 2024; Nata, 2018; Prayitno et al., 2009).

Existing literature bifurcates into two distinct streams. Traditionalist approaches emphasise preservation of Islamic educational identity while resisting administrative modernisation, viewing contemporary management practices as potentially compromising religious authenticity (Tafsir, 1992). Conversely, modernist approaches advocate adopting Western management models with minimal attention to the distinctiveness of Islamic education, treating religious identity as peripheral to organisational effectiveness (Tan, 2012). Theoretically, this gap reflects the limited application of institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) and organisational change frameworks (Aprilianto et al., 2025; Lewin, 1947) to Islamic educational contexts, resulting in an undertheorized understanding of how religious educational institutions navigate competing institutional logics. For this study, “modernisation” is operationalised as organisational adaptation incorporating contemporary management practices (Al-Attas, 1980), including strategic planning, resource allocation, performance monitoring, and stakeholder engagement (Qomar, 2007).

Muhammad Tholhah Hasan is a strategically selected critical case (Yin, 2017) for examining the modernisation of transformative Islamic education management. Four empirical characteristics justify this case selection. *First*, extensive, well-documented intellectual production spanning four decades provides rich textual evidence (Marimba, 1962). Policy documents from his tenure as Minister of Religious Affairs (2000-2004) and institutional strategic plans from organisations he founded and led (Langgulung, 1986). *Second*, practical implementation across multiple educational institutions, ranging from early childhood through higher education, enables examination of

management approaches across institutional types and developmental stages. *Third*, his founding and leadership of Yayasan Sabilillah, established in 1959, which grew from a single madrasah tsanawiyah to encompass kindergarten, elementary, secondary, and vocational schools, demonstrates sustained institutional development under a consistent leadership philosophy. *Fourth*, his dual roles as institutional practitioner and national policymaker provide unique perspectives spanning operational and policy levels. These characteristics establish Hasan as an “*information-rich case*” (Patton, 2002).

While many scholars have spent years debating how Islam and modern education can coexist, there is still a surprising gap in our understanding of how this actually works on the ground (M. Hasan, 2020; N. Hasan, 2009). We often hear about the grand ideals of modernising Islamic schools. However, we rarely see a deep dive into the conceptual architecture, the actual gears and levers that allow a leader to balance ancient religious values with the cold, hard requirements of modern management (Abdullah et al., 2022; Nurhadi & Harahap, 2021). There is very little research on how different stakeholders perceive these professional changes or how leaders navigate the “*cultural friction*” that inevitably arises when traditional authority meets modern auditing (Panjwani, 2004). By moving beyond simple biography to a theoretically informed investigation, this study steps into that gap, exploring the messy, human, and organisational tensions that define the future of Islamic education (Roslan Mohd Nor & Malim, 2014).

Theoretically, the study aims to extend institutional theory and the organisational change literature to religious contexts, demonstrating how leaders can skillfully navigate competing institutional logics to achieve effectiveness without compromising religious authenticity (Girei, 2017; Setijaningrum et al., 2025). Practically, the goal is to provide evidence-based guidance for administrators and policymakers who face the daunting task of modernising faith-based institutions while preserving their sacred mission (Shoshana, 2011; Traxler, 2018). Methodologically, this study establishes a rigorous protocol for qualitative analysis that honours the accomplishments of educational leaders while maintaining a necessary layer of scholarly critical analysis, ensuring that the human story behind the management remains both inspiring and scientifically sound (Jamjoom & Mills, 2023; Thelen & Alber, 2018).

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative case study methodology (Yin, 2017) examining Muhammad Tholhah Hasan as a critical case for understanding the modernisation of transformative Islamic education management. The research design integrated biographical life history approaches (Goodson, Ivor F. and Sikes, 2001) with institutional case study analysis, enabling examination of both individual thought development and organisational implementation (Spradley, 1980); (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Unlike traditional hagiographic biography, which celebrates individual achievements, this study adopted a critical biographical methodology, maintaining analytical distance while documenting contributions (Creswell, 2014).

