

Islamic Academic Supervision Model: Enhancing the quality of Islamic religious education in Muhammadiyah junior high schools

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Abstract: The need to improve the quality of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in faith-based schools has become increasingly urgent as teachers face challenges of professional competence, administrative burden, and limited supervisory support that hinder effective classroom practice. This study investigates the Islamic Academic Supervision Model (IASM) as an empirically grounded framework for enhancing the quality of PAI learning in Muhammadiyah junior high schools in Malang, Indonesia. Using a qualitative case study design, the research explored supervisory practices, challenges, and their implications for instructional quality improvement. The study was conducted at four Muhammadiyah junior high schools or *Sekolah Menengah Pertama* (SMP)—SMP Muhammadiyah 1, 2, 4, and 6—between January and June 2025. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis involving principals, Islamic teachers, students, and a supervisor from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Triangulation of sources and methods and member checking ensured credibility, while data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. Findings show that supervision follows structured, collaborative, and reflective stages: (1) planning and scheduling, (2) classroom observation, (3) evaluation and feedback, and (4) follow-up. Constraints include time limitations, overlapping duties of principals, and inadequate facilities, but effective supervision improved teachers' pedagogical competence, documentation, classroom management, and student engagement. The IASM emphasizes spiritual-reflective dialogue, contextual evaluation, and collaborative improvement, integrating Islamic values with professional standards. This model strengthens the pedagogical and moral dimensions of teaching, enhances learning quality and students' religious character, and serves as a replicable framework for faith-based schools pursuing holistic quality assurance.

Keywords: academic supervision; Islamic education; learning quality; Muhammadiyah schools; teacher professionalism

1. Introduction

Quality assurance in Islamic education remains a major challenge for many faith-based schools in Indonesia, where the effectiveness of classroom learning often depends on the competence and continuous support of teachers (Diabat, 2025; Nor et al., 2024; Nurfaishal et al., 2024; Saepudin, 2023). Despite the strong moral and spiritual foundations of Muhammadiyah education (Hidayatullah et al., 2021; Husamah et al., 2024; Rahardjanto et al., 2025), recent internal evaluations reveal that the professional development of Islamic Religious Education teachers is still constrained by administrative workloads, limited supervisory resources, and the absence of structured feedback mechanisms (Jemain et al., 2025; Nurhasanah & Idharudin, 2025; Ridlo & Hafidz, 2024; Supriani, 2025). These constraints hinder the realization of reflective, student-centered, and value-based learning that aligns with the goals of the *Al-Islam, Kemuhimmadiyahan*, and *Arabic* (ISMUBA) curriculum (Adha & Prawironegoro, 2024; Dwi et al., 2025; Fauziyah & Istanto, 2025; Qosim & Rahmatullah, 2025).

Academic supervision, defined as a process of professional guidance aimed at improving teaching performance and learning outcomes (Lorensisu et al., 2022; Halmaida et al., 2022; Haryanto, 2024), is one of the most strategic mechanisms for quality improvement (Alshameri et al., 2025; Gohar & Qouta, 2021). However, in many Islamic schools, supervision tends to be procedural rather than developmental, focusing on compliance instead of mentorship. Previous research underscores that without reflective dialogue and moral engagement, supervision rarely transforms teaching practices (Collins et al., 2021; Rossa et al., 2025; Yusron et al., 2025; Zahra & Barawi, 2025).

In this context, Muhammadiyah schools in Malang present a unique case. They integrate religious and general education under a shared value system grounded in Islamic ethics and pedagogical innovation. Within this environment, a distinct pattern of academic supervision has emerged—one that combines pedagogical observation with spiritual reflection, collaborative feedback, and contextual evaluation. This pattern, identified through field-based qualitative inquiry, is conceptualized in this study as the Islamic Academic Supervision Model (IASM). Unlike previous studies that discuss supervision in general or treat Islamic values only as a background variable, this research offers a contextually grounded supervision model that explicitly integrates Islamic spiritual-moral principles with established supervisory practices. The IASM provides (1) an empirically derived conceptual framework of supervision for ISMUBA teachers, (2) a detailed mapping of supervisory interactions that nurture reflective, value-based pedagogy, and (3) a transferable model that can inform quality assurance policies in other faith-based schools.

