



THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ISO 21001:2018 IN THE QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITIES: A STUDY OF ITS IMPACT ON INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of implementing ISO 21001:2018, the Quality Management System, in State Islamic Universities and its contribution to improving the quality and outcomes of institutional accreditation. This research used a literature study approach, reviewing books, indexed international and national scientific articles, the web (internet), and several other relevant literature sources. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion/verification. The results of the study show that the effectiveness of ISO 21001 implementation in State Islamic Universities is influenced by three main factors: transformational leadership, the internalization of a quality culture, and the integration of digital-based quality systems. All three encourage the creation of transparent, efficient, and sustainable academic governance. In addition, the implementation of ISO 21001 has been proven to strengthen the alignment between the internal quality assurance system and the BAN-PT national accreditation standards through an evidence-based approach. The integration of Islamic values, such as *ihsan*, *amanah*, and *istiqamah*, also enriches the implementation of the quality system by adding distinctive ethical and spiritual dimensions. This study concludes that ISO 21001:2018 is not only an administrative instrument, but also a reflective framework that forms a culture of sustainable quality in State Islamic Universities. The study's results recommend policy synergy among the Ministry of Religion, BAN-PT, and ISO certification bodies to expand the adoption of a spirituality-based quality system and global standards in the Indonesian Islamic higher education environment.

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INTRODUCTION

The quality of higher education is one of the main pillars of developing human resources and enhancing the nation's competitiveness. In Indonesia, efforts to improve the quality of higher education are carried out through two main mechanisms: the internal quality assurance system (IQAS) and institutional accreditation, which serves as an external mechanism to assess the accountability and performance of higher education institutions. Accreditation is not only an administrative instrument but also a representation of public trust in the quality of an institution's governance and academic processes. However, in the context of State Islamic Universities, achieving superior accreditation remains quite complex. Problems that often arise include inconsistencies in documentation, weak follow-up mechanisms for internal quality audit results, and limited participation of the academic community in building a sustainable quality culture (BAN-PT, 2022).

In response to these challenges, several State Islamic Universities began adopting international quality management systems, specifically ISO 21001:2018, which was designed for educational organizations. The standard emphasizes a process-based approach, stakeholder engagement, and principles of continuous improvement that are relevant to the characteristics of higher education. Globally, various studies show that implementing ISO 21001 can improve governance efficiency, consistency in academic implementation, and student satisfaction as users of educational services (Umam & Rahman, 2024). However, research in the Indonesian context shows mixed results. Pratiwi (2023) found that although implementing ISO 21001 strengthens administrative evidence in accreditation, its impact on substantive academic quality improvement remains limited. Similarly, Trisnawati and Rosiawan (2022) note that integrating ISO 21001 with the BAN-PT national accreditation system continues to face coordination constraints, particularly regarding indicator alignment, quality data reporting, and institutional commitment.

Based on these gaps, this study aims to analyze the effectiveness of implementing ISO 21001:2018 in State Islamic Universities in the context of increasing institutional accreditation. The research focuses on identifying implementation strategies, the obstacles encountered, and stakeholder perceptions of the benefits of the quality system in strengthening institutional performance. This approach is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how international quality management standards can be contextually adapted in the Islamic educational environment.

Argumentatively, this study assumes that the effectiveness of ISO 21001 implementation is not only measured by compliance with procedures and documentation, but also by the successful internalization of quality values within the culture of academic organizations. Thus, the ideal implementation synergizes global quality management principles with Islamic values such as *ihsan* (excellence), *amanah* (responsibility), and *istiqamah* (consistency). This approach is expected to produce a quality management system that is not only effective in meeting accreditation indicators but also relevant to the character and mission of Islamic higher education in Indonesia (Pratiwi, 2023).

