



From Values to Practice: Narrative Accounts of Quality Culture Construction Through Islamic Principles and TQM in an Indonesian State Madrasah

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ABSTRACT

Background. Islamic educational institutions, especially madrasas, face increasing pressure to maintain academic quality while preserving their religious identity. MTsN 2 Tulungagung represents a case where Islamic values and modern management principles converge, yet empirical studies on systematically embedding transcendental values into quality management frameworks remain limited.

Purpose. This study aims to examine the development of a quality culture at MTsN 2 Tulungagung by exploring how the Islamic principles Itqan (precision), Ihsan (excellence), and Amanah (trustworthiness) are integrated into contemporary management practices, and to assess the role of institutional leadership and evaluation mechanisms in sustaining quality improvement.

Methods. A qualitative case study with descriptive-analytical orientation was employed, involving participatory observation, in-depth interviews with key informants including the principal, vice principal for curriculum affairs, teachers, administrative staff, school committee members, the Quality Assurance Unit (UPM), students, and parents and document review. Data were analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña framework of data reduction, thematic coding, narrative display, and interpretive conclusion drawing.

Results. Embedding Islamic transcendental values into institutional practices strengthened intrinsic motivation among school members, promoted a stable quality culture, and facilitated collaborative working relationships. Transformational leadership combined with human resource development strategies supported staff engagement, while a monitoring and evaluation system based on the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle reinforced continuous quality assurance.

Conclusion. Developing a sustainable quality culture in madrasas requires balancing Islamic ethical values with systematic, evidence-informed management practices. The proposed MBMM-TQM model offers a conceptual framework applicable to madrasas with comparable characteristics, refined through expert review and a Focus Group Discussion. As it was developed from a single institutional setting, further studies across multiple madrasas are needed to examine its broader applicability.

KEYWORDS

Islamic Values, Islamic School Management, Madrasah Quality Improvement, Quality Culture, Total Quality Management

INTRODUCTION

The improvement of education quality in Indonesia continues to leave unresolved structural problems, particularly within Islamic educational institutions such

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as madrasas. Historically, madrasas have often been perceived as second-tier educational institutions compared to public schools, despite the fact that both are legally positioned under an equally recognized national education system (Khoiriyani et al., 2023). Official data indicate that disparities in educational access and infrastructure remain important challenges in Indonesia. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has continued to map and address infrastructure needs across madrasas, including through the allocation of IDR 848.599 billion under the 2025 State Sharia Securities (SBSN) scheme for the development and improvement of madrasah facilities (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024). In addition, data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS) show that educational participation declines considerably at the upper-secondary-school age. In East Java, the School Participation Rate (SPR) in 2024 was 97.68% among children aged 13–15 years, but decreased to 76.44% among those aged 16–18 years. The disparity was more pronounced between urban and rural areas, with the SPR for those aged 16–18 years reaching 81.98% in urban areas compared with only 68.71% in rural areas (BPS-Statistics of Jawa Timur Province, 2025). These figures indicate that ensuring equitable access to quality education, particularly at the upper-secondary level and in geographically disadvantaged areas, remains an important challenge. This disparity is not merely physical and technological in nature; it also touches upon more fundamental paradigmatic and managerial dimensions. The General Chairperson of PBNU, KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf, at the Madrasa Reform Consolidation Forum supported by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Bappenas, and the World Bank, emphasized that two forms of disparity continue to haunt Islamic education in Indonesia: a paradigmatic gap concerning fundamental educational assumptions, and a technological gap encompassing management models and institutional technical maintenance (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023). Both forms of disparity place madrasas in a vulnerable position when competing for quality within the national education landscape.

Amid these challenges, the development of a quality culture is widely regarded as the most fundamental foundation for the sustainable institutional transformation of madrasas. Quality culture is not merely a program or a short-term policy; rather, it constitutes an organizational value system that drives continuous improvement across all levels of an institution (Putri et al., 2025). Research conducted by Bukhori and Fahmi at MTs Al-Hurriyyah demonstrated that the optimization of quality culture significantly contributes to improvements in students' academic achievement (Bukhori, 2022). In a similar vein, Holili and Fitriyah affirm that quality-oriented organizational culture transformation in madrasas cannot be separated from the reinforcement of Islamic values that form the institutional identity of such institutions (Holili, 2025). Accordingly, the quality culture of madrasas possesses a unique dimension that distinguishes it from general educational institutions it must be capable of synergistically integrating modern management standards with Islamic spiritual principles and ethics.

