

Sustainable Islamic Education Management: Integrating Islamic Values and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Lilis Supriatin¹, M. Saroni², Nuruddin Araniri³

Manajemen Pendidikan Islam, Program Pascasarjana, Universitas Majalengka¹²³

e-mail: lilis.supriatinim@gmail.com , msaroni@unma.ac.id , siudin1308@unma.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Accepted : July 04, 2025

Revised : July 27, 2025

Approved : August 10, 2025

Published : August 28, 2025

Keywords:

Islamic education management; sustainable development goals; islamic values; sustainable education; spiritual leadership.



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ABSTRACT

This article explores the integration of Islamic values with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the framework of sustainable Islamic education management. Islamic education plays a strategic role in advancing sustainable development, as it embodies universal principles such as justice, trustworthiness (amanah), responsibility, and compassion (rahmah) that are aligned with the vision of the SDGs. This study employs a qualitative approach through a systematic literature review and conceptual analysis to formulate a theoretical framework for sustainable Islamic education management. The findings indicate a strong alignment between the objectives of Islamic law (maqāṣid al-sharīʿah) and the principles of sustainability, particularly in relation to quality education, gender equality, social justice, and environmental preservation. This integration can be achieved through the development of curricula that are responsive to global issues, the implementation of transformative spiritual leadership, inclusive institutional governance, and learning evaluations that emphasize social, moral, and ecological dimensions. The article proposes a conceptual model, the Islamic Sustainable Education Management Framework, which bridges Islamic spirituality with the SDGs. It contributes to the literature on Islamic education management from a sustainability perspective while offering practical recommendations for policymakers and managers of Islamic educational institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable education has become a central issue in the discourse of global development, especially since the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. Within this global agenda, SDG 4, Quality Education, emphasizes inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education as the foundation for developing knowledgeable, critical, and adaptive societies. Quality education is seen not only as a fundamental human right but also as a key driver for achieving other goals such as poverty reduction, gender equality, and environmental protection (Khoiriyah, Asror, Ruzakki, & Hilmy, 2023).

In the context of Muslim-majority countries, Islamic education holds a strategic role in realizing the SDGs. Islam, as the religion of the majority in many parts of the world, emphasizes moral, spiritual, and social principles that resonate strongly with the vision of sustainable development. Core Islamic values such as ‘adl (justice), amanah (responsibility), rahmah (compassion), and the role of human beings as khalīfah (stewards of the earth) can serve as philosophical foundations for aligning Islamic education with sustainability. These values not only shape ethical behavior but also provide a theological basis for addressing contemporary issues such as environmental degradation and social inequality (Andi, 2025). Thus, Islamic education should not be limited to the transmission of knowledge but should also serve as a transformative medium for embedding universal and sustainable values in students’ character and worldview.

The relevance of Islamic education to sustainability is reflected in multiple dimensions. Historically, Islamic intellectual traditions during the so-called “Golden Age” made significant contributions to philosophy, science, and technology, demonstrating that knowledge-seeking and innovation are deeply rooted in Islam. This spirit resonates with SDG 4, which promotes lifelong learning and 21st-century skills. Likewise, Islamic teachings on social justice support SDG 10 on reducing inequality and SDG 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions. Moreover, the responsibility of humans as stewards of nature closely relates to SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 15 (Life on Land), highlighting Islam’s emphasis on ecological consciousness (Salmi, Eliwatis, & Akhyar, 2025).

Despite its strong potential, Islamic education management continues to face structural and systemic challenges in harmonizing religious values with global demands. One critical issue is the quality of teachers and educators. Many Islamic education institutions lack sufficient training for teachers in integrating modern pedagogy and digital tools with Islamic values. Hidayah, Sunarto, and Hikmatullah (2025) found that the adoption of Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) in Islamic schools remains limited, hindering transparency and efficiency in institutional management. Similarly, unequal access to education continues to be a major challenge, particularly in rural or marginalized areas, where students often face limited infrastructure, minimal access to technology, and economic barriers. This situation significantly hampers the achievement of SDG 4. As Septi, Burniat, Hilmin, and Noviani (2025) observed, insufficient funding and a lack of teacher awareness regarding SDGs remain major obstacles.

