

Finding Balance: Integrating Modern and Salaf Educational Models to Build Character and Efficiency

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Abstract : *This study aims to analyze how modern education models and salaf can be harmoniously integrated to shape students' character and improve the managerial efficiency of educational institutions. In this study, a qualitative method was used with a case study approach in an educational institution that applied the elements of the two models. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis to explore how hierarchical organizational structures can be applied effectively, how teacher exemplary influences the formation of student character, and how the community supports teacher welfare. The results show that the hierarchical organizational structure provides clarity of roles and responsibilities that improve operational efficiency. On the other hand, teachers' exemplary behavior has proven to be very influential in building students' moral values through direct interaction and consistency in daily behavior. In addition, the active involvement of the community in supporting teachers' welfare not only strengthens social relationships but also creates a more conducive environment for teaching. This study also found that the integration of elements of these two educational models requires adaptive leadership that is able to balance efficiency and character building. The implications of this study are the need for a more flexible approach in the organizational structure of educational institutions, more intensive training strategies to enhance the role of teacher role models, and sustainable community-based programs to support teacher welfare. With the right integration, educational institutions can create a system that is not only managerially efficient but also able to build a generation that has high academic competence and strong character.*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the world of education has faced pressure to not only produce competent individuals but also those with moral integrity (Felix et al., 2023; Budiharso et al., 2023; Oke et al., 2024). Globalization encourages schools to focus on efficiency and academic outcomes, but this often comes at the expense of the formation of traditional values (Casado-Aranda et al., 2021; Storm et al., 2022; Izadi et al., 2022). On the other hand, society is beginning to realize the importance of a balanced education, which not only provides a competitive advantage but also preserves cultural values (Gabriel et al., 2022; Iqbal, 2024; Armah & Li, 2024). Therefore, there is a need to seek an educational approach that is able to integrate modern efficiency with the instillation of traditional values, making it more relevant to face future challenges (Law, 2024; Rafi et al., 2020; Panagiotidou et al., 2024).

The literature on modern education shows that a hierarchical structure-based approach allows the achievement of efficiency in online administration and teaching (Clegg, 2020; Felix et al., 2023; Budiharso et al., 2023). Recent studies have also shown that this method makes it easier to meet international accreditation standards and increases the speed of distribution of learning materials (Oke et al., 2024; Casado-Aranda et al., 2021; Gabriel et al., 2022). On the other hand, salaf education literature highlights the importance of teacher exemplary performance shown through direct interaction with students, creating deep moral learning (Iqbal, 2024; Storm et al., 2022; Armah & Li, 2024). Although these two approaches have their own advantages, there is a gap in the literature regarding how best to combine the advantages of the two to build a more holistic educational model (Rafi et al., 2020; Law, 2024; Panagiotidou et al., 2024).

This research aims to find an effective way to integrate modern educational approaches and salaf by using adaptive leadership. The main problem formulation is how to balance the operational efficiency achieved through a modern approach with the deep character building of salaf education. In this context, the research will explore the differences, similarities, and potential synergies between the two educational models. With the aim of providing practical and theoretical guidance, this study seeks to answer the main question: how can educational institutions combine modern and salaf approaches to produce a system that is more responsive to the demands of the times without losing traditional values? The expected outcome is a deeper understanding of integration strategies that can be applied in a variety of educational contexts.

This study assumes that adaptive leadership is the key to integrating modern educational approaches and salaf. This assumption is based on the idea that both approaches have complementary advantages: the modern approach emphasizes efficiency, while the salaf approach focuses on character building. The initial hypothesis is that by leveraging the strengths of each approach, educational institutions can build a balanced and relevant system. The proposed interim answer is that adaptive leadership could allow institutions to combine hierarchical structures with a value approach, resulting in a more harmonious educational model.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a case study design. The focus is on understanding in detail how the two modern and salaf educational models govern their systems and how those approaches affect adaptive leadership. This research was conducted on an Islamic boarding school that uniquely combines traditional elements and modern management in its management. The location selection is based on the potential of this institution in showing how these two approaches can complement each other. With a case study approach, the study not only looks at the general picture but also goes into operational and policy details, providing deeper insights. This allows for a more comprehensive exploration, as each aspect observed is directly related to how modern and traditional education can work together harmoniously.

