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AND COMMUNICATION (IJLGC)**www.gaexcellence.com/ijlgc**INTEGRATING SHARIAH PRINCIPLES IN EDUCATIONAL
GOVERNANCE: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW
OF ISLAMIC SCHOOLS**

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Embedding Shariah principles in the governance of Islamic schools presents significant challenges. Schools must remain faithful to classical Islamic jurisprudence while also meeting internationally recognised academic standards and reconciling these two commitments creates considerable tension in day-to-day practice. Although prior research has addressed aspects of this issue, existing studies remain fragmented across different disciplines and institutional contexts, offering little consolidated evidence. This review therefore examines these challenges by asking how Shariah principles are applied in educational governance and by identifying the barriers to their implementation. Following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021), 13 peer-reviewed articles from Scopus and Web of Science were retained after screening, quality appraisal and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The synthesis produced three themes: the integration of Shariah in policy and curriculum; quality assurance and ethical leadership; and institutional tensions and regulatory challenges. Across the studies, the higher objectives of Islamic law (Maqasid al-Shariah) consistently enabled schools to adapt modern policies while preserving their religious character. The studies also identified recurring obstacles, including seniority-based leadership hierarchies that slow reform, limited digital infrastructure, and unresolved jurisdictional gaps

between classical doctrine and contemporary statute, which together indicate a need for specialised, independent Shariah supervisory oversight. This review contributes a consolidated, evidence-based synthesis of fragmented multidisciplinary literature and provides policymakers with a defensible basis for developing context-sensitive governance frameworks for faith-based institutions.

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Educational Governance, Islamic Schools, Maqasid Al-Shariah, Shariah Governance, Systematic Literature Review



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Introduction

How Islamic schools are governed cannot really be separated from the higher purposes of Shariah, the Maqasid al-Shariah, which frame education as the balanced development of a student's spiritual, intellectual and social life (Abdalla & Memon, 2025; Al-Attari & Essa, 2023). Governance of this kind grows out of an Islamic worldview that ties questions of being and knowledge directly to what a school teacher, how it is run, and what it expects of its members from one day to the next. At the centre of the arrangement is the idea of khilafah, or stewardship: teachers and administrators are understood not simply as managers but as trustees, responsible for guiding students in line with Islamic ethical commitments (Al-Attari & Essa, 2023). Running such a school is therefore a moral and spiritual undertaking as much as an administrative one.

In practice, Shariah principles enter school life through a handful of channels, chiefly policy, curriculum and quality assurance. School policies and quality-management frameworks are commonly shaped by religious directives so that what students learn stays consistent with Islamic values (Saekan & Kayadibi, 2026; Yuspiani et al., 2026). Curricula are adjusted to hold a workable balance between core religious teaching and the demands of a modern education (Alshammari, 2025; Yuspiani et al., 2026). Leadership structures, for their part, are built to model ethical conduct and to draw the surrounding community in, which is part of what gives these schools their distinctive learning environment (Amatullah, 2023; Arar et al., 2026; Ezzani et al., 2023).

Clear as these philosophical foundations are, putting them into practice is another matter. The recurring difficulty is a mismatch between regulatory expectations for Shariah compliance and the messier reality of actually running a school, where gaps in staff competence and institutional readiness quickly become visible (Sulaiman et al., 2026). There is also the harder

problem of squaring strict Shariah-based policy with wider obligations that schools cannot simply set aside, such as internationally recognised children's rights and regional autonomy laws (Mukhlis et al., 2025). What emerges is an uneven governance landscape, one in which an ideal Islamic model and the constraints of everyday implementation frequently pull in different directions.

Where earlier reviews have leaned toward conceptual or theological debate, the present systematic literature review (SLR) takes a more empirical route, using a transparent and repeatable method to weigh the available evidence on Shariah governance. Previous work has tended to isolate single elements, Islamic leadership in one study, a particular region's policy in another (Arar et al., 2026). This review in) andreads across several governance dimensions at once, from curriculum design (Alshammari, 2025) through to quality assurance (Saekan & Kayadibi, 2026), and applies explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria to trace how Shariah principles move from abstract doctrine into local practice. The result is a more structured and comparable synthesis than the exploratory narratives that have dominated the field so far.