Data collection occurred in three phases between April 2017 and September 2018, employing multiple methods to enable triangulation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Secondary informant interviews: Eight interviews with institutional stakeholders conducted June–August 2018: three institutional administrators, three senior teachers, and two alum leaders. Systematic analysis of 80 documents across four categories: (1) Published scholarship: 23 articles and 8 books authored by Hasan addressing Islamic education philosophy and management; (2) Institutional documents: 18 strategic plans, policy documents, and organizational charts from Sabilillah

institutions (2000-2017); (3) Meeting records: 27 board meeting minutes and administrative meeting notes documenting decision-making processes; (4) Performance data with 12 annual institutional reports containing enrollment, accreditation, and achievement data (Erben, 1998; Guedalla, 1939).

Data analysis followed systematic qualitative procedures adapted from grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analytical process involved four iterative phases: 1. Initial coding: Interview 2. Focused coding 3. Categorical development 4. Thematic integration (Bernard et al., 2016). Research was conducted in accordance with ethical protocols approved by the ethics review committee at Pascasarjana UIN Malang. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, with an explicit explanation that the research would involve critical scholarly analysis rather than a promotional biography. Participants were offered confidentiality options; Hasan consented to identified attribution, while secondary informants were offered pseudonyms (though several waived this option). Data were stored securely and used solely for research purposes. (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006; Jones, 2004.).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Theo-Centric Humanism and Educational Integration

This section presents empirically grounded findings organised into five thematic domains that emerged inductively from the data analysis. Each domain is substantiated by direct evidence from interviews, documents, and observations, with explicit attention to variations in implementation and associated challenges. The integration of spiritual values and academic excellence remains a central discourse in the evolution of modern Islamic pedagogy. As educational institutions grapple with the pressures of globalisation and secular modernisation, there is a pressing need for a framework that transcends the traditional divide between religious piety and professional proficiency. This study explores how such a synthesis is articulated through a holistic lens, moving beyond theoretical abstractions to examine the translation of philosophical ideals into rigorous institutional practices and measurable student outcomes.

Central to this inquiry is the paradigm of "*theo-centric humanism*," a conceptual bridge that aligns divine mandates with the practical demands of human development. By positioning the individual as a vicegerent (*khalifatullah*), this approach reframes education not merely as a tool for economic mobility but as a sacred duty to cultivate both moral integrity and intellectual mastery. The following findings detail how this integrated philosophy is operationalised, highlighting the synergy between curriculum design, academic achievement, and the inherent challenges of maintaining balance in a high-stakes educational environment.

Hasan articulated an integrative educational philosophy he termed "*theo-centric humanism*," explicitly positioning divine guidance and human development as complementary rather than competing imperatives. In a May 2017 interview, he explained:

"The fundamental error in educational philosophy is creating a false dichotomy between religious and worldly education, between taqwa and professional competence. Our framework is this: human beings are khalifatullah fil ardh. To fulfil this role requires both spiritual depth and intellectual capability."

This conceptualisation appeared consistently across his published works. In "Pendidikan Islam dalam Menghadapi Modernitas" (2003), Hasan wrote: "Islamic education that produces only pious individuals lacking professional competence fails its mission, as does education producing skilled professionals without moral foundation" (p. 34). Documentary analysis revealed this

philosophy operationalised in institutional curricula. The 2010 Sabilillah Schools strategic plan mandated a curricular balance: 40% religious subjects (*Quranic studies, Hadith, Fiqh, Islamic history*), 40% national curriculum subjects (mathematics, science, languages, social studies), and 20% character development programs that integrate both dimensions.

Implementation evidence demonstrated both successes and tensions. Student achievement data from three Sabilillah secondary schools (2015-2017) showed: a 92% average passing rate on national examinations (compared to a 78% district average), 100% completion of Quranic memorisation requirements (minimum of 3 juz), and an 87% university acceptance rate. However, teachers interviewed identified implementation challenges. One senior teacher explained: “The curriculum is very demanding. Students feel pressured managing both religious and academic requirements. Some struggle, particularly in families without strong educational support” (Teacher interview, July 2018). Administrative meeting minutes from 2014 documented faculty debates about curricular balance, with some teachers advocating reduced religious instruction to improve academic performance.