In this context, Total Quality Management (TQM) emerges as a management approach that has proven relevant and effective within educational institution settings. Sallis defines TQM as a philosophy and methodology of continuous improvement that places customer satisfaction, leadership commitment, and the engagement of all organizational elements as its primary pillars (Sallis, 2002). A number of empirical studies have confirmed TQM's effectiveness in Islamic educational institutions: Rahmadani and Soddiq found that the implementation of TQM at MTs Ma'arif Darussholihin Sleman was able to measurably improve educational quality (Rahmadani, 2023); while Febriani and Sesmiarni reported that the application of spiritually-based TQM in several madrasas demonstrably improved work culture, albeit still constrained by limitations in human resources and infrastructure (Febriani, 2024). Furthermore, Rosidin's comprehensive study

analyzing TQM implementation in Islamic secondary schools across Indonesia concluded that the adaptation of TQM, when combined with local values and participatory leadership, can enhance both learning effectiveness and stakeholder satisfaction (Rosidin's, 2025)

Although scholarly inquiry into TQM within Islamic educational institutions has grown considerably, the majority of existing research remains at a descriptive level portraying how TQM is applied without advancing further to produce conceptual models that can be operationalized by other madrasas. A systematic literature review conducted by Afriantoni on various TQM studies in madrasas confirms that the primary barriers to TQM implementation including limited resources, resistance to change, and insufficient understanding of TQM have never been synthesized into a comprehensive and contextually grounded model framework (Afriantoni et.al, , 2025). This condition creates a significant epistemological gap: madrasa education practitioners have abundant references regarding what is being done, yet lack sufficient guidance on how to construct a structured and sustainable quality culture system.

This gap becomes even more pronounced when narrowed to the specific context of State Islamic Junior Secondary Schools (MTsN). Existing TQM studies generally focus on the Aliyah level, Islamic higher education institutions, or pesantren (Sonia, 2021; Yusuf & Mahfud, 2022), while in-depth studies that specifically construct a TQM-based quality culture model at the MTs level are virtually absent from the national literature. Yet MTsN, as a junior secondary education unit under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, possesses unique characteristics that distinguish it from general junior high schools as well as from Aliyah institutions or Islamic universities ranging from a curriculum structure that integrates general and religious subjects, the leadership culture of the madrasa principal, to the complex expectations of various stakeholders. Sallis's TQM theory was itself designed for educational contexts in Western countries and has not been rigorously tested for its compatibility with the institutional characteristics of MTsN in Indonesia (Hidayati, 2025). Therefore, a study is needed that not only describes the implementation of TQM but also explicitly constructs a contextual and applicable quality culture model that has the potential to be adapted and applied to other madrasas with similar characteristics in Indonesia, while taking into account the specific contexts and characteristics of each madrasa.

Departing from the urgency and research gaps outlined above, this study is directed toward achieving three primary objectives. First, to provide an in-depth description of Total Quality Management implementation at MTsN 2 Tulungagung from the perspectives of the madrasa principal, the vice principal for curriculum affairs, and teachers. Second, to identify the enabling and inhibiting factors in the development of quality culture at the institution. Third and this constitutes the principal contribution of this study to construct a TQM-based madrasa quality culture model that can serve as a conceptual reference for MTsN administrators and equivalent Islamic educational institutions across Indonesia. In doing so, this study is expected not only to fill the existing gaps in the scholarly literature, but also to deliver tangible practical contributions to the advancement of Islamic education quality management at the national level.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach using an instrumental case study design. This design was selected because the study sought not only to understand how Total Quality Management (TQM) was implemented within a specific institutional setting, but also to use the case as an analytical basis for constructing a contextually grounded quality culture model that has the potential to be adapted in other madrasas with comparable characteristics. The study therefore does not claim statistical generalizability or universal applicability of the resulting model. Rather, it

emphasizes contextual understanding and the potential transferability of the findings to institutions with sufficiently similar organizational and cultural conditions. A case study design is particularly appropriate when research questions focus on *how* a phenomenon operates within a real-life setting in which the phenomenon and its context cannot be clearly separated (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018).

The study was conducted at MTsN 2 Tulungagung. The research site was selected purposively rather than through random sampling because it constituted an information-rich case that was relevant to the objectives of the study. The selection was based on several considerations, including the madrasah's accreditation record, established quality-management practices, the existence of an internal quality assurance structure, and its relatively comprehensive academic and institutional management system. Accordingly, MTsN 2 Tulungagung was not treated as statistically representative of all madrasahs in Indonesia, but as a bounded case through which the processes, meanings, and mechanisms underlying the development of quality culture could be examined in depth (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018).

Informants were selected through *purposive sampling* based on the relevance of their roles, experiences, and direct involvement in quality management within the madrasah (Miles et al., 2014). Four key informants were strategically selected to represent different levels of the institutional quality system. The first was the madrasa principal, who holds strategic authority over quality policy, institutional direction, resource allocation, and the development of the madrasah's quality vision. The second was the vice principal for curriculum affairs, who plays a central role in translating institutional quality standards into academic planning, instructional processes, teacher supervision, and curriculum evaluation. The third was a representative of the Internal Quality Assurance Unit (*Unit Benjamin Mutu* [UPM]), whose responsibilities include quality monitoring, internal auditing, evaluation, and the formulation of recommendations for institutional improvement. The fourth was a teacher, who provided a practice-based perspective on how quality policies, academic standards, and institutional expectations were experienced and implemented at the classroom level. The inclusion of these four informants enabled the study to examine quality culture from strategic, structural, academic, and operational perspectives.

