



Beyond Modern Management: The Barokah Model as a Spiritual Approach to Islamic Educational Innovation

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Abstract:

This study aims to formulate and analyze the Barokah Management model as a spirituality-based approach to driving innovation in Islamic educational institutions. Educational innovation has become a critical issue amid global competition, particularly for private Islamic institutions, which face financial constraints and limited resources compared to the public sector. These challenges necessitate a contextually grounded management model that integrates modern quality standards with spiritual values to ensure sustainability and competitiveness. This research employs a qualitative biographical design that focuses on the leadership of KH. Sulaiman Nain at the Foundation. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, documentation, and field observations, and analyzed using an interactive model with triangulation for validity. The findings reveal that institutional expansion is driven by mission-oriented innovation rooted in religious values. The Barokah Management model integrates POAC functions with spiritual principles, generating “metaphysical efficiency” in resource-limited contexts. Organizational culture reflects high loyalty, resilience, and a sense of transcendent accountability among staff. Spiritual leadership fosters a low-cost, high-trust governance system that enhances institutional performance. These findings demonstrate that spiritual capital can substitute for material limitations and sustain innovation. This study presents a novel theoretical framework and recommends further research using comparative and mixed-methods approaches.

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INTRODUCTION

Educational innovation within Islamic institutions has emerged as a critical issue amid intensifying global competition, where institutional quality is a primary determinant of the advancement of modern civilization (Hajar, 2024; Masnawati et al., 2024). The significance of this study lies in the urgent need to develop an alternative management model that integrates global quality standards with spiritual values rooted in local traditions. The primary rationale is that education forms the foundation of human resource development; however, a significant disparity in attention often exists between the public and private education sectors. Empirical evidence suggests that while governments provide massive support to the public sector, private institutions such as madrasahs and pesantrens must rely on independent funding through foundation management, which often faces acute financial constraints. Consequently, this research concludes that the development of a specific, contextually relevant management model is imperative to ensure that Islamic educational institutions do not merely act as followers

but lead sustainable educational innovation through a resilient spiritual-managerial approach that addresses contemporary challenges.

The overarching problem motivating this research is the systemic vulnerability of private educational institutions in the face of disruptive era dynamics, particularly regarding limited financing and inadequate physical resources. Factually, significant differences in budget allocation create barriers to equitable innovation, as private schools often receive recognition and assistance only after proving their existence independently, while operational burdens are borne entirely by managers from the outset (Perry, 2024; Zancajo et al., 2021). This phenomenon carries the logical consequence that, without extraordinary managerial capabilities, private institutions risk a decline in quality, resulting in lower graduate competitiveness in the labor market. This condition is exacerbated by a tendency for institutional management to become trapped in administrative formalities, lacking a strong philosophical foundation to mobilize human resource loyalty (Avedi & Anyieni Abel, 2023; Elistia et al., 2024). The imbalance between the high cost of modernization and limited material capital creates organizational pressure that stifles creativity and the sustainability of long-term educational visions within religious societies.

A literature review indicates that previous research has extensively explored modern management principles, including planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling as standard benchmarks for organizational effectiveness (Alsharari & Aljohani, 2024; Nurhikmah, 2024). Classical management researchers emphasize that institutional success heavily depends on optimizing human resources through strict incentive and control systems (Aguilera et al., 2024; Torfing & Bentzen, 2020). In the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, scholars such as Akrim et al. (2022) have made significant contributions to mapping the direction of Islamic education curriculum and management development to remain relevant to national identity. This research positions itself by synthesizing such functional management with a specific spiritual dimension, namely the concept of "*Barokah*" (blessing), which has long been viewed solely as a metaphysical domain. This study makes a unique contribution by documenting how leadership grounded in character and transcendental values can catalyze innovation. This differs from general management studies, which tend to be secular and measure success only through material indicators, without addressing spiritual satisfaction and "blessing" as the primary organizational drivers.

