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TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT AS A STRATEGY TO IMPROVE THE COMPETITIVENESS OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION AT MI TERPADU AL-FALAH JEPARA

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ABSTRACTS

This study examines the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) as a strategy to improve the competitiveness of Islamic education at MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected from 12 informants, including the principal, teachers, educational staff, and parent representatives, through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, supported by source and technique triangulation to ensure data validity. The findings indicate that the implementation of TQM principles—such as continuous improvement, involvement of all institutional components, and customer focus—has been effectively integrated with Islamic values, including amanah, ihsan, istiqamah, and ta'awun. These principles are realized through regular academic supervision, continuous teacher competency development, strengthening of religious culture, and open communication with parents. The implementation of TQM has contributed to improvements in learning quality, teacher professionalism, service effectiveness, public trust, and increased student enrollment, which collectively strengthen the institution's competitiveness. The novelty of this study lies in its empirical evidence of how TQM can be systematically adapted within an Islamic elementary school context by integrating modern quality management practices with Islamic organizational values. Practically, the findings provide strategic insights for Islamic education managers in developing sustainable quality improvement programs while maintaining Islamic identity in an increasingly competitive educational environment.

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A. INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the main pillars in building a nation's civilization. The quality of education provided by educational institutions plays a crucial role in determining a nation's ability to face increasingly complex global challenges. In the context of Islamic education, these challenges become more demanding because Islamic educational institutions are required not only to produce academically competent graduates but also to develop individuals with strong religious character, moral integrity, and adaptability to the rapid development of science and technology. Therefore, improving the quality of Islamic education has become an unavoidable necessity.

Along with the increasing public demand for high-quality educational services, Islamic educational institutions are required to implement management systems that ensure continuous quality improvement. One management approach that has been widely adopted to enhance organizational quality is Total Quality Management (TQM). Although originally developed in the industrial and business sectors, TQM has been extensively adapted in the field of education due to its principles emphasizing continuous improvement, the involvement of all organizational components, effective leadership, and a strong focus on customer satisfaction. In the educational context, customers are not limited to students but also include parents, communities, and other stakeholders.

The implementation of TQM in Islamic education is highly relevant to Islamic values. Core TQM principles such as continuous improvement, teamwork, and customer focus are closely aligned with Islamic values, including *ihsan* (excellence), *istiqamah* (consistency), *amanah* (responsibility), and *ta'awun* (cooperation). Therefore, the application of TQM in Islamic educational institutions should not be viewed as a concept that contradicts Islamic teachings, but rather as an actualization of Islamic values within modern management practices.

However, empirical realities indicate that not all Islamic educational institutions are able to implement TQM optimally. Many institutions still face various challenges, such as bureaucratic and administrative management styles, limited human resources with sufficient understanding of quality management concepts, the absence of sustainable evaluation systems, and weak organizational cultures that do not fully

support quality improvement. As a result, quality improvement efforts often tend to be partial, unmeasurable, and difficult to sustain in the long term. These conditions ultimately affect the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions amid increasingly intense competition with both general and other Islamic schools.

Previous studies have discussed the implementation of Total Quality Management in educational settings. However, most of these studies focus on general education institutions or higher education, while empirical research on the implementation of TQM in Islamic basic education institutions, particularly Islamic elementary schools (*madrasah ibtidaiyah*), remains limited. Moreover, studies that explicitly examine the integration of TQM principles with Islamic values in strengthening institutional competitiveness are still relatively scarce. This situation indicates the existence of a research gap that needs further investigation.

Based on this background, the present study focuses on the implementation of Total Quality Management as a strategy to enhance the competitiveness of Islamic education at MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara, an Islamic elementary school that integrates the national curriculum with the strengthening of Islamic values and *pesantren*-based culture. This research is important to provide empirical evidence on how TQM principles are implemented within the context of Islamic education and how they contribute to improving service quality and institutional competitiveness. The objectives of this study are as follows:

To analyze the implementation of Total Quality Management principles at MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara.

To examine the impact of Total Quality Management implementation on enhancing the competitiveness of Islamic education at MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara.

To identify the supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of Total Quality Management at MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara.

Thus, this study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of Islamic education quality management studies and practically to provide guidance for Islamic education managers in designing and implementing sustainable quality improvement strategies grounded in Islamic values.

B. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design conducted at MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara, an Islamic elementary school that has implemented quality improvement initiatives based on Total Quality Management (TQM) principles. The qualitative case study approach was selected to obtain an in-depth understanding of the processes, strategies, and contextual dynamics involved in the implementation of TQM within an Islamic educational institution.

The research participants consisted of 12 informants, including the madrasah principal, vice principals, teachers, educational staff, and representatives of parents. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, based on their roles, responsibilities, and direct involvement in quality management and educational service delivery at the madrasah.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observations, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted to explore participants' perspectives and experiences related to the implementation of TQM, quality improvement practices, and institutional competitiveness. Observations focused on learning activities, academic supervision, management practices, religious culture, and interactions among school stakeholders. Document analysis included institutional documents such as vision and mission statements, quality standards, standard operating procedures (SOPs), accreditation reports, and internal evaluation records.

Data analysis was carried out using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which involves three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the data, this study applied source triangulation and technique triangulation, as well as member checking to confirm the accuracy of the findings.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process. All participants provided informed consent prior to data collection, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, and the collected data were used solely for academic and research purposes.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Overview of Alfalah Integrated Islamic Elementary School in Jepara

MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara is an Islamic elementary school under the auspices of the Al-Falah Bakalan Jepara Foundation. As part of the Islamic education ecosystem in Jepara, this madrasah provides focused, systematic, and continuous educational services for students at the elementary level. The position of MI Terpadu Al-Falah as a formal institution based on Islamic values makes it not only a place for the transfer of knowledge, but also a center for the development of students' morals and character from an early age.

This institution promotes an integrated education concept that combines the national curriculum with the strengthening of Islamic education based on Islamic boarding schools. This integration is evident in the planning of learning, intracurricular, cocurricular, and extracurricular activities designed to harmonize the achievement of national competency standards with the deepening of Islamic teachings. With this concept, MI Terpadu Al-Falah not only targets cognitive learning outcomes, but also fosters habits of worship, noble character, and a strong religious culture, as is characteristic of modern Islamic educational institutions.

In line with this, MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara has a vision to become an Islamic elementary school that excels in achievement, Islamic character, and national awareness, capable of producing a generation that is knowledgeable, noble, and competitive in the global era. To realize this vision, the madrasah's mission includes: organizing a learning process that integrates the national curriculum with an Islamic curriculum based on Islamic boarding schools; fostering a religious culture through habitual worship, strengthening morals, and teacher role models; optimally developing the academic and non-academic potential of students; and building constructive partnerships with parents, the community, and related institutions in order to strengthen the quality of integrated education that combines academic and religious competencies.

2. Forms of TQM Implementation at Alfalah Integrated Islamic Elementary School in Jepara

The implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) at MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara is evident through various continuous improvement efforts in the learning process, routine evaluations, and service quality improvements for students and parents. The principle of continuous improvement is realized by conducting periodic reviews of lesson plans, teaching methods, and media used by teachers in the classroom. At the beginning and end of each semester, the madrasah holds evaluation meetings to review learning outcomes, discipline, and student character development, then formulates improvement measures to be implemented in the following period.

Madrasahs involve all elements of the madrasah leadership, teachers, educational staff, and parents in planning and quality control. This involvement is realized, for example, through the formation of an internal quality assurance team consisting of leaders and teachers, as well as the involvement of the madrasah committee as representatives of parents in discussions of strategic programs and policies. Every new program, such as literacy strengthening, tahfiz, or Olympic coaching, is designed through joint deliberation so that the objectives, success indicators, and evaluation mechanisms are clear and agreed upon by all interested parties.

Supervision, teacher competency improvement, and open communication are part of the strategy to maintain the internal quality of madrasahs. Learning supervision is carried out in a planned manner by the head of the madrasah or curriculum coordinator by observing the learning process in the classroom, providing written and verbal feedback, and developing follow-up improvement plans. Teacher competency improvement is realized through participation in training, workshops, KKG/MGMP, and forums for sharing good practices within the madrasah environment. On the other hand, open communication with parents is facilitated through communication books, parent meetings, digital communication groups, and individual consultation forums to discuss students' academic and non-academic development.

In addition, the religious culture and discipline of the pesantren help strengthen the commitment to quality, resulting in more effective educational services that are oriented towards customer satisfaction. Practical examples that reflect this include the habit of praying in congregation, reciting the Qur'an before studying, teaching manners and morals in every activity, and consistently enforcing rules and regulations for teachers and students. A disciplined, clean, and Islamic learning environment supports the creation of a conducive, safe, and enjoyable school climate for students. Thus, management practices at MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara are in line with TQM principles that emphasize teamwork, continuous improvement, and a focus on education service users, namely students and parents as the madrasah's main customers.

