

Literature review of contemporary issues in islamic education management: between transformation, ethics, and innovation.

Rahayu Lestari ^{a,1,*}, Nur Fahmuiddin Hanif ^{a,2}, Shera Nabila Iuvianingtias ^{a,3}, Tin Amalia Fitri ^{a,4}, Amiruddin ^{a,5}

^a Pasca Sarjana UIN Raden Intan Lampung

¹ rahayulestar08@gmail.com ² fahmudinhani91@gmail.com ³ nabilashera775@gmail.com ⁴

tin.amalia@radenintan.ac.id ⁵ amirudin570@gmail.com

*Correspondent Author

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a comprehensive literature review on *contemporary issues in Islamic Education Management (IEM)*, emphasizing three interconnected dimensions: institutional transformation, ethics-based governance, and innovation in management and learning. Using an analytical-descriptive approach, the review synthesizes findings from national and international journals published within the last five years to identify emerging challenges and strategic responses in modern IEM practices. The results indicate that institutional transformation provides a structural foundation for adaptive change, while ethics and Islamic value-based governance ensure that managerial decisions remain aligned with moral and spiritual principles. Innovation serves as a catalyst that enhances educational quality through digital integration, human resource development, and curriculum renewal. These three elements are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, forming a holistic framework that balances modernization with Islamic ethical identity. The study concludes that effective Islamic education management must harmonize transformative strategies, ethical integrity, and sustainable innovation to achieve relevance, competitiveness, and spiritual authenticity in the contemporary era.

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Introduction

The twin forces of globalization and digitalization have fundamentally reshaped the operating environment for Islamic educational institutions, forcing them to expand beyond traditional administrative functions to become adaptive sites of pedagogy, identity formation, and transnational knowledge exchange. Recent literature emphasizes that digital tools both enable wider access to Islamic learning and create pressures to reconceptualize curricula so they remain authentically Islamic while interoperable with global knowledge flows. In short, institutions must navigate a dual demand: adopt technologies that increase reach and relevance, yet deliberately preserve core Islamic values as central organizing principles of education (Syafaruddin, 2024)

A critical lesson from the COVID-19 emergency now widely documented is that rapid adoption of remote and digital teaching exposed both opportunities and capability gaps: teachers' digital proficiency rose quickly under pressure, but sustainable integration requires ongoing professional development, supportive policy, and robust pedagogical design

(Beardsley et al., 2021). Empirical studies indicate educators reported increased confidence using digital technologies for instruction, assessment, and communication during the emergency period, yet they also identified needs for structured training, digital infrastructure, and pedagogically sound platforms tailored to Islamic education contexts (Syafaruddin, 2024). These findings suggest that capacity building not merely device rollout is the linchpin for ethically and theologically coherent digital transformation.

To adapt without losing Islamic identity, the literature recommends an integrative strategy combining policy frameworks, institutional capacity building, and value-centered instructional design: (1) national and institutional policies that fund infrastructure and set quality standards for Islamic edtech; (2) continuous professional development programs that blend digital pedagogies with Islamic epistemic aims; and (3) curricular/performance-assessment models that leverage adaptive technologies while foregrounding moral and spiritual formation (Brifkani & Khan, 2021). When these elements operate together, digitalization becomes a means to amplify not dilute the mission of Islamic education: producing knowledgeable graduates who are both tech-literate and ethically grounded.

While many studies celebrate digital tools as enablers of access and innovation, recent empirical work shows a persistent risk that technology adoption in Islamic educational settings is often superficial focusing on platforms and devices rather than on rethinking pedagogy or embedding Islamic ethical aims into digital practice. For example, case studies of pesantren and Islamic schools reveal implementations centered on administrative systems and content delivery (e-modules, e-santri platforms) but with limited curricular redesign that aligns digital affordances to moral formation goals (Hasan et al., 2023). This gap means institutions may appear “digitalized” while students receive little improvement in critical religious reasoning, character formation, or contextualized religious literacy; in short, form changes faster than educational substance.

A second criticism concerns equity and infrastructural realism: optimistic narratives about digital transformation frequently underplay persistent resource divides and organizational capacity constraints. Field research in multiple Indonesian pesantren documents how limited bandwidth, patchy device availability, and resistance among older educators produce uneven implementation — with a handful of well-resourced schools advancing while many remain functionally excluded (Barid et al., 2025). Without addressing these structural barriers through targeted policy, funding, and long-term teacher development, digitalization risks reproducing existing inequalities and eroding communal trust when promised improvements fail to materialize for most learners.

