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Islamic Education Management Strategy in Responding to the Challenges of Modernity in Tadika Perpaduan Pulau Pinang Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The study purpose was to examine the management strategies of Islamic education in responding to the challenges of modernity in Malaysia. The focus of the study is on educational practices at Tadika Perpaduan Batu Lancang, Penang, in integrating Islamic values with contemporary educational demands.

Materials and methods. This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through observation and interviews conducted during the International Community Service (KPM) and Field Experience Program (PPL) involving students from STIT Al Washliyah Aceh Tengah. The data were analyzed thematically to identify key educational management strategies.

Results. The results show that Islamic education in Malaysia adopts an adaptive approach toward modernity. Tadika Perpaduan Batu Lancang integrates spiritual, social, and technological aspects in its educational management, while strengthening students' moral and character development. These practices are aligned with national education policies, including the J-QAF program.

Conclusions. The study concludes that Islamic education management in Malaysia is able to balance religious values with modern educational demands. This integrative approach provides a relevant model for the development of Islamic education in the contemporary global context.

Keywords: *Management Strategy, Islamic Education Management, Challenges of Modernity, Education at tadika perpaduan Malaysia*

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in the modern era faces increasingly complex dynamics, the digital technology revolution, socio-cultural changes along with the development of globalization have raised deep concerns among various Islamic educational institutions, but from another perspective, the development of science in the modern era presents great opportunities where access to scientific information is exchanged and learning methodologies are increasingly diverse and it cannot be denied that modernity brings negative impacts in the form of secularization of values, moral degradation, and Islamic traditions are increasingly distant from the lives of the Islamic generation.

In line with these challenges and opportunities, several experts emphasize the importance of curriculum modernization in Islamic education. Abdullah (Ahmadi 2024) argues that modernization demands a curriculum that balances religious knowledge and general knowledge. In the past, Islamic education focused more on teaching religious knowledge such as tafsir, fiqh, and morals, with little attention paid to general knowledge. However, with the increasing demands of the workplace and global competition, Islamic educational institutions are required to develop curricula that encompass general knowledge so that their graduates are not only proficient in religious knowledge but also able to compete in other professional fields.

Islamic education in the modern era is expected to be able to combine religious knowledge and general knowledge, the concept of integration of knowledge is not only seen and interpreted as a combination of two different disciplines, but creates an epistemological unity based on Islamic values, so that Islamic education in the modern era is not only seen as producing graduates who

only master religious knowledge, but also understand the concept of religion and are also able to read social realities, economic changes and technological progress and still make religion an ethical and moral guideline. As a country with a relatively large Muslim population, Malaysia presents an education system that does not obscure its Muslim identity and does not make technological developments a manifestation of the modern era that must be feared but Malaysia views it as a challenge that must receive in-depth attention. The Malaysian government through the Ministry of Education and Teaching of the Kingdom of Malaysia or often called *the Federal Ministry of Education and Teaching Malaysia* (MOE) presents the J-QAF program (Jawi, al-Quran, Arabic, and Fardu Ain), as one form of scientific integration that must be implemented in educational institutions, the program was initiated by former Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi with the main goal of becoming a generation of Malaysian Muslims who can make the Qur'an the foundation of their lives (Suhid, Noh, and Mutalib 2014) .

Historically, Islamic education in Malaysia began with the pondok (Islamic boarding school) system, which began with the arrival of Islam in the Malay Peninsula in the 19th century AD. It was an alternative method for Malays in Malaysia to pursue knowledge, especially in the field of religion. This Islamic study system continues to develop in several states such as Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah, Pulau Pinang, Perak, and Negeri Sembilan (Wahyudi 2024) . To date, the Malaysian education system continues to develop as the second best educational institution in Southeast Asia. According to (Hidayah et al. 2025) , Malaysia has successfully reformed educational management through the consistent integration of theory and practice at various levels. This reform involves strengthening outcome-based governance and increasing community involvement in education. Similarly, the modernization of Islamic education in Malaysia can be seen from two sides: the learning curriculum and the institutional side. In terms of the educational curriculum implemented in Malaysia, since 1960 Islamic Religious Education has been implemented in all schools in Malaysia (Takwil 2023) .