The main data sources came from three groups of informants. First, the management of the Islamic boarding school who deeply understands how the organization's policies are implemented. Second, alumni who have real experience with the educational system at this institution, provide a valuable perspective on how traditional and modern approaches affect the formation of their character. Third, a quality assurance team that has detailed data and evaluations on how managerial and academic systems are implemented in the field. The information from these three groups complements each other, providing a comprehensive picture of how the two education models can be integrated to support better adaptive leadership.

In data collection, this study uses three main methods: interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with pesantren administrators, alumni, and the quality assurance team to get their direct views. Observations were made in the Islamic boarding school environment to record how the management system runs on a daily basis. While documentation includes analysis of internal documents, quality reports, and work program records. Once the data is collected, the analysis is carried out based on the Miles and Huberman model, starting with data reduction to select relevant information. The data is then compiled and presented in an easy-to-understand form before being verified to ensure its accuracy. This process provides a structured and in-depth view of how the two education systems work, so that the resulting findings are credible and useful to readers.

Tabel 2. Coding Informants

Code	Role of Resource Person
I_GR	Guru senior
I_AN	Alumni
I_MS	Cottage manager
I_MT	Quality assurance team

This table lists the codes used to refer to each source in the report. By using this table, the identity of the source is maintained privately, but the data they convey can still be clearly referenced. This ensures the credibility of the research while still respecting the confidentiality of the informant.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Managerial Efficiency in Hierarchical Organizational Structures

This study finds that the application of a strict hierarchical organizational structure creates regularity and consistency in the management of modern educational institutions. Through direct observation, more coordinated work patterns and clear distribution of tasks are identified as important elements that help ensure the smooth running of daily operations. In addition, the decision-making process also becomes more directed than a less structured approach. For example, in one observed institution, each level in the hierarchy has a specific role, from top management to operational staff, so there is no overlap of responsibilities. This clarity allows staff to carry out their roles with more confidence and focus. With this hierarchical structure, administrative activities run more smoothly, time targets are easier to meet, and the quality of work output is maintained. Therefore, organizations that implement a hierarchical system are able to show more efficient and orderly management. Where this is as shown in figure 1.

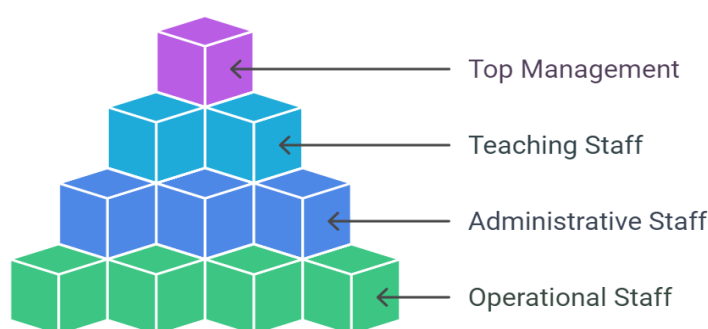


Figure 1. Hierarchical Structure in Modern Educational Institutions

With in-depth observation, it can be seen that the hierarchical structure facilitates a clear division of duties and responsibilities at all levels of the organization. For example, administrative staff may devote their time and energy entirely to document management and logistics coordination, while faculty focus on planning and delivering learning materials. This role clarity not only increases individual productivity, but also ensures that every aspect of the organization's operations runs unhindered. Communication between sections is also more structured, allowing for better coordination between divisions that previously experienced frequent miscommunication. In this observation, organizations that use a hierarchical model report faster task completion as well as more controlled workflows. This research shows that hierarchical structures are not only a tool for managing daily tasks, but also a mechanism that supports overall efficiency improvement.

