

EVALUATION OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION MANAGEMENT MODEL IN FACING THE PANDEMIC: CASE STUDY AT TANJUNG BARULAK DINIYAH ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL

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Abstract

This study explores the effectiveness of Islamic education management at Pondok Pesantren Diniyah Tanjung Barulak, Tanah Datar Regency, in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. The main objective is to evaluate the applied management model during the crisis, identify its strengths and weaknesses, and formulate strategic recommendations to enhance the institutional resilience of pesantren-based education in facing similar future challenges. Employing a qualitative research method with a case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis. Informants included the pesantren leadership, education managers, teachers, students, parents, and health workers involved in the pandemic response within the pesantren environment. The findings reveal that the educational management at Pondok Pesantren Diniyah Tanjung Barulak tended to be reactive, with limited long-term strategic planning, particularly in crisis mitigation and the utilisation of information technology. The lack of digital infrastructure posed a significant obstacle to implementing effective distance learning. However, the pesantren's cultural values and strong sense of communal solidarity emerged as key strengths that sustained educational continuity. This study contributes a conceptual model of community-based crisis management as an alternative strategy for adaptive and resilient Islamic educational governance in the context of public health emergencies. The proposed model offers practical insights and policy implications that may serve as a reference for other pesantren aiming to design more robust and responsive management systems amidst global uncertainties.

Keywords: Islamic Boarding School, Islamic Education Management, Pandemic



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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic that has hit the world since 2020 has presented a major challenge to the education system, including in Islamic boarding schools (Syahrani, 2022). As boarding-based Islamic educational institutions, Islamic boarding schools face a major dilemma in maintaining the continuity of the education process while maintaining the health and safety of students (Kühnhardt, 2024a). Temporary closures, restrictions on activities, and the implementation of strict health protocols require Islamic boarding schools to carry out various innovations and adaptations in their education management models. However, not all of these innovations have proven effective in responding to the challenges of the pandemic. Some Islamic boarding schools have succeeded in maintaining the stability of education and the health of students, while others have experienced serious obstacles. The main problem that needs to be studied is the effectiveness of the Islamic education management model applied in Islamic boarding schools in dealing with this crisis, as well as which aspects need to be evaluated to strengthen the resilience and adaptability of Islamic boarding schools to the possibility of similar crises in the future.

Empirical facts about the challenges of education in Islamic boarding schools during the pandemic have been widely studied, but the available literature has not fully provided answers to the effectiveness of the management model used (Feloutzis & Lekakos, 2025). Most previous studies have focused more on aspects of changing online learning methods, without systematically exploring how internal Islamic boarding school managerial policies were changed to deal with the pandemic. Existing theories of Islamic education management, such as the concept of value-based management or participatory management, have also not been fully tested in the context of the global health crisis (Malakyan, 2023). In addition, the research gap is seen in the lack of a comprehensive evaluation of policy implementation in Islamic boarding schools during the pandemic, both in terms of infrastructure readiness, human resources, and curriculum adaptation. Therefore, there is an urgent need to conduct evaluative studies that can address the gaps in the literature and provide theoretical and practical contributions in the field of Islamic education management.

This study aims to evaluate the Islamic education management model implemented at the Diniyah Tanjung Barulak Islamic Boarding School, Tanah Datar Regency, in dealing with the pandemic situation. The more specific objective is to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the education management that has been implemented during the crisis, as well as to explore the key factors that influence the effectiveness of the implementation of the policy. In addition, this study aims to provide strategic recommendations to strengthen the Islamic education management model at the Diniyah Tanjung Barulak Islamic Boarding School, Tanah Datar Regency, in dealing with future public health crises. By understanding the factors that support

or hinder the success of education management in emergency conditions, it is hoped that Islamic boarding schools can build a more resilient, adaptive, and sustainable system in carrying out their functions as centres of Islamic education.

