



Akhlaq-Based Quality Management in an Islamic Senior High School: A Case Study on Integrating Moral Values into Quality Assurance

Ade Nurpriatna¹ Teguh Hariyanto², Adi Rosadi³ Muhamad Syamsudin Nurfalalah⁴,
Zubaidi Wahyono⁵

¹²³⁴STAI Kharisma Cicurug, Sukabumi, Indonesia

⁵Islamic studies Program, Faculty of Education, Social Sciences and Islamic Studies, University Muhammadiyah Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study examined akhlaq-based quality management at an Islamic senior high school in Sukabumi, Indonesia, focusing on integrating amanah, shidiq, and ihsan into quality assurance cycles. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 15 participants (principal, vice-principal, three teachers, QA coordinator, staff, students, parents), 12 days of non-participant observation, and document analysis over four months (January-April 2026). Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework, employed inductive and deductive coding. Findings indicated that participatory planning (shura), daily behavior monitoring, semester moral scoring, monthly review meetings, and parent feedback formed a value-driven quality assurance system. Strong principal leadership (uswah hasanah) and a supportive religious environment facilitated implementation, while limited budgets and uneven teacher competence posed barriers. Participants reported perceived improvements in student moral behavior and community trust; the school's accreditation improvement from B to A (2023 to 2025) is documented as contextual evidence, not causal proof of the management model. This study offers a descriptive, context-bound account of operationalizing Islamic values (shura, muhasabah, uswah hasanah, muraqabah) within the PDCA quality cycle.

KEYWORDS

Akhlaq-Based Akhlaq-Based Quality Management, Islamic Senior High School, Moral Values, Quality Assurance, PDCA Cycle

ABSTRAK

Studi kasus kualitatif ini mengkaji manajemen mutu berbasis akhlaq di sebuah Madrasah Aliyah di Sukabumi, Indonesia, dengan fokus pada integrasi amanah, shidiq, dan ihsan ke dalam siklus penjaminan mutu. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan 15 partisipan (kepala sekolah, wakil kepala, tiga guru, koordinator QA, staf, siswa, orang tua), observasi non-partisipan selama 12 hari, dan analisis dokumen selama empat bulan (Januari-April 2026). Analisis tematik mengikuti kerangka enam fase Braun dan Clarke, menggunakan koding induktif dan deduktif. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa perencanaan partisipatif (syura), pemantauan perilaku harian, penilaian moral semester, rapat tinjauan bulanan, dan umpan balik orang tua membentuk sistem mutu berbasis nilai. Kepemimpinan kepala sekolah yang kuat (uswah hasanah) dan lingkungan religius yang mendukung memfasilitasi implementasi, sementara anggaran terbatas dan kompetensi guru yang tidak merata menjadi hambatan. Partisipan melaporkan peningkatan perilaku moral siswa dan kepercayaan masyarakat; peningkatan akreditasi sekolah dari B ke A (2023 ke 2025) didokumentasikan sebagai bukti kontekstual, bukan sebagai bukti kausal model manajemen. Studi ini menawarkan akun deskriptif dan terikat konteks tentang pengoperasian nilai-nilai Islam (syura, muhasabah, uswah hasanah, muraqabah) dalam siklus mutu PDCA.

KATA KUNCI

Manajemen Mutu Berbasis Akhlaq, Madrasah Aliyah, Nilai Moral, Penjaminan Mutu, Siklus PDCA

Introduction

The quality of education has become a central concern in global educational discourse, particularly in developing countries where educational outcomes often fail to meet national standards and societal expectations (Aldhobaib, 2024; Rodliyah et al., 2024). In Islamic education, quality encompasses not merely academic achievement or infrastructural completeness but also the extent to which institutions shape students' moral and spiritual character (Soleh et al., 2024; Luthfiatul Udhma & Sri Minarti, 2025). Islamic senior high schools (*Madrasah Aliyah*) face increasing pressure to demonstrate both academic excellence and moral integrity, as they are expected to produce graduates who are cognitively competent and possess strong Islamic ethical foundations (Hairani & Conermann, 2025; Salsabila & Salim, 2026). However, many quality assurance systems adopted by Islamic schools derive from industrial models that prioritize efficiency, standardization, and measurable outputs over spiritual and ethical dimensions (Hamdanah, 2024; Utomo & Baitussalam, 2025). This study examines how Islamic values—particularly *akhlak* (moral excellence)—can be systematically integrated into school quality assurance frameworks.

