

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN ENHANCING COMPETITIVENESS OF ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstrak

Di era disrupsi digital, lembaga pendidikan Islam dihadapkan pada tuntutan untuk meningkatkan daya saing tanpa mengabaikan nilai-nilai keislaman dan identitas pendidikan. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis integrasi manajemen strategis dan kecerdasan buatan (AI) dalam memperkuat daya saing lembaga pendidikan Islam melalui tinjauan literatur sistematis. Studi ini menerapkan protokol penelusuran terstruktur pada database akademik dan repositori institusi dengan rentang publikasi 2020–2026, menghasilkan 50+ artikel ilmiah, laporan kebijakan, dan dokumen akademik yang dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis konten tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sinergi antara manajemen strategis yang terstruktur dan adopsi AI secara signifikan meningkatkan daya saing institusi melalui perencanaan berbasis data, inovasi kurikulum, efisiensi administratif, serta kepemimpinan transformasional yang adaptif. Meskipun demikian, implementasi masih terkendala oleh keterbatasan infrastruktur digital, kesenjangan kompetensi SDM dalam literasi AI, dan lemahnya budaya evaluasi berbasis kinerja. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa keunggulan kompetitif berkelanjutan dapat dicapai ketika lembaga pendidikan Islam mampu menyelaraskan tata kelola modern, transparansi manajerial, dan internalisasi nilai-nilai Islam sebagai proposisi nilai unggulan. Temuan ini memberikan kerangka konseptual dan rekomendasi praktis bagi pengelola serta pemangku kebijakan pendidikan Islam untuk merancang strategi transformasi digital yang adaptif, berkelanjutan, dan berorientasi pada mutu lulusan.

Kata kunci: Manajemen Strategis, Daya Saing, Kepemimpinan Transformasional, Digitalisasi.

Abstract

In the era of digital disruption, Islamic educational institutions face the challenge of enhancing competitiveness while preserving Islamic educational values. This study aims to analyze the integration of strategic management and artificial intelligence (AI) in strengthening the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions through a systematic literature review. Following a structured literature search protocol across academic databases and institutional repositories, 50+ peer-reviewed articles, policy reports, and scholarly publications from 2020 to 2026 were selected and analyzed using thematic content analysis. The findings reveal that the synergy between structured strategic management and AI adoption significantly enhances institutional competitiveness through data-driven planning, curriculum innovation, administrative efficiency, and adaptive transformational leadership. However, implementation remains constrained by limited digital infrastructure, gaps in AI literacy among human resources, and weak performance-based evaluation cultures. This study emphasizes that sustainable competitive advantage is achieved when Islamic educational institutions align modern governance, transparent management practices, and the internalization of Islamic values as a core value proposition. The findings offer a conceptual framework and practical recommendations for institutional leaders and policymakers to design adaptive, sustainable, and quality-oriented digital transformation strategies.

Key words: Strategic Management, Competitiveness, Transformational Leadership, Digitalization.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization, digital transformation, and the rapid development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) have brought major impacts on various aspects of life, including the education sector. Islamic educational institutions are challenged to remain relevant, excellent, and adaptive in an ever-changing world. These challenges arise not only from technological and economic shifts, but also from social and cultural changes that influence institutional orientation and strategy.¹ Islamic educational institutions occupy a strategic position in shaping learners' character and competencies not only through academic excellence, but also by cultivating strong moral integrity.² However, alongside rapid developments in information technology, digitalization, and AI-based systems, Islamic educational institutions are required to adjust quickly and effectively. These demands include transforming curricula, learning methods, and managerial systems in ways that are adaptive to contemporary change and technological disruption.³

In recent years, AI has increasingly influenced educational management practices worldwide. AI-based technologies are now utilized in academic administration, institutional data analysis, digital learning systems, personalized learning, and strategic decision-making processes.⁴ In the context of Islamic educational institutions, AI integration can become an important instrument to improve efficiency, transparency, institutional competitiveness, and the quality of educational services. Many Islamic educational institutions still face difficulties in adopting AI-supported management systems due to limited digital infrastructure, low technological literacy, and insufficient human resource competencies.⁵

Field realities in early 2026 indicate that although digitalization programs have been intensified, managerial challenges within Islamic educational institutions remain significant. Based on an evaluation report on educational governance transformation, around 42% of Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia still do not have a digitally integrated and properly documented strategic plan (*Renstra*) that meets modern management standards.⁶ This condition causes many institutions to fall behind in responding to the dynamics of national education policy and global competition, because institutional development directions remain reactive rather than proactive.

