

Principals' Managerial Strategies in Integrating IQ, EQ, and SQ in Islamic Early Childhood Education

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Abstract

Keywords:

School principal, IQ EQ SQ Integration, Early Childhood Islamic Education, Managerial strategies.

This study aims to examine the managerial strategies of school principals in integrating intellectual intelligence (IQ), emotional intelligence (EQ), and spiritual intelligence (SQ) to optimize the growth and development of early childhood in Islamic early childhood education institutions. The integration of these three dimensions of intelligence is important because early childhood development emphasizes not only cognitive aspects, but also character building, emotional management, and the internalization of spiritual values. This study uses a qualitative, multi-site case study design conducted across three Islamic kindergartens in Karawang Regency. The multi-site design was chosen to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of variations in managerial strategies across institutions. Research data were obtained through questionnaires distributed to school principals and teachers, comprising closed- and open-ended questions to explore managerial planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation practices in the development of children's holistic intelligence. The data were analyzed descriptively and thematically to identify patterns of managerial strategies applied at each research location. The results showed that principals applied integrative strategies by implementing holistic learning planning, strengthening teacher collaboration, structuring task-sharing, and instilling religious values in daily learning activities. These strategies support the balanced development of children in cognitive, social-emotional, and spiritual aspects. However, this study also found several obstacles, including limited teacher competence, limited learning time, and variations in parental support. This study recommends strengthening teacher professional development, increasing synergy between schools and parents, and strengthening integrative management to improve the quality of Islamic early childhood education.

Kata Kunci:

Kepala sekolah, Integrasi IQ, EQ, SQ, Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini, Strategi Manajerial.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji strategi manajerial kepala sekolah dalam mengintegrasikan kecerdasan intelektual (IQ), emosional (EQ), dan spiritual (SQ) untuk mengoptimalkan tumbuh kembang anak usia dini pada lembaga pendidikan anak usia dini Islam. Integrasi ketiga dimensi kecerdasan tersebut penting karena perkembangan anak usia dini tidak hanya menekankan aspek kognitif, tetapi juga penguatan karakter, pengelolaan emosi, dan internalisasi nilai-nilai spiritual. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus multi-situs yang dilaksanakan di tiga TK Islam di Kabupaten Karawang. Desain multi-situs dipilih untuk memperoleh pemahaman yang lebih komprehensif mengenai variasi strategi manajerial yang diterapkan pada masing-masing lembaga. Data penelitian diperoleh melalui penyebaran kuesioner kepada kepala sekolah dan guru yang terdiri atas pertanyaan tertutup dan terbuka untuk menggali praktik perencanaan, pelaksanaan, pengawasan, dan evaluasi manajerial dalam pengembangan

kecerdasan holistik anak. Data dianalisis secara deskriptif dan tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola strategi manajerial yang diterapkan pada setiap lokasi penelitian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepala sekolah menerapkan strategi integratif melalui perencanaan pembelajaran holistik, penguatan kolaborasi antarguru, pembagian tugas yang terstruktur, serta pembiasaan nilai-nilai keagamaan dalam kegiatan pembelajaran sehari-hari. Strategi tersebut mendukung perkembangan anak secara seimbang pada aspek kognitif, sosial-emosional, dan spiritual. Namun demikian, penelitian ini juga menemukan beberapa kendala, antara lain keterbatasan kompetensi guru, keterbatasan waktu pembelajaran, serta variasi dukungan orang tua. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan penguatan pengembangan profesional guru, peningkatan sinergi antara sekolah dan orang tua, serta penguatan manajemen integratif untuk meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan anak usia dini Islam.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education plays a strategic role in shaping the foundation for holistic human development (Fernandes, et.al, 2023). At this stage, children are in *their golden age*, which is characterized by the rapid development of cognitive, social-emotional, moral, and spiritual abilities (Markowitz, et.al, 2026; Putra, Utami, & Jamilah, 2024). The quality of education at this stage greatly determines children's readiness to face the next level of education and shapes their long-term character (Nursalim, 2024). Early childhood education cannot be viewed solely as a process of early academic introduction, but must be directed towards the holistic and balanced development of children's potential (Yusuf, 2021; Rusanti, 2024). However, various education reports show that learning practices in Islamic Early Childhood Education institutions often focus on early academic achievements such as reading, writing, and arithmetic, while aspects of children's emotional and spiritual development have not received equal attention (Maduerawae, 2025; Mayasari, 2025). This condition indicates a gap between the holistic early childhood education paradigm and educational practices in the field.