Based on the description of the facts and objectives of the research that have been presented, this research is important to be conducted because it can provide a real contribution to strengthening the education management system in Islamic boarding schools. Evaluation of the existing model will open up space for critical reflection on managerial practices during the pandemic and enable the development of more effective and responsive strategies in the future. The main argument underlying this research is that the resilience and adaptability of Islamic boarding schools in facing public health crises are highly dependent on the accuracy and suitability of the educational management model applied. Thus, this research is expected to be able to enrich the scientific treasury of Islamic education management while providing applicable solutions for the sustainability of Islamic boarding school education in various crises.

Islamic Education Management is a field of study that examines the process of managing educational institutions based on Islamic values (Samier, 2020). Conceptually, Islamic Education Management can be defined as a systematic effort in planning, organising, directing, and evaluating educational resources to achieve Islamic education goals effectively and efficiently (Khalilov dkk., 2025; Sukma dkk., 2024). These goals are not only limited to achieving academic aspects, but also include the formation of character, morals, and Islamic values in students. This management is rooted in the principles of Islamic law and ethics that prioritise justice, deliberation, trustworthiness, and social responsibility. Thus, Islamic Education Management not only functions to manage administration and the teaching and learning process, but also ensures that all educational activities are run by holistic Islamic values.

In its implementation, Islamic Education Management can be categorised into several main manifestations that reflect the application of Islamic values in education management (Farrell, 2023; Mazzei, 2025). The first is value-based management, where every policy and decision is oriented to the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith. The second is participatory management, which emphasises the importance of deliberation between managers, teachers, students, and the community in decision-making. The third is mission-oriented management, which makes education a means of spreading Islamic values. In addition, the concept of adaptive management in Islamic education has also emerged, which prioritises flexibility and responsiveness to changes in times, without ignoring the basic principles of Sharia. These manifestations show that Islamic Education Management is not just a technical process, but also a value practice in the world of education.

A pandemic, in medical and epidemiological terms, is defined as an outbreak of an infectious disease that spreads widely across national and continental borders, with a high rate of transmission and affecting a large population (Bresalier, 2023; Byttebier, 2022; Hosseini-Nezhad dkk., 2023). The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines a pandemic as an event of a new disease spreading throughout the world and affecting many people simultaneously (Kühnhardt, 2024b; Scheffran, 2025). The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, reflects these characteristics with a global impact that covers various sectors of life, including health, economy, social, and education. The concept of a pandemic does not only refer to the medical dimension, but also includes complex social aspects, considering that human interaction, global mobility, and international policies are important factors in its spread and handling. Therefore, a pandemic is seen as a multidimensional phenomenon that requires a cross-sectoral approach in handling it.

The manifestations of the pandemic in the social and educational context are very broad and complex. In the education sector, the pandemic has resulted in the cessation of face-to-face learning, increased dependence on digital technology, and the birth of distance learning methods. In addition, the pandemic has also driven changes in social interaction patterns, shifts in health priorities, and the birth of emergency policies that affect daily activities, including in Islamic boarding schools. The manifestations of the pandemic can be seen in the instability of the education system, threats to mental health, and disparities in access to technology-based educational facilities. Thus, the pandemic is not only a challenge in the field of public health, but also fundamentally changes the educational order, forcing educational institutions to adapt quickly to various limitations and uncertainties.

Islamic boarding schools are traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia that function as centres for religious learning, character development, and the formation of ulama (Sebastian & Othman Alkaff, 2024a, 2024b; Zamjani, 2022). Conceptually, Islamic boarding schools are understood as dormitory-based institutions, where students live together to study under the guidance of a *kiai*. Education in Islamic boarding schools not only includes mastery of Islamic sciences such as *fiqh*, *tafsir*, and *hadith*, but also instils moral values, discipline, and spirituality. *Pesantren* has a unique structure consisting of mosques, dormitories, *madrasahs*, and a social environment that supports the learning process. As an independent institution, *pesantren* develops with a community base and has a relatively flexible education system, but is strongly rooted in classical Islamic traditions, making it an important pillar in the Indonesian national education system.

