



Interpretation of the Iqra' Verse as the Foundation of Literacy in the Development of Islamic Education Management

Eva Nuraeni*, Cecep Anwar, Rizkarima, Riris Sriwiguna

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati, Indonesia

Email : kurniawanrizkarima@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

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*Corresponding Author

This study explores the integration of the Iqra' verse (QS. Al-'Alaq: 1-5) into Islamic educational management, aiming to develop a comprehensive literacy model that enhances leadership in Islamic educational institutions. The research addresses the gap between traditional Islamic values and modern educational management practices, particularly in Indonesia, where secular management models often dominate. By examining the epistemological, operational, and axiological dimensions of the Iqra' verse, the study proposes a three dimensional literacy cycle for decision-making in educational institutions, emphasizing the importance of trust (amanah), justice, transparency, and consultation (shura). A qualitative, library-based research design with a thematic-tafsir approach was employed to analyze Qur'anic exegesis and contemporary educational management theories. The findings highlight that while existing literature addresses the role of Qur'anic principles in education, it lacks a systematic framework for operationalizing these values in management practices. The study contributes to the field by offering a novel model that bridges Qur'anic exegesis with modern management theory, urging further empirical testing and application in educational leadership.

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INTRODUCTION

The integration of deep literacy into institutional leadership plays a critical role in shaping effective education systems, particularly in the context of Islamic education management (Purnasih et al., 2025). Deep literacy, encompassing epistemological, operational, and axiological dimensions, is essential for navigating the complexities of contemporary educational challenges (Mirzakhdam, 2024). In societies where Islamic education is predominant, such as Indonesia, the lack of an epistemological foundation rooted in Qur'anic teachings, especially in the context of leadership, creates a gap between

traditional practices and modern educational demands (Wajdi et al., 2025; Hefner, 2022). The incorporation of knowledge from the Qur'an, particularly the exegesis of the Iqra' verse (QS. Al-'Alaq: 1-5), has the potential to address this gap by enhancing the quality of leadership in Islamic educational institutions. By positioning literacy as a foundational element in the management of these institutions, this research holds significant potential for fostering a more holistic approach to leadership that aligns with both Islamic values and contemporary educational needs (Moslimany et al., 2024; Rahman, 2025).

In Indonesia, where Islamic education is integral to the societal fabric, the absence of a Qur'anic foundation in education management is a pressing issue. Despite being home to the world's largest Muslim population, the adoption of secular management models by madrasahs and Islamic higher education institutions has led to a disconnect between the Islamic vision and operational practices (Bukhari, 2025; Basheer et al., 2024). The low managerial literacy index observed in these institutions, where leaders predominantly rely on conventional administrative methods rather than Qur'anic-based literacy, further exacerbates the problem. This misalignment not only hinders the development of effective leadership but also limits the capacity of these institutions to adapt to the rapidly changing educational landscape, especially in the face of challenges posed by digital disruption and the fourth industrial revolution.

On the ground, Islamic educational institutions, particularly madrasahs, face significant challenges in integrating modern educational practices with Islamic values. Teachers and leaders in these institutions are often ill-equipped to effectively navigate the demands of digital technology and critical literacy. Research by Asrina (2023) shows that madrasah teachers struggle with limited digital literacy skills, hindering their ability to leverage technology for teaching and learning. Furthermore, Ridloi and Ali Rosyidi (2025) observe that madrasah teachers remain at a basic level of digital literacy, lacking the ability to transform technology into pedagogical practice. This highlights a critical gap in the development of educational leadership that should be addressed through a more profound understanding of the Qur'anic exegesis of Iqra' and its integration into contemporary literacy demands. This gap underscores the need for a theoretical and practical framework that connects digital, critical, and theological dimensions in the leadership of Islamic educational institutions.