METHOD

This study uses data on ISO 21001:2018, quality management, and accreditation at State Islamic Religious Colleges. The data were found using library research. Many references, both primary and secondary, were collected through documentation, such as reading texts and reviewing literature related to the issues discussed in this paper. Data collection techniques were carried out by identifying discourses from books, journal articles, the web (internet), or other information related to the writing study to search for things or variables in the form of notes, transcripts, books, newspapers, guidelines, guides, and so on related to ISO 21001:2018 certification and its relevance to quality and accreditation at State Islamic Religious Colleges (Kuhlthau, 1994). Data were analyzed by performing data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions or verification (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). Data Reduction: Researchers select the articles, books, or documents most relevant to the research question, discard unnecessary information, and create initial summaries or categories. Data Display: Reduced data are then presented in an organized format, such as a structured narrative, a comparison matrix of the literature, a flowchart, or a thematic table that organizes findings from various sources. Conclusion Drawing/Verification: Researchers begin drawing initial conclusions based on patterns and relationships evident in the data presentation. These conclusions are then verified and validated by referring back to the sources. This process is iterative, allowing researchers to return to the data reduction or presentation stage if necessary until solid, credible conclusions are obtained.

RESULT

This research analyzes various national and international scientific articles, several books and guides, and websites relevant to the research topic. The analysis is conducted through a process of reduction, display, and verification to identify relevant conceptual and empirical patterns between the implementation of ISO 21001:2018 and institutional accreditation in higher education, particularly at PTKIN (State Islamic University) and religious universities in the Islamic world.

Table 1. Thematic Synthesis of the Implementation of ISO 21001:2018 in Higher Education

No	Theme	Focus of Findings	Contribution to Accreditation	Representative Sources
1	Leadership and Management Commitment	Transformational leadership encourages a culture of quality and strengthens governance.	Strengthening the criteria of vision, governance, and institutional management.	(Khan, 2020; Rahman, 2023; Sari, 2022)
2	Quality Culture and Academic Community Involvement	The culture of quality is uneven; The participation of lecturers and students is a key factor in success.	Improve indicators of stakeholder engagement and academic quality.	(Mahmood & Ooi, 2021); Pratiwi, 2023)
3	Documentation and Internal Audit	ISO 21001 provides a documentation structure that is compatible with the BAN-PT instrument.	Facilitate the provision of accreditation evidence and internal quality audits.	(El-Masri, 2021; Hidayat, 2022)
4	Stakeholder Satisfaction	Focusing on the needs of students and graduate users enhances the study program's relevance.	Supporting indicators of accreditation results and outputs (Tracer Study, Stakeholder Feedback).	(Yildirim & Uğur, 2020; BAN-PT, 2023)
5	Digitization of Quality System	Digital data-based implementation accelerates reporting and quality monitoring.	Optimizing the effectiveness of the implementation of SPMI and online BAN-PT assessments.	(Sari, 2022; Rahman, 2023)
6	Integration of ISO 21001 with IQAS	Integration prevents duplication of procedures between international and national standards.	Improve the efficiency of quality document management and ensure compliance with standards.	(Pratiwi, 2023; Hidayat, 2022)

Most of the literature indicates that implementing ISO 21001:2018 in universities has a positive impact on internal and external quality performance. Universities in Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey reported significant improvements in academic governance and in transparency of quality data (Yildirim & Uğur, 2020). In Indonesia, State Islamic Universities that have begun adopting ISO 21001, such as UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang and UIN Sunan Kalijaga, have shown increases in scores for governance and quality assurance criteria (Rahman, 2023). The analysis indicates that leadership commitment is the primary determinant of successful ISO 21001 implementation. Rectors or deans who adopt a transformational leadership style can build collective quality awareness (Khan, 2020). In State

Islamic Universities, leadership values based on spirituality and trust strengthen moral legitimacy in the implementation of quality policies (Sari, 2022).

The findings show that resistance to change and weak participation of lecturers and education personnel are often obstacles. However, institutions that implement a participatory approach, such as quality circles or focus group discussions, tend to be more successful in internalizing quality culture (Mahmood & Ooi, 2021). Student participation in quality evaluation is also an essential indicator in the BAN-PT accreditation instrument. The ISO 21001 standard emphasizes the importance of documented information and internal audits. In the context of accreditation, this makes it easier for State Islamic Universities to compile systematic and verified evidence of performance (Hidayat, 2022). A consistent internal audit process also strengthens the evaluation criteria and continuous improvement.