Unlike conventional supervision frameworks, IASM does not merely represent a managerial tool; it embodies an integrated process of *niyyah* (planning), *ihsan* (professional excellence), and *muhasabah* (self-evaluation). By identifying and describing this model empirically, the study contributes to both Islamic educational leadership theory and quality assurance practices, offering a replicable model for faith-based institutions striving for holistic educational improvement.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Research Design

A qualitative case study was conducted to understand the implementation of academic supervision in Islamic education contexts. This design allowed for in-depth exploration of natural settings and participants' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

2.2 Research Sites and Participants

The study involved four Muhammadiyah junior high schools: SMP Muhammadiyah 1, 2, 4, and 6 in Malang City. The research was conducted during January-July 2025. Participants included: (1) 4 School Principals (supervisors), (2) 4 Islamic Religious Education Teachers, (3) 1 Islamic Education Supervisor (Ministry of Religion of Malang City), and (4) 8 Students (two from each school). Participants were selected purposively to ensure representation of different supervision experiences and contexts.

2.3 Data Collection

Three main techniques were applied: (1) Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were used to capture detailed insights from principals, teachers, and students. (2) Observation: Classroom sessions and supervision meetings were observed to examine real supervisory practices. (3) Documentation: Reports, lesson plans, and official supervisory forms were analyzed to complement interview data.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed through Miles's et al. (2014) model involving three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Thematic analysis was

applied to identify patterns and concepts related to supervision practices, challenges, and outcomes.

2.5 Trustworthiness

Triangulation of sources and methods, peer debriefing, and member checking ensured the credibility and reliability of findings.

3. Results

3.1 Emerging Pattern of Islamic Academic Supervision Practices

Field data gathered from four Muhammadiyah junior high schools (SMP Muhammadiyah 1, 2, 4, and 6 Malang) revealed a consistent pattern in how academic supervision was conducted, integrating both pedagogical and spiritual dimensions. Principals acted not merely as evaluators but as moral mentors who guided teachers through a reflective process of teaching improvement. The process typically followed four stages: (1) planning and scheduling, (2) classroom observation, (3) evaluation and feedback, and (4) follow-up.

“Before supervision, we begin with niyyah, with a sincere intention to help teachers grow professionally, not to judge or criticize.” (Principal, SMPM 1)

“Our discussions after observation are not only about techniques but also about spiritual responsibility—how teaching becomes ibadah.” (Teacher, SMPM 2)

These statements illustrate that the supervision process in Muhammadiyah schools embeds religious consciousness as part of pedagogical reflection. The integration of spiritual and professional aims forms the foundation of what this study identifies as the Islamic Academic Supervision Model (IASM).

3.2 Supervisory Challenges and Solutions

Although the supervisory process is well-structured, several constraints hinder its optimal implementation. Principals often face time limitations due to multiple administrative responsibilities, while teachers experience difficulty in preparing adequate documentation.

“Sometimes we have to postpone supervision because the principal is handling other official duties.” (Teacher, SMPM 6)

“We also struggle with proper documentation—some forms are only filled out after the supervision, not before.” (Teacher, SMPM 4)

To mitigate these barriers, schools developed adaptive strategies such as flexible scheduling, digital communication through WhatsApp groups, and peer observation among teachers. These solutions fostered collaboration and shared accountability, reinforcing the reflective and communal nature of supervision.

3.3 Identification and Structure of the Islamic Academic Supervision Model (IASM)

Through thematic coding and data triangulation, three interrelated dimensions emerged as the core of the IASM: *Niyyah* (Planning), *Ihsan* (Implementation), and *Muhasabah* (Evaluation) as in [Table 1](#). Each dimension represents both a procedural and spiritual component of supervision, highlighting that academic quality and moral integrity are inseparable in Islamic education.

Table 1. The core of the IASM

Stage	Core Activities	Islamic Ethical Principle	Expected Outcome
<i>Niyyah</i> (Planning)	Scheduling, goal setting, self-evaluation	<i>Ikhlās</i> (sincere intention)	Well-structured and meaningful supervision goals
<i>Ihsan</i> (Implementation)	Observation, mentoring, feedback	<i>Ihsan</i> (professional excellence and accountability before Allah)	Improved teaching quality and reflective practice
<i>Muhasabah</i> (Evaluation)	Reflection, follow-up, documentation	<i>Muhasabah</i> (self-assessment and continuous improvement)	Sustained professional growth and moral awareness