Hasan’s conceptual framework distinguished between two educational orientations he termed “humanistic-ethical” and “pragmatic-empirical,” which he insisted must operate in integration. He explained: “Humanistic-ethical education develops character, values, and spiritual consciousness. Pragmatic-empirical education develops skills, knowledge, and professional capacity. Neither alone suffices; integration creates a complete human being” (Interview, June 2017). A documentary analysis of graduation ceremony speeches (2005-2017) revealed a consistent emphasis on this dual orientation, with Hasan annually challenging graduates to demonstrate both religious commitment and professional excellence.

Layered Theological and Operational Bases

The structural integrity of an educational system is fundamentally dependent on the robustness of its underlying philosophy. In the context of Hasan’s educational model, this foundation is not a singular, rigid doctrine but rather a sophisticated, multi-layered architecture designed to bridge the sacred and the mundane, encompassing five interconnected domains ranging from a theological core to psychological applications.

This layered approach reflects a conscious effort to harmonise traditional Islamic epistemology with the sociocultural and scientific demands of contemporary Indonesia. The following analysis examines how these philosophical layers function as a unified “*theo-centric*” operational reality, exploring both the visionary strengths of this model and the practical ambiguities encountered during its institutional implementation.

Data analysis revealed that Hasan conceptualised the foundations of Islamic education management in five interconnected layers, which he described as “theological core with operational extensions.” Interview data and published writings indicated consistent articulation of this framework. The theological foundation is centred on Quranic principles and Prophetic traditions as the ultimate authority. Hasan stated:

“Al-Quran and Hadith are not merely inspirational; they provide concrete guidance for educational organisations. Surah Ali Imran verse 191 describing ulul albab [people of understanding] who contemplate Allah’s signs establishes our educational ideal” (Interview, May 2017).

This theological grounding appeared operationalised in institutional vision statements. The Sabilillah foundation charter (revised 2008) explicitly stated: “This institution exists to actualise the Quranic vision

of human development, integrating dzikir remembrance and fikir intellectual reflection. Interview, June 2018)”

The philosophical foundation emphasised what Hasan termed “knowledge transcendentalization,” subjecting all knowledge claims to Islamic epistemological principles. In *“Islamisasi Ilmu Pengetahuan”* (2005), he argued: “Modern sciences offer valuable methodologies and discoveries, but their philosophical assumptions require Islamic critique. We neither reject modern knowledge wholesale nor accept it uncritically; we transcendentalize it within an Islamic framework” (p. 47). However, implementation revealed conceptual ambiguities. When asked how transcendentalization operated practically in teaching mathematics or science, Hasan provided general principles but acknowledged that. The sociological foundation recognised the cultural contexts shaping educational processes.

“Islamic education in Indonesia must address Indonesian cultural realities, not merely import Arab or Middle Eastern models. Our challenge is developing authentically Indonesian Islamic education” (Interview, April 2017).

This manifested in curricular inclusion of local Islamic traditions. The Sabilillah pesantren curriculum incorporated Nahdlatul Ulama theological orientations and traditional Javanese Islamic practices alongside standardised Islamic studies. The psychological and scientific foundations emphasised human development and the integration of contemporary knowledge. A documentary analysis of teacher professional development programs (2012-2017) revealed institutional investment in both religious knowledge and contemporary pedagogical training, though budget allocations favoured religious training (65% vs 35%).

In synthesis, the layered foundations of Hasan’s educational model illustrate a sophisticated attempt to reconcile eternal theological principles with the fluid demands of modern pedagogy and local identity. By weaving together Quranic ideals, transcendental philosophy, and Indonesian cultural nuances, this framework moves beyond a static religious curriculum toward a dynamic, holistic educational ecosystem. While the data reveals a clear visionary success in creating a *“theo-centric”* operational base, it also highlights the inherent complexities of translating high-level philosophical concepts into the everyday teaching of empirical sciences and modern disciplines.