This step shows that the Malaysian government places Islamic education as an integral part of the national education system, not just as an additional lesson, but as the foundation of the nation's character and the implementation of this policy can be seen in various educational institutions, one of which is the Tadika Perpaduan Batu Lancang educational institution, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia, which is a real representation of the integration of Islamic education with a modern management approach, at the Tadika Perpaduan Batu Lancang educational institution, Pulau Pinang not only focuses on teaching religious knowledge from an early age, but also combines it with the values of togetherness, social skills, and mastery of modern literacy, so that it is in line with the vision of Malaysian Islamic education in responding to the challenges of modernity.

In addition, the modernization of Islamic education in Malaysia is not only limited to national policies, but is also reflected in the implementation at the level of primary and secondary education institutions. The Tadika Perpaduan Batu Lancang educational institution, Pulau Pinang, which is a real representation of how Islamic education management strategies are applied in responding to the challenges of modernity, the institution emphasizes an integrative approach by integrating Islamic values into all aspects of learning, both cognitive, affective, and psychomotor, as well as adapting learning methods that are in accordance with current developments. The presence of Tadika Perpaduan also reflects the Malaysian government's inclusive policy in strengthening Islamic education from an early age, and moral education for non-Muslims with the aim of forming a generation of Muslims who are characterful, religious, and adaptive to technological developments and globalization.

Furthermore, state religious schools and Islamic higher education institutions have adopted this integrative approach by combining traditional curricula such as tafsir, hadith, and fiqh with contemporary disciplines such as science, technology, and social studies. This approach demonstrates that Islamic education in Malaysia aims not only to preserve Islamic scholarly traditions but also to equip the younger generation with modern competencies so they can compete in a global context without losing their Islamic identity.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of understanding in depth the implementation of Islamic education management strategies in responding to the challenges of modernity in Malaysia, especially at the Tadika Perpaduan Batu Lancang institution, Pulau Pinang. This approach was chosen because it is able to explore social phenomena, values and practices of Islamic education contextually and holistically, as well as providing a real picture of the integration of religious knowledge and general knowledge at the basic education level.

The research data was obtained through direct observation and in-depth interviews during the implementation of the Community Service Lecture (KPM) and the International Field Experience Program (PPL) by STIT Al Washliyah Aceh Tengah students in Malaysia. Students were actively involved in learning activities, administration, and social interactions in the Tadika Perpaduan Batu Lancang environment, thus providing an empirical perspective on how Islamic education management strategies are implemented in a multicultural educational environment, these international KPM and PPL activities became an important means of obtaining authentic data, where students not only acted as observers, but also as participants who took part in the learning process and school managerial activities. During the program, students observed the integrative teaching process that combines Islamic values with modern learning approaches based on character, literacy, and technology, in addition, interviews were conducted with the principal, teachers, and educational staff to gain a deeper understanding of the strategies, challenges, and innovations applied in the management of Islamic education in the institution, with the direct involvement of STIT Al Washliyah Aceh Tengah students in this international activity, the research not only produced academic findings, but also strengthened cross-country collaboration in the field of Islamic education.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The Condition of Islamic Education in Malaysia

Islamic education in Malaysia has long been an integral part of the national education system, various literature studies have explained that the existence of Islamic education in Malaysia existed long before colonialism, the existence of Islamic education was carried out traditionally as the main foundation of the social system of Malay society, related to the renewal of Islamic education (Wahyudi 2024) explains that the Islamic boarding school system began with the initial arrival of Islam to Malay Land in the 19th century AD. It is an alternative way for the Malay community in Malaysia to seek knowledge, especially in the field of religion. This recitation system continues to develop in several countries such as Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah, Pulau Pinang, Perak and Negeri Sembilan, as is the opinion of Luqman in (Wahyudi 2024) explaining that through this recitation system the Malay community better understands the laws of hakam, creeds and problems related to Islam. Because of this, the Islamic boarding school system in Malaysia is no longer foreign to the Malay community. The current conditions show stable development as well as challenges that need to be managed so that Islamic education remains relevant in the era of modernity, therefore, it is important to examine the structure of the Islamic education system in Malaysia in order to understand how Islamic values are integrated into the national education framework.