Reading the literature this way brings three gaps into focus. First, very little empirical work looks at how Shariah principles are built into formal quality assurance and accreditation, and quality management in particular has drawn limited scholarly attention (Saekan & Kayadibi, 2026). Second, although the broad principles of Maqasid al-Shariah are well covered (Al-Attari & Essa, 2023), there is little practical guidance on how those principles are adapted locally to ease conflict with modern legal frameworks such as children's rights (Mukhlis et al., 2025). Third, longitudinal evidence is almost entirely absent; we know very little about whether Shariah-mandated competence frameworks for educators actually hold up over time, especially in regions where Shariah law is strictly enforced (Sulaiman et al., 2026).

This study responds to those gaps by systematically reviewing and synthesising the literature on how Shariah principles are integrated into the governance of Islamic schools. Its contribution is a consolidated, evidence-based account that pulls together what is currently known about policy development, curriculum alignment, leadership models and quality assurance. In doing so, it offers something usable to the people who have to reconcile Islamic values with modern educational standards on the ground, namely policymakers, school administrators and teachers.

The rest of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 sets out the review method, including the search strategy, the selection criteria and the extraction procedure. Section 3 reports the thematic findings and discusses them, grouping the literature under policy and curriculum, quality assurance and leadership, and institutional and regulatory tensions. Section 4 concludes with the practical implications for Islamic educational institutions and with specific directions for future research.

Methodology

Review Protocol

Protocol Used: PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses; Page et al., 2021).

PRISMA was chosen because it is the most widely accepted reporting standard for systematic reviews in the social sciences and educational management, offering a clear

checklist and flow diagram that make the selection process auditable and reduce selection bias.

To keep the synthesis rigorous, transparent and reproducible, this review followed the PRISMA 2020 framework (Page et al., 2021). PRISMA is widely regarded as the reference standard for reporting systematic reviews; its checklist and flow diagram standardise how studies are identified, screened and included. That structure matters here because the topic sits across several disciplines, and a clear reporting protocol limits the arbitrary selection that has weakened earlier narrative reviews in this area (Snyder, 2019). Following an explicit roadmap also means the identification, screening and inclusion of studies can be carried out methodically rather than intuitively.

A further advantage of PRISMA is that it leaves an auditable trail, so other researchers can reproduce the search parameters and test the findings for themselves (Xiao & Watson, 2019). Working within that framework, the review was carried out in four sequential stages: formulating the research questions to fix the boundaries of the inquiry; running a systematic search to define the database queries and inclusion rules; appraising quality to judge the soundness and relevance of the retrieved studies; and finally extracting and analysing the data to synthesise the evidence against the study's objectives (Page et al., 2021; Xiao & Watson, 2019).

Formulation of Research Questions

Getting the research questions right is the first real task in a systematic review, since they set the scope and the analytical limits of everything that follows (Booth et al., 2016). Well-framed questions guide the choice of keywords, the design of the search across databases, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to keep selection bias in check (Xiao & Watson, 2019). They also anchor the screening and extraction stages, keeping the reviewers focused on evidence that speaks directly to the phenomenon under study (Snyder, 2019).

With that in mind, the questions for this review were derived from its central objective, which is to review and synthesise the current literature on integrating Shariah principles into the governance of Islamic schools. To make sure the questions were both relevant and capable of addressing the gaps identified above, they were refined after consulting prior work on Islamic educational leadership and institutional governance. This produced the two guiding questions:

- **RQ1:** How are core Shariah principles operationalised and integrated across the different dimensions of educational governance, such as policy formation, curriculum design and quality assurance, in Islamic schools?
- **RQ2:** What are the main empirical challenges and institutional tensions encountered when Shariah-based governance frameworks are put into practice in these educational settings?

Systematic Searching Strategies

The search strategy is the structured process through which relevant studies are identified, screened and selected in a way that others can follow and reproduce. Working to a set protocol keeps selection bias in check and helps ensure that the final set of articles genuinely maps onto

the research objective and questions. Here the search was organised into three sequential stages: identification, screening and eligibility. Through these stages, only relevant, high-quality studies were retained for synthesis (see Figure 1)