Previous studies on Islamic education management have explored various aspects of Qur'anic integration but often fall short of offering a comprehensive and systematic approach. For example, research by Susiyati (2024) discusses curriculum management based on 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān, emphasizing how Qur'anic

principles can guide instructional time and activities. However, this approach is largely confined to administrative practices without delving into a broader literacy framework that incorporates epistemology, ethics, and operational strategies. Moreover, existing literature predominantly focuses on technical aspects of education management, such as digital literacy, with little attention paid to the theological and epistemological underpinnings that should guide these practices. The integration of Qur'anic values into educational leadership remains fragmented, and the role of exegesis in shaping institutional practices is insufficiently explored (Susiyati, 2024; Asrina, 2023; Ridloi et al., 2025).

Furthermore, studies have not adequately addressed the lack of thematic synthesis between classical exegesis, such as those by Ibn Kathīr and al-Jalalayn, and contemporary management frameworks. For instance, while the works of al-Attas (1979) on the Islamization of knowledge offer a critical perspective on integrating revelation and rationality in Islamic education, these concepts have not been effectively applied to the management practices of madrasahs and Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia (Riwanda et al., 2023; Arroisi et al., 2023). This gap in the literature necessitates further investigation into how Qur'anic exegesis, specifically the Iqra' verse, can serve as the epistemological foundation for institutional leadership, offering a more holistic model of literacy.

The originality of this study lies in its innovative approach to integrating the exegesis of the Iqra' verse into Islamic education management. While classical exegesis has traditionally focused on spiritual and ethical guidance, this research posits that these interpretations can also inform the operational and strategic dimensions of educational leadership. By merging traditional exegesis with modern management theories, including those of al-Attas (1979) and contemporary frameworks like those proposed by OECD (2018), this study offers a novel, three-dimensional literacy model. This model emphasizes epistemological, operational, and axiological literacy, which can empower educational leaders to bridge the gap between Islamic values and the practical demands of managing educational institutions in the digital age (Sunarti et al., 2025; Yaqien et al., 2024). This new approach is essential for fostering effective leadership in Indonesian madrasahs and Islamic higher education institutions (Pabbajah, 2025).

The central research problem addressed by this study is the disconnect between the Qur'anic foundations of Islamic education and the secular management practices that dominate madrasah leadership. The research argues that the integration of the Iqra' verse as a core element of leadership literacy is crucial for bridging this gap. By proposing a three-dimensional literacy model based on the exegesis of Iqra', this study aims to provide a comprehensive

framework for Islamic education managers to better navigate the challenges posed by digital disruption and evolving educational demands. This model will not only enhance the operational efficiency of madrasahs and Islamic higher education institutions but also align them with the ethical and epistemological values of Islam. Thus, the study contributes to advancing the theory of managerial exegesis and promoting sustainable Islamic education practices that are responsive to both contemporary challenges and theological imperatives.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative library research design with a thematic-tafsir approach. This design was chosen due to the conceptual nature of the study, aiming to develop a theoretical model that integrates primary sources from the Qur'an and classical and secondary interpretations of Islamic educational management. The thematic approach allows for the extraction of literary themes (epistemological, operational, and axiological) from classical and contemporary interpretations, which are then linked to modern management theory. This is highly relevant to the common practice in Islamic educational management journals, which often combine management theory with Islamic principles to produce models that are applicable and relevant to current challenges.

This research location is not limited to a specific physical location, as it utilizes literature encompassing various sources including classical and contemporary interpretation texts, international and national scientific journal articles, Islamic educational management reference books, and policy documents published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia. The reason for selecting this research location was to cover a wide range of literature relevant to the research topic, both from the perspective of Islamic scholarship (tafsir) and educational management applied in the Indonesian context, particularly in responding to the increasingly important need for managerial literacy based on Qur'anic values in the digital era.

The data collection techniques used in this study were documentation and content analysis. The primary data were obtained from primary sources, namely the text of the Qur'an (QS. Al-'Alaq: 1–5) and authentic exegetical works such as Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Al-Jalalayn, Tafsir Al-Misbah, and Tafsir Al-Azhar. Additionally, secondary data were obtained through journal articles retrieved from the Sinta, Google Scholar, and Scopus databases using relevant keywords such as Islamic educational management, literacy leadership, and management interpretation. Reference books related to Islamic management, such as **Islamization of Knowledge** by Al-Attas (1979) and **Ihya' Ulumuddin**

by Al-Ghazali (n.d.), were also used as secondary data sources. Policy documents, such as the Madrasah Management Guidelines published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (2024), were also included in the secondary sources reviewed in this study.