In contemporary educational studies, a holistic approach to child development is often formulated through the development of intellectual intelligence (*Intellectual Quotient* or IQ), emotional intelligence (*Emotional Quotient* or EQ), and spiritual intelligence (*Spiritual Quotient* or SQ) (Nursidah, et.al, 2025; Fauzi, 2024). IQ refers to cognitive capacity related to the ability to think, reason, and solve problems; EQ relates to the ability to recognize, manage, and express emotions adaptively in social interactions; while SQ refers to an individual's ability to make sense of life, values, and transcendental relationships with God (Samul, 2020; Kumar, 2025). The integration of these three dimensions of intelligence is important because children's development does not occur in isolation; these dimensions influence one another and shape the wholeness of a child's personality. In this study, the integration of IQ, EQ, and SQ is operationally defined as the simultaneous, interrelated development of these three dimensions of intelligence through program planning, learning practices, school culture, and the internalization of values.

This concept of integration intersects with Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, which asserts that child development is not singular but encompasses various dimensions of intelligence that develop through meaningful learning experiences (Gardner, 2019; Zhang & Wu, 2025). However, in the context of Early Childhood Islamic Education, intelligence integration is not only oriented towards the development of cognitive and social potential, but also towards the formation of spiritual awareness and moral values derived from Islamic teachings (Mahfouz et al, 2025; Sulistyorini, 2025). Thus, the development of SQ is not merely understood as a psychological

construct but is oriented toward the internalization of the values of monotheism, morals, and manners as the foundation for shaping children's personalities from an early age.

Various previous studies have shown that the integrated development of IQ, EQ, and SQ positively impacts learning readiness, character formation, and social skills in early childhood (Mergoni et al., 2026; Wu & Shen, 2022). Other studies confirm that school principal leadership has a significant effect on learning quality, teacher performance, and school climate (Daniëls et al., 2019; Sartika et al., 2023; Weisberg, 2016). However, most of these studies still place the integration of intelligence as a pedagogical practice of teachers in the classroom, while the role of the principal is more often discussed normatively and has not been analyzed in depth from the perspective of concrete managerial strategies applied in early childhood education institutions. This limitation indicates a research gap regarding how principals design, organize, and control the educational process to ensure that holistic intelligence development is carried out consistently across all school activities.

Based on these conditions, this study departs from the proposition that the successful integration of IQ, EQ, and SQ in early childhood education is not only determined by teachers' pedagogical practices in the classroom but is also greatly influenced by the effectiveness of principals' managerial strategies in systematically designing, implementing, and evaluating educational programs. This study aims to examine in depth the managerial strategies of principals in integrating IQ, EQ, and SQ in Islamic Early Childhood Education institutions. Specifically, this study is directed at: (1) analyzing how principals formulate the integration of IQ, EQ, and SQ in school program planning; (2) examine how these strategies are implemented through organization, learning practices, and school culture; and (3) identify the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms used by principals to ensure the sustainability of holistic intelligence integration in various contexts of Islamic Early Childhood Education institutions.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a multi-site case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of principals' managerial strategies for integrating intellectual (IQ), emotional (EQ), and spiritual (SQ) intelligence within Islamic Early Childhood Education institutions. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to explore the meaning, process, and managerial practices that take place in the real context of school management, rather than to test the relationship between variables statistically (Moleong, 2019). A multi-site case study design was used to analyze and compare managerial practices across several institutions with relatively similar characteristics but in different organizational and school cultural contexts (Sugiyono, 2019). The research was conducted for approximately three months at three Islamic kindergartens in Karawang Regency, namely TKQ An Namlu, TKIT Al Irsyad Al Islamiyyah Karawang, and TKQ Salsabilla. These three institutions were selected purposively because they share similarities as Islamic Early Childhood Education institutions grounded in Islamic values, yet exhibit variations in foundation management, program characteristics, and student backgrounds, making them relevant for cross-case analysis.