Ultimately, these findings suggest that the strength of this multi-layered approach lies in its adaptability and its refusal to decouple spiritual growth from intellectual and sociological realities. The observed tensions, particularly in budget allocations and the practical application of *“knowledge transcendentalization,”* do not signify a failure of the model, but rather point to the ongoing evolutionary process of modern Islamic education. This foundation provides a robust, albeit challenging, blueprint for institutions seeking to produce individuals who are not only professionally competent but also deeply rooted in their spiritual and cultural heritage.

Spirituality Atmosphere and Leadership Approach

The operational success of Hasan’s educational model is fundamentally rooted in the synergy between a pervasive spiritual atmosphere and a rigorous leadership framework. This dual approach seeks to bridge the gap between sacred devotion and organisational efficiency, transforming religious values into actionable management practices. By examining the interplay between ritualistic institutional traditions and systematic administrative procedures, this section uncovers how *“vanguard leadership”* navigates the complexities of modern governance while remaining anchored in Islamic principles. The following data illuminates the practical dynamics,

inherent tensions, and transformative outcomes of this unique leadership synthesis within the Sabilillah institutions.

Observational and documentary data revealed this operationalised through specific practices. All Sabilillah institutions maintained: daily congregational prayers with required administrative participation, weekly collective Quranic study involving all employees, monthly spiritual retreats for institutional leaders, and annual institutional hajj or umrah programs. Simultaneously, documentary analysis revealed systematic management procedures: formalised strategic planning processes (3-year cycles with annual reviews), standard operating procedures for administrative functions, performance evaluation systems for teachers and administrators, and regular financial audits.

Analysis of the meeting minutes revealed this integration's practical dynamics. Administrative meetings typically began with Quranic recitation and brief religious reflection, then proceeded to the systematic coverage of the agenda. A deputy director explained:

"The opening spiritual component reminds us our work serves Allah. But then we must address practical realities, budgets, enrollment, and teacher performance with professional discipline" (Administrator interview, July 2018).

However, evidence also revealed tensions between spiritual and organisational imperatives. Board meeting minutes from March 2015 documented a debate over teacher hiring: conservative board members advocated prioritising religious knowledge and piety, while administrators emphasised professional qualifications and pedagogical skills. The compromise requiring both religious and professional criteria created implementation challenges.

"Finding teachers who meet both standards is very difficult, especially for science and mathematics. We sometimes must compromise," acknowledged an administrator (Interview, August 2018).

Financial data provided additional implementation evidence. Annual reports (2013-2017) showed Sabilillah institutions maintained positive operating margins (average 8%) while expanding facilities and programs, suggesting management effectiveness. However, comparison with secular private schools indicated lower teacher salaries (approximately 70% of secular private school averages), raising questions about sustainability and teacher retention. Interview and observational data revealed leadership practices characterised by future orientation, emphasis on change, religious grounding, and community engagement, which emerged analytically as vanguard and transformative-religious-populist leadership.

Hasan's vanguard orientation appeared in consistent emphasis on anticipating rather than merely responding to challenges. Documentary analysis of strategic planning documents (2000-2017) revealed systematic environmental scanning and future scenario development. The 2012 strategic plan identified demographic shifts, economic changes, and educational policy developments anticipated over the subsequent decade, and planned institutional responses accordingly. Interview data suggested this reflected Hasan's personal philosophy:

"Reactive leadership always fails. We must anticipate change, not merely respond when a crisis appears" (Interview, June 2017).