3. The Impact of TQM Implementation on Competitiveness

The implementation of TQM at MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara has produced several positive impacts that are visible gradually and directly in the daily life of the madrasah. The quality of learning has improved through a more structured planning process, the use of more varied methods, and the strengthening of continuous learning outcome evaluations. The discipline of the madrasah community, both teachers and students, has also improved due to clear operational standards, consistent supervision, and the habit of integrating religious values into the madrasah rules and regulations. The effectiveness of school management has also increased because program management, administration, and resources are carried out in a more systematic, transparent, and measurable manner.

Regular evaluations and supervision encourage teachers to be more professional in carrying out their duties. Teachers become better prepared in developing learning tools, more reflective of their teaching practices in the classroom, and more open to receiving feedback for improvement. On the other hand, improvements in the quality of services provided to students and parents—through fast administrative services, clear academic information, and responsive handling of student issues have strengthened public trust. This is reflected in the increasing interest of the community in enrolling their children

at MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara, as indicated by the increase in the number of applicants from year to year.

A well-organized, clean, and comfortable learning environment, combined with a religious culture and open communication, encourages the creation of a more conducive and humanistic learning atmosphere. Cooperation between teachers, students, and parents is built more harmoniously through regular meetings, communication forums, and parental involvement in various madrasah activities. These conditions enable the quality of education to be maintained on an ongoing basis because each party feels responsible for the success of the educational process. These various positive impacts are in line with TQM theory, which emphasizes improving service quality, customer satisfaction, and strengthening the performance of educational organizations as an integrated system. (Juran, 2007)

4. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors at Alfalah Integrated Islamic School in Jepara

Supporting factors for the implementation of TQM at MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara include strong commitment from the madrasah leadership, teacher professionalism, a disciplined religious culture, and high levels of support from the community and parents. The commitment of the leadership is reflected in the seriousness of the madrasah principal in promoting quality improvement programs, allocating resources proportionally, and setting an example of discipline for the entire madrasah community. The professionalism of teachers is evident in their readiness to develop learning tools, their earnestness in participating in training, and their willingness to innovate in teaching methods. Meanwhile, a strong religious culture and active support from parents in the madrasah committee strengthen the atmosphere of cooperation and a sense of ownership towards quality improvement programs.

The availability of relatively adequate infrastructure and good internal communication also facilitate the quality improvement process. Decent classrooms, worship facilities, libraries, and simple but functional learning media help teachers carry out the teaching and learning process more effectively. On

the other hand, internal communication established through regular meetings, coordination groups, and periodic reports ensures that information related to quality programs, evaluation results, and follow-up improvements can be conveyed clearly and quickly. This open communication pattern facilitates coordination between departments and reduces the potential for misunderstandings in the implementation of TQM programs.

However, there are several obstacles that need to be managed properly, such as the limitations of certain facilities that do not yet fully meet modern standards, variations in teacher competence that require ongoing training, and challenges in maintaining consistency in the implementation of routine quality evaluations. The increasing number of students each year also requires adjustments to classroom management, additional facilities, and more intensive service improvements to maintain quality. This condition is in line with the literature which states that the success of TQM is greatly influenced by management commitment, human resource competence, supporting facilities, and the organization's ability to manage change in an adaptive and sustainable manner. (Hasanah & Habsari, 2023)

DISCUSSION

1. Analysis of TQM Implementation Patterns at Alfalah Integrated Islamic Elementary School in Jepara

The implementation of TQM at MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara shows that the madrasah has integrated the basic principles of TQM, such as customer focus, involvement of all components, and continuous improvement in every educational activity. The madrasah places students and parents at the center of its services (customer focus), which is reflected in its efforts to understand their needs, expectations, and aspirations through intensive communication. This is evident in the provision of learning consultation services, the transparent delivery of learning outcome reports, and the quick response to complaints or feedback submitted by parents. Additional learning services, such as enrichment programs, special guidance for students with learning difficulties, and structured

religious activities, are also a tangible manifestation of customer satisfaction orientation.