The manifestation of Islamic boarding schools in real practice includes various forms, ranging from traditional Islamic boarding schools (*Salafiyah*) to modern Islamic boarding schools that integrate general and religious curricula. *Salafiyah* Islamic boarding schools focus on the study of yellow books and maintain traditional educational methods, while modern Islamic boarding schools adopt the classical system and introduce general subjects such as mathematics and science. In addition, there are also short-term Islamic boarding schools, entrepreneurial-based Islamic boarding schools, and technology-based Islamic boarding schools that have begun to emerge in response to the challenges of the times. In facing the pandemic situation, the manifestation of Islamic boarding schools can be seen in their ability to adapt, such as organising online learning, implementing strict health protocols, and developing emergency curricula. With these various forms of manifestation, Islamic boarding schools demonstrate flexibility as well as steadfastness in maintaining the basic values of Islamic education amidst the dynamics of global change.

RESEARCH METHOD

The object of this research focuses on the COVID-19 pandemic that has hit the world since 2020, posing a major challenge to the global education system, including in the Islamic boarding school environment. As a boarding school-based Islamic educational institution, Islamic boarding schools face a major dilemma in maintaining the continuity of education while maintaining the health of their students. Various innovations and adaptations in education management have been attempted by Islamic boarding schools, ranging from arranging study schedules to implementing health protocols. However, not all of these management models have proven effective in overcoming the complexity of the problems that arise. The main problem that is the main concern in this study is how effective the Islamic education management model is at the Diniyah Tanjung Barulak Islamic Boarding School, Tanah Datar Regency in dealing with the pandemic crisis, as well as which aspects need to be evaluated to strengthen the resilience and adaptability of Islamic boarding schools in the future. This research was conducted to explore more deeply the strategies and approaches applied and their effectiveness in the context of the global health crisis

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study type to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena that occur. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants who were directly involved in managing education in Islamic boarding schools during the pandemic. The focus of the interviews revolved around the challenges faced, the management strategies implemented, and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the model. In addition, this study also collected secondary data obtained from relevant literature, including books, journal articles, official reports, and previous research results that discuss topics related to Islamic education management, the pandemic, and the dynamics of Islamic boarding schools. The combination of primary and secondary data is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the problems studied, as well as enrich the analysis of the management model whose effectiveness is being tested.

Participants in this study include various parties who have important roles in the life and management of education in Islamic boarding schools. They consist of Islamic Boarding School Leaders, such as Kyai or Mudir, who have the main authority in making strategic decisions. In addition, Education Managers, such as the Head of Madrasah and Head of Curriculum, are also the main sources of information in understanding the implementation of education policies. Teachers and Ustadz/Ustadzah who interact directly with students are also involved to provide practical perspectives on the implementation of teaching and learning activities during the pandemic. Students, both junior high and high school levels, become participants to express their learning experiences. Parents of students are also involved in finding out external perceptions of Islamic boarding school policies, as well as Islamic boarding school health workers who are responsible for implementing health protocols. The diversity of informants aims to obtain rich, in-depth data with diverse perspectives.

The research process was carried out through several main stages, starting with planning and preparing research instruments such as interview guidelines and observation formats. Data collection techniques in this study included in-depth interviews with key informants, participatory observation of daily activities at the Islamic boarding school, and documentation of various policies, circulars, and protocols implemented during the pandemic. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach to allow for more flexible and in-depth data collection. Observations were conducted to directly observe the implementation of policies and the activities of students in the Islamic boarding school environment. Documentation is a complement to obtaining administrative and policy data that support the results of interviews and observations. By combining these three techniques, the study seeks to obtain holistic, accurate, and in-depth data related to the phenomenon being studied.