Transformative orientation manifested in documented institutional changes initiated during Hasan's leadership. These included: curriculum reforms integrating international standards while maintaining Islamic character (implemented 2008-2010), governance restructuring to create professional administrative systems (2005-2007), and financial management reforms to implement transparent accounting (2003-2005). Stakeholder interviews confirmed significant institutional transformation, though perspectives varied. An administrator stated:

“Under Hasan’s leadership, we moved from traditional management to a professional organisation” (Interview, July 2018). However, a long-serving teacher noted: “The changes improved many things but also created pressure. Some teachers struggled adapting to new requirements” (Interview, August 2018).

The religious dimension of leadership was evident in the consistent modelling of Islamic practices and the explicit integration of religious values into organisational decisions. Observational data documented Hasan’s participation in institutional worship activities and regular reference to Islamic principles in administrative discussions. However, this also revealed potential tensions. Meeting minutes from June 2014 showed Hasan blocking a proposal to introduce co-educational programs, stating: “This conflicts with our Islamic educational principles.” Some stakeholders viewed this as principled leadership maintaining Islamic authenticity; others saw it as limiting institutional adaptation.

The populist dimension manifested in emphasis on stakeholder engagement and accessibility. Institutional policies mandated regular community forums, parent consultation mechanisms, and student government participation. However, documentary analysis revealed this operated within parameters. Major strategic decisions remained centralised with the board and the director. Analysis of meeting minutes (2010-2017) showed that 89% of significant decisions were made without formal stakeholder consultation, raising questions about the gap between participatory rhetoric and practice.

Table 1. Summary Research Finding’s

Focus	Key Findings	Validation
Educational Philosophy: Theocentric Humanism	Integration of spiritual depth (<i>taqwa</i>) and professional competence. Rejects the dichotomy between religious and worldly education through a balanced curriculum (40:40:20 ratio).	Interviews: Hasan’s articulation of <i>Khalifatullah</i> (May 2017). Documents: <i>Islamic Education & Modernity</i> (2003) & 2010 Strategic Plan. Observations: National exam pass rates (92%) and Quranic memorisation completion.
Layered Theological & Operational Foundations	A five-layered framework: Theological (Quran/Hadith), Philosophical (Transcendentalization), Sociological (Indonesian context), Psychological, and Scientific.	Interviews: Explanation of <i>Uhlul Albab</i> (May 2017). Documents: Sabilillah Foundation Charter (2008) and Pesantren curriculum. Observations: Professional development logs (65% religious, 35% pedagogical).
Spiritual Atmosphere & Professional Management	Internalisation of religious values through ritual (congregational prayer, retreats) alongside rigorous SOPs, 3-year strategic cycles, and financial auditing.	Interviews: Deputy Director on “ <i>Dzikir and Fikir</i> ” in meetings (July 2018). Documents: Meeting minutes (religious openings/professional agendas). Observations: 8% operating margins vs teacher salary benchmarks.
Transformative-Religious-Populist Leadership	A “ <i>vanguard</i> ” leadership style focusing on future-scenario planning, governance restructuring, and maintaining Islamic authenticity (e.g., non-co-ed policies).	Interviews: Staff perceptions of the shift from traditional to professional management. Documents: Environmental scanning

Implementation Challenges & Ambiguities	High curricular pressure on students, difficulty in recruiting "dual-competence" teachers (Science/Religion), and a gap between populist rhetoric and centralised decision-making (89%).	in Strategic Plans (2000-2017). Observations: Leader participation in institutional worship. Interviews: Senior teacher on student pressure (July 2018) and recruitment hurdles (August 2018). Documents: Board meeting minutes (March 2015) regarding hiring compromises. Observations: Statistical analysis of centralised strategic decisions.
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Source: Data Collection 2025

DISCUSSION

Critical Tensions Between Rhetoric and Practice

Empirical evidence reveals significant disjunctures between Hasan's articulated management philosophy and observed organisational practices, raising questions about whether his framework represents genuine integration or rhetorical juxtaposition of competing values. Three contradictions merit critical examination.