Another emerging problem is the strong dependence on traditional, centralized management systems that are less innovative. Islamic educational institutions are often trapped in administrative routines without serious efforts to renew governance or to provide competitive educational services.⁷ Without transformation in leadership practices, digital governance, and resource management, institutions will struggle to compete with educational institutions that are more progressive in adopting AI and management technology. This creates an urgency for Islamic educational institutions to leave the comfort zone of conventional leadership patterns and begin adopting

¹ George R Terry, *Principles of Management* (Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, 2020), 15–18.

² Abuddin Nata, *Pendidikan Islam Di Era Digital* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2021), 42–45.

³ Muhaimin, *Manajemen Pendidikan Islam: Aplikasi Dalam Penyusunan Rencana Pengembangan Sekolah/Madrasah* (Jakarta: Prenada Media, 2020), 61–66.

⁴ UNESCO, *Artificial Intelligence and Education: Guidance for Policy Makers* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2021), 23–29.

⁵ Ahmad Tafsir, “Challenges of Islamic Educational Institutions in the Digital Era,” *Journal of Islamic Education Studies* 8, no. 2 (2022): 120–34.

⁶ Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, “EMIS 4.0 and Digital Transformation Report” (Jakarta: Kemenag RI, 2025), 17–19.

⁷ Mulyasa, *Manajemen Berbasis Sekolah* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2021), 88–93.

management models that are more participatory, data-driven, and responsive to current dynamics. Failure to transform governance will not only lead to administrative backwardness, but also to the loss of institutional relevance in responding to increasingly complex global challenges in 2026.

To address this stagnation, implementing strategic management becomes a non-negotiable necessity for Islamic educational institutions. Strategic management is not merely an administrative instrument; rather, it is a systematic process that includes the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of cross-functional decisions that enable an organization to achieve its objectives.⁸ Through this approach, institutions can map internal strengths and external opportunities more precisely in order to take anticipatory steps in response to change. In addition, AI-supported strategic management enables institutions to analyze institutional data more effectively, predict future educational trends, and improve decision-making accuracy.⁹

The competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions does not rest solely on their similarity to general schools, but on their ability to integrate Islamic values with competitive advantages. Strategic management helps institutions create unique value added (unique value proposition) that differentiates them from other institutions.¹⁰ With such uniqueness, Islamic educational institutions can hold strong appeal in the public's view as institutions that ensure academic quality while strengthening spiritual integrity. Internalizing Islamic values alongside global competency standards and AI-based innovation is not merely a curricular complement; it is a strategic variable that produces real differentiation in an increasingly saturated education market. This integrative strategy allows institutions to avoid competition based merely on price or physical facilities, and instead to build stakeholder loyalty through the quality of graduates who possess intellectual intelligence, digital competence, and moral maturity.

One key instrument in strategic management that must be adopted is comprehensive environmental analysis. This process involves scanning internal and external environments to identify strategic factors that will determine an institution's future.¹¹ For Islamic educational institutions, such analysis is crucial for detecting weaknesses in facilities and infrastructure management, identifying digital transformation opportunities, and anticipating threats posed by competitors that are more technologically advanced so that mitigation steps can be formulated promptly.

Several previous studies have discussed strategic management in Islamic educational institutions, while others have focused on educational digitalization and AI implementation separately. However, studies specifically examining the integration of strategic management and artificial intelligence in enhancing the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions are still limited.¹² Most previous research emphasizes administrative effectiveness or digital learning innovation without comprehensively analyzing how AI can support institutional strategic management and competitiveness simultaneously. Therefore, there remains a research gap regarding the role of AI-

⁸ Fred R David and Forest R David, *Strategic Management: Concepts and Cases* (New York: Pearson, 2020), 35–41.