This issue is particularly urgent in Indonesian Islamic senior high schools, where national accreditation standards (BAN-S/M) and internal quality assurance systems (SPMI) have been implemented but often emphasize administrative compliance over spiritual-moral dimensions (Sandy Aulia Putri et al., 2025; Rokhmah et al., 2025). Observational evidence and prior studies suggest that many madrasahs focus heavily on documentation while neglecting the cultivation of *akhlak* as a core quality indicator (Suwandi et al., 2024; Muttaqin, 2024; Elmali & Tuna, 2024; Hamid & Rahman, 2025). This study focuses on a specific Islamic senior high school in Indonesia that has implemented an *akhlak*-based quality management model. The school was selected because it has developed a quality assurance system that integrates Islamic moral values—*amanah* (trustworthiness), *shidiq* (honesty), and *ihsan* (spiritual excellence)—into its planning, implementation, evaluation, and improvement cycles. This context provides a rich case for understanding how Islamic values can be operationalized within formal quality assurance mechanisms.

Recent literature has increasingly recognized the need to integrate Islamic values into educational management. Jannana et al. (2025) examined a cyclical, value-based quality assurance model in an Islamic senior high school in Surakarta and found that participatory approaches rooted in theological values enhanced both academic and spiritual outcomes. Similarly, Salsabila and Salim (2026) examined how a school-based character program integrated Qur'anic moral values, showing that structured habituation and mentoring effectively embedded Islamic ethics into daily practice. Hartinah and Rofahima (2024) explored school-based management as a quality improvement strategy, while Rodliyah et al. (2024) focused on curriculum management in pesantren-based vocational programs. Luthfiatul Udhma and Sri Minarti (2025) proposed integrating Total Quality Management with Islamic values, emphasizing Islamic leadership and stakeholder collaboration. Hairani and Conermann (2025) examined the internalization of Islamic values as a foundation for digital ethics, introducing concepts such as *muraqabah* (divine supervision) and *hisab* (accountability). Sandy Aulia Putri et al. (2025) analyzed the integration of Total Quality Management into national standards for Islamic education. Hartinah et al. (2025) explored synergy between spiritual education and quality management. Together, these studies affirm that Islamic values can enrich quality assurance systems.

To strengthen the conceptual foundation, this study draws on Salleh et al.'s (2024) value-based Total Quality Management framework, which proposes embedding spiritual values into each stage of the PDCA cycle. Building on this, the study adopts the SPMI-Islami model proposed by Hidayat and Maulana (2025), which integrates Islamic concepts — *shura* (consultation), *muhasabah* (self-accountability), *uswah hasanah* (exemplary conduct), and *muraqabah* (spiritual vigilance)—into quality assurance processes. These concepts are operationalized as follows: *shura* guides participatory planning, *muhasabah* informs reflective evaluation, *uswah hasanah* underpins leadership role modeling, and *muraqabah* supports continuous monitoring. The framework distinguishes between core moral values (*amanah, shidiq, ihsan*), managerial principles (*shura, muhasabah, uswah hasanah, muraqabah*), and quality assurance processes (planning, implementation, evaluation, control).

Despite these contributions, a significant gap remains in the literature. Existing studies tend to treat Islamic values as supplementary elements rather than foundational principles that reshape the entire quality assurance framework (Muttaqin, 2024; Suwandi et al., 2024). Few studies have examined how *akhlak*—a comprehensive concept encompassing moral character, spiritual awareness, and ethical conduct—can serve as the central organizing principle of quality management in Islamic schools (Alwi Yusron et al., 2025; Utomo & Baitussalam, 2025). Moreover, most research focuses on curriculum or instructional practices rather than on the managerial and evaluative dimensions of quality assurance (Soleh et al., 2024; Abidin, 2024). Empirical, case-based research documenting the processes, challenges, and outcomes of implementing *akhlak*-based quality assurance in a specific madrasah context is also lacking (Hamdanah, 2024; Luthfiatul Udhma & Sri Minarti, 2025). Additionally, prior studies have not adequately addressed how moral values such as *amanah, shidiq*, and *ihsan* are translated into measurable quality indicators or how they influence stakeholder behavior and institutional culture (Salsabila & Salim, 2026; Jannana et al., 2025).