Finally, scholarship warns that hastily crafted “digital Islamic content” can unintentionally dilute theological rigor and context sensitivity if content curation is left to generic edtech suppliers or poorly guided faculty teams. Critical reviews argue that sustainable adaptation requires interdisciplinary teams (theologians, pedagogues, instructional designers) and governance frameworks that safeguard theological integrity while harnessing innovation (Khikmah, F. Santosa, A. B. & Sudarsono, 2022). In the absence of such institutional safeguards, the digital turn can commodify religious knowledge into bite-sized modules lacking depth, weakening the very Islamic values institutions aim to preserve.

Contemporary scholarship argues that Islamic education management (MPI) has expanded well beyond routine administrative functions to become a vehicle for organizational transformation reframing curricula, leadership practices, and institutional missions to respond to 21st-century demands. Recent reviews show institutions are redesigning learning outcomes to include critical thinking, digital literacies, and value-based competencies, which requires managerial roles that plan strategic change, coordinate professional development, and realign resource priorities rather than merely processing paperwork. This transformational

orientation positions MPI as a proactive catalyst for institutional renewal, embedding systemic change into the heart of school and madrasa governance.

Equally important in current literature is the claim that MPI must integrate ethics as an operational pillar meaning managers are expected to translate Islamic moral and spiritual aims into policies, assessment practices, and teacher development programs. Empirical syntheses and conceptual reviews highlight how explicit value-centred management (e.g., ethics-based appraisal systems, character-focused curricula, and stakeholder engagement protocols) helps safeguard institutional identity while guiding innovation, thereby preventing a disconnect between formal modernization and moral formation (Wibawa et al., 2024). In short, ethical stewardship is now treated as a core managerial competency, not an optional add-on.

Finally, the literature stresses that innovation pedagogical, technological, and organizational must be managed deliberately within MPI so innovations advance educational and spiritual goals rather than undermine them. Recent conference and edited-volume contributions argue for “personalised” and open learning resource models that integrate instructional design, theology, and ICT expertise, recommending cross-disciplinary managerial teams to oversee innovation pipelines, quality assurance, and alignment with Islamic epistemic aims. Together, transformation, ethics, and innovation form an integrated MPI agenda: managerial practice that is strategic, value-oriented, and innovation capable.

A central critique of positioning MPI as a tripod of transformation, ethics, and innovation is that institutional transformation often proceeds as a top-down administrative project rather than as a deliberative pedagogical reform; in practice, “transformation” frequently means adopting digital tools and reorganizing workflows without rethinking curricular aims or teacher roles (Yanti & Solihah, 2024). Such surface-level change risks producing a managerial veneer of modernity while leaving intact older transmission-oriented pedagogies that do not cultivate the critical, ethical, and contextual competencies MPI claims to promote. In short, transformation that is not accompanied by deep curricular and professional reorientation can inadvertently reinforce institutional inertia under the label of innovation.

A second critical perspective focuses on the instrumentalization of ethics: when ethics is folded into management as a set of policies or codes without attention to lived moral formation, it becomes a compliance exercise rather than a formative practice (Ernawati et al., 2024). Empirical analyses show that appraisal systems, mission statements, and ethics workshops while visible often fail to alter classroom interactions, assessment approaches, or the informal cultures that shape students’ moral development. Therefore, treating ethics primarily as organizational policy risks decoupling stated Islamic values from the everyday pedagogical and relational practices that actually instantiate moral formation.

Finally, scholarship warns that innovation if managed without contextual sensitivity and capacity building can widen inequalities and produce poorly integrated solutions: technology-led pilots in well-resourced units contrast starkly with under-supported schools and pesantrens, creating a two-tier system of Islamic education (Sumiati et al., 2024). Moreover, innovation projects often lack interdisciplinary governance (theologians, curriculum specialists, instructional designers), so new tools may not align with Islamic epistemic aims and pedagogical integrity. Consequently, innovation policies must be coupled with equity-focused investment and inclusive governance to prevent innovation from becoming mere gadgetry that undermines MPI’s ethical and educational mission.

