



ADAPTATION STRATEGY OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM IN *PESANTREN*: CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS BASED ON TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

Despite their unique learning systems, *Kiai* leadership, and character building, *pesantren salaf* struggle to develop structured, documented, and sustainable quality assurance systems to meet accountability demands. This study aims to analyze strategies for adapting Islamic education quality assurance systems within *pesantren salaf* by integrating Total Quality Management (TQM) principles. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach and library research methods, the study utilizes data sources including books, scholarly journal articles, and academic documents relevant to quality assurance, TQM, and *pesantren* education. Data analysis was conducted through content analysis and conceptual synthesis to formulate a contextually appropriate adaptation model. The findings indicate that TQM principles such as quality-oriented leadership, the involvement of the entire *pesantren* community, the establishment of value-based quality standards, and continuous improvement can be adapted in harmony with the character and traditions of *pesantren salaf*. This adaptation holds the potential to strengthen internal quality assurance systems without compromising the institution's unique *pesantren* identity. The study offers a conceptual contribution to the development of research on Islamic education quality assurance systems and serves as a practical reference for *pesantren salaf* administrators.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (known as *Pesantren*), as Islamic educational institutions, are expected to have a quality assurance system that can ensure the quality of the learning process, institutional management, and educational output measurably and sustainably, in line with the demands of modern education accountability and national education standards. The ideal quality assurance system should be systematic, documented, and integrate Islamic values as the main foundation in every aspect of education. However, in reality (*das sein*), many *pesantren* still operate quality mechanisms that are informal and based on the tradition of kiai leadership, so they do not fully have an internal quality system that is structured and measured consistently. This can be seen from the many studies that show variations in the implementation of quality assurance that have not been systemically integrated in a clear framework, both in leadership, learning evaluation, and documentation of the quality of *pesantren* education as a whole (Rusli et al., 2025). This condition indicates a gap between the ideal expectations for the *pesantren* quality assurance system and real practices in the field, which requires a deeper analysis of contextual and relevant adaptation strategies.

The gap between ideal expectations (*das sollen*) and real practice (*das sein*) in ensuring the quality of *pesantren* education is not just a normative statement, but is also reflected in the findings of the latest academic research. Bibliometric studies on the quality of *pesantren* education show that although there are many scientific publications related to quality assurance and Islamic education in the period 2017–2021, research that examines the integration of quality systems comprehensively is still very limited and has not mapped the strategic trends that can be adopted by *pesantren* in Indonesia widely. Other research shows that to face the demands of the Society 5.0 era, *pesantren* need to develop a quality assurance system like formal educational institutions so that their quality achievements can be objectively measured and accredited, but the real implementation of the model is still partial and highly dependent on the initiatives of each *pesantren* (Aimah & Nasih, 2023). The implication of this reality is the inconsistency in the quality of education between *pesantren*, the lack of a structured and documented internal system, and the lack of integration of modern quality management principles in *pesantren* operational practices. This condition creates a significant research gap between the expectations of the ideal quality assurance system and the operational reality of *pesantren* operation, thus requiring a clear conceptual study of the adaptation strategy of the quality assurance system that can bridge the two in the context of Islamic education.

Various studies have examined aspects of quality assurance and quality management in the *pesantren* environment, but each has a different focus and contribution. First, bibliometric studies show that although there have been hundreds of publications related to quality assurance and Islamic education in recent years, research that maps the strategic trends of quality assurance in *pesantren* is still very limited, especially those that discuss the integration of the quality framework comprehensively from the perspective of institutional