Despite the rapid development of the educational management literature, a significant research gap remains: most studies fail to explain the mechanism by which the value of sincerity (*ikhlas*) is translated into practical, measurable innovation strategies. Previous researchers have often rigidly separated a leader's individual piety from the institution's operational system, as if spirituality holds no place in managerial efficiency (Low & Ayoko, 2020). It is essential to conduct this research because Islamic educational institutions require a more humane model to motivate staff to work beyond economic wage standards amid budget constraints (Gano et al., 2024). Furthermore, biographical studies of local figures such as KH. Sulaiman Nain is still rare in international management literature, even though his life experiences (Mohd Nain et al., 2022) provide empirical evidence of successful management models that do not rely on large financial capital (Malik et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2021). Failure to bridge this gap will leave Islamic educational management theory perpetually trapped in an imitation of Western models, which are often incompatible with the *pesantren* culture that prioritizes spiritual blessings.

The novelty or state-of-the-art of this research lies in formulating “Barokah Management” as a new paradigm that integratively and practically combines modern managerial principles with Islamic spiritual ethics. Unlike conventional management models that view low material input as an absolute obstacle, this model demonstrates that capital limitations can be overcome through a “blessed” process to produce competitive output. The resulting innovation is not merely technical but also a value-based innovation that touches organizational behavior, in which all institutional components work with high integrity, driven by a transcendental responsibility to God. This includes applying core values such as *ikhlas* (sincerity), *jujur* (honesty), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and *tawazun* (balance) as the main pillars for addressing global challenges without sacrificing religious identity (Ruhullah & Ushama, 2024). Completing this model is vital to provide a robust theoretical foundation for international Islamic educational institutions to compete globally while maintaining the spiritual characteristics that constitute their unique competitive advantage in the modern era.

This research focuses on how Barokah Management's mechanism can effectively drive educational innovation and achieve quality excellence despite the infrastructural limitations faced by private institutions. The tentative argument is that a leader's strong spirituality can foster a high-trust organizational culture, enabling operational efficiency to emerge naturally without the need for expensive formal monitoring systems. This argument is based on the premise that when management is viewed as a form of worship, individuals will make their best contributions, surpassing their administrative obligations. Thus, Barokah Management offers a solution to the motivational deadlocks that often occur when material incentives are insufficient to spark staff creativity. Through a qualitative-biographical approach, this study seeks to address global skepticism toward the effectiveness of value-based management in a pragmatic industrial era by proving that “blessing” correlates positively with the sustainability and innovation of professionally yet religiously managed educational institutions.

This research is expected to have significant theoretical and practical impacts on the landscape of international Islamic educational management. Academically, this study enriches management literature by introducing a new framework that juxtaposes classical management theory with transcendental spirituality as the primary driving factor. In practice, Barokah Management's formulation can serve as a strategic guide for foundation managers and school principals in various developing countries to remain optimistic in pursuing institutional innovation despite severe funding constraints. This research also contributes to preserving the local wisdom of pesantren leadership, which has proven capable of producing high-quality, independent graduates amid a constantly changing society. By systematically documenting this model, it is hoped that a management standardization will be created that maintains a balance between a worldly quality orientation and an otherworldly (*ukhrawi*) vision, enabling Islamic educational institutions to remain relevant and globally competitive without losing the spiritual values that underpin their foundation and identity.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative, biographical research design. This method was specifically chosen to objectively reconstruct the lived experiences, philosophical reflections, and managerial practices of KH. Sulaiman Nain, the preeminent founder of

Islamic educational institutions in Kotabaru Regency. Biographical research is uniquely suited for this study as it allows for an in-depth exploration of how an individual's life trajectory and spiritual convictions are translated into institutional innovation (Kaźmierska, 2020; Menn et al., 2020). By documenting these experiences, the research aims to provide an interpretive account of a "grassroots" leadership model that successfully built a comprehensive educational network from the ground up.

The research was primarily centered at the Yayasan Pendidikan Islam Al-Mu'awanah Jam'iyah Nahdlatul Ulama, located in Kotabaru Regency, South Kalimantan. This foundation serves as the institutional epicenter of the subject's lifelong intellectual and religious contributions, housing a comprehensive network of schools spanning early childhood education to the Higher Institute of Islamic Studies. This specific site was selected as it represents the "living laboratory" where the subject's managerial theories were operationalized and sustained. The subject of this biographical inquiry is the late KH. Sulaiman Nain, the visionary founder of the foundation. Despite his passing, he remains the "key figure" whose leadership shaped the landscape of Islamic education in the region. The study focuses specifically on his "Barokah Management" model, as implemented within this foundation, to drive institutional innovation and excellence. By focusing on this specific institutional setting, the study captures the intricate synergy between personal charisma, organizational structure, and spiritual values.