The involvement of teachers, educational staff, and madrasah leaders in the implementation of TQM is evident through various mechanisms of systematic cooperation and coordination. Regular evaluation meetings, both at the management and teacher levels, are used as forums to review program implementation, analyze achievements, and formulate improvement measures. Academic and managerial supervision is carried out to ensure that the learning process and madrasah management run in accordance with established quality standards. Clear division of tasks, the formation of teams or committees, and assignments based on competence show that madrasahs apply the principle of teamwork in TQM, where each element has complementary roles and responsibilities.

In addition, periodic evaluation and teacher competency development patterns reinforce continuous improvement efforts at MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara. Teachers are encouraged to participate in training, workshops, or other capacity-building activities so that they can adapt to the latest curriculum developments and learning methods. The strengthening of religious culture and pesantren-style discipline, such as the habit of worship, enforcement of rules, and exemplary attitudes from educators, creates an environment conducive to the implementation of quality management. Systematic, documented, and program-based madrasah governance is also a major supporting factor in maintaining consistency in the implementation of TQM. Overall, this pattern is in line with the TQM concept, which emphasizes the alignment of vision, organizational commitment, and measurable quality processes in educational institutions. (John, n.d.)

2. TQM as a Strategy to Improve the Competitiveness of Alfalah Integrated Islamic School in Jepara

Total Quality Management (TQM) menjadi strategi utama MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara dalam meningkatkan daya saing melalui peningkatan mutu

layanan pendidikan secara menyeluruh. Madrasah menempatkan siswa dan wali murid sebagai pusat layanan (customer focus) dengan berupaya menyediakan pelayanan pendidikan yang responsif, berkualitas, dan sesuai kebutuhan masyarakat sekitar. Orientasi ini tercermin dari kesungguhan madrasah dalam memahami harapan orang tua, memperhatikan perbedaan kemampuan dan karakter siswa, serta menyediakan layanan bimbingan belajar dan pembinaan akhlak yang terarah. Dengan demikian, kebijakan dan program madrasah disusun tidak hanya berdasarkan standar kurikulum, tetapi juga mempertimbangkan aspirasi dan kepuasan pengguna layanan pendidikan.

The implementation of the principle of continuous improvement is realized through various concrete steps, such as routine evaluation of learning, classroom supervision, improvement of teacher competence, and strengthening of the madrasah administration and management system. Evaluation of learning outcomes and the learning process is carried out periodically to identify weaknesses and determine improvement strategies for the next period. Classroom supervision helps ensure that learning is carried out in accordance with established quality standards, while also providing a means of giving constructive feedback to teachers. On the other hand, strengthening administration and management through file organization, the use of standard formats, and the use of simple technology for data processing supports the creation of more effective, accountable, and easily monitored governance.

The madrasah also maximizes teamwork and the involvement of all components of the leadership, teachers, educational staff, and parents to create effective collaboration in quality improvement efforts. This cooperation is built through coordination meetings, the formation of quality teams, and the active involvement of the madrasah committee in program planning and evaluation. The strengthening of religious culture and discipline typical of Islamic boarding schools—such as the habit of worship, order during school hours, and enforcement of rules—becomes an added value that distinguishes MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara from other institutions, thereby increasing its attractiveness and public trust. Thus, the implementation of TQM not only improves the internal quality of the madrasah but also plays a strategic role in strengthening its

reputation, increasing enrollment, and ensuring the sustainability of the institution amid increasingly competitive Islamic education, in line with the TQM concept that emphasizes service quality, customer satisfaction, and competitive advantage as the end result of integrated quality management. (Sallis, n.d.)

3. Integration of Islamic Values in the Application of TQM at Alfalah Integrated Islamic Elementary School in Jepara

The integration of Islamic values in the application of TQM at MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara can be seen in the way the madrasah combines modern quality concepts with Islamic spiritual and moral principles in every aspect of educational management. The values of trustworthiness, benevolence, discipline, cooperation (ta'awun), and honesty are used as behavioral standards for all members of the madrasah, from the leadership, teachers, and educational staff to the students. Thus, the quality improvement process is not only oriented towards technical and administrative service quality, but also directed at character building based on Islamic values. This dual orientation means that quality is not only measured by academic results, but also by the quality of morals and daily behavior.