Another pressing challenge lies in curriculum design. Many Islamic schools still rely on traditional curricula that underemphasize essential 21st-century competencies such as creativity, collaboration, digital literacy, and problem-solving. Consequently, graduates from Islamic educational institutions often lag behind in responding to contemporary challenges. Integrating responsive curricula that address global issues such as climate change, peace, and gender equality is crucial to align Islamic education with SDG targets (Juliani, Mahdi, Sari, Sari, & Nazwa, 2024).

In response to these challenges, several innovations have been introduced in Islamic education management. One notable initiative is the integration of the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) approach with Islamic values. In an exploratory study conducted at Islamic boarding schools, Pepilina, Fauzi, and Rahmawati (2025) demonstrated that STEAM integration through project-based learning enhanced student engagement while strengthening the principle of ta’dib,

which emphasizes both moral and intellectual development. This finding indicates that innovative pedagogical approaches can effectively combine sustainability-oriented skills with Islamic ethics.

Another innovation is the emergence of the green Islamic school concept. Juliani et al. (2024) highlighted how environmental education can be integrated into Islamic curricula through practical initiatives such as waste management, tree planting, and energy conservation. This model helps foster ecological awareness among students, demonstrating the compatibility between Islamic education and environmental stewardship. However, the implementation of such initiatives requires strong institutional commitment, supportive policies, and adequate resources.

Entrepreneurship education has also been identified as a promising strategy for sustainable Islamic education. Najihah, Wahidmurni, and Tharaba (2025) emphasized that entrepreneurship-oriented management not only equips students with practical skills but also ensures the financial sustainability of institutions by reducing dependency on external funding. Entrepreneurship rooted in Islamic values aligns well with SDG 8, which advocates decent work and economic growth. This perspective expands the role of Islamic education beyond the classroom, positioning it as a driver of socio-economic empowerment in Muslim communities.

Collectively, these innovations suggest that Islamic education has both the theological grounding and practical potential to contribute to global sustainability. However, maximizing this contribution requires the development of a comprehensive framework for sustainable Islamic education management. Such a framework should integrate spiritual values with global sustainability principles, encompassing curriculum design, leadership, governance, and evaluation. Through this lens, Islamic education can play a transformative role in preparing future generations to face global challenges while staying rooted in faith-based values.

The present study aims to examine how Islamic education management can strategically support the realization of SDGs by integrating Islamic values into educational practices. Drawing on literature and conceptual analysis, this article proposes a theoretical framework for sustainable Islamic education management that bridges spirituality with global sustainability discourse. The model is expected to provide both theoretical contributions to the literature and practical recommendations for Islamic educational institutions in adapting to global challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a systematic literature review design. A literature-based methodology is considered appropriate because the research aims to conceptualize the integration of Islamic values with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the context of sustainable Islamic education management. Systematic literature review (SLR) approaches have increasingly been used in educational studies to synthesize theoretical insights and map research trends across global contexts (Snyder, 2019). Through this method, relevant scholarly articles indexed in Scopus and other reputable international databases were reviewed to ensure rigor, reliability, and credibility in the findings.

The process of data collection began with identifying peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2025 to reflect the decade since the adoption of the SDGs. Databases such as Elsevier, Springer, Taylor & Francis, and MDPI were targeted to capture high-impact studies. The selection criteria were based on three main aspects:

(1) relevance to Islamic education or management, (2) explicit connection to sustainability or SDGs, and (3) publication in internationally recognized journals. This process resulted in a refined dataset of studies that provide empirical and conceptual insights into how Islamic educational institutions address sustainability challenges.

The analysis followed a thematic approach, which is widely recognized in qualitative educational research for identifying and categorizing recurring patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Three primary thematic dimensions guided the analysis. First, the principles of Islam in education, which encompass core values such as *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (objectives of Islamic law), justice, responsibility, and stewardship. These principles were extracted from studies that highlighted their application in pedagogy, curriculum, and institutional governance (Khoiriyah, Asror, Ruzakki, & Hilmy, 2023). Second, the indicators of SDGs related to education, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), but also other interrelated goals such as SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 13 (Climate Action). This allowed the study to map how Islamic education aligns with broader sustainability objectives (Salmi, Eliwatis, & Akhyar, 2025). Third, the strategies for sustainable Islamic education management, including curriculum reform, leadership practices, technological adoption, and environmental education initiatives. This thematic axis was particularly informed by research on innovative practices in pesantren, green Islamic schools, and entrepreneurship-based Islamic education management (Juliani, Mahdi, Sari, Sari, & Nazwa, 2024; Najihah, Wahidmurni, & Tharaba, 2025).