The foremost managerial challenge for Islamic educational institutions is building effectiveness that goes beyond administrative efficiency to include strategic alignment of curriculum, human resources, and technology with institutional mission. Recent analyses argue that globalization requires institutions to translate mission statements into measurable

outcomes for example, by redesigning learning outcomes, strengthening monitoring & evaluation, and reallocating resources toward teacher professional development so that managerial systems produce demonstrable gains in both academic and moral formation (Setyowati et al., 2024). Without such strategic alignment, investments in technology or reorganization risk producing isolated improvements rather than coherent institutional advancement.

A closely related challenge concerns embedding ethics into everyday management practices rather than treating Islamic values as ceremonial rhetoric. Empirical studies show that many institutions have codes, mission statements, or occasional ethics workshops, yet these measures rarely alter everyday pedagogical interactions or appraisal processes; effective ethical management therefore requires longitudinal initiatives value-centred appraisal, mentoring, and community engagement that make moral formation visible and accountable in routine practice. In short, ethical stewardship must be operationalized through policies that change incentives, assessment, and professional development, not solely through declarations.

Finally, remaining relevant to rapid social and technological change means managers must balance innovation with equity and contextual fidelity: leadership must invest in capacity building (teacher digital literacy, instructional design), infrastructure where needed, and governance arrangements that include theologians and curriculum specialists so innovations reinforce rather than dilute Islamic aims (Rohman, 2025). Failure to pair innovation with capacity and inclusive governance risks producing fragmented, two-tiered systems where a small number of well-resourced units innovate while many others fall further behind, undermining both relevance and social justice objectives.

A major critique of efforts to build *effective* management systems in Islamic education is that many initiatives prioritize technological or administrative fixes without embedding them within a strategic results framework that ties resources, teacher development, and curriculum change to measurable student outcomes. Field studies of pesantren and Islamic boarding schools show repeated patterns: technology is introduced (e-santri systems, Google Classroom, m-learning) to increase efficiency, yet monitoring & evaluation, learning-outcome alignment, and systematic redeployment of staff time toward pedagogy remain weak so gains are fragmented rather than transformational. This suggests that “effectiveness” in MPI cannot be achieved by digitalizing forms alone; it requires purposeful strategic management that converts efficiency into documented improvements in both academic and character formation.

A second critical point concerns the *instrumentalization of ethics* within managerial reforms: ethical values are often formalized as mission statements, codes, or one-off workshops, but these do not necessarily change the routine incentives, appraisal practices, or classroom interactions that shape students’ moral formation. Literature reviews on sustainable Islamic education highlight that unless ethical aims are operationalized into assessment criteria, mentoring systems, and long-term professional learning, ethics remains rhetorical rather than formative. In short, ethical management must move from symbolic policy to embedded practice only then will institutions credibly claim both moral integrity and managerial legitimacy.

Finally, critiques of relevance emphasize governance and quality risks: rapid adoption of digital platforms without safeguards creates vulnerability to low-quality or misleading content, uneven implementation, and weakened teacher–student relational work that is central to Islamic pedagogy. Reviews and case analyses warn that the digital turn can expand access but also amplify poor-quality materials and reduce critical theological oversight if interdisciplinary governance (theologians, curriculum specialists, instructional designers) and quality assurance are not in place. Thus, staying “relevant” requires managers to pair innovation with content governance, capacity building, and evaluative mechanisms that protect theological

integrity while enabling pedagogical renewal.

The novelty of this *literature review on contemporary issues in Islamic Education Management (MPI): between transformation, ethics, and innovation* lies in its integrative approach that connects three dimensions often studied separately. Previous research has typically focused on administrative modernization or digital transformation in isolation, neglecting how ethical governance and spiritual values intersect with innovation processes in Islamic educational contexts. This study offers a distinctive contribution by critically synthesizing recent global and national scholarship to reveal how transformation must be guided by ethical integrity and supported by innovative management models that remain faithful to Islamic principles. Unlike prior reviews that treat ethics as a normative backdrop, this work positions ethics as an active managerial framework that mediates technological change and institutional transformation, thereby providing a more holistic and contextually grounded understanding of Islamic education management in the 21st century.