Student, lecturer, alum, and graduate user satisfaction is a benchmark for the quality system's success. ISO 21001 provides a more measurable and results-oriented satisfaction evaluation instrument (El-Masri, 2021). Graduate user involvement (stakeholder feedback) has been proven to increase the value of accreditation in the external aspects and learning outcomes (BAN-PT, 2023). Many universities have adopted digital platforms to support the implementation of ISO 21001. This system includes e-document management, e-audit, and a quality dashboard that facilitates accreditation reporting (Sari, 2022). In State Islamic Universities, IQAS digitization is the key to integrating academic quality reporting with BAN-PT-based accreditation data. Some studies show overlap between the ISO 21001 standard and the national IQAS (Pratiwi, 2023). However, institutions that integrate the two actually get significant efficiencies in planning, implementation, evaluation, and quality improvement. This integration also fosters a culture of synergy between academic and administrative work units.

The main obstacles include the lack of competence among internal auditors, limited certification funds, and low literacy levels among the community (Rahman, 2023). In some State Islamic Universities, ISO certification often stops at the administrative level without substantial changes in the quality culture. Overall, the results of the literature study show that ISO 21001:2018 is effective as an instrument for quality improvement and accreditation, provided that a transformation of the quality culture, participatory leadership, and a digital, integrated quality information system accompany implementation.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that the successful implementation of ISO 21001:2018 in Islamic higher education depends on three key factors: transformational leadership, the internalization of a quality culture, and the integration of digital-based quality systems. These three factors interact to form a sustainable, adaptable quality management system that adapts to changes in

the academic environment. These findings reinforce the principles of quality management by [Deming \(1986\)](#), who emphasized that the sustainability of organizational quality can be achieved only through the synergy of visionary leadership, consistent systems, and a work culture oriented towards continuous improvement. In the context of the State Islamic Religious University, the successful implementation of ISO 21001 is not only a technical-administrative matter but also reflects the ethical and spiritual commitment inherent in Islamic institutional values.

This finding aligns with [Mahmood and Ooi \(2021\)](#), who affirm that ISO-based quality standards encourage transparency, accountability, and more open governance in educational institutions. However, within State Islamic Universities, the application of ISO 21001 takes on an additional dimension, namely the moral and spiritual values inherent in leadership and management practices. [Rahman \(2023\)](#) shows that leadership's commitment to the principles of trust and *ihsan* strengthens the implementation of quality standards by combining professionalism with Islamic values. Thus, the quality system in the context of Islamic higher education not only functions as an instrument of performance control, but also as a vehicle for the formation of organizational character oriented towards ethical and social sustainability.

The implementation of ISO 21001 is highly relevant to the Total Quality Management (TQM) paradigm, particularly in its focus on customer satisfaction and continuous improvement. The integration of TQM principles with ISO 21001 creates synergy between a system-based international approach and local needs rooted in Islamic values ([El-Masri, 2021](#)). This approach enhances State Islamic Universities' quality management flexibility in responding to the dynamics of policy changes and stakeholder expectations. On the other hand, transformational leadership plays an essential role in fostering collective awareness within the academic community to embed quality into the work culture, rather than merely fulfilling formal standards.

From an accreditation perspective, ISO 21001 serves as a framework that helps universities align their quality planning, implementation, evaluation, and reporting processes with the nine accreditation criteria set by BAN-PT. According to [Sari \(2022\)](#), institutions that adopt ISO 21001 have a stronger evidence-based management system, thereby making the reaccreditation process more efficient and transparent. ISO 21001 enables performance documentation to be carried out systematically and measurably, supports the tracking of *tridharma* achievements, and enhances the overall value of institutional accreditation. However, applying this standard at State Islamic Universities poses adaptation challenges, especially in integrating modern quality management principles with Islamic values such as *ihsan*, *amanah*, and *istiqamah*, which form the foundation of academic ethics ([Pratiwi, 2023](#)). Without integrating these values, the quality system risks becoming purely procedural and losing its substantive meaning in the context of Islamic education.

