

REVOLUTIONIZING MANAGEMENT IN ISLAMIC UNIVERSITIES: ADDRESSING CONTROVERSIES, CHANGE, AND EMERGING TRENDS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the transformation of management practices in Islamic universities, focusing on the challenges, controversies, and emerging trends in the post-pandemic era. The research investigates how Islamic universities adapt to evolving educational demands while preserving their traditional values. The study employs a qualitative case study approach, examining leadership strategies, curriculum innovations, and organizational changes at Islamic universities. Key findings reveal that these institutions are increasingly embracing digitalization, curriculum restructuring, and more inclusive governance practices. However, they face significant challenges, including balancing traditional religious teachings with modern academic requirements and managing financial sustainability. The research provides insights into the dynamic relationship between leadership, management, and academic performance, offering recommendations for enhancing governance in Islamic higher education institutions. The study concludes by highlighting the need for a comprehensive management framework that can bridge the gap between tradition and innovation in Islamic universities.

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INTRODUCTION

The management of Islamic universities is an issue of increasing importance in today's rapidly changing educational landscape. Islamic higher education institutions, particularly in Indonesia and other Muslim-majority countries, are facing numerous challenges, including the need for modernization and innovation while maintaining their religious and cultural foundations. The post-pandemic era has further amplified these challenges, as universities are required to adopt digital platforms and flexible learning models to remain relevant. However, the integration of

modern management strategies with traditional Islamic values remains controversial. This research is crucial because it examines how Islamic universities can navigate these complex dynamics, transforming their management practices to ensure academic excellence, spiritual development, and societal relevance. By addressing these issues, the study contributes to the improvement of management practices within Islamic higher education and offers valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and administrators.

Previous studies have examined various aspects of Islamic higher education management, with a focus on curriculum development, teaching methodologies, and the integration of Islamic principles with modern academic practices. For instance, research has explored the role of Islamic universities in fostering a balance between academic excellence and spiritual development (Lavigne, 2020). Other studies have analyzed the use of digital technologies in enhancing educational delivery (Rahman & Yusuf, 2021). However, there is a gap in understanding the specific challenges faced by Islamic universities in revolutionizing their management structures to align with contemporary trends while preserving their religious values. Additionally, the impact of emerging global educational trends, such as the increased use of technology and the need for inclusivity and diversity, has not been thoroughly explored in the context of Islamic higher education institutions. This paper aims to fill these gaps by providing a comprehensive analysis of these issues.

This research aims to address the following key questions: How can Islamic universities manage the balance between modern educational trends and traditional Islamic values? What are the emerging trends in the management of Islamic universities, and how can these be effectively implemented? What are the controversies surrounding the management of these institutions, and what transformations are needed to meet the challenges posed by globalization and technological advancements? The study will also explore the role of digital tools, flexible learning environments, and student-centered approaches in transforming the management practices of Islamic universities. By answering these questions, this research will provide actionable insights into how Islamic universities can evolve without compromising their core religious principles.

Preliminary findings suggest that while Islamic universities face significant challenges in integrating modern management practices, they also have unique opportunities for transformation. The key to success lies in embracing emerging trends such as digitalization and inclusivity while ensuring that the core Islamic values remain at the heart of the institution's mission. The research

indicates that effective leadership, strategic curriculum development, and a clear vision for the future are essential for navigating this transformation. Moreover, collaboration with other educational institutions and the private sector can offer innovative solutions to the challenges faced by Islamic universities. This study highlights that, rather than viewing change as a threat to tradition, Islamic universities can revolutionize their management by integrating modern practices with their religious foundations to better serve their students and communities in the 21st century.