Ethical considerations were addressed throughout the data collection and reporting processes. Before the interviews were conducted, each informant was provided with information concerning the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, the intended use of interview data, and their right to decline to answer particular questions or withdraw from participation. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. To protect confidentiality in the reporting of findings, informants were identified according to their institutional roles rather than by their personal names, using the identifiers Principal (P1), UPM Representative (P2), Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs (P3), and Teacher (P4). This procedure was intended to minimize unnecessary personal identification while preserving the institutional context required for data interpretation. The use of real names should only be retained when explicit consent for identifiable quotation has been obtained from the respective informants.

Data were collected through three complementary techniques. First, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with all four informants to explore their experiences, perceptions, interpretations, and roles in the implementation and development of quality culture. The semi-structured format enabled the researcher to address predetermined topics while retaining sufficient flexibility to explore meanings and experiences that emerged during the interviews. Second, participatory observation was undertaken to examine observable practices, interactions, routines, symbols, and institutional activities associated with quality management within the madrasa environment. Third, documentary analysis was conducted on relevant institutional documents,

including the madrasa strategic plan, UPM work programs, internal quality evaluation documents, meeting records, and accreditation reports. The combination of interview, observation, and documentary evidence enabled the study to develop a richer and more contextualized understanding of how quality culture was constructed, interpreted, and enacted across different institutional levels (Yin, 2018).

Data analysis followed an interactive process consisting of three interconnected and continuous stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 2014). Thematic analysis was conducted through a layered coding process. Open coding was initially used to identify concepts, recurring patterns, actions, meanings, and issues emerging from the empirical data. Axial coding was subsequently employed to examine relationships among the emerging categories, while selective coding was used to integrate the principal categories into a coherent explanatory framework (Saldaña, 2016).

The analytical process did not stop at determining whether the findings were consistent with existing TQM theories. Instead, particular attention was given to explaining why specific quality-management practices emerged, how they operated within everyday institutional settings, how institutional actors interpreted them, how Islamic values such as *itqan*, *amanah*, *ihsan*, and *tarbiyah* were embedded and enacted within these practices, and through what structural and cultural mechanisms a quality culture was formed, reinforced, and sustained (Saldaña, 2016).

To strengthen the depth of interpretation, interview evidence was examined across informants whenever more than one participant addressed the same theme. Convergent and divergent perspectives were retained in the analysis rather than reducing each theme to a single individual account. Interview quotations were also interpreted alongside contextual information obtained through observation and documentary analysis. This strategy was intended to produce a more comprehensive *thick description* by connecting participants' statements with the situations, routines, structures, interactions, and meanings within which those statements were produced (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data trustworthiness was established through source triangulation, technique triangulation, member checking, and reflexive analysis. Source triangulation was undertaken by comparing the perspectives of the four informants, particularly where their different institutional positions provided complementary or contrasting interpretations of the same quality-management practices. For example, statements concerning institutional quality standards were compared among the principal, UPM representative, vice principal for curriculum affairs, and teacher to determine how strategic policies were understood and experienced at different organizational levels.

Technique triangulation was conducted by systematically comparing interview data with evidence obtained through participatory observation and institutional documentation. This process helped ensure that the interpretations were not based solely on individual perceptions but were supported, challenged, or contextualized by other forms of empirical evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Member checking was also conducted by presenting summaries of the interpreted findings to the informants to determine whether the researcher's interpretations adequately reflected their experiences and intended meanings. Where clarification was required, the interpretation was reconsidered in relation to the original interview data and other supporting evidence. These procedures were used to strengthen the credibility and confirmability of the findings in accordance with established principles of qualitative inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Researcher positionality and reflexivity were explicitly considered because qualitative interpretation may be influenced by the researcher's interaction with the research setting,

participants, and data. The researcher acknowledged that the purposive selection of MTsN 2 Tulungagung and direct engagement with its institutional actors could influence what was observed, emphasized, and interpreted. The madrasah was therefore approached as an information-rich case rather than as an institution selected to confirm predetermined assumptions about successful TQM implementation. Throughout data collection and analysis, efforts were made to distinguish participants' accounts and empirical evidence from the researcher's personal expectations and theoretical assumptions.

Reflexivity was maintained by documenting analytical decisions, emerging interpretations, potential assumptions, and discrepancies encountered throughout the research process. Interpretations were repeatedly compared with the original interview data, observational evidence, and institutional documents. Existing theoretical frameworks were used as interpretive lenses rather than as predetermined categories into which the empirical findings had to be forced. Themes reflecting limitations, tensions, resistance, administrative burden, or other findings that did not necessarily support a positive portrayal of the madrasah were retained in the analysis. This reflexive procedure, together with triangulation and member checking, was intended to reduce the influence of researcher bias and strengthen the transparency, credibility, and confirmability of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Total Quality Management at Madrasah

Findings from the in-depth interview with the school principal indicate that the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) at MTsN 2 Tulungagung begins with a consciously developed institutional vision in which quality is positioned as the organizing principle of institutional life. Quality is not treated merely as an administrative requirement or as a target associated with accreditation. Instead, it becomes a reference point for decision-making, program planning, service delivery, and institutional evaluation. The principal explained: "We make quality the soul of all madrasah programs. It is not merely an accreditation target, but the way we work and the way we serve students and parents. In every meeting and every policy, quality is always the first question." (P1, 2026).