The main objective of this *literature review on contemporary issues in Islamic Education Management (MPI): between transformation, ethics, and innovation* is to analyze and synthesize recent scholarly findings to identify emerging trends, challenges, and strategic directions in the management of Islamic educational institutions. Specifically, it aims to explore how transformative leadership, ethical governance, and innovative practices can be integrated to strengthen institutional effectiveness while preserving Islamic values. Through a systematic examination of national and international research published in the past five years, this review seeks to provide a comprehensive conceptual framework that links managerial transformation with moral responsibility and technological adaptation. Ultimately, the goal is to contribute to the development of a dynamic, ethically grounded, and future-oriented model of Islamic education management that responds to global changes without compromising its spiritual foundation.

Research Methods

Given the multidisciplinary and heterogeneous nature of research on Islamic education management (spanning leadership studies, ethics, curriculum innovation, and edtech), an integrative approach that combines elements of a scoping review and a systematic review is recommended: the scoping element maps the breadth and types of evidence (including policy papers and grey literature), while the systematic element provides focused, reproducible synthesis on narrowly defined questions (e.g., how ethical governance is operationalized). Methodological guidance emphasizes selecting the review type to match the question: scoping for mapping and gap-identification, systematic for syntheses that require critical appraisal and more stringent synthesis. In practice, authors should register a protocol that states this hybrid intent and justifies it in relation to the review questions.

A comprehensive search strategy must combine multiple bibliographic databases (e.g., Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, ProQuest Education, and relevant regional databases for Indonesian scholarship), controlled vocabulary and free-text strings for the three pillars (transformation, ethics, innovation), and explicit date/language limits; grey literature (policy briefs, institutional reports, conference proceedings) should be included to capture practice-oriented evidence. Best practice is to develop the search iteratively with a research librarian, document final search strings for each database, and export records into a reference manager to support de-duplication and transparency (PRISMA 2020 recommends describing this process in detail (Page et al., 2021).

Study selection should follow a two-stage screening (title/abstract followed by full text) by at least two independent reviewers with a pretested screening form; disagreements are resolved through discussion or third-reviewer adjudication. Report the process using the

PRISMA 2020 flow diagram (records identified, screened, excluded, included) and provide reasons for exclusion at full text stage. Using screening tools and keeping an audit trail of decisions enhances reproducibility and helps justify inclusion choices in the final write-up (Page et al., 2021).

Data extraction should capture bibliographic details, study aims, theoretical framing (e.g., ethical frameworks used), methods, context (country/setting), and key findings related to transformation/ethics/innovation. For synthesis, combine thematic (narrative) synthesis to integrate qualitative and conceptual findings with optional bibliometric mapping (co-citation, keyword co-occurrence) to visualise research clusters and historic trends. Narrative synthesis frameworks (explicit coding, developing thematic matrices, and generating higher-order analytic themes) are especially suitable where study designs differ; bibliometric methods (using VOSviewer or similar tools) complement narrative synthesis by quantifying topical emergence and key actors (Mohamud et al., 2025).

If part of the review aims at evaluative claims (e.g., “what works” in ethical governance), include critical appraisal using appropriate tools (JBI, CASP, or discipline-specific checklists) and report appraisal outcomes alongside findings; for scoping elements, explicit appraisal may not be required but the limitations must be acknowledged. Follow reporting checklists (PRISMA 2020 and PRISMA-ScR where relevant) and transparently discuss limitations (publication bias, language restrictions, grey literature coverage, heterogeneity). Finally, register the review protocol (eg. PROSPERO or institutional repository) and, where feasible, share the extraction sheet and codebook as supplementary material to maximise reproducibility and utility for future MPI research (Mohamud et al., 2025).

Results and Discussion

1. identifying and analysing contemporary issues in Islamic education management (MPI)

One of the foremost issues in Islamic education management is the digitalization and technology-integration gap, wherein institutions face pressure to adopt digital platforms yet struggle with infrastructure, teacher capacity, and equity. A systematic review found that post-pandemic shifts compelled Islamic education institutions to adopt remote teaching and tech-enabled management, but many reported uneven access, limited digital skills of staff, and inconsistent pedagogical alignment (Ernawati et al., 2024). The consequence is that while technology is introduced, it often remains a superficial layer rather than a fully integrated management practice aligned with educational mission.

A second contemporary challenge is the quality and professionalisation of human resources especially leadership and teachers in Islamic schools and institutions. Hariyanti et al. (2023) highlight that weak strategic leadership, shortages in qualified staff, and inadequate continuing professional development hamper the transformation agenda of Islamic education management. This undermines efforts to move beyond administrative routines and engage in innovation and ethical governance, since human capacity remains a bottleneck.