Structure of the Islamic Education System

The education system in Malaysia has undergone significant development since the country's independence in 1957. Education in Malaysia is not only seen as an instrument to advance the country, but also as a tool to form an educated and competitive society in the global arena (Pratama, Mislaini, and Rahman 2025) . In line with the findings (Razaqna and Putra 2024) which explain that the level of education in Malaysia, primary education for 6 years, then comprehensive secondary school for 3 years, and senior secondary school for 3 years, then academic or technical education for 2 years and Higher Education. The education system in Malaysia follows a regular structure and consists of several main levels of education, which include preschool, primary, secondary, and

higher education. In Malaysia the education system involves the Community, the Ministry of Education Malaysia (KPM) regulates the Malaysian education system, the formal education system in Malaysia consists of pre-school, primary school, secondary school, university, and higher education, the community can evaluate schools managed by the government, both private schools and individual schools, education systems such as secondary schools and lower schools, must be evaluated, in Malaysia, the government system is the Kingdom, however, the Kingdom has the authority to determine the curriculum that has been set (Kurniawan and Dompak 2024) .

Structurally, Islamic education in Malaysia runs parallel to and is integrated with the national education system. Its forms and levels include pre-school education (KAFA) (Quran and Fardu Ain Classes), primary and secondary schools with religious stream classes (KAA) or State Religious Schools (SAN), government-assisted religious schools (SABK), as well as private schools/tahfiz and Islamic boarding schools/madrasahs that maintain a traditional curriculum. At the formal level, Islamic Religious Education (ISE) is included in the national curriculum for Muslim students, while outside formal hours there are additional educational services based on mosques, Islamic boarding schools, and tahfiz institutions. This diversity of institutions results in a dual approach: (1) integration of religion into the national system and (2) preservation of more independent traditional religious pathways. Comparative studies show similar patterns but differ in administrative detail when compared to Indonesia, particularly in the involvement of state authorities and the role of national education law.

Implementation and Practice

The implementation of Islamic education in Malaysia takes place within a dual system framework, namely national schools that integrate Islamic religious subjects into the national curriculum and state or private religious schools that focus more on religious teaching. In daily practice, the implementation of Islamic education reflects an effort to bridge the spiritual, intellectual, and skills needs of the 21st century, according to (Ummi Kalsum et al. 2023). The development of Islamic education in Malaysia is a reflection of the Malaysian government's commitment to promoting quality and relevant Islamic education for the Muslim community. Malaysia continues to strive to improve its Islamic education system to produce a generation that is highly educated, ethical, and able to contribute to the overall development of the country. From the aspect of teaching staff, it is also an important concern for Malaysian educational institutions, according to (Sejatiningrum 2019) the Malaysian Teacher Standards (SGM) includes three aspects, namely: "Standards of teacher professionalism, knowledge and understanding, as well as teaching and learning skills. This means that there is a structured mechanism in the development of Islamic education in Malaysia, maintaining the quality of teachers as educators in multicultural educational institutions is the most important aspect. Designing effective classes requires teachers to use appropriate techniques, such as combining learning plans that refer to students' cultural, religious and environmental backgrounds. This approach not only makes learning more relevant but also more effective (Abd Rahman 2024)

Improving teacher competence is a right that every educator has, which includes developing their attitudes, actions, skills, and abilities in carrying out their role as teaching staff (Rahman 2025b) . Likewise, the Malaysian government's service in purchasing a teacher to be able to become an educator in various institutions, Religious education is also not only taught as a subject, but also internalized through co-curricular programs, discipline development, and school culture. In various Indonesian literature studies, it shows that the integration of modern-based Islamic education places Malaysia as a country that is relatively successful in combining Islamic traditions with the demands of educational modernity. This practice shows a collaborative model between the government, society, and Islamic organizations in expanding access to religious education, teacher development policies and the provision of innovative modules, the implementation of religious education becomes more adaptive to the global context.