⁹ OECD, *AI and the Future of Skills* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2023), 54–58.

¹⁰ Michael E Porter, *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance* (New York: Free Press, 2019), 53–57.

¹¹ J David Hunger and Thomas L Wheelen, *Strategic Management and Business Policy* (Boston: Pearson, 2021), 102–6.

¹² Siti Maesaroh, "Artificial Intelligence Integration in Islamic Education Management," *International Journal of Islamic Educational Management* 5, no. 1 (2024): 45–60.

supported strategic management in strengthening institutional competitiveness within Islamic educational institutions.

The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to integrate strategic management theory with the utilization of artificial intelligence in the context of Islamic educational institutions through a literature-based review approach. This study not only discusses strategic planning and competitiveness conceptually, but also highlights the contribution of AI in educational governance, institutional decision-making, digital transformation, and quality improvement while maintaining Islamic values and moral integrity. Thus, this study offers a more contemporary and integrative perspective on the future direction of Islamic educational management in the era of digital disruption.

Based on this background, this study focuses on a literature review examining how strategic management and artificial intelligence can be optimized to enhance the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions. This aligns with the theory that organizational success depends heavily on management's ability to align organizational capacity with a dynamic environment.¹³ In addition, previous studies emphasize that effective strategic management implementation supported by technology and AI can significantly improve service quality and institutional image in the public eye, thereby strengthening an institution's bargaining position amid increasingly intense educational competition.¹⁴ This study is expected to provide a conceptual framework for institutional managers in designing strategies that are practical, adaptive, and visionary in the global and digital era.

METHOD

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology to synthesize empirical and conceptual findings on the integration of strategic management and artificial intelligence in enhancing the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions. The review protocol follows the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) to ensure transparency, reproducibility, and methodological rigor.¹⁵ The systematic search was conducted across five academic databases: Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Google Scholar, and DOAJ, using a combination of keywords related to three core constructs: (1) strategic management, (2) artificial intelligence, and (3) Islamic educational institutions. The search string was structured as follows: 1) ("strategic management" OR "institutional planning" OR "educational governance"), 2) AND ("artificial intelligence" OR "AI" OR "machine learning" OR "educational technology"), 3) AND ("Islamic education" OR "madrasah" OR "*pesantren*" OR "Islamic school" OR "Islamic higher education").

Inclusion criteria were: (a) peer-reviewed articles, conference papers, or policy reports published between 2020–2026; (b) written in English or Indonesian; (c) explicitly discussing strategic management, AI, and/or competitiveness in Islamic educational contexts. Exclusion criteria included: (a) non-empirical opinion pieces without methodological clarity; (b) studies focused solely on general education without Islamic institutional context; (c) duplicate publications.

The selection process followed a three-stage screening: (1) title/abstract screening, (2) full-text assessment, and (3) final inclusion based on relevance and quality. A

¹³Richard L Daft, *Management* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2022), 74–79.

¹⁴Wahyudin Darmalaksana, "Digital Transformation and AI in Islamic Higher Education," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 1 (2024): 77–92.

¹⁵Matthew J. Page et al., "The PRISMA 2020 Statement: An Updated Guideline for Reporting Systematic Reviews," *Bmj* 372 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71>.