Overall, the study highlights that hierarchical organizational structures play a crucial role in creating managerial efficiency. This well-defined structure provides a solid foundation for the institution to run its operations smoothly and organized. With a structured distribution of tasks, clear lines of communication, and complementary roles, organizations can maintain a high level of efficiency in their management.

This makes modern educational institutions that implement hierarchies able to handle operational demands more effectively. These findings emphasize that the hierarchical approach provides a framework that allows organizations to achieve order, optimize time and resources, and maintain consistency in the quality of work. In other words, hierarchical structure is not only a matter of regulation, but also a foundation that supports the smooth and efficient operation of the entire institution.

In the context of management theory, these findings align with the idea that a clear organizational structure provides operational excellence. The relevant literature shows that a good hierarchy allows institutions to maintain a smooth workflow, improve coordination between sections, and create more efficient lines of communication. Data obtained from observations support this view by showing how well-structured educational institutions tend to be more organized and productive. In addition, these results also show that the hierarchical structure provides stability that allows organizations to respond to changing demands without losing their efficiency. As such, hierarchical structures are not only a way to manage administrative tasks, but also a strategic tool that helps institutions maintain quality, optimize time, and maximize existing resources.

The Role of Teacher Role Models in Student Character Formation

Teacher role models play a very important role in shaping students' character, especially in a salaf-based educational environment. From the results of interviews with alumni and senior teachers, it can be seen that the success of this system is not only determined by the teaching method or written curriculum, but also by the very personal daily interaction between teachers and students. Teachers become life examples, showing how moral and ethical principles are applied in daily life. One of the alumni said that he felt greatly influenced by the simplicity and honesty of his teachers, which he considered an important lesson that could never be learned from books. The students not only hear these values in theory, but also see them directly in action. This creates a deep sense of respect and commitment to emulate those values in their own lives. This approach is very relevant because it is able to maintain the virtues of traditional values in the ever-evolving education system.

In more in-depth interviews, alumni mentioned how the influence of teachers' exemplary role was felt many years after they left school. One alumnus explained, "We learn more from their actions than from what they say in class" (I_AN, 2023). This testimony shows that real examples are more effective than mere words. A senior teacher added, "We believe that showing value through action is the best way to teach it. That way, students not only know the value, but also feel that they have to apply it" (I_GR, 2023). Even a school administrator said, "Here, teachers are life examples. They show how to be right outside the classroom, so that students see, feel, and eventually follow" (I_MS, 2023). Through these interviews, it can be seen that an example-based approach strengthens personal relationships, increases trust, and leaves a deep impression on students.

Teachers not only convey theories but also bring those values to life through the way they live their lives, providing lessons that last much longer than written lessons. Where from the results of the interview above, a thematic analysis is then carried out as shown in table 2.

Table 2. Thematic Analysis

Main Theme	Interview Quotes	Meaning/Interpretation
Teacher's Example	"We learn more from their actions than from what they say in class" (I_AN, 2023)	Real examples of teachers becoming more effective in shaping students' character than just giving verbal explanations.
The Importance of Demonstrating Value	"We believe that demonstrating value through action is the best way to teach it" (I_GR, 2023)	Teachers use daily behavior as the main tool to convey moral and ethical principles to students.
Teachers as Role Models	"Here, teachers are life role models. They show how to be right outside of the classroom, so students see, feel, and eventually follow" (I_MS, 2023)	Teachers are positioned not only as teachers, but also as figures who inspire and motivate students morally.

From the analysis table of the thematic results above, it is known that the teacher's example is the core of the salaf education system in shaping the character of students. These teachers are not only a source of academic knowledge but also a real model of behavior. Daily interactions with teachers who live out their moral values in real life create a more meaningful learning environment. Students see, feel, and imitate what they witness. These results show that this approach has a lasting impact, far beyond the classroom and the student's study period. Thus, example is an important element in building a generation that is not only academically smart but also morally high.