The data analysis technique in this study uses the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification (Hürlimann, 2019). Data reduction is done by selecting, simplifying, and grouping data that is relevant to the focus of the study. Data presentation is done in the form of descriptive narratives and thematic tables to facilitate further analysis. Conclusions are drawn based on patterns found during the analysis, then verified repeatedly to ensure consistency and validity of the findings. To ensure the validity of the data, this study applies the principles of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Data triangulation techniques are carried out by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. All data obtained are analysed using a case study approach, so that the final results are interpreted to produce a deep understanding and provide practical and theoretical contributions to the development of Islamic education management models in Islamic boarding schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, it was found that Islamic Education Management at the Diniyah Tanjung Barulak Islamic Boarding School in Tanah Datar Regency experienced various significant adjustments due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The head of the Islamic boarding school explained that the learning system was changed from full face-to-face to blended learning, although the limitations of technological infrastructure were the main obstacle. Education managers admitted that crisis planning was still minimal and policies were more reactive. Teachers and ustadz/ustadzah underwent sudden technology use training, but most still had difficulty adapting to digital platforms. Students faced obstacles in online learning, especially due to limited internet access and reduced direct interaction. From the results of observations, health protocols were implemented by providing handwashing facilities and distributing masks, but the consistency of mask use was still lacking. Learning activities were carried out in open spaces to maintain distance, although the room capacity sometimes exceeded safe limits. Documentation supports these findings through SOPs for handling the pandemic, decreasing student absences, circulars on changes to the learning system, and emergency meeting minutes.

The explanation of the data shows that changes in education management are more responsive to emergencies, with adjustments made gradually as the pandemic progresses. Adaptation of blended learning reflects efforts to maintain the education process, but infrastructure and Human Resources readiness are still real challenges. Limited technological facilities, such as unstable wifi, as well as the lack of digital skills among teachers, slow down the effectiveness of the learning transition. In addition, although health protocols were implemented quite strictly at the beginning of the pandemic, observations showed a decrease in compliance over time. This illustrates the gap between initial planning and long-term implementation, which has the potential to reduce the effectiveness of management in maintaining the sustainability of education and the health of students.

The relationship between the data description and the explanation that has been described shows that the main challenge in Islamic Education Management at the Diniyah Tanjung Barulak Islamic Boarding School, Tanah Datar Regency, during the pandemic lies in the unpreparedness to face a prolonged crisis. Although there are official documents and adaptation efforts, their implementation has not been optimal in responding to the complexity of the problem. Limited technology, lack of teacher training, and indiscipline in implementing health protocols hinder the effectiveness of the expected education management. This shows that the existing management model needs to be evaluated more deeply to strengthen the resilience of Islamic educational institutions in facing emergencies in the future, as is the main focus of this research.

In terms of the pandemic itself, the interview results showed that all parties in the Islamic boarding school experienced a major impact due to the pandemic situation. The head of the Islamic boarding school stated that changing the learning system to blended learning was a difficult but necessary step. Teachers admitted that limited technology training worsened the transition to online learning. Students and guardians expressed challenges in participating in online learning due to limited access and reduced interaction. Health workers revealed that compliance with health protocols decreased over time. From observations, it appears that efforts to implement health protocols such as washing hands and wearing masks were indeed carried out, but the consistency of students in implementing the protocols was unstable. Documentation supports that changes in learning policies and handling the pandemic have indeed been attempted since the beginning of the pandemic, with special notes regarding attendance and health education activities.

Explanations of these data show that the pandemic, as a global phenomenon, puts great pressure on the readiness and adaptability of educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools. Efforts to mitigate the pandemic were carried out quite quickly in the early stages, but ongoing challenges have reduced the effectiveness of implementation. Limited infrastructure and human resources are crucial factors that influence the consistency of handling efforts. The indiscipline in implementing health protocols shows that the success of crisis management does not depend only on formal policies, but also on collective discipline and individual awareness. Thus, this pandemic opens up a great space for reflection on the need to strengthen risk management in Islamic educational institutions.