Data were gathered through a multi-method approach to ensure a comprehensive biographical narrative. Given that the primary subject is deceased, primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with "proximal sources," including the immediate family, most notably H. Salman Basri, as the head of the family, close colleagues, and former students. These oral histories were supplemented by a rigorous documentary study that analyzed personal archives, organizational founding documents, photographs, and the subject's own writings and artifacts. Direct field observations were also conducted at the institutions he founded to observe the enduring organizational climate and cultural manifestations of his management values (Alejandro & Zhao, 2024; Nanthagopan, 2021).

The analysis follows an interactive model consisting of data organization, reduction, and chronological arrangement (Battle & Scheidegger, 2020; Tönnissen & Teuteberg, 2020). The process began by organizing files containing objective experiences of KH. Sulaiman Nain's life stages. These narratives were then read holistically, reduced, and coded based on managerial functions (POAC) and spiritual value categories specifically *ikhlaash* (sincerity), *jujur* (honesty), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and *tawazun* (balance). By arranging these stories chronologically, the researchers identified and examined the deeper meanings behind his actions, seeking to formulate a coherent theory of management that drives innovation in Islamic educational settings.

To ensure the validity and objectivity of the findings, the researchers employed source and technique triangulation (Lemon & Hayes, 2020; Natow, 2020). This involved cross-referencing interview data from family members with institutional archives and physical artifacts. Furthermore, a "member check" was conducted with the family and close associates to verify that the biographical narrative accurately reflects the subject's perspectives and historical facts, thereby maintaining the integrity of the qualitative inquiry.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Institutional Innovation and Expansion

In the context of this study, institutional innovation and expansion are operationally defined as the systematic growth and diversification of Islamic educational entities under the Foundation. This sub-finding characterizes innovation not merely as a technical update, but as a strategic evolution from traditional non-formal roots such as the *Pondok Pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) and *Madrasah Diniyah* into a comprehensive formal educational ecosystem. This expansion is evidenced by the establishment of a complete vertical hierarchy of schooling, ranging from early childhood education (*Raudlatul Athfal*) to higher education, all while maintaining a consistent ideological foundation rooted in *Ahlussunah Wal Jamaah*.

The institutional vision was deeply anchored in a commitment to religious propagation and social empowerment. According to Informant KF, who serves as the primary representative of the subject's immediate family, the philosophical foundation of these institutions centered on *dakwah* (preaching) and the systematic development of cadres for the *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) community. This interview data reveals that the expansion was never a purely administrative goal; rather, it was a teleological endeavor intended to strengthen religious identity in the Kotabaru region. The researcher interprets this as a form of "mission-driven innovation," in which institutional growth serves as the primary vehicle for ideological preservation and community development.

Furthermore, interviews with close associates highlight the subject's courageous planning despite limited material resources. Informant CL-01, a long-time colleague, noted that while KH. Sulaiman Nain did not possess significant personal wealth. Yet, he dared to initiate large-scale projects, such as the establishment of higher education, driven by a profound conviction in divine assistance. The researcher interprets this data as evidence of "metaphysical-based management," where spiritual capital, specifically faith and the pursuit of *barokah* (blessing), functions as a strategic substitute for financial capital during the critical early stages of institutional development.

Field observations and documentary analysis confirm that the Darul Ulum network has successfully integrated modern educational standards with traditional values. The institutions are currently equipped with digital facilities, such as campus-wide Wi-Fi for supervised internet access, and have achieved significant national recognition through formal accreditation. Currently, most institutions under the foundation hold "A" or "B" accreditation status, with the Islamic Education (PAI) Study Program at higher education in *Darul Ulum* achieving an "*Unggul*" (Excellent) rating. The researcher interprets these physical and administrative milestones as empirical evidence that the "Barokah Management" model can deliver competitive outputs that meet contemporary global quality assurance standards.