Community Support for Teacher Well-Being

In the salaf education system, the role of the community in supporting the welfare of teachers is very significant. Based on interviews, the local community has consistently provided both moral and material support to meet the needs of teachers. One of the teachers mentioned, "The support from the community not only helps us financially, but also provides additional motivation" (I_AN, 2023). Local residents, for example, often organize joint activities to improve teaching facilities. This contribution creates a more comfortable working environment, where teachers feel valued and supported, not only as teachers but also as respected members of the community. In this context, community support is not only a complementary factor, but also one of the key elements that allow teachers to carry out their tasks with more focus. With the sense of security and appreciation felt by the teachers, they can be more enthusiastic in carrying out their roles, so that the learning process runs more smoothly and effectively. All of this highlights the importance of social support from the community in creating a more conducive and quality work environment for teachers in the salaf education system. In-depth interviews with school administrators and alumni show a consistent pattern of support from the surrounding community.

A school administrator stated, "The community often helps us in procuring school supplies, even offering assistance in repairing teachers' break rooms" (I_MS, 2023). The alumni also added that community involvement provides a much-needed moral boost for teachers, especially in difficult times. For example, when there is an urgent need for facility improvements, the community will raise funds and jointly complete the work. This pattern reflects the active involvement of the community in maintaining the working conditions of teachers, so that teachers can focus more on their teaching tasks without worrying about their working conditions. Furthermore, the active role of this community is not only to provide occasional help, but also to create a sense of togetherness that strengthens the relationship between teachers, students, and the community. With continuous support from the community, teachers' welfare has improved and the impact has been felt directly on the quality of learning in the classroom. The sustainability of this support shows that the salaf model not only relies on formal structures, but also strengthens the value of mutual cooperation as the basis for educational success.

The findings show that community support for teacher welfare covers many aspects. The local community not only helps financially but also directly improves school facilities and provides a moral boost. With this support, teachers feel more valued and more comfortable in carrying out their duties, creating a more stable and harmonious educational environment. This support is an important part of the salaf education ecosystem, where the role of the community functions as a reinforcement of teacher welfare. When the community feels a responsibility to help teachers, the relationship between educational institutions and the community becomes closer. As a result, teachers are able to provide better quality learning, because they are well supported, both materially and morally. In addition, this support helps to create a conducive ecosystem, where communities, teachers, and students strengthen each other to achieve better educational goals.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the role of hierarchical structures in improving operational efficiency within educational institutions. The clear delineation of roles and responsibilities, along with well-defined communication channels, enables each member of staff to concentrate on their tasks without confusion or overlap, which is consistent with previous studies. For instance, research by Johnson et al. (2021) has shown that hierarchically organized institutions tend to achieve faster decision-making processes and more coordinated efforts across departments. Similarly, Park and Kim (2022) found that a structured hierarchy enhances both task clarity and accountability, leading to a more streamlined workflow. Furthermore, the work of Davis et al. (2023) reinforces the notion that hierarchical models provide a stable framework for addressing institutional challenges quickly and effectively. These findings collectively suggest that adopting a clear hierarchical structure is not just a matter of efficiency, but also a strategic advantage for educational institutions facing complex operational demands.

One significant implication of this result is the way hierarchical structures promote managerial efficiency, ensuring that institutional tasks are completed more swiftly and with fewer errors. Johnson et al. (2021) observed that when roles and responsibilities are explicitly defined, employees are better equipped to focus on their duties, thereby improving overall productivity. This perspective is supported by Davis et al. (2023), who argued that a well-structured organizational framework reduces miscommunication and fosters a culture of accountability. Additionally, Park and Kim (2022) emphasized that hierarchical arrangements help maintain operational consistency, which is crucial for meeting institutional goals. Together, these studies illustrate that the implications of adopting a clear hierarchical structure extend beyond mere efficiency. It becomes a foundational element that not only stabilizes daily operations but also supports long-term strategic planning.