The objective of this study is to examine the managerial strategies of school principals for integrating the development of IQ, EQ, and SQ into educational activities at Islamic Early Childhood Education institutions. Research informants were selected purposively based on their experience, position, and involvement in school management practices. The main informants were three school principals from each kindergarten, who served as policymakers and school managers.

Supporting informants included six classroom teachers and three senior teachers or curriculum coordinators involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning. Data collection was conducted using semi-structured in-depth interviews as the main technique, non-participant observation, documentary studies, and open-ended questionnaires as supporting instruments (Sugiyono, 2019). Interviews were used to explore the informants' views and experiences regarding managerial strategies for integrating IQ, EQ, and SQ, while observation and documentation were used to verify the managerial practices in educational activities and school management.

Data analysis was conducted descriptively and thematically with reference to Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model, which includes the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles, 2014). The analysis was carried out in two stages: within-case analysis to understand the characteristics of managerial strategies in each institution, and cross-case analysis to identify common patterns, similarities, and variations in the managerial strategies of school principals in integrating IQ, EQ, and SQ. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation and method triangulation by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation, as well as conducting member checks with key informants to ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of data interpretation (Radlinski & Craswell, 2022).

Table 1. Research Informants

Informant Code	Informant Status	Institution	Function in Research
KS-1	School Principal	TKQ An Namlu	Primary informant explains managerial strategy planning and the integration of religious habits in the development of IQ, EQ, and SQ
KS-2	Principal	TKIT Al Irsyad Al Islamiyyah Karawang	Key informant: explains integrated curriculum management and learning coordination systems
KS-3	Principal	TKQ Salsabilla	Key informant: explains leadership strategies and reflective approaches in learning evaluation
GS-3	Senior Teacher	TKQ Salsabilla	Supporting informant: provides information on adaptive learning planning practices tailored to student characteristics
G-1	Class Teacher	TKQ An Namlu	Supporting informant explains the implementation of instilling values of manners and emotional interaction in learning
G-6	Class Teacher	TKQ Salsabilla	Supporting informant; explaining the principal's informal communication and mentoring practices towards teachers

Source: Data Collection, 2026

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Principal's Managerial Strategy Planning in the Integration of IQ, EQ, and SQ

Planning is a fundamental managerial function that determines the direction and quality of early childhood education. In the context of this multi-site case study, managerial strategy planning is understood as a social and reflective process built through interactions among the principal and teachers, the institutional context, and the Islamic values embraced by each school. Field observations show that the planning process is carried out not only through the preparation of formal documents but also through regular discussion forums between principals and teachers, such as weekly coordination meetings, learning activity evaluation meetings, and informal discussions related to student development. In these forums, principals and teachers discuss

children's developmental needs, design learning activities, and determine how to integrate cognitive, social-emotional, and spiritual values into daily learning activities.

The results of the study show that the three Islamic kindergartens in Karawang Regency all place the integration of intellectual (IQ), emotional (EQ), and spiritual (SQ) intelligence as the main orientation of their planning, but with different emphases and strategies according to the characteristics of each institution.

At TKQ An Namlu, planning emphasizes strengthening religious habits as the foundation of SQ, which is then integrated into cognitive and social-emotional activities. Based on observation results, planning activities at this school often begins with reflection on children's religious habits, such as group prayer, learning daily manners, and simple worship practices, which are then linked to other learning activities. The principal said:

"We start with daily moral and worship habits. Once their spirituality has been formed, it is easier to guide the children's cognitive and emotional aspects." (KS-1, Principal of TKQ An Namlu)

Meanwhile, TKIT Al Irsyad Al Islamiyyah Karawang demonstrated a more structured and curricular approach to planning. Planning was carried out through internal curriculum documents that explicitly mapped IQ, EQ, and SQ indicators in each learning activity. Observations show that the learning planning documents at this school include indicators of child development integrated with Islamic values, as well as learning activity guidelines systematically designed by the team of teachers and the principal. The principal explained:

"Every program must clearly contribute to children's intelligence, not only academically, but also in terms of attitude and spirituality." (KS-2, Principal of TKIT Al Irsyad Al Islamiyyah Karawang)

In contrast to the other two institutions, TKQ Salsabilla displayed more flexible and adaptive planning in response to students' conditions. Observations showed that the principal gave teachers space to adjust the learning plan in response to classroom dynamics and children's developmental characteristics. This was evident in the practice of periodically revising activity plans following teachers' reflections on classroom learning activities. A senior teacher said:

"We often adjust the plans because the children have different characteristics. The principal allows room for such adjustments." (GS-3, Senior Teacher at TKQ Salsabilla)

These findings indicate that although the three schools have a relatively similar vision of holistic intelligence development, managerial planning practices are not uniform but are influenced by organizational culture, principal leadership, and student characteristics.

The visualization of questionnaire data in Table 1 shows that all indicators of managerial strategy planning are in the high category, with average scores ranging from 4.33 to 4.67. The indicators of teacher involvement in holistic learning program planning and teacher cooperation coordination each received an average score of 4.33. This shows that the principal employs a participatory management approach to planning, enabling programs that are more contextual, realistic, and aligned with actual classroom conditions.

Table 2. Average Scores for Principal Managerial Strategy Planning Indicators

Indicator	Average Score
Development of an integrated school program for IQ, EQ, and SQ	4
Planning learning based on children's growth and development needs	4.67
Teacher involvement in holistic learning program planning	4.33
School activity planning that covers academic, social-emotional, and spiritual aspects	4.33
Clear division of teachers' tasks in supporting the integration of IQ, EQ, and SQ	4.67
Teacher collaboration in lesson planning	4.33

Source: Primary data from research questionnaires. 2026

Teacher questionnaire data were used as supporting information showing a general tendency for planning to be rated in the high category. However, these numerical data were not positioned as the main findings, but rather as reinforcement of the qualitative findings obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation.

Implementation of the Principal's Managerial Strategy in Integrating IQ, EQ, and SQ

The implementation of managerial strategies in integrating IQ, EQ, and SQ showed variations in practice between research locations. Based on the results of observations, the implementation of strategies was not only evident in the implementation of formal learning programs but also in the principal's daily leadership practices, such as communication patterns with teachers, involvement in children's habit-forming activities, and the principal's approach to building a school culture that supports holistic intelligence development. At TKQ An Namlu, the integration of IQ, EQ, and SQ is evident in the principal's direct example. Observations show that the principal routinely attends morning activities, such as welcoming children at the school gate, leading prayers, and interacting directly with students in classrooms and on the school grounds.

This presence creates a positive emotional atmosphere for children and teachers. One teacher stated:

"The children imitate the principal directly, especially in terms of manners and attitude." (G-1, An Namlu Kindergarten Teacher)

At TKIT Al Irsyad Al Islamiyyah, the implementation of the strategy is more characterized by a formal coordination and supervision system. Observations show that teachers consistently refer to integrated lesson plans and follow the learning activity procedures established in the institution's curriculum. The principal serves as a quality controller, ensuring alignment between the plan and the learning program's implementation.

In contrast, TKQ Salsabilla demonstrates the implementation of relationship-based and informal mentoring strategies. The principal more often conducts reflective discussions with teachers after learning activities, so that teachers can share experiences and discuss learning strategies better suited to the children's needs. One teacher said:

"Instructions are usually given while chatting, but that actually makes us more open." (G-6, TKQ Salsabilla Classroom Teacher)

Cross-case analysis shows that personal exemplary behavior, formal managerial systems, and relational approaches are distinct patterns of strategy implementation, each contributing equally to the integration of IQ, EQ, and SQ.