RESEARCH METHOD

The unit of analysis in this research is the management practices at Universitas KH. Achmad Muzakki Syah Jember, a leading Islamic university located in East Java, Indonesia. This university has been selected as the case study due to its evolving approach to integrating modern management practices while maintaining its Islamic educational values. The research adopts a qualitative approach, using a case study design to deeply explore the transformation of management practices within this specific context. This approach is chosen to understand the complexities and dynamics of Islamic higher education institutions in the face of contemporary challenges. The case study design allows for an in-depth analysis of the university's policies, practices, and the responses of its stakeholders (administrators, faculty, and students) to the evolving educational trends and technological advancements. This research aims to provide insights into the impact of these changes on the institution's mission and vision.

The sources of information for this research are key stakeholders at Universitas KH. Achmad Muzakki Syah Jember, which include the Rector, Vice Rectors, lecturers, and students. These individuals are chosen because they represent the core components of the university's management and educational system. The Rector and Vice Rectors provide insight into the strategic planning, decision-making processes, and challenges faced by the university's leadership. Lecturers offer perspectives on how changes in management practices affect teaching and academic delivery, while students provide feedback on how these changes impact their learning experiences and overall satisfaction. This diverse range of informants ensures a comprehensive view of the university's management practices, as well as the transformations occurring within the institution. Their experiences and perspectives will serve as valuable data for analyzing the effectiveness of the university's management adaptations.

Data for this research will be collected through a combination of observations, interviews, and document analysis. Observations will be conducted to gain a first-hand understanding of the daily operations and management practices at the university. Researchers will attend faculty meetings, academic sessions, and institutional events to observe interactions between administrators, faculty, and students, as well as the implementation of management strategies. In-depth interviews will be conducted with key informants, including the Rector, Vice Rectors, selected lecturers, and students, to capture their personal insights and experiences regarding the management practices at the university. These interviews will be semi-structured, allowing for flexibility in exploring specific issues. Additionally, relevant university documents, such as strategic plans, policies, and annual reports, will be analyzed to understand the formal management structures and their alignment with emerging trends. This multi-method approach ensures a rich and comprehensive data set.

The collected data will undergo a systematic analysis process. Initially, data reduction will be conducted to filter out irrelevant information and focus on the key themes related to management practices and transformation. This process involves organizing the data into manageable categories, based on the research questions. Next, the data will be displayed through thematic charts, matrices, and diagrams to visually represent patterns, trends, and relationships between different elements of the management practices at the university. Verification of the data will be carried out by cross-checking interview transcripts with observations and document analysis, ensuring consistency and reliability. For the analytical methods, content analysis, discourse analysis, and interpretive analysis will be employed. Content analysis will be used to examine the frequency and significance of certain themes within the collected data. Discourse analysis will help identify how language and communication in the university reflect its management and organizational culture. Interpretive analysis will allow for deeper insights into the underlying meanings and implications of the data, focusing on the motivations, beliefs, and strategies that shape the management practices.

The qualitative research approach and case study design offer several advantages in studying the management of Islamic higher education institutions. This approach provides a rich, contextual understanding of the processes, practices, and challenges faced by universities, making it suitable for examining the complex dynamics of Islamic universities. However, this methodology also presents challenges, including the potential for researcher bias and the difficulty of generalizing

the findings to other institutions. To address these challenges, the researcher will take steps to ensure objectivity, such as using triangulation across different data sources (observations, interviews, and documents). Additionally, the semi-structured interview format allows for flexibility in exploring different perspectives, which helps mitigate bias. The focus on a single institution, while limiting generalizability, provides an in-depth examination of the specific issues faced by Islamic universities in managing contemporary educational trends. This focused approach enables a detailed exploration of the intersection between tradition and modernity in Islamic higher education management.

RESULT

In the interviews conducted with key figures from the university, including the Rector, Vice Rectors, lecturers, and students, several themes emerged regarding the management transformation in Islamic universities. A recurring point across all interviews was the university's focus on balancing traditional Islamic values with the adoption of modern management practices. The majority of respondents noted that the university had made significant efforts to implement more inclusive, technology-driven processes while still ensuring that the Islamic principles underlying the institution were upheld. The Rector emphasized the importance of aligning academic structures with changing educational demands, particularly post-pandemic. Meanwhile, faculty members expressed concerns about the adaptation to online learning models and how it affected the depth of student engagement in the traditional Islamic curriculum. Students, on the other hand, noted an increasing desire for more flexible, student-centered approaches in the educational system.