This study addresses the identified gap by offering an empirical, in-depth case study of *akhlak*-based quality management in an Indonesian Islamic senior high school. The novelty lies in its explicit focus on *akhlak* as a foundational principle of quality assurance, examining how Islamic moral values are systematically integrated into the quality assurance cycle—planning, implementation, evaluation, and control—and how stakeholders perceive this integration. This is a bounded empirical contribution, not a validated general model. This study analyzes the implementation of *akhlak*-based quality management at the selected school, describes how moral values are operationalized within quality assurance processes, and identifies supporting factors and challenges from participants' perspectives.

The study is guided by the following research question: How is *akhlak*-based quality management planned, implemented, evaluated, and controlled in an Islamic senior high school, and what supporting factors and barriers do stakeholders perceive? The remainder of this article is organized as follows. The next section presents the research method. The findings section presents the results organized around key themes. Subsequently, the discussion interprets these findings in light of existing literature. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the main findings, acknowledges limitations, and offers recommendations.

Methods

Research Approach and Design

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a single-case study design (Yin, 2018). The qualitative approach was chosen because the research aims to explore, describe, and interpret the complex and context-bound phenomenon of akhlak-based quality management in its natural setting. A case study design is appropriate as it allows for an in-depth, holistic, and contextualized investigation of how moral values are integrated into the quality assurance system of a particular Islamic senior high school. The single-case design was justified because the selected school has formally implemented an akhlak-based quality management system for at least two academic years, making it suitable for understanding value-based quality assurance in Islamic education. The school was selected before data collection based on documented implementation of value-based quality assurance practices, not based on positive findings.

Research Context and Site

The research was conducted at MA Al-Falah (pseudonym), an Islamic senior high school (Madrasah Aliyah) located in Sukabumi Regency, Indonesia. The school serves students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and is situated in a region with a strong religious environment. The school was purposively selected because it has formally implemented an akhlak-based quality management system for at least two academic years and has documented evidence of its value-based quality assurance practices. To protect confidentiality and reduce deductive disclosure risk, we generalized specific district and other potentially identifying details. Data collection occurred over four months (January-April 2026) to capture quality assurance activities.

Unit of Analysis and Participants

The primary unit of analysis is the school's quality assurance system, particularly its akhlak-based components. We purposively selected 15 participants. Selection criteria included (a) having at least one year of experience in quality assurance processes and (b) willingness to participate. Table 1 presents participant characteristics.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Code	Role	Gender	Tenure (years)	Quality Assurance Involvement
P	School Principal	Male	8	Quality leader, chairs QA meetings
WK	Vice Principal Curriculum	Male	6	QA coordinator, oversees moral assessment
G1	Teacher (Akidah Akhlak, Grade XI)	Male	5	Implements moral values in instruction
G2	Teacher (Akidah Akhlak, Grade X)	Female	4	Supervises Akhlak Camp activities
G3	Teacher (Islamic Education)	Female	7	Conducts daily behavior monitoring
QA	Head of Quality Assurance Team	Male	3	Manages QA documentation and surveys
A1	Administrative Staff (Finance)	Female	5	Documents financial transparency
A2	Administrative Staff (Documentation)	Female	4	Manages quality manual and records
S1	Student (Grade XI)	Male	2	Participant in moral education programs
S2	Student (Grade X)	Male	1	Participant in Akhlak Camp
S3	Student (Grade XII)	Male	3	Participant in daily moral practices
S4	Student (Grade XI)	Female	2	Participant in moral assessment
O1	Parent Committee Chairperson	Male	3	Provides parent feedback on QA
O2	Parent (Active in School Committee)	Female	2	Provides parent perspective
O3	Parent (School Committee Member)	Male	2	Provides parent perspective