Malaysia's National Policy on Modernization of Islamic Education

According to (Hidayah et al. 2025) Theoretically, education can be seen as a foundation of knowledge that provides basic values and principles to be implemented in educational management. Education not only creates goals and values, but also directs how the learning process and governance should be carried out to achieve maximum results. (Mohd Nor 2011) Islamic education in Malaysia has no authentic evidence, but is only seen from the King of Melaka who first embraced Islam in 1414 AD, named Parasmeswara or better known as Megat Iskandar Syah.9 The royal government system at that time, it is no longer denied that the first education taught by Malaysia with the royal system was Islam taught by scholars or religious teachers who had been recognized by the community and by the Malaysian kingdom.

Furthermore, the literature (Mohd Nor 2011) also explains that before the establishment of Malay schools by the British government, the Islamic education system was reportedly still running as usual. According to Abdullah Munshi's notes during his visit to Melaka, Singapore and Pulau Pinang, there were Koran schools held in these countries. 47 After 1854, the Koran school began to change its appearance when it was taken over by the British government through the British East Indies Company. Even though the colonialists were able to establish Malay schools and isolate Al-Quran schools next door, the Malay community still maintained the principles of Islamic education which were the heritage of their religion and nation. They succeeded in maintaining traditional Malay institutions which had been inherited from generation to generation. The Islamic education system is still the focus of students.

The dynamics of the implementation of Islamic education in Malaysia have a long history and a long struggle, in order to inherit Islamic education for the future generation of Malaysian Muslims, in line with the opinion (Afif and Zalnur 2024) The Malaysian government has successfully implemented a policy of an eleven-year basic education system for all. Basic education as the main education for all has been launched since 1990. Furthermore, the highest enrollment rate at the secondary level between 1960 and 1995 ranged from 10% to 56%. On the other hand, Malaysian citizens' participation in higher education ranged from 0.4% to 3.7% during the period. The quality of education provided by the Malaysian government is quite good. This condition is supported by competent teaching resources who can apply technology and multimedia facilities, as well as the implementation of a curriculum that suits their needs. (Hidayah et al. 2025) Malaysia has successfully implemented educational management reform through consistent integration of theory and practice at various levels.

As a complement to the study above, it is also important to see how the Islamic education management strategy in Malaysia is implemented in the context of smaller and more practical educational institutions, the implementation of the Islamic Education Management Strategy in Tadika Perpaduan Batu Lancang, theoretically, education can be seen as a foundation of knowledge that provides basic values and principles to be implemented in educational management, but education not only creates goals and values, but also directs how the learning process and governance must be carried out to achieve maximum results.

In practice, Tadika Perpaduan Batu Lancang implements an Islamic education management strategy by emphasizing the integration of spiritual, moral, and academic values in teaching and learning activities. Each learning activity begins with a group prayer, recitation of short verses from the Quran, and character building through routine activities such as helping each other and maintaining a clean school environment. Because essentially, instilling religious values in children's cognitive development requires an approach that is relevant to the child's age . (Rahman 2025a)

In addition, the institution implements a thematic learning approach based on Islamic values that are adapted to the developmental stages of early childhood, teachers play a role not only as teachers, but also as moral role models who instill the values of discipline, compassion, and responsibility, in the context of management, the head of Tadika prioritizes the active participation of teachers and parents in planning educational activities, so that synergy is created between home and school, the management strategy reflects the integrative spirit of Islamic education in Malaysia, where the spiritual aspect is not separated from the development of children's intellectual and social

potential. Thus, Tadika Perpaduan Batu Lancang is an example of an Islamic educational institution that is able to adapt modern management principles without leaving its Islamic identity.

In a broader context, the practice of Islamic education management as implemented at Tadika Perpaduan Batu Lancang demonstrates the importance of balance between modern progress and religious values, this principle of balance is in line with the concept of religious moderation which is an important foundation in responding to the challenges of modernity and secularization in Malaysia. In line with the opinion of (Katimin and Saragih 2024) Religious moderation is a religious attitude that is not extreme, either in the form of radical attitudes or excessive liberalism. Lukman Hakim Saifuddin explained that many people misunderstand when the term moderation is proposed, so they think that this is a Western way to weaken Islam, in religious moderation does not mean that what is moderated is the religion, as is also applied by early childhood education institutions at Tadika Perpaduan Batu Lancang Malaysia.