The data visualized from the interviews reveals a clear pattern: a clash between modernizing efforts and preserving traditional values. The university's management is caught in a balancing act, navigating both internal and external pressures. One notable trend is the desire for digital transformation, especially in response to the pandemic's impact. However, a significant portion of the teaching staff is hesitant to adopt new technological tools, citing concerns about diluting the authenticity of the Islamic educational experience. This hesitation stems from a deeply ingrained culture of traditionalism, which prioritizes face-to-face teaching and values direct engagement with students. The students' perspectives, however, reflect a more progressive outlook, emphasizing the need for more interactive and flexible learning environments. This divide between

administrators, educators, and students suggests an ongoing transformation in the management practices, albeit one that has not been universally accepted.

The observed patterns stem from the historical and cultural context of Islamic universities, where the integration of modern practices into a traditional framework has always been challenging. Islamic educational institutions have long been characterized by rigid pedagogical structures that prioritize the transmission of knowledge through face-to-face interactions, often with little deviation from established methods. The recent push towards digitalization in response to the pandemic has forced a shift in these practices, but not without resistance. This resistance can be attributed to fears of eroding the values that define Islamic education. Additionally, the differing attitudes between faculty members and students reflect the generational gap in adopting new technologies. While older educators are more reluctant to embrace change, students, who are digital natives, have become accustomed to flexible learning environments and are more open to adopting digital tools. This generational difference further complicates the university's efforts to implement comprehensive management changes.

Observations conducted at the university highlighted the ongoing tension between traditional and modern management practices. During faculty meetings and administrative discussions, it was clear that there was a push for innovation, especially in curriculum design and teaching methodologies. However, this innovation was often met with resistance, especially from those who were more aligned with the traditional pedagogical methods. Observations of student behavior indicated that while many students were enthusiastic about the integration of technology, others expressed frustration with the slow pace of change. In classrooms, lecturers were observed using a mix of traditional teaching methods, such as lectures and discussions, alongside occasional use of technology, such as online resources and digital presentations. The slow integration of technology reflects the broader challenge of modernizing management practices while retaining the integrity of Islamic educational values.

The data visualized from the observations suggests that the university is in a state of transitional inertia. There is a clear divide between those advocating for change and those favoring continuity. The faculty, who have been accustomed to traditional methods of teaching and learning, seem to approach technological integration with caution. This is reflected in the gradual implementation of online tools, which are often only used as supplementary resources rather than central components of the curriculum. In contrast, students' enthusiasm for technology suggests a

mismatch between their expectations for a more modern, flexible educational experience and the reality of what is currently offered. The observation data also highlights a lack of comprehensive professional development for educators to equip them with the skills necessary for fully integrating technology into their teaching. The university's management practices thus remain in a state of flux, with no clear path forward yet fully realized.

The patterns observed in this phase are likely due to a combination of institutional culture and the broader educational climate in which the university operates. The Islamic university's commitment to preserving traditional values often creates friction when attempting to introduce modern practices, such as online learning or digital management tools. This resistance is rooted in a fear that the essence of Islamic education will be compromised if it becomes too aligned with secular or Western educational models. Furthermore, the lack of adequate support structures for educators, including professional development programs focused on technology integration, contributes to the slow pace of change. The generational divide between students and faculty also plays a significant role. While students are familiar with technology and demand more interactive learning experiences, older faculty members, who may lack confidence in using digital tools, are hesitant to embrace these changes. This tension between tradition and modernity is a critical challenge in Islamic university management.