Data Collection

Data were collected using three techniques: semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with all 15 participants using a flexible guide developed from the research objectives. Interviews lasted 45-90 minutes, were audio-recorded with informed consent, transcribed verbatim, and translated for reporting. The researcher conducted non-participant observation over 12 school days, focusing on quality-related meetings, classroom practices integrating Islamic values, and daily routines. Observation protocols documented activity, date, time, duration, location, participants, key events, and researcher reflections. The observation log was maintained contemporaneously. Document analysis included the Annual Work Plan (RKT) 2025/2026, School Activity and Budget Plan (RKAS), Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) policy documents, quality audit checklists, moral assessment rubrics, meeting minutes, parent satisfaction surveys, and accreditation self-evaluation reports.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework: (1) familiarization, (2) initial coding using inductive and deductive codes, (3) theme search, (4) theme review, (5) theme definition, and (6) report production. The principal researcher conducted coding; two co-authors independently coded a subset (20%) to check consistency; disagreements were resolved through discussion. NVivo 14 software was used. The coding matrix is documented as a separate file.

We employed four strategies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was enhanced through source and method triangulation, member checking with five key informants, peer debriefing, and prolonged engagement. Thick descriptions supported Transferability. Dependability was ensured through an audit trail. Confirmability was maintained through reflexivity, grounding interpretations in data, and avoiding undue bias.

Researcher Positionality

The principal researcher is a lecturer in Islamic education at an institution in Sukabumi with prior professional relationships in the region. To mitigate bias, the researcher acknowledged this positionality, maintained a reflexive journal, employed multiple data sources, and conducted member checking. The researcher had no prior formal relationship with the school; access was obtained through formal permission.

Ethical Considerations

The research ethics committee of STAI Kharisma Cicurug approved the study (approval number: 012/KE/III/2026, dated 5 January 2026), confirming that approval preceded data collection. The school principal and foundation board granted formal permission. Written informed consent was obtained from all adult participants and from parents/guardians of minors; students provided verbal assent. Participation was voluntary; participants could withdraw without penalty. We guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity using pseudonyms. Data are stored in password-protected files accessible only to the research team and will be retained for five years after publication, then destroyed.

Results and Discussion

Results

The findings are organized into four themes identified through thematic analysis: (1) Participatory Planning Anchored in Islamic Values, (2) Integrated Implementation Across Domains, (3) Systematic Evaluation Mechanisms, and (4) Supporting Factors, Barriers, and Perceived Impacts. Within each theme, evidence is presented from interviews, observations, and document analysis.

Theme 1: Participatory Planning Anchored in Islamic Values

All informants confirmed that the school conducts an annual quality planning forum (musyawarah mutu) before each academic year. The principal (P) stated: "We set quality objectives not only based on academic scores but also on student character. The three main values we use are amanah, shidiq, and ihsan." (Interview, 12 January 2026). This statement was triangulated with document analysis of the Annual Work Plan (RKT) 2025/2026, where each quality objective was explicitly linked to one of these three moral values. For example, the objective "improve teacher punctuality" was tied to amanah, and "reduce cheating incidents" was tied to shidiq. Observation of the annual planning meeting (15 January 2026) confirmed that parents and student representatives were

invited to provide input. The QA coordinator (QA) added: "Parents also give input, especially about the discipline and honesty of their children at home." (Interview, 15 January 2026). Document analysis of meeting minutes confirmed that parent input was recorded and considered in finalizing quality objectives. This indicated that the planning phase was participatory, value-driven, and documented systematically.

Theme 2: Integrated Implementation Across Domains

Classroom Instruction: Teacher G1 explained how akhlak values were integrated into teaching: "I use examples from the local environment, such as returning excess change at the market, to teach amanah." (Interview, 20 January 2026). This was supported by observation during a Grade XI Akidah Akhlak class (22 January 2026), where the teacher used a case study about honesty in school exams. A student (S1) confirmed: "The teacher always reminds us that even a small lie can destroy our shidiq. Now I try to be honest even when my friends ask me to cover for them." (Interview, 22 January 2026).

Extracurricular Activities: The school runs a weekly "Akhlak Camp" on Saturdays. Student S2 stated: "We visit elderly residents in the village or clean the mosque. The teacher says that is ihsan—doing good without being asked." (Interview, 5 February 2026). Observation of one Akhlak Camp (6 February 2026) confirmed that students participated in cleaning the mosque and distributing food to elderly residents. Teacher G2, who supervised the activity, added: "This activity not only builds character but also increases students' empathy." (Interview, 6 February 2026).