PRISMA flow diagram was used to document the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages.¹⁶ Two independent reviewers conducted the screening to minimize selection bias; discrepancies were resolved through discussion or consultation with a third reviewer. Data extraction was performed using a standardized template capturing: author(s), year, country, research design, key variables, main findings, and implications for Islamic educational management. The extraction process was guided by methodological recommendations for SLR in management research.¹⁷

Given the heterogeneity of study designs (qualitative, quantitative, and conceptual), a narrative synthesis approach was adopted, complemented by thematic analysis to identify patterns, tensions, and emergent concepts across the literature.¹⁸ The quality of included studies was assessed using criteria adapted from Snyder, focusing on: clarity of research questions, methodological transparency, theoretical grounding, and relevance to the review objectives.¹⁹ Thematic analysis followed a three-phase process: (1) data reduction, coding key concepts related to strategic management and AI integration; (2) data display, organizing codes into thematic clusters (e.g., governance, curriculum innovation, leadership); and (3) conclusion drawing, interpreting themes in relation to institutional competitiveness in Islamic education.²⁰

As this study synthesizes publicly available scholarly works, no primary data involving human subjects were collected. Limitations include potential publication bias toward English-language sources and the evolving nature of AI applications in education, which may affect the generalizability of findings beyond the 2020–2026 timeframe.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

The systematic literature review synthesized findings from peer-reviewed articles, policy reports, and academic publications published between 2020 and 2026. Thematic content analysis reveals six interconnected domains through which strategic management and AI integration influence the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions.

To systematically map the evidence base, the included literature was categorized according to institutional context, methodological design, core variables, and primary contributions. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics and key findings of the ten most representative studies that directly inform the thematic analysis. This compilation provides a transparent overview of the empirical and policy-based foundations underpinning the review, enabling readers to trace how specific managerial, technological, and institutional factors converge to shape competitiveness in Islamic education.

¹⁶Page et al.

¹⁷David Tranfield, David Denyer, and Palminder Smart, “Towards a Methodology for Developing Evidence-Informed Management Knowledge by Means of Systematic Review *,” *British Journal of Management* 14 (2003): 207–22.

¹⁸Yu Xiao and Maria Watson, “Guidance on Conducting a Systematic Literature Review,” *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 39, no. 1 (2019): 93–112, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X17723971>.

¹⁹Hannah Snyder, “Literature Review as a Research Methodology: An Overview and Guidelines,” *Journal of Business Research* 104, no. March (2019): 333–39, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>.

²⁰Snyder.

Table 1. Study Characteristics & Key Findings

Author (Year)	Context / Country	Study Type	Key Focus / Variables	Main Findings	Relevance to SLR Objective
Hidayat (2023)	Madrasah Aliyah, Indonesia	Qualitative Case Study	Strategic Planning (Renstra)	Vision/mission translation to environmental analysis enables early trend detection & proactive development	High: Links strategy formulation to institutional competitiveness
Syarifudin & Mahaseng (2024)	Islamic Schools, Indonesia	Empirical/ Conceptual	Differentiation Strategy	Integrating international standards with religious programs boosts stakeholder attraction & retention	High: Demonstrates unique value proposition in competitive education market
Nasiruddin (2022)	Islamic Education, Indonesia	Quantitative Survey	Transformational Leadership	Positive correlation between leadership flexibility, tech adaptation, and service quality	High: Leadership as key implementation driver for AI & strategy
Fauziah & Rohman (2025)	Educational Institutions, Indonesia	Mixed Methods	Customer Relationship Management	Transparent communication & parent involvement increase retention; balance needed with academic independence	Moderate: Stakeholder management as competitiveness enabler
Zulkifli (2026)	Islamic Education, Indonesia	Qualitative	Internal Quality Audit	Strict quality control sustains long-term competitiveness; early detection of service deviations	High: Evaluation as strategic feedback mechanism
Maesaroh (2024)	Islamic Education Management, Indonesia	Conceptual Review	AI Integration in Management	AI enhances transparency & efficiency but requires HR readiness & digital infrastructure	High: Directly addresses AI's role in institutional governance
Kemenag RI (2025)	National Policy, Indonesia	Government Report	Digital Governance & EMIS 4.0	42% of Islamic institutions lack documented, integrated strategic plans	Contextual: Highlights real-world urgency for strategic planning
OECD (2023)	Global / Policy	Policy Report	AI & Future of Skills	Predictive analytics & AI support data-	Theoretical: Framework for AI in

				driven strategic decision-making in education	educational management
UNESCO (2021)	Global / Policy	Policy Guideline	AI Ethics & Implementation	Provides framework for ethical AI integration, administrative efficiency, & digital sustainability	Foundational: Guidelines for responsible AI adoption in education
Darmalaksana (2024)	Islamic Higher Education, Indonesia	Empirical	Digital Transformation & AI	AI accelerates institutional agility but faces infrastructure & literacy gaps	High: Contextualizes AI integration challenges in Islamic institutions

Source: Authors' synthesis of the systematically reviewed literature (2020–2026).