The documentation analysis focused on the university's official records, reports, and behavioral data of students, which included attendance records, performance assessments, and feedback from surveys on teaching methods. One of the key findings was the increasing interest in extracurricular activities related to digital literacy, which students were actively engaging with outside of formal classes. The data also showed a significant rise in the use of online platforms for accessing learning resources, though the main teaching still occurred through traditional face-to-face methods. Additionally, records revealed that students had mixed opinions on the effectiveness of the blended learning approach, with some praising the flexibility it offered, while others noted that it sometimes lacked depth compared to in-person learning. The documentation also reflected growing support from the administration for incorporating technology, though the pace of implementation remained slow.

The documentation reveals that there is a growing recognition among students and faculty of the importance of integrating technology into the university's educational practices. Students' active engagement with digital literacy programs and the use of online platforms for learning demonstrate

a desire for more interactive and flexible learning experiences. However, the documentation also reveals that traditional teaching methods still dominate, particularly in the classroom. This creates a disconnect between the university's management efforts to modernize and the actual experiences of students and faculty. The data suggests that while there is a shift towards incorporating more technology, this process is gradual and somewhat fragmented, with varying levels of enthusiasm and support among different stakeholders. The documentation also underscores the importance of clear communication and a cohesive strategy for integrating technology, which appears to be lacking in the current management practices.

The patterns identified in the documentation can be explained by the gradual process of institutional adaptation to technological changes. The mixed reactions from students regarding the effectiveness of blended learning are indicative of the challenges universities face when attempting to implement new teaching methods. While some students appreciate the flexibility and accessibility that technology offers, others feel that it compromises the depth of their learning experience. This tension can be attributed to the fact that traditional teaching methods are still deeply embedded in the university's culture, and shifting away from these methods requires time, resources, and a shift in mindset. Furthermore, the slow pace of technology integration in the classroom can be attributed to the lack of infrastructure and support for both students and faculty. The university's management is aware of these challenges but has yet to fully address them in a systematic and strategic way.

DISCUSSION

The interviews conducted with key figures at Islamic universities indicate a significant shift in how the management is approaching educational transformations, especially in the context of post-pandemic realities. The most pressing implication is that, while these changes are necessary, there remains resistance within faculty to fully embrace them. Faculty members, accustomed to traditional pedagogies, are cautious about integrating digital technologies into their curricula. This resistance presents both a dysfunction and a function of the management process. On one hand, it highlights the difficulties of modernizing long-established systems; on the other, it reveals a certain loyalty to maintaining the integrity of the Islamic educational framework. This duality presents an ongoing challenge for university management. As universities attempt to implement digital systems, they must address the underlying cultural conservatism that can obstruct the adoption of

transformative practices. This tension will inevitably shape the success or failure of curriculum reforms in Islamic higher education (Aydın & Ayvaz, 2020; Zaman, 2021). Resistance from faculty, while grounded in a commitment to tradition, is a critical barrier to the successful integration of modern technologies into Islamic higher education curricula.

The resistance to adopting digital technologies observed during the interviews can be attributed to a variety of factors, primarily cultural and structural. The deep-rooted adherence to traditional teaching methods within Islamic educational institutions serves as a major structural barrier. Faculty members have long been accustomed to face-to-face pedagogies and perceive technological changes as a threat to the depth of Islamic education. Additionally, the lack of sufficient training and resources for educators to adapt to online learning platforms contributes to this reluctance. As a result, even as the global educational landscape shifts towards more flexible, technology-driven approaches, Islamic universities are confronted with a structural lag in implementing these changes. This failure to adapt quickly leads to missed opportunities for improving educational delivery, especially in a post-pandemic world where digital competency is increasingly critical (Güler et al., 2020; El-Din & Nassar, 2022). The structural and cultural factors, including a lack of proper training, are the primary causes of resistance to digital integration in Islamic universities, delaying necessary educational reforms.