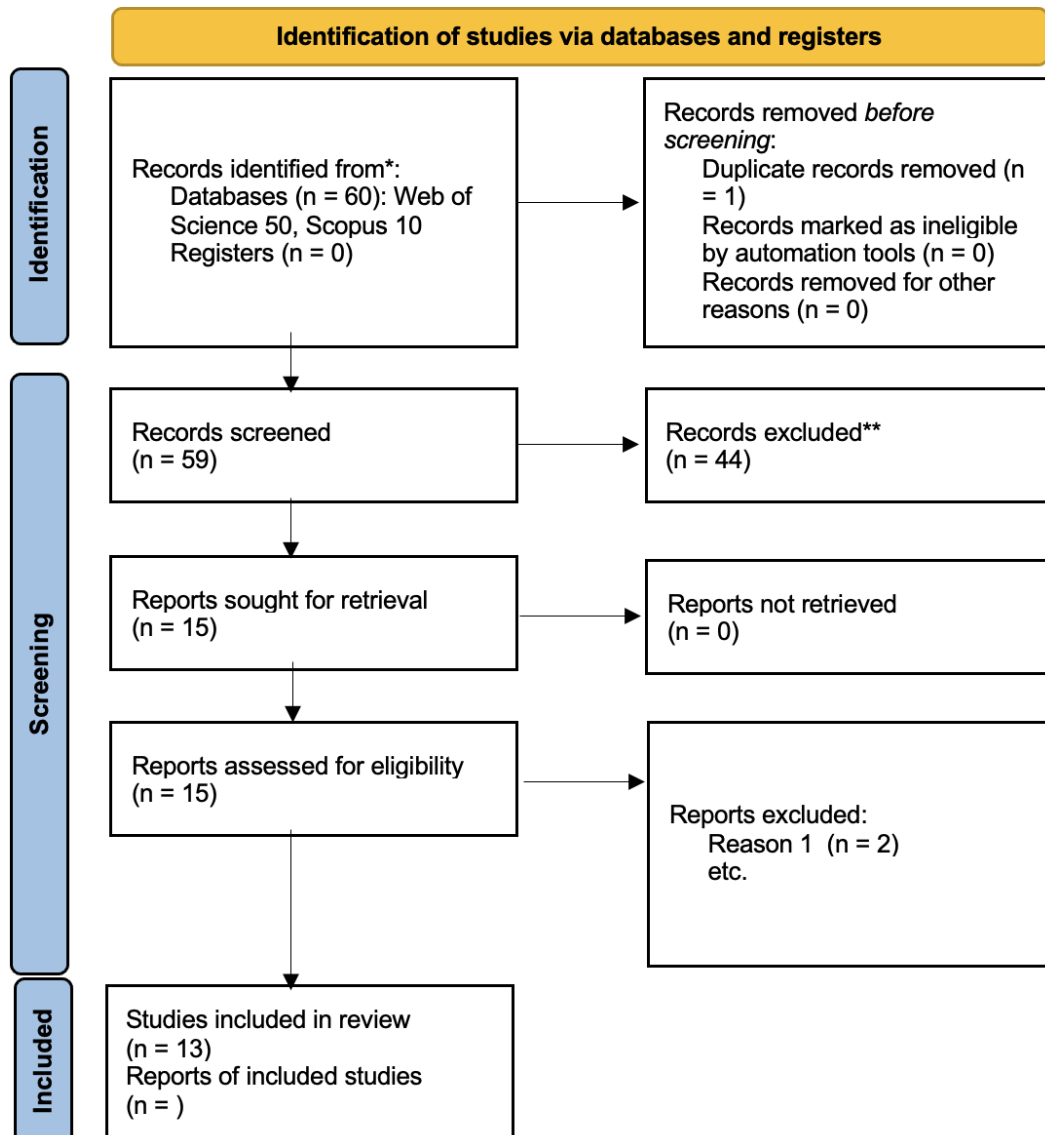


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram

Identification

The first stage is about casting a wide but disciplined net. The aim was to build a search that was exhaustive enough to capture the available evidence on the two guiding questions, yet reproducible enough for another researcher to repeat.

Initial keywords were taken directly from the research questions and the study's objective, centred on the two core concepts of Shariah principles and educational governance. To widen coverage and avoid missing relevant work, these concepts were expanded with synonyms,

related terms, alternative spellings and database-suggested keywords, drawing on prior studies, database thesauri and expert input.