During the analysis phase, data from selected articles were coded manually according to these thematic categories. Thematic synthesis involved comparing similarities and differences across studies, identifying converging patterns, and highlighting gaps in the literature. To ensure validity, triangulation was conducted by cross-referencing findings across multiple sources and by situating them within both Islamic theoretical frameworks and global educational discourses. The interpretive nature of qualitative analysis enabled the researchers to develop a conceptual model that not only reflects the current state of scholarship but also provides practical recommendations for policy and practice in Islamic education.

This methodological design is particularly valuable because it enables the integration of diverse perspectives from Islamic scholarship and international sustainability frameworks. Moreover, by relying on Scopus-indexed and reputable journals, the study ensures a robust evidence base, thereby contributing both to theoretical development and practical applications in the field of Islamic education management.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are presented through a thematic synthesis of the reviewed literature, focusing on the interplay between Islamic educational values and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The discussion unfolds across three interrelated dimensions: the principles of Islam in education, the relevance of SDG indicators to Islamic education, and the strategies employed to advance sustainable Islamic education management. The findings demonstrate that while Islamic education is firmly grounded in moral and spiritual values, it also possesses significant potential to contribute to the global sustainability agenda when its management is strategically restructured.

Islamic Principles in Education

The review of the literature highlights that Islamic principles offer a robust normative framework for sustainable education. At the heart of this framework lies the concept of *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* the higher objectives of Islamic law which emphasize the preservation of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), life (*ḥifẓ al-naḥs*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-‘aql*), progeny (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and wealth (*ḥifẓ al-māl*). These objectives are not merely religious obligations but also align closely with the ethical and developmental dimensions of the SDGs (Kamali, 2019). For instance, the preservation of intellect underscores the importance of lifelong learning and quality education, echoing the aspirations of SDG 4. Similarly, the preservation of life and progeny resonates with goals related to health, equity, and intergenerational justice.

Another principle that emerges as central is *‘adl* (justice), which commands fairness in access to knowledge and resources. In the context of Islamic education, this principle necessitates equal opportunities for all learners regardless of gender, socioeconomic background, or geographic location (Khoiriyah, Asror, Ruzakki, & Hilmy, 2023). Empirical research conducted in Jordanian Islamic schools, for example, has shown that institutions that explicitly embed the value of justice in their policies and pedagogy witness higher levels of student engagement and reduced dropout rates (Al-Salamat & Al-Khalidi, 2020). Justice thus functions as a bridge between traditional Islamic ethics and contemporary discourses on equity and inclusion in education.

The principle of *amanah* (trust or responsibility) is equally significant. Islamic educational managers and teachers are entrusted not only with the transmission of knowledge but also with the moral and spiritual formation of students. This sense of responsibility extends to the stewardship of resources and the environment, reflecting the Qur’anic notion of humans as *khalīfah* (stewards) on earth (Salmi, Eliwatis, & Akhyar, 2025). As a result, Islamic education has the capacity to cultivate ecological awareness among students, thereby supporting SDGs related to environmental protection.

Compassion (*rahmah*) emerges as another foundational value, fostering inclusivity and empathy within learning environments. Inclusive Islamic education informed by compassion ensures that learners with disabilities, minority groups, or economically disadvantaged students are not marginalized. Research conducted by Al-Salamat and Al-Khalidi (2020) demonstrated that compassionate teaching practices improved both academic achievement and socio-emotional development, thus reinforcing the holistic mission of education.

Taken together, these principles demonstrate that Islamic education is not confined to religious instruction but provides a comprehensive moral-ethical foundation that can significantly enrich the discourse of sustainability in education. The challenge, however, lies in operationalizing these values within institutional structures and pedagogical practices in ways that are measurable, scalable, and aligned with global indicators.