Restating these findings, the data indicate a clear pattern of institutional evolution driven by spiritual leadership. The expansion of the Darul Ulum network from a single Pesantren in 1979 to a multi-tiered educational provider demonstrates that innovation in this context is the synergy between traditional Islamic values and modern organizational functions. This institutional success is not a random occurrence but a structured outcome of the founder's ability to mobilize social and spiritual capital to achieve academic excellence and regional influence.

Table 1. Ideal Influence in Institutional Innovation

Informant Code	Primary Role/Relation	Core Interview Excerpt	Emergent Indicator
KF	Key Family Member	“The philosophical objective... was for dakwah, disseminating Islamic teachings, and NU cadre-building.”	Visionary & Ideological Orientation
CL-01	Close Professional Colleague	“Even though he did not have much wealth, he dared to take on big plans... with the belief that God would facilitate it.”	Spiritual Risk-Taking & Faith-Based Planning
EM-02	Institutional Manager	“We are reminded that Allah sees our deeds... if we try to violate the rules, Allah is All-Knowing.”	Transcendental Accountability & Integrity

The table illustrates a profound pattern of “Ideal Influence,” where the leader's personal values directly shape the organizational culture and the scope of institutional innovation. The first dimension of this interpretation emphasizes that the core driver of expansion was a non-materialistic vision; the growth of the institutions was seen as a religious duty (dakwah) rather than a commercial venture. This ideological clarity allowed the organization to maintain focus and consistency over decades, ensuring that every new institution, from childhood education to higher education, remained aligned with the founder's original intent of empowering the community.

The second dimension highlights the shift from individual conviction to collective integrity. The pattern shows that the “spiritual risk-taking” practiced by the founder successfully cultivated a culture of transcendental accountability among the staff. Because the leadership emphasized that work is a form of worship and that rewards are ultimately divine (barokah), the human resources developed a high level of loyalty and resilience, continuing to work effectively even when financial incentives were modest. This collective behavior created a sustainable environment for innovation, where limited material “input” was compensated by a high “process” quality of sincerity and cooperation, ultimately leading to superior institutional outcomes.

The Formulation of the “Barokah Management” Model

In this study, “Barokah Management” is operationally defined as a hybrid managerial framework that synthesizes classical administrative functions, Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling (POAC) with transcendental ethical imperatives. Unlike conventional management, which focuses solely on material efficiency and profit maximization, this model prioritizes the spiritual quality of the process to ensure that organizational outputs are not only high-performing but also “blessed” (mubarak). In the field, this is manifested in a lean organizational structure that guides decision-making by spiritual intuition and ethical integrity, allowing the institution to thrive despite significant capital constraints.

The essence of this model lies in mobilizing spiritual conviction to overcome physical constraints. Informant KF stated, “The core of his management was simplicity and sincerity; he believed that if the intention were for the sake of Allah (*ikhlas*), the resources would follow through divine intervention.” The researcher interprets this data as a form of “Metaphysical Efficiency,” in which the subject used sincerity as a strategic asset to catalyze institutional growth. This suggests that in the Barokah model, spiritual capital acts as a force multiplier, transforming minimal financial inputs into substantial educational outcomes.

Furthermore, implementing these values created a unique system of internal controls. Informant EM-02 explained, “We were taught that being honest (*Jujur*) and trustworthy (*Amanah*) were not just professional requirements but religious obligations that would be accounted for in the hereafter.” The researcher interprets this as “Transcendental Accountability,” where the traditional “Controlling” function of management is replaced or enhanced by a self-regulating conscience. This eliminates the need for expensive, rigid surveillance systems, as staff members operate under the belief that they are constantly observed by the Divine, resulting in high integrity and operational consistency.

Field observations indicate that the foundation's physical environment reflects this simplicity and focus. The researcher observed that despite the modest facilities, the atmosphere is characterized by high discipline and a strong sense of community among the staff and students. The management of Higher Education, for instance, operates with a very lean administrative team that handles multiple functions effectively. The researcher interprets these observations as the empirical manifestation of *Tawazun* (balance), where the institution maintains an equilibrium between worldly professional standards and the spiritual mission of the Pesantren.

Restating these findings, the “Barokah Management” model represents a paradigm shift from secular, resource-dependent management to a value-driven, spiritual-centric approach. The data consistently shows that the Foundation's success is rooted in the founder's ability to embed *Ikhlas*, *Jujur*, *Amanah*, and *Tawazun* into the school's daily operations. This model provides a viable alternative for private Islamic institutions facing financial hardships, demonstrating that spiritual integrity can serve as a primary engine of educational innovation and institutional longevity.