Discussion

The synthesized literature reveals that competitiveness in Islamic educational institutions is not the product of isolated managerial initiatives, but rather the outcome of an integrated strategic management cycle reinforced by AI-enabled governance. The consistent emphasis on environmental scanning and structured strategic formulation²¹ indicates that institutions failing to institutionalize data-driven planning remain reactive to policy shifts and market demands. Furthermore, the integration of AI into administrative and pedagogical systems transcends mere technological adoption; it functions as a strategic enabler that amplifies decision-making accuracy, operational transparency, and resource optimization.²² However, the persistent gap between technological potential and institutional readiness (evidenced by infrastructure constraints and AI literacy deficits), Tafsir suggests that AI implementation must be preceded by systematic capacity building rather than treated as a standalone solution.²³

Strategic Formulation and Environmental Analysis

The literature consistently identifies structured strategic planning as the foundational driver of institutional competitiveness. Hidayat²⁴ demonstrates that high-performing madrasah aliyah differentiate themselves by translating institutional vision and mission into comprehensive macro- and micro-environmental analyses, rather than treating strategic documents as administrative formalities. This aligns with established strategic management frameworks emphasizing that environmental scanning enables leaders to detect policy shifts and market disruptions earlier than competitors.²⁵

Studies indicate that institutions utilizing documented, data-driven strategic plans exhibit proactive rather than reactive development trajectories, thereby securing a sustainable competitive advantage in dynamic educational markets. Theoretically, this

²¹S. Hidayat, "Formulasi Rencana Strategis Di Madrasah Aliyah Unggulan," *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 2 (2023): 110–25; Hunger and Wheelen, *Strategic Management and Business Policy*.

²²Maesaroh, "Artificial Intelligence Integration in Islamic Education Management"; OECD, *AI and the Future of Skills*.

²³Indonesia, "EMIS 4.0 and Digital Transformation Report"; Tafsir, "Challenges of Islamic Educational Institutions in the Digital Era."

²⁴Hidayat, "Formulasi Rencana Strategis Di Madrasah Aliyah Unggulan."

²⁵Hunger and Wheelen, *Strategic Management and Business Policy*; David and David, *Strategic Management: Concepts and Cases*.

reflects the imperative of strategic foresight, where institutional agility is cultivated through continuous environmental monitoring and anticipatory scenario planning.

Artificial Intelligence Integration in Governance and Operations

Multiple studies document that AI-supported management systems enhance administrative efficiency, data processing accuracy, and institutional transparency.²⁶ Applications such as predictive analytics, automated reporting, and digital resource allocation are increasingly adopted to support strategic decision-making in educational settings.²⁷ Policy evaluations indicate that AI integration contributes to faster response times to institutional challenges and the development of adaptive learning frameworks.²⁸

However, literature consistently notes that digital sustainability strategies and infrastructure readiness remain prerequisite conditions for effective AI deployment. AI should be conceptualized not as a technological replacement but as a cognitive amplifier that operationalizes strategic intent through real-time data synthesis and continuous process optimization.

Differentiation Strategy and Competitive Positioning

The synthesis reveals that competitive advantage in Islamic education is strongly associated with curriculum and service differentiation. Syarifudin and Mahaseng²⁹ find that Islamic schools integrating distinctive academic-religious models (such as combining international scientific standards with structured religious programs) demonstrate higher stakeholder attraction and enrollment retention.