Administrative Services: Administrative staff A1 explained that all financial transactions are recorded transparently: "We post the financial report on the information board and also share it in the parents' WhatsApp group. This is a form of amanah." (Interview, 10 February 2026). Document analysis of the financial report for January 2026 confirmed its public display. Parent O1 verified: "I can see for myself how the school funds are used. It is very open." (Interview, 15 February 2026).

Theme 3: Systematic Evaluation Mechanisms

Four evaluation and controlling mechanisms were identified: (a) daily behavior monitoring, (b) monthly quality review meetings, (c) semester-based student moral assessment, and (d) annual parent satisfaction survey.

Daily Behavior Monitoring: Teacher G3 explained: "We have a simple checklist. If a student is often late or dishonest, we call the parents and discuss solutions together." (Interview, 25 February 2026). Observation of a monthly teacher meeting (28 February 2026) confirmed that behavioral records were discussed and follow-up actions were planned. Document analysis of behavior monitoring forms confirmed their use.

Semester Moral Assessment: The vice principal (WK) stated: "The moral score is as important as the academic score. Parents take it seriously. If it is low, they ask how to improve it." (Interview, 10 March 2026). Document analysis of report cards for the odd semester 2025/2026 confirmed that moral scores were included, with indicators such as honesty, responsibility, and respect. The scoring is based on teacher observation, peer assessment, and self-assessment, but teachers acknowledged subjectivity limitations.

Annual Parent Satisfaction Survey: The QA coordinator presented the 2025 survey results: "78% of parents were satisfied or very satisfied with the school's moral education." (Interview, 15 March 2026). The survey instrument (distributed to 120 parents, 98 responses received, response rate 81.7%) was reviewed as part of document analysis. Parent O2 supported this: "I am satisfied because my child has changed. He used to skip school, now he is disciplined." (Interview, 20 March 2026).

Monthly Quality Review Meetings: The principal explained: "Every month we evaluate the achievement of quality indicators. If something has not been achieved, we find the root cause and make an improvement plan." (Interview, 5 April 2026). Observation of the monthly quality meeting (2 April 2026) confirmed this pattern. Document analysis of meeting minutes confirmed follow-up actions.

Theme 4: Supporting Factors, Barriers, and Perceived Impacts

Supporting Factors: All participants identified strong leadership commitment, a supportive religious environment, active parent participation, and a clear quality manual as supporting factors. The principal stated: "Without leadership commitment, nothing works. I personally attend the monthly quality meetings and set an example of discipline." (Interview, 5 April 2026). Observation confirmed the principal's active role. The QA coordinator added that the school's location near Islamic boarding schools creates a naturally supportive environment: "The surrounding environment is religious, so students are already accustomed to Islamic values." (Interview, 8 April 2026).

Barriers: Participants identified limited budget, varying teacher competence, and inconsistent parental reinforcement as barriers. The QA coordinator explained: "Funding for the Akhlak Camp program is limited, so its frequency has to be reduced. Also, not all teachers can integrate akhlak into general subjects like mathematics." (Interview, 8 April 2026). Teacher G2 added: "It is difficult when a child is taught honesty at school, but at home parents actually ask the child to lie for family reasons." (Interview, 10 April 2026). Observation of a teacher training session (12 April 2026) confirmed that the school was addressing these barriers through monthly value-based pedagogy workshops.

Perceived Impacts: Most participants reported improved student moral behavior and increased community trust. Teacher G1 reported: "Our graduates are now known in the community for their good manners. Many are accepted into leading Islamic universities not only because of their grades but also because of their akhlak." (Interview, 20 April 2026). Student S3 confirmed personal change: "I used to skip duha prayer. Now I do it regularly because the school makes it a habit. My parents are happy." (Interview, 22 April 2026). Parent O1 stated: "This school has become more trusted. Many parents from outside want to enroll their children because they hear about the character program." (Interview, 25 April 2026). Document analysis of the school's BAN-S/M accreditation report (2025) showed that the school improved its accreditation score from B to A (2023 to 2025), with its highest score in the component "School Culture and Character." This is documented as contextual evidence, not as proof of the management model's effectiveness.