In conclusion, the implementation of the principal's managerial strategy for integrating IQ, EQ, and SQ varies across school settings, yet each approach significantly contributes to the development of students' holistic intelligence. At TKQ An Namlu, the principal's direct involvement in daily activities, such as welcoming children and leading prayers, creates a positive emotional atmosphere that directly influences students' attitudes and behavior. In contrast, TKIT Al Irsyad Al Islamiyyah emphasizes formal coordination and supervision, with teachers following integrated lesson plans and the principal ensuring alignment between plans and implementation. These strategies highlight the importance of clear structure and consistent oversight in promoting the integration of IQ, EQ, and SQ.

On the other hand, TKQ Salsabilla exemplifies a more relational approach, with the principal conducting reflective discussions and informal mentoring sessions to support teachers'

professional growth and adapt learning strategies to children's needs. This cross-case analysis reveals that personal exemplary behavior, formal managerial systems, and relational mentoring are distinct yet equally valuable patterns of strategy implementation. Each of these methods plays a vital role in fostering both cognitive and emotional development, underscoring the need for flexible, context-specific leadership to promote holistic child development.

Principal Supervision and Supporting and Hindering Factors of Principal Managerial Strategies

The field findings regarding principal supervision and the factors that support or hinder managerial strategies across the three research locations revealed notable differences in the evaluation processes used at each school. At TKIT Al Irsyad, evaluation is conducted systematically through scheduled academic supervision, with written feedback provided regularly to teachers. In contrast, both TKQ An Namlu and TKQ Salsabilla place more emphasis on dialogue-based evaluations and reflective discussions. While TKIT Al Irsyad benefits from a more formalized and structured evaluation system, the other two schools prioritize flexibility and real-time feedback to adapt their approaches to the immediate needs of students and teachers.

Additionally, the study highlighted a range of factors that support or hinder the successful implementation of managerial strategies. Across the schools, teacher competence and a strong religious culture were commonly identified as key supporting factors. However, differences in institutional resources and external support from the foundation were significant. TKIT Al Irsyad benefited from improved facilities and institutional support, while TKQ An Namlu and TKQ Salsabilla faced facility constraints that hindered their holistic learning activities. Nevertheless, these limitations were often mitigated by teachers' creativity and principals' flexible management styles, demonstrating that the success of managerial strategies depends more on principals' ability to adapt to and manage contextual challenges than on the uniformity of practices across schools.

Supervision and evaluation across the three research locations revealed differences in the level of formality and the depth of reflection. The evaluation function was not always carried out through the same mechanisms, even though they had similar objectives. At TKIT Al Irsyad, evaluation is carried out systematically through scheduled academic supervision and written evaluation documents. Observations show that the principal routinely supervises classes and provides teachers with written feedback on the implementation of integrated learning.

In contrast, TKQ An Namlu and TKQ Salsabilla place more emphasis on dialogue-based evaluation and joint reflection. The principal at TKQ Salsabilla stated: *"We focus more on immediate improvement than written reports."* (KS-3, Principal of TKQ Salsabilla)

Cross-case analysis shows a contradiction between the strength of the formal system and reflective flexibility. Schools with strong evaluation systems tend to excel in program consistency, while schools with a reflective approach are more adaptive to the needs of children and teachers. Supporting and inhibiting factors for managerial strategies vary across schools. Although teacher competence and religious culture are common supportive factors, the levels of resource availability and foundation support vary significantly.

TKIT Al Irsyad is relatively stronger in terms of facilities and institutional support, while TKQ An Namlu and TKQ Salsabilla face facility limitations that impact the variety of holistic learning activities. However, these limitations are often offset by teacher creativity and the managerial flexibility of the school principal. Cross-case findings confirm that the success of

managerial strategies is not determined by uniformity of practice but rather by the principal's ability to adaptively manage the institution's context, limitations, and potential.