The study's findings demonstrate that Islamic education in Malaysia serves more than just the purpose of transmitting Islamic values to future generations of Muslims . Furthermore , it fosters an understanding that technological progress and modernization are not something Islam should reject. However, Islamic education rejects the negative impacts of this progress, especially those that give rise to secularist thinking that can separate religion from social life. In line with Azra's opinion in (Ahmadi 2024), one of the greatest challenges in managing Islamic education in the modern era is the integration of technology. On the one hand, technology facilitates the learning process, such as through online learning systems, access to global literature, and the use of digital devices in learning. However, the adoption of technology also poses dilemmas for Islamic educational institutions, particularly in maintaining control over content that aligns with Islamic values and in educating students to use technology wisely and responsibly. The need to provide adequate technological facilities and ensure that educators have the competence to use them also adds to the burden on Islamic educational institutions.

Challenges of Modernity to Islamic Education

same perspective, stating that modernity has had a significant impact on the system and orientation of Islamic education in Malaysia. On the one hand, modernity presents opportunities for improving the quality of education through technological advancement, information globalization, and openness to knowledge. On the other hand, modernity also raises serious challenges that Islamic educational institutions must respond strategically to in order to remain relevant and competitive without losing their Islamic identity. (Zain et al. 2024) explains that modern society faces various significant challenges. One of the main challenges is the influence of globalization which brings major changes in the mindset, culture and values of society.

In the context of globalization, which brings rapid cultural and ideological exchange and can shift Islamic values, the impact of globalization encourages a universal and competitive mindset. Therefore, Islamic educational institutions must be able to balance openness to global knowledge with the preservation of Islamic spiritual and moral values. (Abnisa and Azis 2025) In the modern era, the use of technology in Islamic education has become an important aspect in improving the quality of learning and management of educational institutions. Technological developments present both challenges and significant opportunities. The digital revolution and the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) require Islamic educational institutions to adapt to technology-based learning models. The use of technology must also be balanced with the strengthening of digital ethics and moral literacy so that students do not fall into dehumanization and lose the spiritual meaning of the learning process. When this occurs, technological development and modernization are not the main problem, but rather the loss of identity and the idea that religion plays no role in life or worldly affairs, which reverts to the main problem of secularization.

The process of secularization is an ideological challenge that can separate knowledge and religious values. In the Malaysian context, this process appears in the form of an overly pragmatic and market-oriented educational orientation, in line with Masri's (2022) opinion that secularism is seen as a discourse and effort to undermine the education system of the Malay nation. Secularism has changed the way society views and thinks about the integrity of the family institution, which is a

key pillar in the formation and development of society. Secularism will have a long-term impact on changes that lead to the loss of Muslim community identity and interest in practicing Islamic teachings for the younger generation. In the history of Malaysian education, secularism is also applied in education, during the British colonial period in Malaya they have made a syllabus of subjects related to academics only without any subjects related to religion. The success of the British colonial mission provides benefits for the progress of Malaysian education in general which is supported by the plurality of society in Malaysia, which consists of various ethnicities, religions, and cultures, but in the context of the Muslim generation it will certainly reduce Islamic values for the generation of Malaysian Muslims, therefore Malaysian society through the community and Islamic educational foundations demands Islamic education to develop an inclusive and dialogical approach. This challenge requires a managerial strategy that encourages tolerance, social harmony, and strengthening the values of rahmatan lil 'alamin in every aspect of learning. Islamic education not only plays a role in the formation of Islamic identity, but also as an agent of peace and national unity.

Islamic Education Management Strategy in the Context of Modernity

Starting from the view that Islamic education is not only interpreted as a process of transferring religious knowledge, but also as a managerial system that integrates sharia values with modern management principles. Islamic educational management theory emphasizes the importance of planning (takhthith), organizing (tanzhim), implementing (tanfidz), and evaluating (taqwim) based on the principles of monotheism, trustworthiness, shura, and ihsan. In the context of modernity, this framework faces challenges in the form of globalization of knowledge, technological advances, and demands for the effectiveness and efficiency of educational institutions. Therefore, Islamic education management is required to be able to integrate spiritual values with innovative strategies such as digitalization of learning, curriculum diversification, and strengthening the quality of human resources, so that it remains relevant and competitive without losing its Islamic identity.