These findings form the empirical basis for the conceptualization of the Islamic Academic Supervision Model (IASM), visualized in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Islamic Academic Supervision Model (IASM)

Figure 1 illustrates the cyclical nature of the IASM, where *Niyyah* (Planning), *Ihsan* (Implementation), and *Muhasabah* (Evaluation) are connected through three continuous guiding principles: Collaboration, Reflection, and Accountability. Collaboration emphasizes collective goal-setting and spiritual-reflective dialogue between principals and teachers. Reflection involves ongoing mentoring and professional feedback, encouraging teachers to internalize improvement as a form of worship (*ibadah*). Accountability links the cycle back to moral responsibility, ensuring that evaluation leads to both pedagogical enhancement and ethical self-assessment.

The arrows between the three stages signify a dynamic and iterative process, where each supervision cycle contributes to continuous teacher development. Unlike conventional models, IASM does not end at evaluation; rather, it returns to *Niyyah*, highlighting that every supervision begins and ends with sincere intention and reflection.

3.4 Analytical Interpretation of the IASM

The integration of pedagogical supervision and Islamic ethical principles makes IASM distinct from other frameworks commonly used in general education. Analysis of field interactions reveals that supervision in Muhammadiyah schools is understood as both a technical process of quality assurance and a spiritual process of self-improvement. Teachers are encouraged to see supervision not as inspection but as *mujahadah* (self-discipline) and *tazkiyah* (purification of teaching intentions).

This dual orientation—technical and spiritual—creates a balanced system where the principal acts as a *murabbi* (educational nurturer) and the teacher as a lifelong learner (*muta'allim da'im*). Hence, the IASM offers an emergent empirical model of academic supervision rooted in Islamic philosophy, moral accountability, and reflective professionalism.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that academic supervision within Muhammadiyah junior high schools represents a distinctive integration of pedagogical and spiritual dimensions. Rather than functioning merely as a managerial mechanism, supervision operates as a moral and reflective process rooted in Islamic ethical principles (Al Halbusi et al., 2023; Ali et al., 2025; Masuwai et al., 2024; Nauman et al., 2025; Suhendra et al., 2024; Topcan et al., 2024; Udin et al., 2022; Zahra & Barawi, 2025). Through the daily practices of principals and teachers, an authentic pattern of supervision emerged that naturally reflects the values of *niyyah* (sincere intention), *ihsan* (professional excellence), and *muhasabah* (accountable self-evaluation). This process, empirically observed and conceptually synthesized, constitutes the Islamic Academic Supervision Model (IASM)—a cyclical and value-driven approach to enhancing instructional quality and teacher professionalism.

The IASM is distinctive in that it was not designed through a top-down developmental procedure but rather discovered inductively from lived practices and moral reflections of Islamic educators. The model recognizes that quality assurance in education cannot be detached from the spiritual accountability of those involved. As such, each stage of the model—*Niyyah* for planning, *Ihsan* for implementation, and *Muhasabah* for evaluation—is intertwined with three guiding principles: collaboration, reflection, and accountability. These principles ensure that supervision becomes a reciprocal and continuous process in which both the supervisor and teacher engage in *spiritual-reflective dialogue* and shared responsibility for improvement (Gordon, 2019; Miller, 2023; Özdemir-Yilmazer, 2021; Rees et al., 2020).

Compared to conventional supervision frameworks that emphasize compliance, standardization, and managerial control (Egeberg et al., 2021; Espinoza, 2020; Gordon, 2022; Haberlin & Burns, 2024; McGhee & Stark, 2021), the IASM advances a transformative paradigm grounded in Islamic epistemology. In secular models, evaluation tends to conclude the supervision cycle (Culloty et al., 2010; Mette et al., 2017; Pallikkuth et al., 2024; Wong et al., 2022); in contrast, the IASM returns to *niyyah*, emphasizing that every improvement effort must begin and end with sincere intention. This continuous moral loop transforms supervision into a form of *ibadah*—an act of worship through service and professionalism—thereby harmonizing performance accountability with ethical and spiritual growth. The model thus extends reflective supervision theory by embedding Islamic ontology of action, where educational work is viewed as both a professional duty and a spiritual journey (Ahmed & Chowdhury, 2025; Jamil, 2019; Succarie, 2024).