Table 3. Cross-Case Findings on School Principals' Managerial Strategies in Integrating IQ, EQ, and SQ

Aspect Findings	TKQ An Namlu	TKIT Al Irsyad Al Islamiyyah	TKQ Salsabilla	Cross-Case Findings
Planning Orientation	SQ is the main foundation, integrated into IQ and EQ	The integration of IQ, EQ, and SQ is explicitly formulated in the curriculum document	Planning is adaptive and contextual	The integration of intelligence is built through a contextual approach, not a single model
Forms of IQ, EQ, and SQ Integration	Integration through religious habits and role models	Integration through mapping indicators and formal programs	Integration through play activities and emotional relationships	Integration is simultaneous, but mediated by culture and the school system
Principal Leadership Style	Personal role modeling and direct involvement	Structural leadership and system control	Relational and reflective leadership	Leadership style influences how intelligence integration is implemented
Holistic Learning Implementation	Cognitive learning accompanied by manners and worship	Learning follows institutional standards and procedures	Flexible learning based on children's experiences	Implementation is not uniform, but oriented towards the same holistic goals
Supervision and Evaluation	Direct observation and informal dialogue	Scheduled and documented academic supervision	Flexible joint reflection	There is productive tension between the formal system and reflective flexibility
The Role of Teachers in Integration	Teachers exemplify the values demonstrated by the principal	Teachers implement programs according to institutional guidelines	Teachers act as facilitators and emotional companions	Teachers are key actors in integration, with varying roles
School Culture	Religious and habit-based	Disciplined, orderly, and structured	Family-like and supportive	School culture is the main medium for internalizing SQ
Key Supporting Factors	The exemplary leadership of the principal and the religious culture	Foundation support and management system	Positive relationships between teachers and parents	Supporting factors are contextual and location-specific
Hindering Factors	Limited learning resources	Teachers' administrative workload	Documentation and program consistency	Integration challenges arise from structural and resource limitations

Source: Results of research data analysis at three Islamic kindergartens in Karawang Regency. 2026

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the principal's managerial strategy in integrating intellectual (IQ), emotional (EQ), and spiritual (SQ) intelligence in Early Childhood Islamic Education cannot be understood solely as normative or administrative achievements, but rather as educational leadership practices formed through complex interactions between Islamic values,

school organizational culture, and the structural limitations faced by educational institutions. Thus, the integration of intelligence does not occur in a neutral pedagogical space but in an institutional social context that involves leadership relations, teacher capacity, and support for the educational environment.

The empirical findings of this study show that principals in three Early Childhood Islamic Education institutions strive to integrate the dimensions of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intelligence through various managerial strategies, such as developing holistic learning programs, instilling religious values in school activities, strengthening coordination among teachers, and providing academic supervision oriented toward teacher professional development. However, the implementation of these strategies is not uniform. Variations in managerial practices show that the integration of intelligence is strongly influenced by the institutional context, the principal's leadership style, and the characteristics of the school culture that has developed within each institution.

The use of the concepts of IQ, EQ, and SQ in this study requires conceptual clarification to avoid reducing the meaning of Islamic education to a Western psychological framework. Historically, the concept of IQ developed from the psychometric tradition that emphasizes measuring individual cognitive abilities, while the concept of EQ developed from social psychology studies that emphasize an individual's ability to understand and manage emotions. However, in the context of Early Childhood Islamic Education, these concepts are not used as quantitative psychometric instruments, but rather as a heuristic conceptual framework for understanding the balance of children's holistic development (Mei-Ju, 2024).

From an Islamic educational perspective, human development is not understood in a partial manner, but as a process of forming a whole human being through the integration of the dimensions of reason (*'aql*), heart (*qalb*), and action (*'amal*) (Ramlah, 2023; Syafarina, 2021). This framework aligns with the view that Islamic education aims to shape individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also emotionally and spiritually mature, as reflected in their social and moral behavior. Therefore, the integration of IQ, EQ, and SQ in this study is more appropriately understood as a modern conceptual articulation of the principle of Islamic *tarbiyah*, which emphasizes the unity of the cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions in the educational process (Samul, 2020; Faruq & Supriyanto, 2020).

In relation to Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences, the findings of this study are not intended as direct evidence of the model's theoretical validity in the context of Islamic Education. Instead, Gardner's theory is used in a limited way as a lens to interpret learning practices that do not focus solely on academic aspects. However, this study also reveals an epistemological tension, as Gardner's theory is secular and individualistic, while Islamic education is oriented towards the formation of a perfect human being based on transcendental values (Pyle & Danniels, 2017). Therefore, the integration of IQ, EQ, and SQ in this study is better understood as a contextual adaptation rather than a complete theoretical adoption.