In addition, this study's results indicate that the successful implementation of ISO 21001 is highly dependent on institutional readiness to adopt a digital quality system. The use of information technology in auditing, monitoring, and quality reporting has been proven to increase efficiency and strengthen internal accountability. This aligns with the findings of [Yilmaz \(2024\)](#) and [Umam & Rahman \(2024\)](#), who emphasize that digitizing IQAS accelerates the PDCA cycle and facilitates coordination across academic units. Thus, digital transformation is the main prerequisite for State Islamic Universities to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of the quality system in the era of education 5.0.

Based on the synthesis of the literature review results, a national policy is needed that integrates ISO 21001 into the quality assurance system of Islamic religious higher education. The findings of this library research confirm the importance of policy alignment between the Ministry of Religion and BAN-PT to systematically expand the adoption of ISO 21001 across State Islamic Universities. Some of the recommendations that can be implemented include: (1) intensive training for internal auditors and quality managers to understand the contextual interpretation of ISO 21001; (2) the development and digitization of an internal quality assurance system (IQAS) to support evidence-based accreditation reporting; and (3) further research on the impact of the implementation of ISO 21001 on the performance of the tridharma of higher education, especially in the aspects of governance, learning innovation, and socio-religious contribution. Through this strategy, ISO 21001 not only serves as an international standard but also becomes an instrument for a contextual, sustainable, and Islamically rooted quality transformation.

Theoretically, the results of this study enrich the body of research on higher education quality management by extending the application of System Management Theory to the context of Islamic education. The integration of ISO 21001:2018 with spiritual values such as *ihsan*, *amanah*, and *istiqamah* shows that the quality management system functions not only as an administrative tool but also as an ethical and reflective framework that shapes a morality-based organizational culture. This research supports [Deming's \(1986\)](#) view of the importance of leadership and culture as the core of quality sustainability, while expanding on it to embrace a value-based quality management paradigm. Thus, this article makes a conceptual contribution to the development of a more contextual, holistic, and value-based theory of education quality management.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study provide a strategic foundation for policy-makers within the Ministry of Religion, BAN-PT, and State Islamic Universities leaders to optimize the implementation of ISO 21001:2018. First, institutions need to develop policy alignment that links international standards to national quality assurance regulations, ensuring harmonization across levels of governance. Second, universities are advised to integrate an ISO-based quality system with an Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) in a digital format to improve audit efficiency, traceability, and transparency. Third, it is necessary to strengthen human resources capacity

through internal quality auditor training, transformational leadership workshops, and the formation of a community of quality practices within State Islamic Universities to accelerate the institutional learning process. Finally, the results of this study can also serve as a reference for other Islamic educational institutions, at both the national and international levels, that wish to adopt a spiritually oriented quality management model aligned with global standards.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of implementing ISO 21001:2018 in improving the quality and institutional accreditation of State Islamic Universities using library research. The results of the study show that the success of implementing the quality management system in the State Islamic Universities environment is highly determined by transformational leadership, the internalization of a quality culture, and the integration of digital-based quality systems. These three factors form the foundation for transparent, adaptive, and performance-oriented governance that enhances the *tridharma* of higher education.

Conceptually, this study expands understanding of higher education quality management by showing that ISO 21001 is not merely an administrative tool but also a reflective instrument that fosters a culture of quality grounded in spiritual values and social responsibility. The application of the principles of continuous improvement, stakeholder satisfaction, and Islamic values such as *ihsan*, *amanah*, and *istiqamah* creates integration between global standards and local contexts. This approach emphasizes the importance of synergy between the international quality system and the vision of Islamic education to build superior, ethical, and globally competitive institutions.

However, this study has limitations in the scope of secondary sources and does not include empirical analysis based on field data. Therefore, further research is recommended to empirically test the ISO 21001 implementation model across various types of State Islamic Universities, assess its impact on *tridharma* performance, and develop a more contextually relevant quality evaluation instrument. In addition, collaboration between the Ministry of Religious Affairs, BAN-PT, and ISO certification bodies needs to be strengthened to ensure the sustainability of the quality system that not only meets international standards but also strengthens the character and identity of Islamic education in Indonesia.

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