The researcher explicitly sought evidence that contradicted the positive pattern. While most participants expressed satisfaction, two teachers (G1 and G3) noted that implementation was inconsistent across subjects: "Some teachers are very good at integrating akhlak, but others still focus only on cognitive content. It depends on the teacher's understanding." (G1, Interview, 20 April 2026). One student (S4) expressed that peer pressure sometimes conflicted with school values: "Sometimes friends laugh when I try to be honest about small things. But the teacher supports me, so I keep trying." (Interview, 18 April 2026). One parent (O3) noted that the school's moral education was not always reinforced at home: "We are busy working, so sometimes we don't have time to check if our child is applying what is taught at school." (Interview, 22 April 2026). These divergent perspectives provide a balanced representation of participant experiences.

Discussion

This study examined the implementation of *akhlak*-based quality management at MA Al-Falah. Three main findings emerged: (1) *akhlak*-based quality management was operationalized through participatory planning and integrated implementation across instructional, co-curricular, and administrative domains; (2) evaluation and controlling mechanisms combined daily monitoring, moral scoring, and parent feedback in a systematic manner; and (3) strong leadership commitment and a supportive religious environment were perceived as enabling positive impacts on graduate character and school reputation, despite budget and teacher competence constraints.

The first major finding shows that MA Al-Falah integrated *akhlak* values into quality planning through an annual participatory forum and translated them into operational indicators in official documents. This aligns with the concept of value-based Total Quality Management proposed by Salleh et al. (2024), who argued that Islamic educational institutions must embed spiritual values into every stage of the PDCA cycle. However, unlike conventional TQM, which focuses on customer satisfaction and continuous improvement as technical goals (Khan & Ahmed, 2025), this study demonstrates that *amanah*, *shidiq*, and *ihsan* served as both procedural norms and ultimate ends. This finding supports the framework of spiritual leadership in quality management (Hassan & Abdullah, 2023), where leaders' moral example becomes a performance indicator.

Moreover, the participatory nature of planning—involving teachers, students, and parents—reflects *shura* (consultation) as an Islamic management principle (Nasir & Zainal, 2024). Previous research in Malaysian Islamic schools found that top-down quality planning often fails because it ignores local moral contexts (Fauzi & Latif, 2025). In contrast, MA Al-Falah's bottom-up approach ensured that *akhlak* indicators were locally relevant. This contextualization is critical because moral values are not universal abstractions but are lived in specific socio-cultural settings (Wahid & Rosyid, 2023). The integration of *akhlak* into administrative services, particularly financial transparency as a manifestation of *amanah*, aligns with the finding that Islamic schools with value-based financial management enjoy higher stakeholder trust (Hamzah & Yusoff, 2024).

However, the implementation domain revealed uneven teacher competence in integrating *akhlak* into non-religious subjects. This echoes a persistent challenge documented by Suryani and Hidayat (2025), who found that many Islamic school teachers lack pedagogical strategies to connect moral values with science or math content. This study extends that finding by showing that even when teachers are willing, the absence of structured lesson plans and value-based assessment rubrics hinders integration. Therefore, the first major finding contributes empirical evidence that *akhlak*-based quality management is feasible but requires continuous teacher professional development in value pedagogy (Rahman & Ismail, 2024).

The second major finding identified four evaluation mechanisms: daily behavior monitoring, monthly quality meetings, semester moral scores, and annual parent surveys. The use of a simple checklist for daily behavior monitoring aligns with the concept of formative moral assessment proposed by Lickona (2019) and reaffirmed in Islamic education contexts (Mulyadi & Kurniawan, 2025). Unlike summative exams that measure knowledge, daily monitoring captures moral habits (*ta'wid*), which is central to *akhlak* formation (Zain & Omar, 2024). The monthly quality meetings function as a controlling loop that operationalizes *muhasabah* (self-accountability), an Islamic spiritual practice. This finding extends the work of Purnama and Sari (2023), who argued that quality control in Islamic schools often remains administrative; this study shows that MA Al-Falah has transformed it into a reflective, data-driven process.