SDG Indicators and Islamic Education

The second theme centers on the alignment between SDG indicators and Islamic education. Among the seventeen SDGs, SDG 4 (Quality Education) is most directly related, yet Islamic education’s scope extends beyond this goal. Literature shows that Islamic education can contribute significantly to other SDGs, including SDG 5 (Gender

Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

SDG 4 emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities. Islamic education aligns with this goal through its strong emphasis on knowledge as a religious duty. The Prophet Muhammad's well-known teaching that "seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim, male and female" provides a theological basis for inclusive educational practices (Sahin, 2018). However, the challenge lies in translating this theological imperative into institutional realities, particularly in regions where socio-cultural factors still hinder equal access to education for women and marginalized groups.

Regarding SDG 5, gender equality in education has gained increasing traction within Islamic schools and universities. While debates persist regarding interpretations of Islamic teachings on gender, empirical evidence indicates that many Islamic institutions have successfully expanded opportunities for women. For instance, Sahin (2018) documents the rise of women's participation in Islamic higher education across the Middle East, reflecting both theological commitment and policy innovation. These developments align with global calls for gender equity in education and underscore the potential of Islamic education to act as a vehicle for social transformation.

SDG 8, which focuses on decent work and economic growth, has also become a priority in Islamic education through the integration of entrepreneurship curricula. Research by Najihah, Wahidmurni, and Tharaba (2025) shows that entrepreneurship programs in Islamic schools not only equip students with practical skills but also enhance institutional sustainability by fostering financial independence. By embedding ethical principles within entrepreneurship education, Islamic schools contribute to the development of socially responsible business practices, aligning with both Islamic economic principles and the global push for sustainable economic development.

Islamic education also intersects with SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 15 (Life on Land). Initiatives such as "green Islamic schools" emphasize ecological awareness and environmentally friendly practices. Juliani, Mahdi, Sari, Sari, and Nazwa (2024) document cases where schools implemented waste management systems, tree-planting programs, and eco-literacy curricula integrated with Islamic teachings on stewardship. These initiatives demonstrate how Islamic education can respond creatively to ecological crises while instilling moral responsibility in younger generations.

Lastly, SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) resonates deeply with the Islamic educational mission. By nurturing ethical leadership, promoting nonviolence, and emphasizing social justice, Islamic education has the potential to contribute to peaceful societies. Studies highlight that students exposed to curricula integrating both Islamic ethics and civic education show higher levels of civic responsibility and tolerance (Abdalla & Al-Haj, 2020). This underscores the dual role of Islamic education in fostering both spiritual growth and civic engagement.

Strategies for Sustainable Islamic Education Management

The third theme revolves around strategies that institutions can adopt to achieve sustainable Islamic education management.

Curriculum reform has emerged as a central strategy. A growing body of literature argues that sustainability themes such as environmental stewardship, social justice, and digital literacy should be embedded across Islamic curricula (Khoiriyah et al., 2023). This integration moves beyond traditional dichotomies between "*religious*"

and “*secular*” subjects by presenting sustainability as a shared ethical commitment rooted in Islamic values. For example, Islamic schools that integrate environmental education within religious studies not only enhance ecological awareness but also foster spiritual reflections on humanity’s role as stewards of creation (Salmi et al., 2025).

Leadership is another critical factor. Spiritual leadership, which integrates managerial competence with ethical guidance, has been identified as vital for institutional sustainability. Abdalla and Al-Haj (2020) argue that leaders in Islamic schools serve as role models, embodying both administrative efficiency and moral authority. Their capacity to inspire, mentor, and mobilize communities ensures that institutions remain aligned with both Islamic teachings and sustainability principles. This leadership style contrasts with purely bureaucratic models and highlights the distinct contribution of spiritual values to educational governance.

Technological innovation also plays a transformative role. The adoption of Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), digital learning platforms, and online pedagogies has expanded access to Islamic education, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hidayah, Sunarto, & Hikmatullah, 2025). These technologies not only enhance transparency and accountability in school management but also foster flexible and inclusive learning environments. However, the literature also notes disparities in technological access, underscoring the need for policies that address the digital divide in rural and under-resourced communities.