The statement illustrates that quality leadership at MTsN 2 Tulungagung operates through more than formal authority. The principal attempts to transform quality from an institutional slogan into a shared working orientation. This process occurs because the principal occupies a strategic position in determining priorities, allocating resources, setting expectations, and repeatedly communicating what the institution considers important. When quality is consistently placed at the beginning of meetings, policy discussions, and program evaluations, organizational members gradually encounter the same message in different institutional settings. Through repetition, modeling, supervision, and policy reinforcement, quality becomes increasingly embedded in everyday organizational routines.

This mechanism explains why leadership commitment is important in the formation of a quality culture. Institutional culture does not emerge automatically from written standards. It develops when organizational values are continuously translated into observable practices. At MTsN 2 Tulungagung, this translation can be seen in several concrete policies already being implemented, including the establishment of an internal quality assurance team, quarterly quality evaluation meetings based on institutional data, and a reward system for teaching and non-teaching staff who demonstrate outstanding performance. These practices create a connection between institutional expectations and individual behavior. Quality is therefore communicated not only

normatively, but also structurally through evaluation, recognition, monitoring, and follow-up mechanisms.

This pattern is consistent with Mu'alimin et al., whose study involving 40 participants across Indonesian madrasahs found that principals who demonstrate quality management through structured policies, resource allocation, and visible commitment tend to generate stronger teacher engagement in quality improvement activities (Mu'allimin et.al, 2026). However, the significance of the present finding extends beyond confirming the role of leadership described in previous studies. It shows the mechanism through which leadership commitment is transformed into organizational behavior: quality priorities are repeatedly communicated, institutionalized through formal structures, monitored through evaluation, and reinforced through recognition and corrective action.

From a theoretical perspective, this finding corresponds with the first pillar of Sallis's TQM framework, namely *leadership commitment* (Sallis, 2002). Nevertheless, the context of MTsN 2 Tulungagung reveals an additional dimension that is not fully captured by a conventional managerial interpretation of TQM. Quality is understood not only as organizational effectiveness but also as a moral and spiritual responsibility. The principle of *itqan* gives religious meaning to the pursuit of excellence by positioning careful, responsible, and high-quality work as part of one's ethical obligation before God.

The role of *itqan* is important because it changes the motivational basis of quality practices. Teachers and institutional leaders are not expected to pursue quality solely because of external standards, accreditation requirements, or managerial control. Rather, professional responsibility is connected with religious consciousness. In this sense, Islamic values function as an internal normative mechanism that strengthens formal quality standards. When institutional procedures are interpreted through *itqan*, quality improvement becomes both a technical task and an ethical commitment. This explains how Islamic values can operate within TQM without replacing its managerial principles: they provide moral meaning that supports discipline, responsibility, and continuous improvement.

Accordingly, the application of TQM at MTsN 2 Tulungagung suggests that quality culture develops through the interaction of two mechanisms. The first is structural, involving policies, evaluation procedures, leadership direction, and institutional monitoring. The second is normative, involving religious values that provide moral justification for why quality should be pursued consistently. The interaction between these two mechanisms differentiates the madrasah context from a purely managerial model and provides an empirical basis for the development of a quality framework grounded in Islamic educational values.

The interview with the Head of the Internal Quality Assurance Unit (*Unit Benjamin Mutu/UPM*) revealed another important layer of TQM implementation. Whereas the principal establishes strategic direction, the UPM performs a more specialized monitoring and verification function. The UPM representative described the unit's role as follows: "We function as the internal quality monitoring body. Every semester we conduct a quality audit of each division curriculum, student affairs, facilities and compile the results into a quality report submitted to the principal. If there are components that fall below the standard, we issue recommendations for improvement." (P2, 2026)

This statement shows that quality assurance at MTsN 2 Tulungagung has moved beyond informal supervision and has been institutionalized in a dedicated organizational mechanism. The importance of the UPM lies in its capacity to create a systematic link between standards, evidence, evaluation, and corrective action. Each academic and administrative unit is not simply expected to

perform well; its performance is examined against predetermined standards, documented, reported, and followed by recommendations when discrepancies are identified.

The mechanism is important because institutional quality culture requires organizational memory. Without documentation and periodic review, weaknesses may be recognized temporarily but easily forgotten. Through semester-based audits and written reports, the UPM converts institutional experience into quality data that can be revisited and used for subsequent decision-making. Consequently, quality improvement becomes cumulative rather than episodic.

The UPM's audit → report → recommendation sequence closely resembles the *Plan-Do-Check-Act* (PDCA) logic embedded in TQM. Yet the empirical significance of this finding lies not merely in its similarity to PDCA. More importantly, the UPM creates a feedback mechanism through which institutional practices are continuously compared with expected standards. The "check" stage generates information, while the recommendation process initiates corrective action. When this cycle is repeated, institutional members become accustomed to viewing shortcomings not simply as failures but as information that can guide improvement.

Busahdiar identified a comparable pattern in their study of Madrasah Aliyah in Indonesia, where the existence of structured internal quality mechanisms was associated with stronger TQM implementation outcomes than in institutions without such mechanisms (Busahdiar et al., 2023). The present study adds to this finding by showing how the internal quality unit works as a bridge between leadership policy and operational practice. The principal establishes the quality direction, while the UPM produces evidence concerning whether institutional units are actually moving in that direction.