Qualitative data, such as interview excerpts and observations, indicate efforts at integration, but do not guarantee that this integration has been optimal and evenly distributed across all aspects of learning. Thus, claims about the consistency and effectiveness of managerial strategies need to be understood in proportion and in context. In the context of educational leadership, the findings of this study are partially aligned with transformational leadership and academic supervision theories, particularly in relation to role modeling, professional mentoring, and reflective dialogue (Lolang et al., 2023; Kahani et al., 2025; Yuliana, 2024). This study also

reveals that school principals' leadership practices are not always at the ideal transformational level. Limited resources, the administrative burden on teachers, and limited learning time significantly restrict school principals' ability to implement managerial strategies systematically and sustainably.

In examining the research findings, this article successfully addresses a significant gap in the current literature on Islamic education management. Most existing studies focus either on theoretical models of leadership or on curriculum integration, but fail to holistically address the integration of IQ, EQ, and SQ into the managerial strategies of school principals (Lunenburg & Irby, 2022). The article makes a valuable contribution by demonstrating how to effectively integrate these three intelligences across different school contexts, particularly in Islamic kindergartens in Karawang Regency. Through its cross-case analysis, the study finds that a one-size-fits-all approach is ineffective and that leadership strategies must be adaptable to the unique contexts and cultures of each school (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2021). This critical finding closes the gap by providing empirical evidence directly applicable to Islamic schools, which have been largely overlooked in prior research.

The theoretical contribution of this article is substantial. By incorporating frameworks from Holistic Education and Emotional Intelligence Theory, the article provides a deep, integrated approach to educational leadership. The study applies the Concept of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner & Moran, 2006) in which IQ, EQ, and SQ serve as multidimensional frameworks to inform leadership strategies. Additionally, the use of Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Theory enriches the discussion around leadership behavior, emphasizing that successful school management involves not only cognitive skills but also emotional and social intelligence. This theoretical integration enables the study to present a leadership model that is more inclusive and adaptable to the dynamic needs of schools seeking to develop well-rounded students (Perreault & Lunenburg, 2002).

Moreover, the article's analysis offers a critical theoretical advance by examining the relationship between the principal's leadership style and the integration of IQ, EQ, and SQ. The literature often treats these three intelligences separately, but the article's contribution lies in synthesizing them through the prism of educational management. The study highlights how the principal's ability to integrate these intelligences impacts student development and teacher performance (Algan & Huillery, 2025; Blaik Hourani et al., 2021). For instance, the case of TKQ An Namlu illustrates how the principal's personal example and involvement directly influence teachers' emotional engagement and students' social development. This integration of emotional and social intelligence into leadership practices further builds on Fullan's theory of educational change, which emphasizes the need for adaptive leadership in fostering holistic student growth (Moore, 2009; Oplatka & Arar, 2018).

Another significant theoretical contribution is the article's use of cultural capital theory to explain how school culture mediates the effectiveness of integrating IQ, EQ, and SQ. The authors assert that the cultural context of each school significantly influences how these intelligences are integrated into the curriculum and day-to-day teaching practices (Oplatka & Arar, 2018). This insight aligns with Honneth's theory of cultural capital, which suggests that institutions shape students' and teachers' behaviors and attitudes in subtle yet profound ways (Honneth, 1986). In the case of TKIT Al Irsyad, where a formal system of evaluation and institutional support is in place, the school culture emphasizes discipline and order, creating an environment conducive to consistent academic performance (Lizardo, 2011). Conversely, TKQ Salsabilla's family-like,

supportive culture highlights how emotional connections can facilitate adaptive learning, making the integration of EQ and SQ particularly effective.