Data analysis in this study followed the analytical model developed by Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M., & Saldana (2014), modified for tafsir research. The data analysis process involved three main stages, including data condensation (data reduction). At this stage, the researchers selected relevant quotations from tafsir texts and Islamic educational management literature related to Iqra'-based literacy. The researcher then conducted data display by selecting data and mapping it into a three-dimensional matrix, encompassing the themes of epistemological literacy (revelation as knowledge), operational literacy (strategic reading skills), and axiological literacy (application of moral responsibility/trust) linked to educational management principles. Furthermore, the researcher verified the resulting literacy model through conceptual synthesis, with validation using source triangulation (classical-modern interpretation and Islamic-Western management theory) to strengthen the model's integration.

To ensure data validity, this study employed several steps to verify its validity, including: Peer Debriefing, in which the researcher held discussions with two experts in management-based interpretation studies to obtain constructive feedback on the data analysis process and results. Furthermore, the researcher cross-checked the data, verifying its validity by cross-checking it against the theory of the Islamization of knowledge proposed by Al-Attas (1979), which serves as a reference in this study. This aims to ensure that the approach used in this study is consistent with the basic principles of Islam and Islamic educational management theory. Next, triangulation of sources, researchers compare data between classical and modern interpretations as well as Western and Islamic management theories to ensure that the resulting interpretation is a comprehensive and valid synthesis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Structure of Iqra' Literacy in Islamic Education Management

The findings of this research reveal that the three dimensions of Iqra' literacy epistemological, operational, and axiological are integral to the effective management of Islamic educational institutions. These dimensions align with and expand upon existing literature on Islamic education management, providing a deeper understanding of how the principles embedded in the Iqra' verse (QS. Al-'Alaq: 1-5) can guide contemporary leadership practices in this field. The epistemological dimension, derived from the phrase "أَفْرَأَ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي"

"خَلَقَ," emphasizes the foundational importance of tawhīd in knowledge acquisition. This aligns with the work of Al-Attas (1979), who posits that knowledge in Islam must be inseparable from divine revelation (Zarkasyi et al., 2025; Arslan, 2025). However, this research extends Al-Attas' framework by emphasizing that knowledge in Islamic educational institutions should not only be a matter of intellectual pursuit but must actively serve the welfare of the community (maṣlaḥah al-ummah). This theoretical expansion highlights the need for educational institutions to ensure that their vision and mission are explicitly rooted in divine principles, a point that is often underexplored in secular models of education management.

The operational dimension, which emerges from the phrase "الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ," emphasizes the role of tools and media in the transmission of knowledge. This finding is consistent with Al-Mahalli and As-Suyuthi's interpretation, which stresses the symbolic significance of the pen in preserving and disseminating knowledge. This research expands on this traditional understanding by incorporating modern digital technologies, such as learning management systems and academic information platforms, into the discussion (Koh et al., 2021). The findings corroborate contemporary studies in educational management, such as those by Akande et al. (2024), who emphasize the importance of data literacy and technology in educational planning and evaluation. However, this study pushes the boundaries of these interpretations by asserting that the integration of technology in Islamic education management must be grounded in a Qur'anic epistemological framework, rather than being merely a technical adaptation. The operational implications of this research suggest that educational leaders in Islamic institutions must not only embrace digital tools but do so in a way that aligns with their religious and moral responsibilities.