contextual adaptation rather than just empirical case descriptions. Another study examined the quality assurance system of *pesantren* in the era of Society 5.0, showing the need for *pesantren* to develop a measurable quality system like formal institutions in order to compete nationally and internationally. Several studies also try to apply the Total Quality Management (TQM) approach or quality management model in certain *pesantren*, for example, in the *pesantren salaf* Sabilurrosyad in Malang and Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor. The findings show that quality management principles such as the involvement of all stakeholders and continuous improvement have positive potential in improving the quality of *pesantren* education, although their implementation still depends on the context of each institution (Aimah & Nasih, 2023). In addition, research on the internal quality assurance model based on *pesantren* values found that the integration between national quality standards and *pesantren* values is key in planning, quality mapping, and internal quality evaluation (Aimah & Nasih, 2023). Although these works make important contributions to the understanding of *pesantren* quality, much of the research is empirical or descriptive case studies that lack emphasis on conceptual adaptation strategies from modern quality frameworks into *pesantren* traditions in a systematic manner. Thus, there are still limitations in the development of strategic discourse that combines the principles of TQM with the values and distinctive structure of *pesantren* to overcome quality inequality more broadly and theoretically.

Based on the conceptual and empirical gaps that have been described, this research is urgent to be carried out because *pesantren salaf* are in a strategic position as well as vulnerable in facing the demands of contemporary education quality. On the one hand, *pesantren salaf* have the strength of values, scientific traditions, and moral authority that are the foundation of Islamic education; However, on the other hand, the absence of a structured quality assurance system framework has the potential to weaken the adaptability of *pesantren* to the demands of accountability, standardization, and sustainability of education quality. Therefore, this study aims to conceptually analyze the principles of Total Quality Management and formulate an adaptation strategy for the quality assurance system of Islamic education that is relevant to the characteristics of *pesantren salaf* through a systematic literature review. The contribution of this research is expected not only to be theoretical by enriching the scientific treasures of the Islamic education quality assurance system based on *pesantren* values, but also to provide a practical contribution in the form of a strategic conceptual framework that can be used as a reference by *pesantren salaf* managers in designing and developing an internal quality system that is contextual, adaptive, and sustainable without losing the identity of the *pesantren*.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the library research method. This method was chosen because the research aims to conceptually analyze the adaptation strategy of the Islamic education quality assurance system in *pesantren salaf* through the integration of TQM principles, without involving

field data collection (Creswell, 2009). Research data sources are in the form of relevant scientific literature, including books, journal articles, and academic documents that discuss education quality assurance, Total Quality Management, Islamic education, and characteristics of *pesantren salaf*. The literature analyzed was selected based on the relevance of the theme and the credibility of the sources (Sugiyono, 2013). Data analysis is carried out through content analysis and conceptual analysis by synthesizing the principles of TQM and Islamic education values to formulate a strategy for adapting the quality assurance system that is contextual and in accordance with the characteristics of *salaf pesantren*.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Quality Assurance in the Perspective of Islamic Education

In the context of Islamic education, the concept of quality is not only understood as the achievement of academic or technical standards, but also includes the dimension of religious values inherent in the goal of Islamic education holistically. The quality of Islamic education must reflect not only the cognitive aspects and skills, but also the formation of the character, spirituality, and morals of students in line with the principles of Islamic teachings, such as *ihsan* (earnestness to do the best), *amanah* (trust), and *tauhid* (integration of divine values in educational actions) which are the normative foundation of the quality of education in Islam. Research by Ansori and Supangat shows that the concept of quality in Islamic education emphasizes the importance of actions that are done well, dedicated, and sincere as part of education quality management that is integrated with the values of Islamic teachings in the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating education (Aimah & Nasih, 2023).

In addition, other literature reviews emphasize that quality assurance of Islamic education must consider the spiritual and ethical dimensions that characterize Islamic education, not simply adopt the quality model of public educational institutions without contextualizing Islamic values. For example, in a review of the quality of Islamic education in schools and religious institutions, it was found that quality assurance includes the development of learning quality, educational governance, and the involvement of the educational community in a system that reflects Islamic values while meeting nationally and internationally relevant educational standards (Aimah & Nasih, 2023).

Thus, the quality assurance of Islamic education cannot be separated from the foundation of holistic Islamic values; It covers academic, spiritual, moral, social, and character development aspects of students. Such a quality model demands a synergistic approach between modern quality management principles and Islamic educational values to produce comprehensive, authentic, and sustainable education.