Entrepreneurship-based management represents another promising strategy. By incorporating entrepreneurial thinking into school governance, Islamic institutions can reduce dependency on external funding while fostering student empowerment. Najihah et al. (2025) highlight how entrepreneurship programs in Islamic schools lead to greater institutional resilience, improved student motivation, and stronger community partnerships. This model aligns with both SDG 8 and Islamic teachings on self-reliance and economic justice.

Finally, environmental initiatives within schools serve as practical applications of Islamic stewardship. Initiatives such as school gardens, recycling projects, and energy conservation programs not only reduce ecological footprints but also provide hands-on learning opportunities. These initiatives align with global sustainability practices while grounding them in Islamic ethics, thus enhancing both relevance and legitimacy in local contexts (Juliani et al., 2024).

Synthesis and Critical Discussion

The findings suggest that Islamic education possesses significant potential to contribute to sustainable development when effectively managed. The alignment between Islamic values and the SDGs provides a unique opportunity for Muslim-majority societies to lead in the integration of ethics and sustainability within education. By embedding sustainability into curricula, adopting innovative management practices, and embracing spiritual leadership, Islamic schools can serve as models for other educational systems.

Nevertheless, several challenges remain. Despite the strong theoretical alignment, gaps persist in practical implementation. Many schools lack adequate teacher training, resources, and institutional policies to translate sustainability ideals into practice (Khoiriyah et al., 2023). Furthermore, while technology holds great promise, disparities in access and digital literacy continue to exacerbate inequalities. Similarly,

although entrepreneurship education has shown promise, cultural and institutional barriers sometimes hinder its integration into Islamic education systems.

Critically, the literature also highlights the risk of instrumentalizing Islamic values to serve external agendas. While alignment with SDGs is beneficial, it is important that Islamic education maintains its authenticity and does not reduce its values to mere tools for achieving global benchmarks. Instead, the integration should be framed as a mutually enriching dialogue where Islamic principles both inform and are informed by global sustainability discourses.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the integration of Islamic values with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provides a comprehensive framework for sustainable Islamic education management. The findings demonstrate that values derived from *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, justice (*ʿadl*), responsibility (*amanah*), compassion (*rahmah*), and stewardship (*khilāfah*) are deeply aligned with global priorities such as inclusivity, equity, gender equality, technological advancement, and ecological sustainability. By situating these principles within the SDG agenda, Islamic education is shown to be capable of bridging spiritual and moral imperatives with the pressing demands of contemporary education systems. The synthesis of the literature highlights the significance of curriculum reform, spiritual leadership, digital transformation, and entrepreneurship-based management in strengthening institutional resilience and sustainability while maintaining a strong ethical foundation.

However, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study is primarily based on secondary data from Scopus-indexed and other reputable international journals, which, while academically rigorous, may not fully reflect the diverse realities of Islamic educational institutions, particularly at the grassroots level. The reliance on a conceptual and literature-based synthesis also limits empirical validation, making it difficult to generalize the findings across different contexts. In addition, the absence of field-based evidence reduces the ability to capture the nuanced challenges faced by schools in rural, underfunded, or politically constrained settings, where the implementation of sustainability principles may vary considerably.

Future research should therefore expand beyond literature-based inquiry to include empirical studies that evaluate how Islamic educational institutions operationalize the integration of sustainability in practice. Comparative research across Muslim-majority and minority contexts would be particularly valuable in examining how cultural, political, and socio-economic differences influence outcomes. Longitudinal studies could also provide deeper insights into the long-term impact of green Islamic schools, entrepreneurship-driven education management, and technology-based governance systems. Moreover, adopting mixed-methods approaches that combine quantitative assessments with qualitative narratives would allow for a more holistic understanding of the challenges and successes of sustainable Islamic education management.

By addressing these limitations and pursuing future research, Islamic education has the potential to contribute a distinctive paradigm to global educational discourse. More than simply fulfilling the technical requirements of the SDGs, Islamic educational institutions can embody a model of sustainability that integrates

faith, ethics, and human development. Such a model not only strengthens the relevance of Islamic education in the modern era but also enriches the global search for educational systems that balance material progress with moral and ecological responsibility.

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