The implementation of supervision, learning evaluation, and teacher competency improvement is carried out using an approach that reflects Islamic leadership ethics. The coaching and supervision process is conducted through deliberation, mutual respect, and the delivery of good advice (mau'izhah hasanah), so that teachers feel accompanied, not repressively supervised. Performance evaluation and the teaching and learning process are linked to the value of responsibility as a form of trust, while a culture of mutual reminders to do good becomes part of a moral and spiritual quality control mechanism. This approach helps to create a harmonious, humanistic work environment that remains oriented towards continuous quality improvement. (Sumarto, 2020)

The religious culture of Islamic boarding schools reinforces the internalization of these values through daily worship activities, moral training,

and the exemplary behavior of teachers as role models for students. Activities such as congregational prayers, Quran recitation, religious lectures, and daily etiquette training serve as systematic means of instilling values of discipline, responsibility, and caring for others. The integration of Islamic values into TQM practices strengthens the commitment to quality, creates a conducive learning environment, and becomes a distinctive advantage that increases public trust in madrasahs. This approach is in line with literature that emphasizes that quality management in Islamic education must be based on spiritual values, ethics, and morals in order to produce sustainable quality. (Febriani & Sesmiarni, 2024)

4. Theoretical and Practical Implications

The implementation of TQM at MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara has significant theoretical and practical implications for the development of Islamic education quality management. Theoretically, the results of this study reinforce the view that quality management in education will be more effective if it integrates the principles of continuous improvement, the involvement of all components, and religious values as the foundation of organizational culture. This is in line with the views of Sallis (2015) and Goetsch & Davis (2014), who emphasize that TQM in the context of educational institutions is not only based on technical procedures and standards, but also on a school culture that supports quality, leadership commitment, and shared values. The findings at MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara enrich the perspective that spiritual and religious dimensions can be key enablers in the implementation of TQM in Islamic educational institutions. (Sallis, n.d.)

In practical terms, the implementation of TQM at MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara provides concrete guidelines for madrasahs in improving teacher professionalism, strengthening educational services, building effective communication with parents, and developing a consistent evaluation system. Teacher professionalism is enhanced through regular supervision, training, and mentoring, while educational services are improved through better classroom management, responsive administrative services, and systematic academic and

non-academic coaching programs. Communication with parents is strengthened through regular meetings, transparent learning outcome reports, and easily accessible communication channels. A planned and continuous quality evaluation system helps madrasahs monitor achievements, identify weaknesses, and formulate improvement measures. These systematic quality improvements have resulted in increased public trust and institutional competitiveness amid competition in Islamic education.

The experience of MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara also confirms that the implementation of TQM has a direct impact on improving the quality of educational services through a series of practical measures such as regular supervision, improving teacher competence, strengthening religious culture, and effective communication with parents. Efforts that seem simple but consistent, such as the habit of worship, enforcement of discipline, quick response to complaints, and continuous evaluation, have made the image of the madrasah increasingly positive in the eyes of the community. The success of TQM is largely determined by organizational commitment, collaboration among school members, and a strong focus on customer satisfaction. Thus, the experience of MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara serves as empirical evidence that TQM principles can be effectively adapted within the context of an Islamic-values-based madrasah. (Baldrige et al., 2002)

D. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) at MI Terpadu Al-Falah Jepara has played a significant role in improving the quality of educational services and strengthening institutional competitiveness. The application of key TQM principles—continuous improvement, stakeholder involvement, and customer focus—has been systematically integrated into various aspects of madrasah management, including learning processes, academic supervision, administrative services, and quality evaluation mechanisms.

The findings show that the integration of TQM with Islamic values, such as amanah, ihsan, istiqamah, and ta'awun, provides a strong ethical and cultural

foundation for sustainable quality improvement. Practices such as routine supervision, continuous teacher competency development, the strengthening of religious culture, and open communication with parents have contributed to improved learning quality, enhanced teacher professionalism, increased public trust, and higher student enrollment. These outcomes indicate that TQM not only improves internal institutional quality but also enhances the external competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions.

Despite these positive impacts, several challenges remain, including limitations in facilities, variations in teacher competencies, and the need to maintain consistency in quality evaluation amid increasing student numbers. Addressing these challenges requires sustained leadership commitment, continuous capacity-building programs, and adaptive quality management strategies to ensure long-term effectiveness.

This study recommends that Islamic educational institutions seeking to enhance their competitiveness adopt TQM as a comprehensive and value-based management approach. Future research is encouraged to explore the implementation of TQM in different Islamic education contexts and to examine its long-term impact on institutional sustainability and student outcomes. Acknowledging its qualitative scope, this study is limited to a single case, and therefore further comparative or longitudinal studies are needed to strengthen the generalizability of the findings.

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