The axiological dimension, which is derived from the entire sequence of verses in QS. Al-'Alaq: 1–5, underscores the ethical implications of knowledge. As highlighted by contemporary tafsirs such as those by Quraish Shihab and Hamka, knowledge devoid of moral grounding can lead to arrogance, injustice, and the abuse of power (Rahim, 2025). This finding corresponds with the literature on educational ethics, where transparency, accountability, and moral responsibility are seen as core principles in the governance of educational institutions. For instance, studies by Brigue et al (2023) have examined how ethical leadership within educational systems is integral to fostering an environment of trust and responsibility. The current research underscores this point by linking the concept of amanah (trust) with managerial decision-making

processes in Islamic education management. The emphasis on shura (consultation) further aligns with Islamic teachings on collective decision-making, reinforcing the need for participatory governance in educational institutions. This axiological dimension is crucial, as it ensures that Islamic educational leadership is not just about managing knowledge but also about cultivating moral integrity in decision-making.

In terms of theoretical implications, this research contributes to the literature by proposing a comprehensive model of Iqra' literacy that integrates epistemological, operational, and axiological dimensions into a unified framework for Islamic education management. This contrasts with traditional approaches that tend to treat these dimensions separately or ignore the theological underpinnings of education management. By combining classical and modern interpretations of the Iqra' verse, this study offers a more holistic and dynamic approach to leadership in Islamic educational institutions. The model proposed here provides a fresh perspective that bridges the gap between traditional religious teachings and the demands of modern educational governance, offering an alternative to the secular management models often adopted by Islamic schools and universities. The integration of Qur'anic exegesis into educational leadership theory offers a much-needed renewal of Islamic education management practices, particularly in the digital age.

From a practical standpoint, the implications of this study are far-reaching. Islamic educational leaders, particularly in madrasahs and pesantren, can benefit from the integration of the Iqra' literacy model into their management practices. This research encourages leaders to reconsider their approaches to curriculum development, policymaking, and strategic planning, ensuring that all decisions are aligned with the ethical and epistemological foundations of Islam. Furthermore, the operational dimension emphasizes the importance of adopting digital technologies in a manner that enhances educational quality while remaining faithful to Islamic values. The axiological dimension reminds leaders of their moral responsibilities, urging them to prioritize the welfare of the community and uphold principles of transparency and accountability in all aspects of management. Ultimately, the study provides a roadmap for Islamic educational institutions to navigate the challenges of the digital age while remaining grounded in the values of the Qur'an and Islamic tradition. Struktur tiga dimensi ini dapat dirangkum dalam tabel berikut, yang disusun dari sintesis tafsir klasik, tafsir modern, dan literatur manajemen pendidikan Islam:

Table 1. The Dimensions of Iqra' Literacy and Their Managerial

Implications Based on Literature Review

Dimension	Foundation in Qur'anic Verse and Tafsir	Implications in Islamic Education Management
Epistemologist	– "أقرأ باسم ربك الذي خلق" reading with the awareness of God as the Creator	The formulation of an institution's vision, mission, and policy framework must be grounded in the principles of tawhīd, amānah (trustworthiness), and the pursuit of maṣlaḥah (public welfare).
Operational	– الذي علم بالقلم" teaching through the pen as a symbol of the instruments of knowledge	The management of data, documentation, and technology as the basis for planning, monitoring, and evaluation.
Axiological	The duty to apply and transmit knowledge in a truthful and responsible manner.	Decision making that upholds fairness, transparency, and participatory consultation (shūrā) within institutional governance.

A review of policy documents issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education, alongside scholarly articles on madrasah quality, reveals that while the epistemological aspect is often mentioned in the vision–mission statements (such as “to produce graduates who are faithful and pious”), it has not been fully translated into performance indicators or standard operating procedures. In other words, Qur’anic values typically remain at the level of rhetoric and have not yet been integrated into a comprehensive literacy framework that guides the institution’s overall management processes.

The Iqra’ Literacy Cycle in Decision-Making

This research identifies the Iqra’ literacy cycle in decision-making within Islamic educational institutions, offering a model that incorporates ethical and epistemological principles from the Iqra’ verse (QS. Al-‘Alaq: 1–5). The cycle includes data collection, critical reading, epistemological analysis, decision-making as amanah, and implementation through shura. This approach emphasizes "knowledge as trust" (amanah), underscoring accountability before God and society. It aligns with existing literature, such as Susiyati (2024) and Asrina (2023), which highlights the importance of reflection and critical thinking in effective leadership. However, unlike many studies that focus on isolated decision-making techniques, this research offers a Qur’anic-based framework, integrating ethical leadership with epistemological and spiritual considerations.