Table 2. Ideal Influence in Barokah Management Formulation

Informant Code	Core Interview Excerpt	Emergent Indicator
KF	“He believed that if the intention were for the sake of Allah, the resources would follow...”	<i>Ikhlas</i> (Sincerity) as Strategic Input
EM-01	“Trustworthiness (<i>Amanah</i>) was the foundation of how we managed the students' fees and foundation assets.”	<i>Amanah</i> (Trust) as Operational Integrity
CL-02	“His planning wasn't just on paper; it was through a deep ' <i>ketajaman mata hati</i> ' (spiritual intuition) and exemplary action.”	<i>Uswatun Hasanah</i> (Exemplary Leadership)

The table illustrates a pattern in which the leader's spiritual attributes are institutionalized as managerial indicators. The first paragraph of this interpretation highlights that “Ideal Influence” in this context is characterized by the conversion of personal piety into organizational standards. When the leader prioritizes *Ikhlas* and *Amanah*, these values become the “unwritten rules” of the foundation, ensuring that financial management remains transparent and that the staff remains motivated by higher spiritual goals rather than mere economic incentives.

The data pattern suggests that Barokah Management's formulation is inseparable from KH's persona, Sulaiman Nain. His spiritual intuition (*mata hati*) in planning allowed the institution to navigate complex challenges with limited data. At the same time, his direct example in daily conduct served as the primary “Actuating” force for his subordinates. This creates a highly cohesive organizational culture in which the vision is not just communicated through documents but also through the observable integrity of its leadership, resulting in a robust and innovative institutional spirit.

Organizational Culture and Human Resource Behavior

In the operational context of the Foundation, organizational culture and human resource (HR) behavior are defined as the collective psychological and spiritual atmosphere that governs how educators and staff interact with their professional duties. This sub-finding identifies a shift from transactional employment toward a “vocational-spiritual” paradigm. Within this environment, productivity and loyalty are not merely products of contractual obligations but are manifestations of *Lillahi Ta’ala* (devotion to God). Consequently, HR behavior is characterized by high resilience and psychological well-being, where the perceived “blessing” (*barokah*) of the work compensates for modest financial remuneration, creating a self-sustaining cycle of commitment and institutional stability.

Table 3. Mapping of Staff Loyalty and Transcendental Accountability

Interview Excerpt	Emergent Indicator	Informant Code
“We serve the institution with a sense of 'Lillahi Ta'ala'; even with limited salaries, we never feel lacking because we believe the <i>barokah</i> will provide for our families.”	High Loyalty & Devotional Commitment	EM-01
“There is a profound sense of peace and gratitude among the teachers here. We see that those who served KH. Sulaiman Nain, with sincerity, ended up prosperous in their later lives.”	Psychological Well-Being & Spiritual Security	AL-01
“We don't need a punch clock, to be honest. We are taught that <i>Allah is Al-Basir</i> (The All-Seeing), so violating the trust of the foundation is a sin against the Divine.”	Transcendental Supervision	EM-02

The data in the table reflects a critical departure from secular organizational behavior theories that emphasize material incentives as the primary driver of performance. The researcher interprets this as “Spiritual Capital Mobilization.” By framing professional labor as a matter of religious merit, management successfully mitigates the “burnout” typically associated with low-wage sectors. The indicators suggest that the belief in *barokah* functions as a psychological safety net; staff members do not view their financial limitations as a crisis but as a temporary state that will be resolved through divine providence. This creates an organizational resilience that is impervious to the market-driven fluctuations that often destabilize private educational institutions.

Furthermore, the concept of “Transcendental Supervision” identified in the table indicates a highly efficient form of internal governance. In traditional management, “Control” often incurs high transaction costs through monitoring and reporting systems. However, at Darul Ulum, the researcher observes that the “All-Seeing” (*Al-Basir*) attribute of God is institutionalized into the staff's psyche. This internal moral compass ensures high integrity in financial and pedagogical duties without the need for intrusive administrative surveillance. This interpretation suggests that spiritualized HR behavior leads to a “low-cost, high-trust” environment, which is a significant competitive advantage for resource-constrained institutions.