In line with Al-Attas' explanation in Ahmadi (2024) , Islamic educational management plays a crucial role in determining the direction and policies of educational institutions to meet the challenges of modernization. As a discipline focused on resource management, Islamic educational management encompasses planning, organizing, directing, and supervising educational activities based on Islamic values. The right management approach can help Islamic educational institutions maintain their identity while adapting to the changes required by the modern era. Rachman in (Ekowati, Sarpendi, and Munirom 2025) expands this perspective by emphasizing that Islamic educational management does not only talk about administrative and structural aspects, but also includes normative and ethical aspects. In Islam, principles such as justice, responsibility, trustworthiness, and deliberation are the basis for decision-making and the implementation of managerial tasks (Hayani et al. 2024).

And in a new perspective (Hidayah et al. 2025) , it is explained that education-based educational management also ensures that every policy and program implemented considers the principles of sustainability and social inclusion. Education helps management design strategies that focus not only on short-term results but also consider the long-term impact on society and the environment. (Ekowati et al. 2025) In today's rapid global development, the world of education is faced with various challenges such as digitalization, technological disruption, cultural globalization, and an increasingly complex moral crisis. The modern era demands that educational institutions be more flexible and adaptive in managing their systems. However, on the other hand, Islamic educational institutions must not lose their identity and character as institutions that shape perfect human beings. Meanwhile , Sholikah and Sunarto (2025) provide a practical perspective in the context of Islamic educational institutions. Planning in Islamic educational institutions includes the integration of Islamic values with modern academic standards, providing a strategic direction that is oriented not only towards academic achievement but also towards spiritual development. Organization in Islamic education emphasizes resource efficiency and the application of Islamic values within the organizational structure. The directive function expands the leadership role by not only focusing on technical aspects but also fostering the moral and spiritual aspects of all components of the organization, thus creating a holistic environment.

Overall, various expert views indicate that Islamic educational management plays a very strategic role in maintaining a balance between religious values and the demands of modernity. Integrating spiritual principles with modern managerial approaches is key to realizing Islamic educational institutions that are adaptive, innovative, and grounded in Islamic values. Thus, Islamic educational management strategies are an important foundation in preparing an educational system capable of adapting to the currents of globalization, technological advances, and rapid social changes occurring in the educational environment and Malaysian society.

CONCLUSIONS

The research study of Islamic Education Management Strategy in Responding to the Challenges of Modernity in Malaysia shows that the Malaysian education system has succeeded in positioning itself as an integrative model between Islamic values and the demands of global modernity. The revitalization of teachers with science-based development in synergy with comprehensive policies, such as the J-QAF program and an institutionalized Islamic education system from early childhood to higher levels, Malaysia shows that modernization does not have to mean secularization, but can be a momentum to strengthen Islamic identity within the framework of scientific and technological progress.

The implementation of Islamic education management strategies at institutions like Tadika Perpaduan Batu Lancang in Pulau Pinang is clear evidence that the implementation of educational concepts must align with holistic government policies. Tadika Perpaduan Bantu Lancing in Pulau Pinang successfully integrates religious instruction with character development, social skills, and modern literacy skills for young children. This demonstrates that Islamic education not only prepares students to understand religious teachings but also shapes individuals who are adaptive, creative, and ready to face global change without losing their spiritual values.

Thus, the success of Malaysia's Islamic education system lies in its ability to maintain a balance between tradition and innovation, between religious and general knowledge, and between local values and global challenges. A strategic educational management approach based on integrated values and relevant to current developments is a key factor in ensuring Islamic education remains vibrant, dynamic, and relevant amidst the currents of modernity. Malaysia, through this model, has demonstrated that Islamic education grounded in modern management can provide a strong foundation for developing a generation of competitive, moral, and civilized Muslims.

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