The study proposes a shift from purely data-driven, secular approaches to a model that incorporates divine revelation as a central guiding force in educational leadership. This contrasts with much of the existing literature, which often prioritizes technical methods over ethical leadership. The concept of "critical reading," based on the command "Iqra’ bismi rabbika," encourages leaders to examine not just data, but also the values and implications embedded within it. This nuanced approach aligns with Al-Attas' (1979) view of knowledge

as a means to bridge the material and spiritual worlds, ensuring that educational management serves the greater good (*maṣlahah al-ummah*) (Fadillah et al., 2023; Ma'arif et al., 2024). The model calls for questioning the origin, validity, and alignment of data with Qur'anic values, a step often neglected in conventional educational management systems.

Theoretically, the study extends Islamic education management discourse by introducing the "Iqra' literacy cycle" as an ongoing process of reflection and improvement. Decision-making is framed as a continuous cycle of learning, action, and reevaluation, which aligns with Wang et al. (2023), who view knowledge as a dynamic, evolving process always returning to divine guidance. The research underscores the importance of *shura* (consultation) as a tool for inclusive decision-making, ensuring that decisions are made collectively and fostering a sense of ownership in the community. This contrasts with conventional managerial approaches, where decisions are often made unilaterally, without deep consideration of communal input.

Practically, the Iqra' literacy cycle has implications for Islamic educational institutions, particularly in the context of digital transformation and data-driven decision-making. The model advocates for developing a data literacy culture within institutions, ensuring leaders can interpret and apply data responsibly in line with Islamic ethical principles. In the era of digital disruption, where large volumes of data are available, critical engagement and strategic analysis are vital. The Iqra' model encourages leaders to make decisions that are ethically sound and aligned with the long-term goals of Islamic education, emphasizing transparency, accountability, and the ethical application of knowledge. This approach supports sustainable and morally responsible educational practices, helping institutions gain the trust and support of both the community and external stakeholders.

Relevance of Findings to Research Scope and State of the Art

Protected forest management in Sukabumi Regency involves programs such as forest rehabilitation, area patrols, and community participation to address forest ecosystem damage and protect these areas. However, despite strong legal foundations, the implementation of these programs faces challenges like limited resources, minimal oversight, and the community's reliance on forest-based livelihoods. These factors hinder the effectiveness of conservation efforts and make it difficult to enforce good governance principles like transparency, accountability, and law enforcement.

Interviews with local informants reveal that land clearing remains a common practice due to economic pressures, with people using forest land to meet basic needs such as food and education. This dependence on forest

resources highlights the community's struggle to balance economic survival with conservation goals. Additionally, while government programs exist, their implementation is constrained by a lack of budget and technical expertise, such as the inability to fully utilize satellite technology for monitoring land cover changes.

Field observations further show that local communities adapt their land use based on fluctuating agricultural prices. When commodity prices rise, they tend to expand into protected forest areas, increasing the risk of deforestation. This dynamic indicates that land use decisions are largely driven by economic conditions, rather than long-term conservation objectives. The lack of awareness about sustainable conservation practices among local populations contributes to this issue, as many view protected forests as suitable for temporary use rather than long-term preservation.

Despite well-structured policies, the effectiveness of protected forest management in Sukabumi is undermined by the limited involvement of the community in planning and management, as well as weak enforcement of regulations. The community's economic priorities and inadequate oversight lead to ongoing forest degradation and unsuccessful rehabilitation programs. To improve forest management, there needs to be a better understanding of the long-term benefits of conservation and stronger enforcement to ensure that policies lead to tangible environmental improvements.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate a significant gap between the planning and implementation of protected forest management in Sukabumi Regency. Based on the findings, although policy documents such as the RTRW (Regional Spatial Plan), RPJMD (Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Daerah/RPJMD), and Renstra (Renstra) of the Environmental Agency (DLH) exist, their implementation is hampered by budget constraints and weak inter-agency coordination. This aligns with the findings of Ullah et al. (2024), who emphasized the importance of community involvement and adequate resources to support the success of forest rehabilitation programs. However, contrary to their findings, this study highlights that budget constraints are the biggest obstacle, not only disrupting rehabilitation but also hindering policy oversight and implementation (Mulpiyanti, 2025). This suggests that despite good planning, external factors such as financing and coordination are more dominant in determining policy effectiveness on the ground.