When interpreted through Sallis's framework, the UPM's function operationalizes the principle of *fact-based management*, because quality decisions are grounded in audit findings and documented institutional performance rather than impression or assumption (sallis, 2022). At MTsN 2 Tulungagung, this evidence-based mechanism also intersects with the Islamic principle of *amanah*. Institutional actors who are entrusted with responsibilities are expected to account for how those responsibilities are fulfilled. Thus, audit and evaluation are not merely bureaucratic control procedures; they can also be understood as institutional expressions of accountability. In this context, *amanah* provides an ethical foundation for transparency, responsibility, and willingness to correct deficiencies.

The combination of fact-based management and *amanah* contributes to the formation of quality culture by reducing the distance between formal responsibility and actual performance. Organizational members are not only assigned duties but are also required to demonstrate, review, and improve the quality of their work. This structural–ethical interaction constitutes an important feature of the quality model emerging from the study.

The interview with the Deputy Head for Curriculum showed how the institutional quality vision is translated into academic and classroom processes. According to the Deputy Head, curriculum quality is maintained through standardized instructional preparation, supervision, peer learning, and immediate academic guidance when practice falls below the expected standard: "We ensure that every teacher possesses a complete set of learning tools aligned with our established standards. We conduct regular peer teaching sessions and classroom supervision. Whenever a teacher's practice falls short of the standard, we provide immediate guidance." (P3, 2026).

The statement demonstrates that classroom quality is not assumed to result automatically from teacher competence. Instead, it is produced through a series of institutional processes that structure how teachers prepare, teach, evaluate, and improve their practice. Standardized learning tools provide a common academic reference, while peer teaching and classroom supervision create

opportunities for professional reflection. When a gap is identified, guidance functions as a corrective mechanism that connects evaluation with professional development.

The madrasah has therefore established a recurring academic quality cycle consisting of clinical supervision, semester-based analysis of student achievement, peer learning activities, and periodic in-house training. The importance of these practices is not simply their existence, but their interconnection. Student performance data can identify learning problems; supervision can reveal instructional factors associated with those problems; training and guidance can then be directed toward identified weaknesses. Quality improvement at the curriculum level consequently emerges through repeated diagnosis, reflection, intervention, and reassessment.

Rahmadani and Soddiq observed a comparable arrangement at MTs Ma'arif Sleman and concluded that curriculum-level TQM depends significantly on the consistency of process standards and on the capacity of the Deputy Head to coordinate academic quality (Rahmadani et.al., 2023). The finding from MTsN 2 Tulungagung supports this view while providing a more process-oriented explanation of how such coordination operates. The Deputy Head does not merely supervise compliance with standards but serves as an intermediary between institutional quality expectations and teachers' daily instructional practices.

This finding reflects Sallis's process improvement principle, according to which educational quality should be managed throughout the learning process rather than assessed only through final outcomes (Sallis, 2002). Nevertheless, the supervision practice identified at MTsN 2 Tulungagung also contains a contextual Islamic element. Corrective action is approached through guidance rather than punishment. This approach is consistent with the ethic of *tarbiyah*, in which improvement is achieved through nurturing, mentoring, and gradual development.

The role of *tarbiyah* explains why supervision can contribute to quality culture rather than merely generating compliance. When teachers interpret supervision as a developmental process, they are more likely to accept feedback, discuss weaknesses, and experiment with improvement. In contrast, a predominantly punitive model may encourage defensive behavior or administrative compliance without genuine professional learning. Thus, the Islamic educational value of nurturing does not operate as an abstract principle; it shapes the manner in which quality standards are communicated and corrective feedback is delivered. Fauzi identify this developmental orientation as an important marker of culturally appropriate TQM in Indonesian Islamic schools (Fauzi et.al, 2025).

The interview with the teacher provides a practice-oriented perspective on how quality expectations are experienced at the classroom level. While the teacher recognized a strong institutional commitment to teaching improvement, the account also revealed tension between quality expectations and administrative workload: "I feel there is genuine enthusiasm for continuously improving teaching quality. But sometimes, the excessive administrative burden limits the time I have to prepare truly high-quality lessons." (P4, 2026)

This statement is analytically important because it reveals that quality culture does not develop in a linear or conflict-free manner. Institutional demands intended to increase accountability can, when excessive, consume the time and cognitive resources required for substantive instructional preparation. In other words, an administrative mechanism designed to support quality may become counterproductive if documentation requirements are disproportionate to their educational value.

This tension helps explain the difference between formal quality systems and lived quality practices. A TQM system may establish standards, monitoring instruments, and reporting requirements, but the effectiveness of those mechanisms depends on whether institutional actors

possess sufficient time, competence, and resources to implement them meaningfully. When administrative compliance dominates professional work, teachers may fulfill documentation requirements while having less time for lesson design, reflection, and individualized student support.

Administrative overload can therefore be interpreted as a structural barrier in Sallis's terminology. Efendi similarly identify disproportionate administrative demands as a recurring constraint in madrasah quality management and argue that sustainable TQM requires the rationalization of teachers' non-instructional workload (Efendi et.al., 2024). In the context of MTsN 2 Tulungagung, this finding indicates that the sustainability of quality culture depends not only on the strength of leadership and monitoring but also on institutional capacity to protect the core educational work of teachers.