Principles of Total Quality Management (TQM) in Education

TQM is a quality management philosophy that emphasizes the involvement of all organizational components in an effort to achieve and maintain quality sustainably, so that it is not only oriented to the result, but also to the process that

produces it. In the context of education, the implementation of TQM encourages institutions to prioritize customer focus (satisfaction of stakeholders such as students and parents), leadership commitment, full participation of all institutional citizens, a systematic process approach, and continuous improvement as the main principles in education quality management. Research shows that these principles can significantly improve academic quality, educational service efficiency, and stakeholder satisfaction through the implementation of a structured and comprehensive system. For example, a study of the principles of TQM in Islamic education states that principles such as customer focus, total involvement, system approach, continuous improvement, and factual decision-making are important elements in the development of the quality of educational institutions (Aimah & Nasih, 2023).

In addition, other research confirms that the principles of TQM in education not only improve the quality of the learning process and administration, but also strengthen the organizational structure through top management commitment and effective team collaboration. The commitment of the leadership and the active involvement of all elements of education are key factors in the successful implementation of TQM, while the continuous improvement approach helps the institution formulate evaluation and innovation mechanisms consistently. In the study of Islamic educational institutions, these principles also show conformity with Islamic values such as improvement (*ishlah*) and seriousness (*itqan*), which affirms the relevance of TQM as a strategic approach in the context of Islamic-based education (Iqbal, 2025). Thus, the principles of TQM become a strong conceptual foundation to encourage the implementation of an efficient, responsive, and sustainable education quality assurance system, especially when synergized with the values of holistic Islamic education.

Characteristics of the *Pesantren Salaf* Education System

Pesantren salaf are traditional Islamic educational institutions that maintain a classical learning system and have unique characteristics compared to other modes of education. In general, *pesantren salaf* are understood as institutions that emphasize kiai leadership, community of coexistence, and the teaching of the yellow book through traditional methods such as *bandongan*, *sorogan*, and *wetonan*, which aim not only to transfer knowledge but also to form habitus, scientific and spiritual skills of students as part of the culture of the institution. Studies show that the salafiyah curriculum usually focuses on intensive classical text studies and is guided by kyai as a central figure in the learning and character formation of students, which reflects symbolic and traditional relationships in *pesantren salaf*. In addition, *pesantren salaf* often try to maintain their classical identity despite the pressure of modernization to adjust their curriculum and organization to be relevant to the demands of the times. Therefore, although the concept of salaf education is very strong in the formation of the spiritual and character of students, challenges arise in the aspects of standardization, documentation, and a structured quality evaluation system, especially when

facing the need for systemic and measurable quality assurance of modern education (Iqbal, 2025).

Adaptation Strategy of TQM-Based Quality Assurance System in Pesantren Salaf

In an effort to bridge the gap between traditional quality practices of *pesantren salaf* and the demands of a structured quality assurance system, TQM offers a relevant strategic framework when adapted by considering the value context of the *pesantren*. TQM principles such as *stakeholder focus*, quality-committed leadership, full participation of the entire community, fact-based decision-making, and continuous improvement have been identified as key drivers of improving the quality of education in various Islamic educational institutions. Literature studies show that these principles can be translated into *pesantren* practices through strategies such as strengthening the vision and commitment to quality at the *pesantren* leadership level, the involvement of students, teachers, and administrators in quality planning, as well as the development of systematic and documented internal evaluation mechanisms. This adaptation not only includes managerial aspects but must also integrate Islamic values such as *ishlah* (improvement) and *amanah* (trust) in quality governance so that it is in line with the character of *pesantren* education. For example, literature research found that the implementation of TQM in Islamic educational institutions improves teacher professionalism, classroom management, and stakeholder engagement, which collectively contributes to the achievement of higher and sustainable quality of education (Aini & Julaiha, 2025).