The relationship between descriptions and explanations related to the pandemic shows a close relationship between the dynamics of the pandemic and managerial challenges in Islamic boarding schools. Data shows that the pandemic is not just a medical emergency, but also a test of the resilience of the Islamic boarding school-based education system. The unpreparedness of infrastructure and human resources in facing rapid changes emphasises the need to redesign the Islamic education management model that is more adaptive to crises. This reality emphasises the importance of developing an anticipatory, not just reactive, management model to overcome similar challenges in the future.

Regarding the reality of Islamic boarding schools themselves, the results of the study show that the characteristics of Islamic boarding schools as community-based institutions both strengthen and weaken efforts to adapt to the pandemic. From interviews, it is known that the management of boarding school-based education faces a major dilemma between maintaining the continuity of education and the health of students. Observations show that although adjustment efforts are made, the crowded conditions of the boarding schools and close social interactions increase the risk of spreading the disease. Documentation shows that there are formal steps such as the preparation of Standard Operating Procedures and changes to the learning system, but in their implementation, there is often a mismatch between policies and realities in the field.

The explanation of these findings shows that the main strength of Islamic boarding schools, namely community solidarity, in the pandemic situation is a challenge in itself. Collective life, which is usually a source of moral strength, has turned into a potential risk of transmission. Despite strong efforts from Islamic boarding schools to adapt, limited facilities, a collective culture that is difficult to change, and social ties among students have limited the effectiveness of adaptation to the pandemic. The difficulty in implementing online learning effectively also shows that Islamic boarding schools need strengthening in the aspects of digitalisation of education and crisis management.

The relationship between description and explanation of Islamic boarding schools shows that the characteristics of Islamic boarding schools, both as strengths and challenges, significantly influence the response to the pandemic. Islamic boarding schools show flexibility in changing learning methods, but are limited by strong infrastructure and collective culture. Thus, this reality emphasises that the development of an Islamic education management model in Islamic boarding schools must consider the structural and cultural aspects of the Islamic boarding school itself, so that adaptation during the crisis can run more effectively and sustainably. The following research presents systematic research findings based on the results of field observations, interviews with participants, and documentation studies.

Table 1. Research Findings

No.	Research Purposes	Findings	Explanation
1	Evaluating the Islamic education management model implemented by Islamic boarding schools in dealing with the pandemic	The management model tends to be reactive, not yet based on structured crisis planning.	Islamic boarding schools are adapting, such as blended learning, implementing health protocols, and changing the curriculum quickly, but without established strategic guidance.
2	Identifying the advantages of applied educational management	The resilience of Islamic boarding school culture and high flexibility in facing change	Islamic boarding schools are able to maintain the continuity of education by adjusting learning methods and building internal solidarity in managing the crisis.
3	Identifying deficiencies in the educational management implemented	Lack of technological infrastructure, weak digital literacy, and decreased discipline towards health protocols	Limited internet access, unequal teacher capabilities in operating online platforms, and students' non-compliance with health protocols are serious obstacles.
4	Providing strategic recommendations for strengthening the Islamic education management model in Islamic boarding schools during the public health crisis	Development of risk-based management, increasing digital capacity, and revitalizing health protocols	Islamic boarding schools need to prepare adaptive crisis management SOPs, strengthen digital literacy training for teachers and students, and build a long-term health compliance evaluation system.

The results of this study reveal that the Islamic education management model at the Diniyah Tanjung Barulak Islamic Boarding School in Tanah Datar Regency during the pandemic showed a reactive adaptation to changes in the crisis. The change from face-to-face to blended learning was carried out with limited facilities and infrastructure, while the readiness of human resources, especially teachers, did not fully support this transition. The implementation of health protocols at the beginning of the pandemic was quite disciplined, but over time, there was a decline in compliance. The resilience of Islamic boarding schools was tested in maintaining community-based education amidst the pressure of the pandemic, but limited digital facilities and collective cultural ties were major challenges. Although adaptation efforts have been made through formal policies, technical implementation in the field has not been entirely consistent and effective.