Participatory observation conducted throughout the study reinforces and triangulates the interview findings. The observations demonstrate that the quality orientation identified in interviews is visible in the physical, managerial, instructional, and service environments of the madrasah. This triangulation is important because it reduces reliance on self-reported claims and shows how quality values are enacted in observable institutional practices.

Tabel 1. Summary of Participatory Observation Findings

No	Aspect Observed	Description
1	Physical environment of the madrasah	Vision-mission statements and quality slogans displayed at multiple strategic locations, reflecting visual and symbolic internalization of quality values
2	Routine coordination meetings	Principal personally chairs quarterly quality evaluation meetings; agenda is data-driven and structured around program achievement targets
3	Classroom learning processes	Teachers utilize standardized lesson planning tools; written formative feedback is provided to students on every assignment
4	Inter-teacher interactions	A culture of peer learning and knowledge-sharing is evident in both formal and informal settings; an active internal teacher learning community (KKG) is operational
5	Services to parents	A digital complaint-and-suggestion channel for parents is actively monitored and responded to by the madrasah management
6	UPM operations	The UPM conducts a structured semester-end audit with standardized instruments; audit reports are formally presented to the principal in a documented review session

The observational data further clarify the mechanisms through which quality culture is formed. First, visual displays of the madrasah's vision and quality messages serve a symbolic function by repeatedly exposing organizational members to institutional values. Second, data-driven coordination meetings transform those values into managerial priorities. Third, standardized lesson planning and formative feedback translate institutional expectations into classroom routines. Fourth, peer-learning practices distribute quality values horizontally among teachers rather than relying exclusively on hierarchical instruction. Fifth, digital communication with parents extends quality orientation beyond the internal organization and introduces stakeholder feedback into institutional evaluation. Finally, structured UPM audits institutionalize accountability and continuous improvement.

Taken together, these observations indicate that quality culture at MTsN 2 Tulungagung is produced through a layered process of symbolization, socialization, standardization, monitoring, feedback, and reinforcement. These mechanisms help explain how an abstract institutional commitment to quality becomes part of organizational practice.

Enabling and Inhibiting Factors of Quality Culture

Triangulation of interview, observation, and documentation data identifies four primary enabling factors in the formation of quality culture at MTsN 2 Tulungagung. The first is the transformational leadership of the principal. Its importance does not lie merely in personal leadership style, but in the principal's capacity to connect institutional vision with structures, routines, and resource decisions. Consistent messages about quality become credible when accompanied by quality evaluation meetings, the establishment of the UPM, teacher development programs, and mechanisms of recognition.

Yazid, in his article titled "The Influence of the Visionary Leadership of Madrasah Heads, Organizational Culture and Motivation for Achievement on the Performance," found that visionary leadership of madrasah heads, particularly when accompanied by a strong organizational culture, significantly enhances teacher performance and institutional quality outcomes (Yazid et.al., 2024). The present study supports this relationship but further suggests that leadership affects quality culture through repeated institutional signaling, structural reinforcement, and the creation of collective expectations.

The second enabling factor is teacher commitment. Teacher participation in supervision, training, peer learning, and internal professional communities allows institutional quality standards to be translated into instructional behavior. This factor is particularly important because leadership initiatives cannot generate a sustainable quality culture if teachers remain passive recipients. Culture becomes durable when organizational members begin to reproduce quality expectations through their own professional practices.

The third enabling factor is collaborative culture. Peer-sharing practices create a horizontal mechanism through which pedagogical knowledge and institutional norms circulate among teachers. In such a context, quality is not transmitted only from principal to teacher but is also reproduced through colleague-to-colleague interaction. This horizontal process reduces dependence on formal supervision and enables quality values to become socially reinforced within the professional community.

The fourth enabling factor is the structural presence of the UPM. Unlike informal quality coordination, the UPM creates a designated institutional space for monitoring, documentation, analysis, and recommendation. Its existence contributes to continuity because quality evaluation

does not depend solely on the personal initiative of the principal. Instead, quality monitoring becomes an institutional function with its own procedures and documentation.

Islamic values strengthen these enabling factors by providing a shared moral vocabulary. *Itqan* encourages excellence in carrying out professional duties; *amanah* emphasizes responsibility and accountability; and *ihsan* encourages individuals to perform beyond minimum compliance. These values operate through organizational interpretation. When leaders connect institutional standards with religious responsibility, formal quality requirements acquire ethical significance. Thus, Islamic values do not function as decorative additions to TQM. They help explain why organizational members may perceive quality improvement as both a professional and moral obligation.

Compared with previous studies of TQM in Islamic educational institutions, particularly research on pesantren (Aini et al., 2022) and Madrasah Aliyah (Busahdiar et al., 2023), the configuration found at MTsN 2 Tulungagung is distinctive in two respects. The first is the formal institutionalization of the UPM as a dedicated quality structure. The second is the explicit integration of spiritual values such as *itqan* and *amanah* into the meaning of quality. These dimensions demonstrate that quality culture is generated through an interaction between organizational systems and religiously grounded institutional meaning.