The adaptation of TQM in the context of *pesantren salaf* must consider the cultural challenges of a hierarchical *pesantren* organization and limited resources, so that the quality strategy is contextual, realistic, and value-based. Another study emphasized the importance of support from institutional leaders and ongoing training for *pesantren* residents so that the principles of TQM can be understood and internalized in daily practice, including in curriculum planning, learning monitoring, and evaluation of results (Suryani, 2024). Thus, this adaptation strategy results in an approach that not only adopts a modern management model but also combines the principles of quality management with the value of Islamic education so that *salaf pesantren* can improve an effective, contextual, and sustainable quality assurance system.

Implications of Quality Assurance Strategies for the Development of Pesantren Salaf

The adaptation strategy of the TQM-based quality assurance system in the context of *salaf pesantren* has significant implications both theoretically and practically for the development of Islamic education. Theoretically, the integration of TQM principles—such as proactive leadership on quality, stakeholder participation, performance measurement, and continuous improvement—can enrich the discourse on quality assurance in Islamic education by adding systemic and methodological dimensions that have been

underexplored in the tradition of *pesantren* education studies. This theoretical implication is in line with research showing that strengthening the value-based quality framework of Islamic educational institutions encourages a more planned, measurable, and relevant quality of learning to the needs of contemporary society (Umiarso, 2022).

Practically, the strategy requires a change in organizational culture in *pesantren salaf*, especially in terms of quality strategy planning, internal evaluation documentation, and active involvement of all components of the *pesantren*, including *kiai*, administrators, teachers, and students. Studies on the internal quality assurance system based on *pesantren* values show that the determination of quality standards that refer to the visions and missions of the institution and the values of the *pesantren* can map the strengths and weaknesses of the institution more clearly, so that the planning and implementation of quality programs can be carried out consistently and effectively (Thoyib, 2022).

In addition, the integration of TQM principles into Islamic education policies at the macro level has implications for the formulation of policies that are more responsive to the dynamics of community needs while maintaining religious values, as revealed in the study of the integration of TQM in national Islamic education standards. The research emphasizes the need to increase institutional capacity, educator professionalism training, and systematic stakeholder engagement mechanisms to accelerate the effective implementation of quality practices (Putri et al., 2025). Thus, the adaptation strategy of the TQM-based quality assurance system not only offers a more structured and sustainable model of improving the quality of education, but also implies the institutional capacity building of *pesantren salaf* in order to realize Islamic education that is able to answer current challenges without sacrificing its traditional identity.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the literature review and the discussion that has been carried out, it can be concluded that *pesantren salaf* has the characteristics of a distinctive education system, firmly rooted in the classical Islamic scientific tradition, *kiai* leadership, and the formation of the character and spirituality of students. However, in the context of the development of modern education, *pesantren salaf* face challenges in the aspect of quality assurance that are systematic, documented, and measurable. This gap is mainly seen in the lack of integrated quality standards, continuous evaluation mechanisms, and planned quality culture in the management of *pesantren* education.

The results of the discussion show that the principles of TQM can be adapted contextually in the quality assurance system of *pesantren salaf* education without losing their traditional identity and values. The adaptation is realized through strengthening quality-oriented *kiai* leadership, the involvement of all *pesantren* residents, the establishment of quality standards based on the vision and values of the *pesantren*, and the implementation of internal evaluation as part of continuous improvement. This strategy emphasizes that quality

assurance in *pesantren salaf* does not have to be technocratic, but can be developed as a system with nuances of Islamic values, culture, and spirituality.

Thus, this research provides a theoretical contribution in the form of enriching the study of Islamic education quality assurance systems based on *pesantren*, especially through a contextual TQM approach. Practically, these findings can be a reference for *pesantren salaf* managers in designing and developing a quality assurance system that is adaptive, sustainable, and relevant to the demands of the times, while maintaining the identity of *pesantren* as traditional Islamic educational institutions.

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