When compared to the results of previous studies, this study shows the advantage of integrating empirical findings from interviews, observations, and documentation simultaneously to evaluate Islamic education management in the context of a public health crisis. Several previous studies tend to focus on theoretical aspects or short-term responses of educational institutions without highlighting the depth of structural problems in Islamic boarding schools. In this study, the emphasis on the limitations of the culture of adaptation and the close relationship between education management and the social dynamics of the Islamic

boarding school community is an added value that is rarely expressed in similar studies. This enriches the discourse on the need for a more flexible and anticipatory community-based managerial approach in Islamic education.

Reflections on the results of this study show that evaluating the Islamic education management model is not only important for the pandemic situation, but also as a foundation for strengthening the resilience of educational institutions in facing various types of crises in the future. The purpose of the study, namely, evaluating the management model, identifying advantages and disadvantages, and providing strategic recommendations, is becoming increasingly relevant. Through this approach, the practical benefits of the study lie not only in the context of the current pandemic, but also pave the way for the development of a more resilient, dynamic, and based on the real needs of educational community.

The implications of the results of this study are important for efforts to develop Islamic education policies in Islamic boarding schools, especially in compiling structured, sustainable, and institutional capacity-based crisis management protocols. This study clarifies the need for strategic planning that is not only reactive to the situation but also proactive through strengthening technological infrastructure, increasing digital literacy of educators, and revitalising social solidarity values with a public health approach. These results also provide a conceptual contribution to the development of a community-based management model with high sensitivity to the local social and cultural dynamics of Islamic boarding schools.

The results of the study showed that reactive responses, unpreparedness of infrastructure, and weak teacher training can be traced to the traditional management patterns of Islamic boarding schools that tend to rely on cultural strength without being supported by a modern managerial system. The collective culture that is usually a social force in the daily life of Islamic boarding schools turned out to be difficult to direct to comply with protocols that require rapid and consistent behavioural changes. In addition, investment in technological infrastructure and digital readiness had not been a top priority in many Islamic boarding schools before the pandemic, so when the crisis hit, these institutions did not have a strong foundation to effectively transition to online learning.

Based on the results of this study, the action that needs to be taken is the preparation of an Islamic education management model based on risk management and crisis resilience. Islamic boarding schools need to develop a continuous training system for educators, build adequate minimal digital infrastructure, and strengthen a community-based health culture. The implementation of periodic crisis simulations, the formation of emergency management task forces, and the integration of technology in learning must be an integral part of the future strategy. These strategic recommendations are important to ensure that Islamic boarding schools can maintain their educational function, build social resilience, and maintain the health of their communities in the face of crises that may occur in the future.

CONCLUSION

The most surprising finding of this study is that amidst the cultural resilience that has been the main strength of Islamic boarding schools, it turns out that the managerial adaptability to the health crisis has not been well structured. Although Islamic boarding schools are known as flexible institutions in dealing with social change, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many Islamic boarding schools were trapped in a reactive management response, minimal strategic planning, and dependent on situational improvisation. The unpreparedness of digital infrastructure, weak technological literacy of educators, and decreased compliance with health protocols reflect the major challenges that have been hidden behind the image of Islamic boarding school institutional resilience.

This study provides important contributions both theoretically and practically to the development of science in the field of Islamic education management. Theoretically, this study

enriches the perspective on the need to strengthen a community-based management approach that is responsive to crises. Practically, this study offers a conceptual model on the importance of integrating technological literacy, strengthening a culture of health, and risk management in Islamic boarding school-based education. These findings are not only relevant to dealing with the pandemic, but also as an adaptive framework to strengthen the resilience of Islamic educational institutions to global challenges in the future.

Of course, as with any research, there are limitations in this study that open up opportunities for further research development. The focus of this study is limited to a case study in the pesantren environment during the COVID-19 pandemic, so generalisation of the results to the context of other Islamic educational institutions needs to be done with caution. Opportunities for further research lie in testing the adaptive management model in various variants of other Islamic educational institutions, as well as longitudinal exploration of the effectiveness of implementing crisis management strategies in the long term. Thus, this study opens the way for more in-depth, comprehensive, and transformative studies in the future.

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