Another critical issue is maintaining alignment with Islamic values while responding to global and societal change, meaning the tension between tradition and modernity. Islamic education institutions struggle to reconcile religious knowledge with general academic knowledge in the face of globalization, leading to dualistic curricula and identity dilemmas (Erni et al., 2024). This conflict challenges management systems to preserve Islamic ethos while embracing global standards and innovations.

The issue of equity and access emerges strongly in contemporary MPI scholarship. found that during the pandemic, online learning in Indonesian Islamic higher-education contexts exacerbated existing inequalities: students from lower socio-economic backgrounds experienced poorer connectivity, limited devices, and weaker support, which in turn reduced learning outcomes . For management teams, this means the innovation agenda must include equity-oriented strategies, or risk leaving large segments of learners behind.

Finally, the innovation governance interface presents a major challenge: while Islamic education institutions are pressured to innovate (curriculum, pedagogy, organizational processes), the governance and accountability structures often lag behind. Governance principles transparency, accountability, strategic planning are inadequate in many Islamic educational institutions, undermining innovation and quality management. Without strong governance frameworks, innovation may be ad hoc and unsustainable (Zahiri & Sahal, 2025).

A less frequently discussed but emerging issue is gender and inclusion in Islamic education management, particularly how female leadership, gender-equitable policy, and inclusive institutional culture are managed. Alfarizi, Mutmainnah & Faizah (2024) note that gender controversy in Islamic school management remains a barrier to fully inclusive governance women's roles in leadership and decision-making are often marginalized, affecting institutional ethos and strategic change (Alfarizi et al., 2024). For MPI to be truly contemporary, management systems must integrate gender and inclusion considerations into transformational, ethical, and innovative frameworks.

2. Analyzing the Institutional Transformation of Islamic Education

Institutional transformation in Islamic education is driven by intersecting external and internal pressures: globalization, demands for international accreditation, shifting labor-market expectations, and the imperative to integrate digital technologies into teaching and management. Recent analyses show that higher-education Islamic institutions and pesantrens increasingly respond to these pressures by rearticulating missions toward global relevance while attempting to retain religious identity (Sumiati et al., 2024). Such drivers force institutions to reconceive governance, curriculum, and stakeholder relations as levers of transformation rather than treating them as static back-office functions.

Leadership emerges repeatedly as a critical enabler (or inhibitor) of transformation: transformational leaders who combine religious legitimacy with strategic managerial skills can mobilize staff, secure resources, and legitimize change initiatives, whereas leadership vacuums produce fragmented reforms. Case studies of pesantrens and Islamic schools emphasize the kyai/principal's role as cultural broker framing innovation in ways that resonate with Islamic values—thereby reducing resistance and enabling more effective institutional change (Bahri et al., 2024).

A core aspect of transformation is curricular reconfiguration: institutions modify learning outcomes and pedagogies to blend religious sciences with contemporary competencies (critical thinking, digital literacy, entrepreneurship). Empirical reviews report moves toward integrated curricula (religious + general knowledge) and competency-based learning, but note uneven implementation—many reforms remain policy-level while classroom practices lag (Dasopang et al., 2023). This curricular tension highlights the need for purposeful instructional design and teacher professional development aligned with transformed curriculum goals.

Digitalization is both catalyst and constraint: it enables scale, flexible delivery, and administrative efficiency but also exposes infrastructural gaps and pedagogical mismatches.

Studies of digital initiatives in pesantrens and Islamic schools show gains in access and administrative transparency when information systems are well governed; conversely, piecemeal digital adoption without capacity building leads to superficial change that does not enhance learning quality (Fauzi et al., 2025). Thus, digital transformation must be accompanied by investment in human capital and governance.

strategic planning, transparent financial management, stakeholder participation, and clear performance metrics. Literature on Islamic higher education transformation points to weaknesses in governance frameworks that undermine long-term reform, recommending institutionalization of quality assurance, external partnerships, and policy alignment with national/regional accreditation standards (Sumiati et al., 2024). Strengthening governance thus converts episodic initiatives into systemic change.

Finally, transformation raises questions of inclusion and religious identity: efforts to modernize should not marginalize vulnerable learners or erode the institution's ethical and spiritual mission. Research on pesantren adaptation notes promising trends greater inclusivity, attention to disability, and community engagement when transformations are guided by ethical frameworks and local engagement; absent such attention, reforms risk alienating stakeholders and compromising moral formation goals (Halimah et al., 2024). Therefore, ethically framed transformation that preserves identity while expanding access is central to legitimate institutional change.