Observations of classroom dynamics at the university reveal that while there is an effort to blend traditional and modern pedagogies, the lack of coordination between the two creates confusion and inefficiency in the learning process. Students often find themselves shifting between face-to-face lectures and online assignments, leading to a fragmented learning experience. This inconsistency in teaching approaches not only disrupts student engagement but also highlights a dysfunction in the curriculum management process. The university's attempts to innovate are hindered by inconsistent application of technology, reflecting a lack of coherent strategy in integrating modern teaching methods. For management, this fragmentation is a significant challenge, as it diminishes the effectiveness of both traditional and digital learning strategies. There is a clear need for a more unified approach to curriculum integration that aligns technology with the university's core educational values (Kaur et al., 2020; Hussein et al., 2022). The observed inconsistencies in blending traditional and modern teaching approaches underscore the need for a more coordinated strategy for integrating digital tools into the curriculum.

The inconsistencies observed between traditional and digital teaching methods can largely be attributed to a lack of strategic planning and insufficient support systems for faculty and students. While the university leadership recognizes the importance of digital transformation, the absence of a clear framework for integrating technology into the curriculum leaves room for discrepancies in implementation. Faculty members are often left to navigate this transition on their own, leading to varying levels of success in adopting new methods. Furthermore, students, accustomed to a more conventional educational structure, face difficulties in adapting to the hybrid model. The slow pace of faculty training and the absence of a unified vision for digital integration exacerbate these challenges, reinforcing the fragmentation in teaching methods (Aziz & Al-Hussein, 2020; Al-Qudah et al., 2022). The lack of clear strategic direction and inadequate support for faculty in digital transformation are significant factors contributing to inconsistencies in teaching practices.

The documentation of student learning outcomes reveals that students are actively engaging with digital resources, but their performance varies significantly based on their exposure to technology. Those who have better access to digital tools tend to perform better in assignments and exams, while students with limited access or skills in technology struggle more. This disparity highlights a function and dysfunction in the curriculum management process. On one hand, the increased use of digital tools improves student engagement and performance. On the other hand, the lack of equal access to these tools leads to unequal learning outcomes, which raises questions about the university's responsibility in ensuring equitable access to resources. This issue of digital equity must be addressed for curriculum reforms to be truly inclusive and effective (Lee et al., 2021; Sulieman & Zain, 2020). The documentation reveals that unequal access to digital resources significantly affects student learning outcomes, necessitating a more equitable approach to technology integration in the curriculum.

The disparity in student performance can be explained by several structural factors, primarily the unequal distribution of technological resources and digital literacy skills. While some students have access to high-quality digital tools, others face significant barriers such as unreliable internet access, lack of personal devices, or limited exposure to digital learning platforms. This divide can be traced back to broader socio-economic inequalities that affect students' ability to fully engage with the university's hybrid learning model. Additionally, the lack of digital literacy programs for students compounds these issues, as many students are not equipped to effectively use the tools

available to them. The university's failure to address these systemic inequities further exacerbates the digital divide in learning outcomes (Saleh et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2021). Structural inequities in access to technology and digital literacy programs are the root causes of performance disparities, calling for a more inclusive approach to technology integration in Islamic universities.

CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this study is that Islamic universities are undergoing significant transformations in their management structures, driven by the need to address contemporary challenges. This includes reconciling traditional values with the demands of modern education and addressing issues such as digital transformation, curriculum innovation, and organizational flexibility. The research highlights the importance of leadership in fostering these changes, with an emphasis on collaboration between university administrators, faculty, and students. The study underscores the need for a dynamic management approach to navigate the evolving landscape of higher education.

The strength of this research lies in its contribution to the academic understanding of Islamic university management by introducing fresh perspectives on how traditional institutions can embrace change. The study utilizes a qualitative case study approach to explore this transformation, offering new insights into the relationship between leadership, organizational change, and emerging educational trends. This research advances the discourse on higher education management in Islamic universities, providing valuable guidance for policymakers, educators, and administrators.

However, this study also has limitations. The research was conducted at a single university, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the focus on a specific context may not fully capture the diversity of challenges and opportunities faced by Islamic universities across different regions. Future research could expand the scope by including multiple universities or by exploring the impact of different management models on student outcomes and institutional sustainability.

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