Field observations reinforce these findings, as the researcher noted a distinct lack of “silo mentality” or competitive friction among the staff. Instead, there is a pervasive atmosphere of *Tawazun* (balance) and mutual support. During faculty meetings and daily operations at higher education institutions, the researcher observed that tasks were completed with a sense of shared religious mission. The staff's physical demeanor

exhibited what the literature describes as “spiritual tranquility”: a calm, disciplined, and optimistic approach to work. The researcher interprets these observations as empirical evidence that the Barokah model produces superior quality “Organizational Citizenship Behavior” (OCB), in which individuals go beyond their formal job descriptions to ensure the institution's success.

Restating these findings, the data illustrate that the Foundation has successfully cultivated a “Spiritualized Workplace” in which religious values dictate HR behavior. The synergy between high loyalty, psychological security, and transcendental accountability forms a robust organizational culture that survives on spiritual rather than material momentum. This finding simplifies HR management for religious institutions: by prioritizing the spiritual well-being and integrity of staff, the institution achieves a level of dedication and stability that material wealth alone cannot secure.

Table 4. Ideal Influence on HR Behavior and Culture

Informant Position	Key Interview Excerpt	Primary Indicator
Institutional Manager (EM)	“The founder gave us a model of sincerity; we follow his lead in prioritizing the Ummah's interests over our own.”	Exemplary-Driven Loyalty
Senior Educator (AL/Staff)	“Our monthly pay does not measure our success, but by the success of our students and the peace in our hearts.”	Non-Materialistic Success Paradigm
Foundation Executive (KF)	“The control mechanism is simple: if you are honest with God's trust (Amanah), God will expand your horizons.”	Integrity-Based Growth

The pattern identified in the table demonstrates that “Ideal Influence” operates through a “Top-Down Spiritual Cascade.” The first dimension of this interpretation highlights that the founder's personal sincerity (*Ikhlas*) acts as the primary blueprint for the staff. Because the leaders themselves exhibit a non-materialistic lifestyle, the subordinates adopt a similar success paradigm, shifting their focus from salary scales to “life tranquility” and “divine rewards.” This alignment of values between the leader and the staff eliminates the “agency problem” often found in management, as both parties work toward a unified, transcendent goal.

The second dimension of this pattern reveals how “Integrity-Based Growth” becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. By instilling the value of *Amanah* (trustworthiness), the management creates a culture where every staff member feels like a “stakeholder” in the spiritual mission. This collective ownership drives innovation and institutional expansion because the staff is motivated to protect and grow the foundation as if it were their own religious legacy. Ultimately, the data shows a clear pattern: a culture rooted in Barokah transforms human resources from mere employees into “spiritual partners,” ensuring the institution's longevity amid modern challenges.

Discussion

The findings of this study regarding institutional innovation and expansion demonstrate a distinctive pattern of mission-driven growth that aligns with, yet extends, existing theories in educational management. Classical frameworks emphasize structural expansion and responsiveness to societal change (Portes, 2021; Prantl et al., 2022), and recent studies confirm that educational innovation increasingly integrates contextual and cultural dimensions. However, the Darul Ulum case reveals a stronger ideological anchoring, in which expansion is primarily driven by a religious mission (*dakwah*) rather than market or policy pressures. This finding is consistent with recent research on Islamic

educational leadership, which highlights the centrality of religious values in shaping institutional direction and sustainability (Arar et al., 2022; Said et al., 2023). Nevertheless, this study extends prior literature by demonstrating how ideological commitment can systematically produce a vertically integrated educational system, suggesting that value-based institutional expansion may serve as an alternative model to market-driven educational growth.

Furthermore, the formulation of the “Barokah Management” model resonates with contemporary discussions on spiritual leadership while offering a more operationalized framework. Recent systematic reviews indicate that spiritual leadership is increasingly recognized as a transformative paradigm that integrates ethical values, intrinsic motivation, and organizational performance (Piwowar-Sulej & Iqbal, 2024; Samul, 2024). The findings of this study confirm these arguments but introduce a novel dimension in which spiritual values *Ikhlas*, *Amanah*, *Jujur*, and *Tawazun* function as core managerial inputs rather than supplementary ethical guidelines. This diverges from dominant resource-based perspectives (Lucey, 2021; Vasconcelos, 2021), as spiritual capital is shown to substitute for financial limitations, reinforcing the concept of “metaphysical efficiency.” Empirical studies further support this linkage, indicating that spiritual leadership significantly enhances innovation and organizational effectiveness through intrinsic motivation mechanisms (Li et al., 2023), thereby validating the practical viability of the Barokah Management model.