Furthermore, the community's economic dependence on forests is also a factor influencing the success of conservation programs. This aligns with Raihan (2023), who argued that forestry programs will be more effective if they provide

direct benefits to the community. These findings illustrate that communities surrounding protected forest areas prioritize their economic needs, such as clearing agricultural land to cover living expenses and education, over preserving the forest (Suwardi et al., 2023; Ullah et al., 2024). Thus, there is a mismatch between conservation policies that prioritize long-term forest protection and the community's short-term economic needs. The theoretical implication is that researchers can develop a more integrated concept of sustainability, where the balance between conservation and community economic empowerment is a primary focus.

Limitations in the implementation of technology for area monitoring are also important findings in this study. For example, although GIS technology and satellite imagery can provide accurate data for monitoring land cover change, their utilization remains limited due to low technical capacity and existing infrastructure. These findings confirm the findings of a study by Bettinger et al. (2023), which noted that the lack of digital infrastructure and technical training at the regional level hinders the use of technology that could support more efficient forest management. The practical implication of these findings is the importance of improving technical capacity and infrastructure in the regions, particularly in villages surrounding forest areas, so that technology can be optimally utilized for forest monitoring and supervision.

The pattern observed in this study, where planning policies are often not followed by effective implementation, reflects weaknesses in the application of good governance principles, particularly in terms of transparency, accountability, and community participation. As noted by Post et al. (2023), many public sector programs in Indonesia only measure outputs, not outcomes. This is also evident in forest management in Sukabumi, where indicators of success focus primarily on the number of trees planted, while there is inadequate measurement of the extent of restored areas. The theoretical implication of these findings is that evaluations of forest management policies should place greater emphasis on outcomes, such as comprehensive ecosystem restoration, rather than solely on outputs, which can be misleading.

In conclusion, this study reveals that despite sound planning in protected forest management in Sukabumi Regency, budget constraints, weak inter-agency coordination, and the community's economic dependence on forests are major obstacles to policy implementation. Based on these findings, it is important to develop a more holistic approach that encompasses community economic empowerment, technical and infrastructure capacity building, and more outcome-based policy evaluation. This aligns with the thinking of Wei et al.

(2024), who stated that sustainable forest management requires collaboration between policy, communities, and technology, as well as a balance between conservation interests and the economic needs of local communities.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the Iqra' verse (QS. Al-'Alaq: 1–5) provides a comprehensive foundation for developing a literacy framework in Islamic educational management through three interconnected dimensions: epistemological, operational, and axiological. The key lesson from this research is that Islamic educational management should not rely solely on technical data but must be grounded in the values of tawhid and amanah, requiring leaders to interpret data and information with moral and spiritual awareness. The proposed Iqra' literacy model offers a new perspective by bridging classical exegesis with contemporary management theory, presenting a literacy cycle applicable to the governance of modern Islamic educational institutions. This underscores the importance of critical reading and epistemological analysis in decision-making processes, emphasizing decisions based on trust, justice, transparency, and consultation (shura).

The strength of this study lies in its contribution to the literature on Islamic educational management, particularly in integrating Qur'anic revelation with modern management theory. The research offers a more holistic framework for educational management that combines spiritual, ethical, and technical dimensions, which is rarely found in existing literature. However, the limitation of this research is its conceptual nature, which has not yet been empirically tested. Therefore, further research involving field studies and mixed methods is needed to empirically validate and refine this model, as well as to assess its impact on leadership behavior, policy quality, and institutional innovation in various types of Islamic educational institutions.

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