The semester moral score on report cards is particularly significant because it treats *akhlak* as an academic equal. This challenges the widespread dichotomization of cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes in Indonesian education (Sulaiman & Rohman, 2024). The parent satisfaction survey (78% satisfaction) corroborates earlier findings that value-based quality management increases parental engagement in Islamic schools (Abdullah & Nadzri, 2023). However, a gap remains: the study did not explore whether parents understand how *akhlak* indicators are constructed, a limitation noted in critiques of moral reporting (Yusof & Hashim, 2024).

The monthly quality meetings as a controlling mechanism exemplify the PDCA cycle infused with Islamic ethics. This finding aligns with the SPMI-Islami model, where the "Check" phase includes *muraqabah* (spiritual vigilance) and the "Act" phase includes corrective action (Hidayat & Maulana, 2025). Unlike secular PDCA, which focuses on error correction, MA Al-Falah's approach also emphasizes moral reflection. This supports the argument that Islamic quality assurance must be *taqwa*-oriented, not merely compliance-oriented (Ismail & Che Noh, 2024). Thus, the second major finding reveals a hybrid evaluation system that combines bureaucratic tools with Islamic spiritual practices.

The third major finding identified strong leadership commitment as the primary supporting factor. This is consistent with transformational leadership theory in educational management (Rahim & Talib, 2025). In Islamic contexts, *kepemimpinan qolbu* (heart-based leadership) has been shown to correlate with teacher motivation and institutional quality (Zulkifli & Ahmad, 2024). The principal's personal example of punctuality and honesty operationalizes *uswah hasanah* (exemplary conduct), which the Qur'an (33:21) prescribes as an effective teaching method. A study of Indonesian madrasah principals found that exemplary moral behavior was a stronger predictor of teacher performance than administrative competence (Latif & Wahab, 2023). This study confirms that finding.

The supportive religious environment—proximity to pesantren—represents a contextual advantage. Research on the spatial ecology of Islamic schools demonstrates that madrasahs located near pesantren benefit from a "moral ecosystem" where Islamic ethics are reinforced outside school hours (Nur & Halim, 2025). Barriers such as limited budget and inconsistent parental reinforcement are well-documented in the literature (Rahmat & Sulaiman, 2024; Fadhlullah & Ghani, 2023). However, this study adds the specific barrier of teacher competence in integrating *akhlak* into general subjects, which has received less attention compared to infrastructure or funding.

Alternative explanations for the observed outcomes were considered. The improvement in accreditation from B to A (2023 to 2025) could be attributed to factors other than *akhlak*-based quality assurance, such as improvements in infrastructure or teacher qualifications. Document analysis indicated that the highest score was in "School Culture and Character," suggesting the value-based approach contributed substantively, but this remains an association, not causation. The reported improvement in student moral behavior could reflect social desirability bias in participant responses. Triangulation with observation and documents partially mitigated this risk, but the possibility remains. The positive parent satisfaction survey (78%) could reflect selection bias, though the response rate of 81.7% reduces this concern.

This article makes three bounded contributions. First, empirically, it provides a descriptive account of how one Indonesian Islamic school translated *akhlak* values into quality assurance practices. Unlike previous studies that treat Islamic values as normative principles without clear managerial translation (e.g., Salleh et al., 2024), this study shows how these values become actionable through participatory forums, daily behavior checklists, moral scoring rubrics, and parent feedback loops. Second, it contributes

contextual knowledge from a suburban Indonesian madrasah, enriching the predominantly urban or pesantren-based literature (Fauzi & Latif, 2025). Third, the study advances theoretical integration by demonstrating how Islamic concepts (*shura*, *muhasabah*, *uswah hasanah*, *muraqabah*) can be systematically embedded into the PDCA cycle of quality assurance, contributing to the conceptual development of SPMI-Islami (Hidayat & Maulana, 2025).

For madrasah leaders, the study implies that *akhlak*-based quality assurance requires not only policy documents but also visible moral leadership (*uswah*). For teacher training institutions, it suggests the need for courses on value pedagogy. For policymakers, the study suggests that accreditation instruments could include *akhlak* indicators, though this remains a recommendation, not a proven claim.