Three inhibiting factors were also consistently identified. The first concerns limited human resource capacity, particularly where personnel assigned to quality-related responsibilities do not possess formal competence in quality management. This limitation matters because quality systems require interpretation, data analysis, follow-up, and technical understanding. When quality responsibilities exceed personnel competence, audit and evaluation processes may become procedural rather than analytically meaningful.

The second inhibiting factor is resistance to change among a minority of senior teachers who are accustomed to established routines and are less willing to engage with newly introduced quality standards. This resistance can be explained as a cultural response to institutional change. New quality procedures may challenge familiar professional identities, working habits, and perceptions of autonomy. Consequently, resistance should not be interpreted solely as unwillingness but also as a sign that new standards have not yet been fully internalized.

Efendi et al. classify resistance to change as a recurring structural obstacle in madrasah quality management across Indonesia (efendi et.al., 2024). In the context of MTsN 2 Tulungagung, overcoming such resistance requires more than administrative instruction. It requires socialization, mentoring, participation in decision-making, and demonstration that new quality procedures contribute meaningfully to educational improvement.

The third inhibiting factor relates to budget constraints. Quality development programs remain significantly dependent on government operational school funds (BOS) and grants, creating vulnerability when funding priorities or policies change (Afriantoni et.al, 2025). This dependence influences the sustainability of training, infrastructure development, digital quality systems, and other improvement initiatives. The finding shows that quality culture is not produced only by attitudes and leadership; it also depends on material capacity.

From a TQM perspective, Sallis regards such constraints not as evidence that quality transformation has failed but as organizational realities that must be identified, analyzed, and systematically managed (Sallis, 2002). This perspective is particularly relevant to the present study because the inhibiting factors reveal where the quality cycle may weaken. Human resource limitations affect competence, resistance affects acceptance, administrative workload affects implementation capacity, and financial limitations affect sustainability. A contextual model of

quality culture must therefore incorporate mechanisms for managing these constraints rather than assuming ideal institutional conditions.

Construction of the MBMM-TQM Model

Building upon the five themes generated through the coding process, the available interview data, participatory observations, documentation, and critical engagement with Sallis's (2002) TQM framework, this study proposes the Madrasah-Based Quality Culture Model grounded in TQM (*Model Budaya Mutu Madrasah Berbasis TQM/MBMM-TQM*). The model constitutes the central theoretical contribution of the study because it attempts to move beyond describing TQM practices toward explaining how a quality culture can be generated, reinforced, and sustained within an Islamic educational institution.

The development of the model responds to a gap identified in previous literature. Existing studies of TQM in Indonesian madrasahs have largely concentrated on describing leadership practices, quality assurance activities, or institutional implementation without constructing an operational and contextually grounded model of how these components interact over time (Afriantoni et.al., 2025; Hidayati, 2025). The MBMM-TQM model consists of seven interrelated components operating as a reinforcing quality cycle.

Tabel 2. Components of the MBMM-TQM Model

No	Component	Description
1	Leadership Commitment	The principal as <i>quality leader</i> , driving the entire quality system through policy, modeling, and resource allocation
2	Collaborative Culture	Horizontal networks of teacher cooperation as the primary medium for distributing quality values across the organization
3	Islamic Quality Standard	Quality criteria that integrate national academic standards with Islamic values (<i>itqan, amanah, ihsan</i>) contextualizing TQM within the madrasah's faith identity
4	Continuous Improvement	An institutionalized cycle of incremental, evidence-based improvement across all 5 operational dimensions
5	Periodic Evaluation	Structured assessment mechanisms (EDM, clinical supervision, accreditation) serving as the empirical basis for quality decisions
6	Internal Quality Assurance	The UPM as an independent structural unit conducting systematic audits and generating quality data for institutional decision-making
7	Stakeholder Satisfaction	The ultimate orientation of the model encompassing student achievement, parental trust, and community confidence as integrated quality outcomes

These seven components should not be understood as separate variables operating independently. Their significance lies in their interaction. Leadership commitment initiates and legitimizes the institutional quality agenda. The principal communicates priorities, provides resources, and models expected behavior. However, leadership alone cannot create culture. Institutional expectations must be socially reproduced through collaborative culture, where teachers

exchange knowledge, interpret standards collectively, and reinforce quality norms through professional interaction.

Islamic Quality Standard gives normative meaning to the quality system. *Itqan* frames professional excellence as religiously meaningful; *amanah* strengthens accountability; and *ihsan* encourages institutional actors to exceed minimum compliance. Through these values, technical standards acquire moral significance. This mechanism explains how Islamic values operate within the model: they influence the meaning organizational members attach to quality-related behavior.

The interaction between standards and practice is sustained through continuous improvement. Problems identified in teaching, management, facilities, or services are treated as opportunities for improvement rather than isolated failures. Periodic evaluation then supplies evidence about whether expected standards have been achieved. This evidence enters the Internal Quality Assurance process, where the UPM organizes audit findings, identifies discrepancies, and generates recommendations.