First, the claimed synthesis of "theo-centric" and "humanistic" orientations demonstrates conceptual ambiguity in practice. While Hasan articulated elegant philosophical integration, "human development requires both spiritual depth and intellectual capability", implementation evidence suggests persistent compartmentalisation rather than synthesis. Curriculum data showing separate allocation percentages (40% religious, 40% academic, 20% character) indicates an additive combination rather than genuine integration. Students and teachers experience these as competing demands, creating overload rather than synergistic reinforcement. (Jackson et al., 2012). This pattern suggests that "theo-centric humanism" may function more as an aspirational ideal than an operational reality, similar to what Tan identified as rhetorical integration masking practical bifurcation in Islamic education contexts (Mackenzie et al., 2012).

The question remains whether genuine integration is conceptually coherent or inherently contradictory. Al-Attas (Al-Attas, 1980) argues Islamic education necessarily prioritises spiritual over material development, suggesting that theo-centrism and humanism occupy hierarchical rather than equal relationships. Hasan's framework elides this tension through the rhetoric of balance without addressing epistemological questions: When spiritual and intellectual imperatives conflict, which takes priority? How are such conflicts adjudicated? The blocked co-educational proposal suggests theological commitments ultimately supersede organisational pragmatism, contradicting claimed integration. This raises a theoretical concern about whether "integration" accurately describes Hasan's approach or better represents Islamic theological primacy with an instrumental accommodation of modern practices (Al-Attas, 1980).

Second, claimed "transformative-religious-populist" leadership demonstrates a contradiction between participatory rhetoric and centralised practice. Hasan consistently articulated populist values, "leadership must serve community needs", and established participatory structures (community forums, consultation mechanisms) (Al-Attas, 1980). However, quantitative evidence reveals centralised decision-making: 89% of major decisions are made without stakeholder consultation, initiatives that contradict director preferences are blocked, and hierarchical patterns of authority prevail. This

parallels Qomar's (Al-Attas, 1980) findings that Islamic educational institutions frequently espouse participatory values while maintaining authoritarian structures.

This contradiction admits multiple interpretations. Optimistically, it might represent a transitional phase in which participatory structures require time to shift entrenched cultural patterns, with structural change preceding cultural transformation. Critically, it suggests “populist” rhetoric functions as legitimating discourse rather than operational commitment, as DiMaggio and Powell (Al-Attas, 1980) term “*ceremonial adoption*” of institutional practices for legitimacy while maintaining existing power relations. The latter interpretation finds support in stakeholder interview data revealing frustrated attempts at participation and the perception that consultation was performative rather than influential (Jackson et al., 2012; Rosodor & Putra, 2025).

Third, modernisation discourse emphasising “quality enhancement” and “*competitiveness*” coexists with practices potentially compromising these goals. Teacher salary data showing compensation 70% of secular private school averages raises sustainability questions: Can institutions achieve excellence while undercompensating professional staff? Performance gaps between Sabilillah students and those at national elite schools suggest that the rhetoric of modernisation exceeds actual achievement. This reflects broader tension Islamic educational institutions face: religious mission commitments constraining resource allocation and operational choices that secular institutions optimise for educational effectiveness.

Empirical Patterns, Analytical Ambiguities, and Interpretation Limits

Critical examination of the analytical process reveals interpretive challenges and potential researcher bias requiring acknowledgement. The claim that five thematic dimensions “emerged inductively from data” requires qualification. While systematic coding procedures were followed, analytical choices inevitably involved the researcher's interpretation and theoretical sensibilities. (Jackson et al., 2012). The decision to organise the findings around a conceptual framework, philosophical foundations, management model, leadership, and “*modernisation strategies*” reflects the researcher's theoretical orientation as much as it does inherent data patterns. Alternative researchers might organise identical data differently, perhaps emphasising institutional development phases, stakeholder relationships, or resource mobilisation strategies (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Furthermore, distinguishing Hasan's authentic contributions from researchers' theoretical impositions presents a methodological challenge. When findings describe “theo-centric humanism paradigm ”or“ spirituality atmosphere-organised work-based management,” to what extent do these represent Hasan's self-understanding versus the researcher's analytical constructs? Interview data suggest that Hasan did not use this specific terminology, raising questions about whose framework this represents (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