The novelty of this article lies in its methodological approach and cross-case analysis, which offer a rare yet highly valuable perspective in educational research. By comparing three distinct schools with varying leadership styles and resources, the article offers new insights into the principal's role in integrating IQ, EQ, and SQ. This contrasts with prior studies, which often focus on a single institution or rely on survey-based methods, limiting the depth of their findings (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). The article's emphasis on reflective leadership and dialogue-based evaluation, especially at TKQ Salsabilla, offers a novel approach that combines both formal evaluation systems and informal, relational leadership, a blend not commonly addressed in the educational management literature (Leithwood & Slegers, 2006).

Table 4. Critical Synthesis of Discussion Analysis and Research Contributions

Findings Aspect	Interpretation and Discussion	Relevance to Theory	Research Contribution
Integration of IQ, EQ, and SQ	Integration is understood as an educational practice that seeks to balance cognitive, emotional, and spiritual aspects in daily school activities	Conceptually aligned with the theory of multiple intelligences and the holistic approach to Islamic education	It shows that intelligence integration can be mediated through the policies and managerial practices of school principals
The Role of Leadership and Supervision	Principal supervision functions as professional mentoring through reflective dialogue	Partially aligned with academic supervision theory and transformational leadership	Shifts the focus of supervision from administrative control to professional development of teachers
Principal Managerial Strategies	Managerial strategies include planning, implementation, and evaluation oriented toward holistic learning	Supports the literature on the role of the principal as an instructional leader	Providing an initial empirical description of the managerial role of school principals in Early Childhood Islamic Education
Supporting Factors	Teacher competence, religious school culture, and foundation/parent strengthen implementation	Consistent with transformational and collaborative leadership theories	Emphasizing the importance of internal and external collaboration in Islamic education
Hindering Factors	Limited resources, learning time, and administrative burdens are real obstacles	In line with the findings of research on Early Childhood Islamic Education	It shows that the integration of intelligence is adaptive and compromising
Multi-Site Design	The multi-site study is intended to examine variations in managerial practices	In accordance with the qualitative case study methodology	Provides the potential for cross-case analysis in the context of Early Childhood Islamic Education

Source: Results of research data analysis. 2026

The contradiction between the claim of holistic integration and the reality of structural limitations is an important finding of this study. On the one hand, principals strive to integrate IQ, EQ, and SQ through learning, religious habits, and teacher supervision. On the other hand, limitations in facilities, learning time, and teachers' administrative burdens indicate that this integration is often compromising and adaptive, rather than ideal. This contradiction reveals the

real dynamics of Early Childhood Islamic Education management, which is rarely revealed in normative research.

Nevertheless, the main contribution of this study lies in its attempt to shift the discourse on intelligence integration from the pedagogical realm of teachers to the managerial realm of principals. This study shows that the integration of IQ, EQ, and SQ does not occur automatically in the classroom but depends heavily on the principal's planning, leadership, supervision, and management of school culture. In the context of Islamic education management, these findings enrich the understanding that the principal's leadership acts as a mediator between Islamic values, curriculum demands, and institutional realities.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the principal's managerial strategies play a very important role in optimizing early childhood development through the integration of intellectual (IQ), emotional (EQ), and spiritual (SQ) intelligence in Early Childhood Islamic Education. Systematic program planning, holistic learning implementation, and continuous monitoring and evaluation show that principals function not only as administrators but also as instructional and transformational leaders. The integration of IQ, EQ, and SQ is consistently manifested in learning activities, religious habits, and a school culture that supports the balanced cognitive, socio-emotional, and spiritual development of children. These findings confirm that early childhood education oriented towards holistic intelligence development can be effectively implemented through visionary and collaborative managerial leadership.

The implications of this study indicate that improving the quality of Early Childhood Islamic Education should focus on strengthening the managerial competencies of school principals, the professional development of teachers, and the continuous synergy among schools, parents, and foundations. This study recommends holistic, education-based leadership training and the strengthening of a reflective academic supervision system. The limitations of this study lie in its limited geographical coverage and non-longitudinal qualitative research design, which does not describe the long-term impact on child development. Further research is recommended to involve more institutions, adopt a longitudinal or mixed-methods approach, and examine the influence of integrating IQ, EQ, and SQ on long-term child development outcomes.

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