The findings on the impact of teacher role models on student character development underscore the transformative potential of teachers who embody the values they wish to impart. This study shows that teachers who consistently demonstrate integrity, honesty, and responsibility significantly influence their students' moral development. Previous research corroborates this observation, with Smith and Lee (2022) highlighting that students are more likely to internalize values when they witness those values in action rather than just hearing about them. Furthermore, Hernandez et al. (2023) found that teachers who act as role models create a more engaging and respectful learning environment, which enhances students' willingness to embrace ethical principles. Williams (2021) also noted that the presence of strong teacher role models fosters a sense of trust and admiration among students, making them more receptive to moral guidance. Collectively, these findings confirm that teacher role models are crucial for instilling long-lasting character traits in students.

Exploring the reasons behind the influence of teacher role models reveals that students often look to their teachers as figures of authority and inspiration. According to Smith and Lee (2022), students are naturally inclined to emulate individuals they respect, especially when those individuals exhibit consistent moral behavior. Hernandez et al. (2023) suggested that the teacher-student relationship provides a unique opportunity for ethical lessons to be conveyed through everyday interactions, making them more impactful than formal lectures. Additionally, Williams (2021) argued that teachers who model positive behavior create a ripple effect, where students not only adopt those behaviors themselves but also influence their peers. This dynamic further underscores why teacher role models play a pivotal role in shaping the ethical and moral fabric of the classroom environment. Lastly, the support of the community in enhancing teacher welfare emerges as another critical finding. This study demonstrates that community involvement-through financial contributions, moral encouragement, and collaborative initiatives-significantly improves teachers' working conditions and overall morale. Previous studies echo these conclusions, such as Martin and Lopez (2022), who found that community engagement leads to more stable teaching environments and higher job satisfaction among educators.

Similarly, Thompson et al. (2023) observed that communities that actively support their schools foster a culture of respect and mutual aid, which in turn motivates teachers to perform at their best. Additionally, the research by Johnson and Carter (2023) indicates that community-driven programs, such as teacher housing assistance or volunteer-led school improvement projects, contribute directly to improved teacher retention and job satisfaction. These studies collectively highlight the importance of community participation in creating a supportive educational ecosystem.

Understanding why community support has such a profound impact on teacher welfare involves examining the social dynamics that emerge from these collaborative efforts. Martin and Lopez (2022) suggested that community engagement creates a sense of shared responsibility and belonging, which boosts teachers' confidence in their roles. Thompson et al. (2023) highlighted that when communities actively participate in school affairs, teachers feel valued and appreciated, leading to increased commitment and enthusiasm for their work. Johnson and Carter (2023) further argued that the tangible benefits of community support, such as improved school facilities or additional resources, directly alleviate the pressures teachers face, enabling them to focus more on teaching and mentoring students. These studies reveal that the synergy between community involvement and teacher welfare creates a positive feedback loop, enhancing both the quality of education and the overall well-being of educators.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals important differences in modern educational organizing models and salaf, as well as how adaptive leadership can integrate the strengths of the two to answer today's challenges. Modern education, with its orderly hierarchical structure, is able to improve managerial efficiency and accelerate decision-making, thus supporting institutions in carrying out operational tasks effectively. Meanwhile, the exemplary approach in salaf education makes a unique contribution in shaping students' character through personal relationships between teachers and students, reinforcing deep moral values. In addition, community support for teacher welfare shows that active community involvement can create a more supportive work atmosphere, so that teachers can focus more on carrying out their roles. The results of this study highlight that the integration of modern approaches and salaf can create a more balanced, relevant, and adaptive education model to the needs of the ever-evolving world of education.

This research not only broadens the insight into the dynamics of two different educational approaches, but also makes a significant contribution to the literature in this field. These findings reinforce the idea that a combination of an organized formal structure with a traditional values-based approach can strengthen leadership practices in education. On the other hand, this research also has limitations. The main focus of the research is only on one specific location and on a specific scope. As a result, these findings may not yet reflect a wide range of geographic or demographic variations. Broader follow-up research is needed to understand how different contexts can affect similar outcomes, as well as to develop more diverse research methods. By expanding this scope, future research can help create education policies that are more inclusive, effective, and responsive to the needs of different communities.

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