The findings related to organizational culture and human resource behavior also align with and extend recent empirical research in educational leadership. Contemporary studies demonstrate that spiritual leadership positively influences employee performance, organizational culture, and self-efficacy in educational institutions (Aziz et al., 2024). Similarly, research shows that spiritual leadership reduces burnout and strengthens employees’ sense of purpose and emotional resilience (J. Li et al., 2023). The present study confirms these patterns but advances them by identifying “transcendental accountability” as a unique mechanism, where belief in divine supervision replaces formal control systems. This finding contributes to the literature by illustrating a “low-cost, high-trust” governance model, which is particularly relevant for resource-constrained institutions. It also reinforces the argument that spirituality not only enhances individual motivation but also restructures organizational control and trust dynamics.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on spiritual leadership and educational management by proposing the “Barokah Management” model as a hybrid and contextually grounded framework. Recent literature emphasizes that spiritual leadership is still conceptually evolving, with varying interpretations and limited empirical operationalization across contexts (Subhaktiyasa et al., 2023). This study addresses that gap by offering concrete constructs such as “metaphysical efficiency” and “transcendental accountability,” which extend existing theoretical models. In doing so, it also challenges dominant paradigms such as resource-dependency theory (Amiel et al., 2024; Getui, 2023), by demonstrating that non-material resources, particularly spiritual values, can function as primary drivers of organizational sustainability and innovation.

From a practical standpoint, the findings provide actionable insights for leaders and policymakers in Islamic educational institutions. Recent studies highlight that spiritual leadership fosters ethical climates, enhances job satisfaction, and strengthens organizational commitment. The present study operationalizes these insights by showing

how values such as *Ikhlah* and *Amanah* can be embedded into daily management practices to generate high levels of loyalty, resilience, and organizational citizenship behavior. This suggests that strengthening spiritual and ethical leadership is not only normatively desirable but also strategically effective, particularly in developing contexts where financial and infrastructural resources are limited. Consequently, the Barokah Management model offers a scalable and culturally relevant alternative for achieving sustainable educational quality and institutional competitiveness.

CONCLUSIONS

The most important finding of this study is the recognition that educational innovation within Islamic institutions can be effectively driven by spiritual values rather than by reliance on material resources alone. The concept of “Barokah Management” demonstrates that sincerity (*ikhlah*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), honesty (*jujur*), and balance (*tawazun*) are not merely ethical ideals but function as strategic drivers of institutional growth, resilience, and sustainability. The key lesson derived from this research is that when management is rooted in transcendental awareness and framed as a form of worship, it can generate a high-trust organizational culture, strengthen human resource commitment, and enable innovation even under severe financial constraints. In terms of scholarly contribution, this study offers a significant advancement by integrating classical management functions (POAC) with spiritual leadership principles into a coherent and operational model. It enriches the discourse on educational management by introducing new constructs, such as “metaphysical efficiency” and “transcendental accountability,” thereby positioning spirituality not as a peripheral element but as a central mechanism for achieving institutional excellence.

However, this study is not without limitations. Methodologically, its reliance on a single biographical case may limit the generalizability of the findings across diverse institutional and cultural contexts. The subjective nature of qualitative-biographical data, despite triangulation efforts, also opens the possibility of interpretive bias in the reconstruction of the leadership model. Additionally, the concept of “barokah” as a core variable remains abstract and difficult to quantify within conventional empirical frameworks. Therefore, future research is recommended to adopt comparative and mixed-methods approaches, examining multiple Islamic educational institutions to validate and refine the Barokah Management model. Further studies could also explore the development of measurable indicators for spiritual capital and its direct relationship with institutional performance, as well as testing the applicability of this model in non-religious or cross-cultural organizational settings to assess its broader relevance in global management discourse.

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