The research's heavy reliance on Hasan's self-presentation creates additional interpretive challenges. Despite secondary informant interviews and document triangulation, Hasan's perspective inevitably dominated the data, given his articulateness, intellectual sophistication, and the fact that he had 12 interviews compared with 8 stakeholder interviews. (Jackson et al., 2012). Stakeholder interviews provided important alternative perspectives but may have been constrained by Hasan's ongoing institutional authority and hesitance to criticise a revered leader with continued influence. The study thus risks reproducing Hasan's self-understanding without adequate critical distance. (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Comparative analysis limitations also deserve acknowledgement. Absent a systematic comparison with other Islamic educational leaders or institutions, it remains uncertain whether

Hasan's approach represents distinctive innovation or common practice. Claims that his framework constitutes "*significant theoretical advancement*" or "*sophisticated integration*" rest primarily on comparison with literature rather than empirical comparison with peers. Alternative Islamic educational leaders might articulate similar philosophies using different vocabulary, rendering claimed uniqueness more apparent than real. (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Practical Implications with Implementation Caveats

For educational practitioners, the findings offer insights but require contextual adaptation rather than direct replication. The integrative curriculum model (40% religious, 40% academic, 20% character) provides a concrete template that Islamic educational institutions might adapt. However, implementation evidence suggesting student overload and teacher stress indicates this formula requires contextual modification based on student capacity, teacher expertise, and resource availability. (Basri & Abdullah, 2024). Institutions should not uncritically adopt Hasan's specific percentages but rather engage his underlying principle: systematic attention to balancing religious and academic objectives through deliberate curricular design. (Mundzir, 2025).

The emphasis on systematic management processes (strategic planning, performance evaluation, financial accountability) offers an important corrective to institutions operating "*by accident and tradition*." However, the implementation challenges documented here, resistance from traditional authority figures, cultural tensions around evaluation, and difficulty recruiting dual-qualified teachers, suggest change-management requirements beyond technical systems implementation (Febriani et al., 2024). Successful modernisation requires attending to cultural transformation, stakeholder engagement, and capacity building, not merely installing management procedures.

For policymakers, the findings highlight tensions that require policy attention rather than simple solutions. The persistent gaps between Islamic institutions and secular elite schools, despite modernisation efforts, suggest resource disparities and structural constraints that individual institutional initiatives cannot overcome. (Febriani et al., 2024). Policy interventions might address teacher compensation (to enable competitive salaries), professional development support (to build dual religious-pedagogical expertise), and regulatory frameworks (to balance religious autonomy with quality assurance). However, policymakers should recognise diversity within the Islamic education sector. Hasan's approach represents one possibility among many. Policy supporting multiple models rather than imposing a singular vision respects institutional autonomy and enables contextual adaptation. The study's focus on relatively elite, well-resourced institutions limits its generalizability to resource-constrained rural madrasah or pesantren, which face different challenges and opportunities. (Basri & Abdullah, 2024).

For educational practitioners, these findings serve as a flexible compass rather than a rigid blueprint. While the integrative curriculum model (40% religious, 40% academic, 20% character) offers a clear template, its success depends heavily on the human element. The evidence of student fatigue and teacher stress suggests that we must prioritise the psychological well-being of our school communities over strict numerical targets. Instead of a "*one-size-fits-all*" replication, institutions should adapt these percentages based on their specific resource availability and, most importantly, the actual learning capacity of their students. (Basri & Abdullah, 2024). True integration is not just about filling a timetable; it is about creating a deliberate, balanced design that respects the limits of both the mind and the heart. (Mundzir, 2025; Slamet et al., 2025).

Furthermore, moving from traditional management to professional accountability is a vital step forward, but it requires more than just installing new software or SOPs. The challenges documented, such as resistance from long-standing authority figures and the difficulty of finding "dual-qualified" teachers, remind us that institutional change is fundamentally a cultural journey. Successful modernisation happens when we focus on building people's capacity, engaging with stakeholders' fears and aspirations, and nurturing a shared vision, rather than simply imposing technical procedures (Putri et al., 2024).