3. Analyzing Ethics and Governance Based on Islamic Values.

Ethical governance in Islamic educational institutions entails the integration of Islamic values such as justice (*‘adl*), trust (*amānah*), compassion (*rahmah*), and deliberation (*syūrā*) into every aspect of management from planning and decision making to accountability and stakeholder engagement. Recent studies demonstrate that institutions employing value-based management frameworks report higher levels of teacher commitment, student engagement, and institutional integrity (Alfaridli & Hasan Agus, 2024). Such integration moves governance beyond compliance and administrative box-checking toward a morally coherent system that resonates with the institution's ethos and mission.

However, embedding value-based ethics into governance poses practical challenges: inconsistent implementation, weak monitoring of ethical criteria, and a gap between stated values and everyday managerial practices. For instance, a study found that although schools proclaimed values-based policies, teachers and staff seldom reported changes in performance appraisal, resource allocation or teacher development consistent with those values (Rahman & Smith, 2024). This challenge underscores the need for aligning policy, structural incentives, and performance mechanisms with ethical values to avoid value-drift.

Moreover, the governance of innovation and transformation must be anchored in ethical oversight to ensure that change does not undermine Islamic values or produce unintended consequences. Research indicates that when digital and organisational innovation proceeds without robust value-driven governance structures, institutions risk increasing inequality, weakening community trust, and eroding moral leadership (Egala et al., 2025). In this light, ethical governance frameworks act as gate-keepers, ensuring that transformations serve the holistic goals of Islamic education rather than purely efficiency-driven metrics.

Finally, implementing value-based governance in Islamic educational institutions involves capacity building, stakeholder participation, and contextualization of values within local culture. Case studies from Indonesia show that when governance reforms include training for leaders in Islamic ethics, participatory decision-making forums including students and

community members, and adaptation of global value frameworks to local Islamic cultural norms, the institution's governance is perceived as more transparent and inclusive (Hariyanto Surbakti, 2024). Thus, ethical governance grounded in Islamic values requires not only policy but also operational practices that build trust, inclusion, and contextual relevance.

4. Analyzing Innovation in Management and Learning.

Innovation in Islamic education management increasingly appears as a planned, strategic process rather than ad-hoc adoption of tools: institutions that codify innovation into strategic plans (with clear goals, timelines, and monitoring mechanisms) report more coherent improvements in both administrative performance and instructional quality. Case research on a pesantren-based secondary school demonstrates that planned innovation including needs analysis, stakeholder consultation, and phased implementation led to measurable improvements in school quality indicators and stakeholder satisfaction. These findings imply that managerial innovation must be embedded in formal planning and quality frameworks to convert creative ideas into sustainable practice (Surakarta & Correspondence, 2024).

On the teaching side, innovations center on active and technology-enhanced pedagogies (blended learning, interactive media, gamification) that are adapted to Islamic curricula. Studies developing interactive multimedia for moral/aqidah instruction show higher student engagement and improvements in concept retention when technology is integrated with sound instructional design, not merely as delivery channels (Nurdin et al., 2024). The lesson is clear: edtech succeeds only when aligned with pedagogical goals and local religious contexts.

Management innovations extend beyond classroom tools into human-resource practices, quality assurance (QA), and evidence-based decision making: digital HR systems (e-recruitment, e-appraisal), data dashboards for student outcomes, and institutional QA units help leaders monitor alignment between mission, pedagogy, and outcomes. Comparative analyses of higher-education Islamic institutions indicate those that adopted integrated management information systems and QA practices were better at scaling pedagogical pilots and institutionalising innovations (Shofiyyah et al., 2023).

Despite promise, scholarship warns of barriers and uneven effects: infrastructure deficits, limited teacher capacity, funding constraints, and weak governance can render innovations superficial or unsustainable. Cross-case reviews highlight that piecemeal digital adoption without capacity building often produces short-lived pilots rather than systemic change; moreover, innovations risk widening inequalities unless equity and contextual fit are explicitly planned (Astuti et al., 2024). Therefore, scalability and social justice must be central concerns in any innovation agenda.