Consistent with resource-based competitive advantage theory, the literature emphasizes that competitiveness is derived from leveraging unique institutional competencies that align Islamic educational values with contemporary academic standards, rather than replicating conventional institutional models.³⁰ This differentiation transforms Islamic education from a supplementary alternative into a preferred ecosystem that offers holistic intellectual and moral development.

Transformational Leadership and Organizational Adaptability

Leadership quality emerges as a critical implementation factor across the reviewed studies. Nasiruddin³¹ reports a positive correlation between transformational leadership practices, bureaucratic flexibility, and educators' adaptation to digital learning tools. Institutions led by principals who demonstrate visionary communication and technology advocacy show higher rates of organizational change adoption. The literature links leadership behaviors that balance task-oriented management with human capital development to successful strategy execution in dynamic educational environments.³²

This finding resonates with Barney and Hesterly's³³ assertion that organizational capability fundamentally rests on a leader's strategic management of human capital.

²⁶Maesaroh, "Artificial Intelligence Integration in Islamic Education Management"; UNESCO, *Artificial Intelligence and Education: Guidance for Policy Makers*.

²⁷OECD, *AI and the Future of Skills*; Darmalaksana, "Digital Transformation and AI in Islamic Higher Education."

²⁸Indonesia, "EMIS 4.0 and Digital Transformation Report."

²⁹J. Syarifudin, A., & Mahaseng, "Strategi Diferensiasi Kurikulum Sebagai Keunggulan Kompetitif Sekolah Islam," *Jurnal Inovasi Kurikulum* 11, no. 2 (2024): 89–104.

³⁰Porter, *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*.

³¹M. Nasiruddin, "Kepemimpinan Transformasional Dan Budaya Organisasi Dalam Pendidikan," *Jurnal Kepemimpinan Pendidikan* 5, no. 4 (2022): 301–15.

³²Daft, *Management*; Mulyasa, *Manajemen Berbasis Sekolah*.

³³Jay B. Barney and William S. Hesterly, *Strategic Management and Competitive Advantages: Concepts and Cases*, 6th ed. (London: Pearson Education, 2019).

Consequently, strategic management transcends technical documentation; it requires leaders who inspire stakeholders to transcend comfort zones and align with long-term objectives amid global uncertainty. Visionary leadership must convert resistance into collective commitment through empathetic communication, thereby transforming administrators into change agents who orchestrate human and technological resources to proactively navigate educational disruption.

Stakeholder Relationship Management and Service Delivery

The reviewed literature identifies stakeholder engagement as an integral component of strategic service marketing. In contrast to internal operational focus, stakeholder engagement constitutes a critical dimension of strategic service marketing. Fauziah and Rohman³⁴ document that institutions implementing transparent communication channels, systematic complaint resolution, and structured parent involvement programs report higher student retention rates. Findings indicate that customer relationship management practices, when aligned with institutional values, contribute to stakeholder loyalty and institutional reputation. However, literature cautions against over-commercialization that may compromise educational autonomy and core pedagogical objectives.³⁵

Strategic management must therefore maintain a delicate equilibrium between market responsiveness and the preservation of core Islamic educational values. Sustainable competitive advantage should be anchored in public trust derived from authentic graduate quality rather than superficial digital branding. By prioritizing transparent accountability, Islamic institutions fulfill their dakwah mandate through professional excellence, ensuring that stakeholder relationships serve as instruments for aspirational alignment rather than commercial concession.

Strategic Evaluation and Internal Quality Assurance

Evaluation mechanisms are consistently reported as the final phase of the strategic management cycle. Zulkifli³⁶ finds that institutions conducting disciplined internal quality audits and performance-based assessments demonstrate greater capacity to maintain long-term competitiveness through early detection of service quality deviations. The literature highlights that systematic evaluation processes function as strategic feedback instruments, enabling continuous institutional improvement and alignment with accreditation standards.³⁷

Quality assessments function not merely as accreditation compliance tools, but as strategic reflection mechanisms that engage the entire institutional community. Nevertheless, a prevalent cultural barrier (the tendency toward *sungkan* or reluctance toward critical self-evaluation) often undermines this process in traditional Islamic settings. Without intellectual honesty at the evaluation stage, strategic planning becomes fragmented, preventing organizations from learning from operational shortcomings. Cultivating an objective, performance-oriented culture is therefore indispensable for modern Islamic institutions seeking sustained excellence.