Conclusion

This case study examined how *akhlak*-based quality management was implemented at MA Al-Falah, an Islamic senior high school in Indonesia. The findings indicate that Islamic moral values—*amanah*, *shidiq*, and *ihsan*—were operationalized through participatory planning (*shura*), integrated implementation across instructional and administrative domains, and systematic evaluation mechanisms including daily monitoring, monthly review meetings, semester moral assessments, and parent feedback. Strong principal leadership (*uswah hasanah*) and a supportive religious environment were reported as enabling factors, while limited budget and uneven teacher competence were identified as barriers. Participants reported perceived improvements in student moral behavior and community trust; school accreditation improvement from B to A (2023 to 2025) is documented as contextual evidence, not as causal proof.

The study's bounded contribution is threefold. Empirically, it provides a descriptive account of how one Indonesian Islamic school translated *akhlak* values into quality assurance practices. Theoretically, it illustrates the embedding of Islamic concepts (*shura*, *muhasabah*, *uswah hasanah*, *muraqabah*) within the PDCA quality cycle, contributing to the conceptual development of SPMI-Islami. Practically, the findings suggest that madrasah leaders may benefit from explicit moral leadership, teacher training institutions might consider value pedagogy curricula, and accreditation bodies could potentially include *akhlak* indicators in their standards.

This study has several limitations. First, as a single-case study, findings require cautious transferability and are not statistically generalizable. Second, the research period of four months captured only one quality assurance cycle; longer-term sustainability could not be assessed. Third, the study relied on self-reported data; although triangulated with observations and documents, social desirability bias may have influenced some responses. Fourth, the researcher's prior relationships in the region may have introduced bias, though reflexivity and member checking were employed to mitigate this.

Future research should conduct multi-case comparative studies across different types of madrasahs to enhance transferability. Longitudinal tracking of *akhlak* outcomes over multiple years would assess sustainability. Development and validation of an *akhlak* measurement instrument for quality assurance purposes would advance the field. Experimental studies testing the effectiveness of value-based teacher training on student moral development are also recommended.

AI Disclosure

The authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) for language editing, grammar improvement, and readability enhancement during the revision process. The authors reviewed and edited all AI-generated suggestions and take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the final manuscript. No AI tools were used for data analysis, interpretation, or the generation of research findings.

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Author Contributions (CRediT)

CRediT: Ade Nurpriatna: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Project administration. Teguh Hariyanto: Formal analysis, Validation, Visualization, Writing – review & editing. Adi Rosadi: Investigation, Methodology, Writing – review & editing. Muhamad Syamsudin Nurfalah: Supervision, Resources, Writing – review & editing. Zubaidi Wahyono: Supervision, Writing – review & editing, Formal analysis.

Disclosure Statement / Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no potential conflict of interest related to this article. No financial, professional, institutional, personal, or other relationship could reasonably be perceived as influencing the research, interpretation, or publication of this article.

Notes on Contributors

Ade Nurpriatna is a lecturer in Islamic Education Management at STAI Kharisma Cicurug, Sukabumi, Indonesia. He holds a Master's degree in Islamic Education and specializes in madrasah quality assurance and educational leadership. His research interests include quality management in Islamic education, moral education, and institutional transformation.

Teguh Hariyanto is a lecturer at STAI Kharisma Cicurug, Sukabumi, Indonesia. He holds a Master's degree in Islamic Education and focuses on curriculum development and teacher professionalism. His research interests include Islamic education policy, curriculum evaluation, and teacher performance.

Adi Rosadi is a lecturer at STAI Kharisma Cicurug, Sukabumi, Indonesia. He holds a Master's degree in Islamic Education and specializes in school management and educational evaluation. His research interests include educational quality assurance and institutional management.

Muhamad Syamsudin Nurfalah is a lecturer at STAI Kharisma Cicurug, Sukabumi, Indonesia. He holds a Master's degree in Islamic Education and focuses on Islamic education and character development. His research interests include moral education and Islamic pedagogy.

Zubaidi Wahyono is affiliated with the Islamic Studies Program, Faculty of Education, Social Sciences and Islamic Studies, Universiti Muhammadiyah Malaysia. He holds a

Doctorate in Education Management and specializes in comparative Islamic education and institutional transformation. His research interests include Islamic educational leadership, cross-cultural studies, and higher education management.

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