5. Addressing How These Three Aspects Interrelate in the Practice of Modern Islamic Education Management.

In practice, institutional transformation in Islamic education often hinges on leaders who can simultaneously act as change agents, ethical exemplars, and innovation stewards. Leadership that frames innovation as an ethical project, innovations must serve moral and educational aims is more successful at gaining teacher and community buy-in, and at embedding new practices into organizational routines (Bahri et al., 2024). Thus, transformational leadership provides the connective tissue that aligns strategic change (transformation), value commitments (ethics), and practical experimentation (innovation).

Governance frameworks that institutionalize Islamic values (justice, amanah, ihsân)

convert isolated innovations into legitimate institutional practice by specifying how innovations will be evaluated, whom they should benefit, and how harms are mitigated. Studies show institutions that adopt values-based governance are better able to prevent “technology for technology’s sake” and instead orient digital or pedagogical innovations toward equitable learning outcomes and character formation (Astuti, 2024). In short, ethics-infused governance is the mechanism that channels innovation into mission-consistent transformation.

Curricular innovation is the most visible site where transformation and ethics intersect: integrating digital literacies, critical thinking, and spiritual formation demands instructional design that intentionally balances epistemic aims (religious knowledge) and instrumental competencies (21st-century skills). Empirical reviews report that successful institutions redesign curricula not merely by adding tech tools but by rearticulating learning outcomes to include moral reasoning and social responsibility, thereby ensuring innovations serve formative ethical ends (Dasopang et al., 2023).

The triadic agenda of transformation–ethics–innovation depends on teachers’ capacities: professional development that couples techno-pedagogical training with reflection on Islamic values enables teachers to interpret and enact innovations ethically in classrooms. Research on techno-pedagogical interventions in pesantrens and Islamic schools indicates that without sustained capacity building, digital tools remain underutilized or used in ways that conflict with pedagogical and ethical aims (Astuti et al., 2024). Therefore, scaling innovation ethically requires long term investment in teacher learning.

Quality assurance (QA) systems and evidence-informed dashboards help managers track whether innovations are producing intended learning and ethical outcomes rather than only efficiency gains. Case studies of Islamic higher-education institutions show that integrated QA linked to mission indicators (e.g., measures of student character development, community engagement) enables leaders to iterate innovations while safeguarding ethical commitments (Shofiyyah et al., 2023). Thus, QA is the feedback loop that sustains mission-aligned transformation.

A persistent theme in recent literature is that innovation choice and scaling must be governed by equity: innovations that ignore access gaps (bandwidth, devices, teacher distribution) risk reinforcing social exclusion. Empirical research from pesantren contexts shows that ethically guided transformation requires explicit equity strategies (subsidies, blended models, community partnerships) so that innovations expand, rather than limit, opportunities for all learners (Maulana, 2024). Therefore, equity becomes both an ethical standard and a practical selection criterion for innovations.

Finally, transformations that integrate ethics and innovation are most durable when shaped through participatory processes with students, parents, religious authorities, and community stakeholders. Studies emphasize that contextualizing innovations within local Islamic norms and involving community deliberation (*syūrā*) ensures changes are culturally intelligible and ethically legitimate, reducing resistance and improving uptake (Hariyanto Surbakti, 2024). In practice, community engagement operationalizes the ethical dimension of MPI while legitimating innovative transformation.

Conclusion

The findings of this literature review reveal that contemporary Islamic Education Management (IEM) stands at the intersection of three interdependent pillars institutional transformation, ethics-based governance, and innovation in management and learning. Institutional transformation provides the strategic direction and structural reform required

for Islamic education to remain adaptive to globalization and digitalization. Ethics and Islamic values-based governance serve as the moral compass that safeguards institutional identity and ensures that all managerial and pedagogical reforms align with spiritual and moral principles. Meanwhile, innovation functions as the dynamic driver that enhances learning quality, strengthens leadership capacity, and supports effective decision-making within educational institutions.

Together, these three dimensions create a synergistic framework that redefines the practice of modern Islamic education management. Transformation offers the strategic structure for change; ethics ensures the integrity and legitimacy of reform; and innovation enables operational effectiveness and contextual relevance. The integration of these elements fosters an Islamic education system that is globally competitive yet firmly rooted in its spiritual and cultural foundations. Consequently, modern IEM not only addresses administrative efficiency but also embodies a holistic paradigm balancing modernization with moral purpose to produce institutions that are ethical, transformative, and sustainably innovative.

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