Cross-Thematic Patterns

³⁴A. Fauziah, N., & Rohman, "Strategi Pemasaran Jasa Pendidikan Dalam Meningkatkan Citra Lembaga," *Jurnal Akuntabilitas Manajemen Pendidikan* 13, no. 1 (2025): 22–35.

³⁵Terry, *Principles of Management*.

³⁶M. Zulkifli, "Audit Mutu Internal Sebagai Alat Evaluasi Strategis Di Lembaga Pendidikan," *Jurnal Penjaminan Mutu Pendidikan* 14, no. 1 (2026): 45–60.

³⁷Muhaimin, *Manajemen Pendidikan Islam: Aplikasi Dalam Penyusunan Rencana Pengembangan Sekolah/Madrasah*.

The synthesized literature indicates that institutional competitiveness is not dependent on isolated management practices, but on the integration of strategic formulation, AI-enabled governance, differentiation, adaptive leadership, stakeholder engagement, and systematic evaluation. Studies consistently report that institutions achieving higher competitiveness levels demonstrate alignment between technological adoption, strategic planning discipline, and value-based educational identity.³⁸

The synergy of these components enables Islamic educational institutions to transition from conventional administrative models to proactive, digitally informed ecosystems. Strategic management, in this context, functions as the organizational spirit that harmonizes human capital, technological infrastructure, and ethical foundations. Ultimately, Islamic institutions can achieve enduring global competitiveness only by aligning academic excellence with moral integrity, thereby emerging as institutions of choice that offer intellectually rigorous and spiritually grounded education in an era of rapid digital transformation.

CONCLUSION

Strategic management has become a crucial instrument in determining the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions amid globalization, Artificial Intelligence (AI) advancement, and the 2026 digital transformation era. Institutional success in improving its bargaining position does not depend solely on technology adoption, but on the integration of strategic planning, adaptive governance, curriculum innovation, and transformational leadership supported by AI-based management systems. The implementation of AI in educational management contributes to more accurate data-driven decision-making, institutional performance evaluation, administrative efficiency, and the development of responsive learning systems.

This study contributes to the development of educational management literature by offering an integrative perspective between strategic management and AI utilization in Islamic educational institutions. Unlike previous studies that mainly focused on digitalization or managerial effectiveness separately, this study highlights how AI-supported strategic management can strengthen institutional competitiveness while maintaining Islamic values and moral integrity. Therefore, the findings of this study provide practical implications for institutional leaders and policymakers to design more innovative, technology-oriented, and sustainable governance strategies in responding to educational challenges in the digital era.

This study confirms that true competitiveness emerges when institutions can align global academic excellence with the integrity of Islamic values as a unique value proposition. However, realities indicate that structural barriers such as dependence on traditional management and an organizational culture that is reluctant toward self-critique remain major challenges. Therefore, strategic management should be viewed as the organizational spirit that integrates managerial aspects, human capital, and technology to ensure sustainable quality amid global uncertainty.

To enhance competitiveness sustainably, Islamic educational institutions are recommended to reposition themselves from traditional management toward proactive, digital-based governance. First, institutional leaders should prioritize the development of a documented, data-driven Strategic Plan (Renstra) as a long-term compass for institutional development. Second, educators' digital competencies should be accelerated

³⁸Nata, *Pendidikan Islam Di Era Digital*; Tafsir, "Challenges of Islamic Educational Institutions in the Digital Era."

through continuous mentoring programs to minimize technological gaps. Third, institutions must strengthen quality assurance systems through objective internal audits to build a performance-based organizational culture. Finally, the integration of distinctive Islamic values within the curriculum should continue to be developed as a competitively differentiating identity. Through these strategic steps, Islamic educational institutions are expected not only to survive, but also to become society's preferred institutions intellectually excellent and morally dignified.

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