Recommendations return to leadership, curriculum management, teachers, and other institutional units, creating a feedback loop. Corrective actions are then implemented, evaluated again, and refined. Through repetition, this cycle produces institutional habits. These habits gradually become taken-for-granted ways of working, which is the point at which quality management begins to develop into a quality culture.

The final component, Stakeholder Satisfaction, functions both as an outcome and as a source of feedback. Student achievement, parental trust, service satisfaction, and community confidence indicate whether internal quality practices produce meaningful external results. Feedback from stakeholders can then re-enter the quality cycle and inform future planning and improvement. The formation of quality culture in the MBMM-TQM model can therefore be represented conceptually as: *quality leadership* → *shared standards* → *collaborative implementation* → *monitoring and evaluation* → *corrective improvement* → *stakeholder feedback* → *renewed quality planning*.

Islamic values operate across the cycle rather than being confined to one component. *Itqan* influences how tasks are performed, *amanah* shapes responsibility for results, *ihsan* encourages continuous improvement beyond minimum standards, and *tarbiyah* influences how professional correction and development are carried out. This interaction between technical quality mechanisms and Islamic normative values constitutes the central contextual feature of the proposed model.

The MBMM-TQM model differs from existing TQM frameworks for Islamic education in two significant respects. First, it explicitly positions Internal Quality Assurance (UPM) as a standalone structural component rather than subsuming quality assurance under leadership or curriculum management. This distinction emerges directly from the empirical evidence showing that a dedicated quality unit strengthens the continuity of audit, documentation, evaluation, and institutional follow-up. This element is absent from the “Madrasah Berbasis Mutu Deming” (MBMD) model (Fauzi et al., 2025) and from the Integrated Islamic TQM model (Hidayati, 2025).

Second, the Islamic Quality Standard component establishes an explicit connection between technical quality management and the religious identity of the madrasah. This component does not merely attach Islamic terminology to conventional management practices. Instead, it explains how Islamic values can influence motivation, accountability, professional behavior, corrective processes, and perceptions of quality. In this respect, the model responds to Norman et al., who call for Sharia-based TQM frameworks that move beyond technical adaptation toward substantive value integration (Norman, et.al., 2025).

The proposed MBMM-TQM model should not be interpreted as universally applicable to all madrasahs. Because it was constructed from evidence generated within one institutional setting, its

broader applicability requires caution. Nevertheless, the model has the potential to be adapted and applied in other MTsN and MA institutions that share comparable structural, organizational, and cultural characteristics, provided that local conditions are carefully considered.

Three contextual prerequisites can be inferred from the findings. First, institutional leadership must demonstrate a clear commitment to quality and possess sufficient capacity to translate that commitment into policy, resource allocation, and organizational practice. Second, the institution needs an internal mechanism capable of systematically monitoring, documenting, and following up quality performance, whether through a formal UPM or an equivalent structure. Third, the madrasah must demonstrate openness to integrating Islamic values into the interpretation and implementation of quality standards.

These prerequisites should be understood as enabling conditions rather than universal requirements that will automatically generate identical outcomes. Madrasahs differ in leadership capacity, organizational structure, resources, teacher characteristics, community expectations, and religious-cultural practices. Consequently, implementation of the MBMM-TQM model in other settings would require contextual adjustment. Future multi-site research is therefore necessary to examine how the model operates under different institutional conditions and to determine which components remain stable and which require adaptation.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of Total Quality Management at MTsN 2 Tulungagung demonstrates that quality culture can be developed when managerial systems, Islamic values, and institutional commitment operate in an integrated manner. Quality improvement is not treated merely as an administrative requirement, but as a shared organizational ethic reflected in leadership practices, curriculum management, teacher collaboration, internal evaluation, and service responsiveness to stakeholders.

This study affirms the Madrasah-Based Quality Culture Model grounded in Total Quality Management, or MBMM-TQM, as a contextual model for strengthening quality culture in Indonesian madrasahs. The model consists of seven mutually reinforcing components: leadership commitment, collaborative culture, Islamic quality standards, continuous improvement, periodic evaluation, internal quality assurance, and stakeholder satisfaction. Theoretically, this model contributes to the development of TQM scholarship by offering a framework that is more responsive to the institutional character of MTs, particularly through the integration of *itqan*, *amanah*, and *ihsan* as quality values. Practically, the model provides an operational reference for madrasah principals and Internal Quality Assurance Units in designing, monitoring, and sustaining quality improvement programs.

However, the findings should be interpreted within the limits of a single-site qualitative case study involving a small number of key informants. Therefore, further studies are needed across different madrasah contexts, preferably using multi-site or mixed-methods designs, examining applicability and contextual adaptation, consistency, and empirical strength of the MBMM-TQM model.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

Authors utilized AI based language support tools solely to enhance the clarity, readability, and linguistic quality of the manuscript. These tools were employed exclusively for linguistic editing and structural refinement, and did not contribute to data collection, data analysis,

interpretation of results, or any scientific decision-making. After using the AI assistance, all content was reviewed, revised, and fully validated by the authors, who take complete responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the publication.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Contributed to the conceptualization of the study, research design, supervision of the research process, critical revision of the manuscript, and finalization of the article.

Author 2: Contributed to data collection, field investigation, methodological implementation, and preparation of the original draft of the manuscript.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper

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