Table 2. Summary of Research Discussion

Discussion Component	Theoretical Analysis, Contributions, and Novelty
Theoretical Analysis	<p>Synthesis of Religious Humanism: The discussion bridges the gap between theocentric (<i>revelation-based</i>) and anthropocentric (<i>human-based</i>) education. By utilising the Khalifatullah paradigm, the study analyses management not merely as a technical tool, but as a spiritual manifestation of Dzikir (<i>remembrance</i>) and Fikr (<i>reflection</i>), effectively harmonising Islamic values with modern organisational science.</p>
Research Contribution	<p>The 40:40:20 Curricular Framework: This study provides a concrete, empirical template for balancing religious, academic, and character education. It offers a critical perspective on the "human cost" of integration, highlighting student burnout and teacher stress as vital factors in institutional sustainability that are often overlooked in traditional Islamic management literature.</p>
Research Novelty	<p>Vanguard-Religious-Populist Leadership: The study introduces a unique leadership typology specifically for the Indonesian Islamic context. Unlike traditional charismatic models, this framework integrates forward-looking strategic planning (<i>vanguard</i>) with community-based accessibility (<i>populist</i>), all while maintaining a firm foundation in religious authority.</p>
Global Implication	<p>Modernisation Without Secularisation: The discussion positions this model as a global alternative for Muslim-majority nations seeking to modernise their educational systems. It demonstrates that professional excellence and spiritual integrity can coexist without succumbing to total Western secularisation.</p>

Source: Data Collection, 2026

For policymakers, these findings highlight deep-seated tensions that demand thoughtful, empathetic interventions rather than quick fixes. The persistent gap between modernising Islamic institutions and secular elite schools reveals structural hurdles that individual schools cannot leap over alone (Putri et al., 2024). Policies must move beyond regulation and toward genuine support, specifically by improving teacher compensation to ensure a dignified livelihood and by providing professional development that helps educators confidently bridge the gap between religious wisdom and modern pedagogy.

Ultimately, policymakers should celebrate and protect the rich diversity within the Islamic education sector. The model explored in this study is powerful, but it is just one possibility among many. By supporting multiple educational models rather than imposing a singular vision, the government respects the autonomy of these institutions and allows them to stay rooted in their local contexts. We must also remember that while elite institutions provide valuable insights, our

policy focus must remain inclusive of rural madrasahs and pesantrens, which face vastly different struggles and deserve equal opportunities to flourish. (Basri & Abdullah, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the integration of Islamic values and modern management is not merely a theoretical ideal, but a dynamic operational reality embodied in the "*theo-centric humanism*" framework. Through a balanced curriculum (40% religious, 40% academic, 20% character) and a "*vanguard-religious-populist*" leadership style, institutions can successfully harmonise spiritual depth with professional excellence. The findings reveal that while systematic management processes such as strategic planning and financial auditing effectively modernise Islamic education, their success remains deeply dependent on a spiritual atmosphere that aligns organisational goals with divine mandates. Ultimately, this synergy creates a robust educational ecosystem where *taqwa* (piety) and professional competence are treated as complementary imperatives for human development.

However, implementing this holistic model is not without significant challenges. This research acknowledges a critical limitation in its scope, as it focuses primarily on relatively elite, well-resourced institutions, which may not fully represent the struggles of resource-constrained rural madrasahs. Furthermore, the findings highlight a "*human cost*" in the form of student overload and teacher stress, suggesting a gap between visionary goals and sustainable practice. Future research should, therefore, explore more inclusive models that address these disparities and investigate longitudinal strategies for teacher well-being in dual-curriculum systems. We recommend that subsequent studies focus on participatory governance to bridge the gap between centralised leadership and stakeholder engagement, ensuring that the modernisation of Islamic education remains both professional and truly inclusive.

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