The relational dynamics identified in Muhammadiyah schools also reflect this integration. Supervision was observed to occur through dialogic and collegial interaction rather than hierarchical inspection. Teachers described the process as a *shared reflection* rather than a formal assessment, reinforcing their motivation to improve practice. This confirms researchers' assertion that trust and collaboration are central to effective

supervision (Badru et al., 2024; Men et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2024). Within the IASM, these values manifest through *musyawarah* (consultation) and *ukhuwah* (collegiality), positioning the principal as a *murabbi*—a moral mentor and facilitator of growth—rather than a bureaucratic controller. Consequently, the model nurtures a culture of mutual accountability where pedagogical reflection is inseparable from spiritual introspection.

Theoretically, the IASM contributes to the broader discourse on Islamic educational leadership and faith-based school quality management. It operationalizes Islamic ethical concepts within the framework of modern instructional supervision, demonstrating how *niyyah*, *ihsan*, and *muhasabah* can function as process-oriented pillars of professional practice. This model also redefines leadership roles by emphasizing moral guidance and shared learning as essential components of effective supervision. The integration of Islamic epistemology into daily school management offers empirical validation for values-based leadership approaches (Asyibli et al., 2025; Prasetyowati et al., 2025) and contextualizes quality assurance within an Islamic worldview (Fadhilillah & Ayuba, 2025; Sulfiani et al., 2023).

Practically, the IASM provides a replicable and adaptable framework for other Islamic education systems. For principals, it offers a structured yet flexible pathway to plan, implement, and evaluate supervision grounded in sincerity and excellence. For teachers, it transforms supervision into a formative and empowering experience that encourages self-evaluation, reflection, and moral growth. For educational authorities, it represents a policy-oriented model that integrates religious values with quality standards, bridging spiritual identity and institutional accountability. By adopting IASM, Islamic schools can foster a professional culture that is both data-informed and value-driven, thereby promoting sustainable improvement in teaching and learning quality.

Nevertheless, the study also acknowledges several contextual limitations. The IASM emerged within Muhammadiyah schools in Malang, whose institutional ethos strongly emphasizes *Al-Islam*, *Kemuhammadiyah*, and *Arabic* as guiding philosophy. Its transferability to other Islamic or non-Islamic contexts may depend on leadership styles, teacher readiness, and cultural receptivity to reflective supervision (Goenaga, 2024; Popov et al., 2021). Moreover, since this study employed a qualitative design, future quantitative and longitudinal studies are recommended to examine how sustained implementation of IASM influences teacher performance, learning outcomes, and overall school quality indicators over time.

In summary, the IASM encapsulates an empirically grounded and spiritually enriched approach to academic supervision. It redefines supervision as a continuous moral and professional endeavor, grounded in intention (*niyyah*), manifested through excellence (*ihsan*), and sustained by self-accountability (*muhasabah*). Through its integration of collaboration, reflection, and accountability, IASM provides a robust conceptual and practical contribution to the advancement of Islamic education quality and professional ethics in faith-based schools.

5. Conclusion

This study identified and conceptualized the Islamic Academic Supervision Model (IASM) as an empirically grounded framework that integrates pedagogical professionalism with Islamic moral values. Emerging from real supervisory practices within Muhammadiyah junior high schools in Malang, the IASM offers a holistic understanding of supervision as both a technical and spiritual process. The model operates through three interdependent stages — *Niyyah* (Planning), *Ihsan* (Implementation), and *Muhasabah* (Evaluation) — which form a continuous cycle of improvement connected by collaboration, reflection, and accountability.

The findings affirm that when supervision is conducted with sincerity (*niyyah*), guided by excellence (*ihsan*), and concluded with self-evaluation (*muhasabah*), it produces

meaningful improvements in teacher professionalism, classroom engagement, and the overall quality of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Beyond procedural compliance, the IASM transforms supervision into a form of *tarbiyah* – a nurturing act of leadership that unites professional growth and moral integrity. It also bridges the gap between faith-based educational philosophy and contemporary quality assurance mechanisms, demonstrating that effective supervision can simultaneously uphold religious values and meet modern pedagogical standards.

In practical terms, the IASM provides a replicable model for faith-based schools seeking sustainable improvement grounded in ethical accountability. It encourages principals to act as *murabbi* (moral mentors) rather than evaluators, teachers to become reflective professionals, and institutions to embrace continuous learning as a collective act of worship. Future studies are recommended to quantitatively validate the impact of IASM across broader educational contexts and explore its potential integration into national supervision frameworks.

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