The expanded terms were then combined into search strings using several standard techniques:

- **Boolean operators.** AND and OR were used to link the concepts, with OR grouping synonyms inside a concept cluster and AND intersecting the two main concepts.
- **Phrase searching.** Quotation marks (for example, "educational governance") kept multi-word phrases together and sharpened the results.
- **Truncation and wildcards.** The asterisk (*) and question mark (?) captured different word endings, regional spellings and plurals, so that principle* returned both "principle" and "principles", and Sharia* covered both "Sharia" and "Shariah".

The resulting strings were run across two major multidisciplinary databases, Scopus and Web of Science (WoS). To keep the results on-target, database-specific field codes limited the search to titles, abstracts and keywords (the TITLE-ABS-KEY tag in Scopus and the TS tag in Web of Science). A representative string is shown below:

TITLE-ABS-KEY (("Shariah principle" OR "Sharia* principle*" OR "Syariah principle*") AND ("educational governance" OR "education* governance"))*

Running this search across the two databases returned 59 initial records, which were exported for screening and evaluation.

Screening

Screening is the second stage, where the initial pool is trimmed against predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria drawn from the review's objectives, questions and scope (Mengist et al., 2020; Xiao & Watson, 2019). The point is to let only the most relevant literature through to full assessment. Two criteria were applied:

- **Publication year.** Only studies published between 2025 and 2026 were retained. This narrow window was deliberate: it captures the most recent turn in the discourse and reflects how the topic is being treated in current scholarship (Kraus et al., 2020).
- **Conceptual relevance.** Studies were kept only where their main focus was the integration, application or structural impact of Shariah principles within the administration, leadership or governance of educational institutions. Work that discussed Shariah in unrelated areas (corporate finance, general jurisprudence, the food industry) or that examined educational governance with no real link to Shariah was excluded.

The screening and retrieval steps were documented in line with PRISMA 2020 (Page et al., 2021). Before manual screening, 11 duplicate records were removed. The remaining 48 unique records were screened by title and abstract, and 27 were excluded for clearly failing the inclusion criteria. Full-text reports were then sought for the 21 records that remained; 3 of these could not be retrieved, leaving 18 reports for full eligibility assessment.

Eligibility

Eligibility is a closer read than screening. Rather than filtering on surface features, this stage involved evaluating the full text of each remaining article to confirm that it offered enough robust evidence to answer the review's questions and to sit squarely within its objective (Snyder, 2019).

Each full text was judged against the two research questions:

- **RQ1:** How are core Shariah principles operationalised and integrated across policy formation, curriculum design and quality assurance in Islamic schools?
- **RQ2:** What are the main empirical challenges and institutional tensions encountered when Shariah-based governance frameworks are put into practice?

To gauge whether a study carried its weight, the methodology, results, discussion and conclusion of each report were read carefully. The aim was to retain work that not only was methodologically sound but also said something substantive about the practical and structural effects of Shariah frameworks on educational administration, rather than mentioning Islamic principles only in passing (Booth et al., 2016).

In total, 18 full-text reports were assessed. After close reading, 5 were excluded: 2 lacked an empirical focus on educational governance, 2 discussed Islamic principles outside an educational-governance setting, and 1 was a purely theoretical paper with no primary or secondary data analysis. This left a final set of 13 studies for extraction and qualitative synthesis (Page et al., 2021).

Quality Appraisal

The retained studies were then appraised for quality. The purpose at this stage was to check the methodological soundness, reporting clarity and overall fit of each article before it entered the synthesis. Appraisal is a standard safeguard in systematic reviews: it limits methodological bias, keeps weak or poorly reported studies from skewing the findings, and strengthens the credibility of the final synthesis.

Six appraisal criteria were used, adapted from Abouzahra et al. (2020):

- **QA1:** Is the purpose of the study clearly stated?
- **QA2:** Is the interest and usefulness of the work clearly presented?
- **QA3:** Is the study methodology clearly stated?
- **QA4:** Are the concepts of the approach clearly defined?
- **QA5:** Is the work compared or measured against other similar studies?
- **QA6:** Are the limitations of the work acknowledged?

Each article was scored on a three-point scale, Yes = 1.0, Partly = 0.5 and No = 0, giving a maximum of 6.0 marks. Articles scoring at least 3.0 were judged to have sufficient methodological rigour and were included; anything below 3.0 was excluded. To improve consistency and reduce reviewer bias, the appraisal was carried out independently and then checked by at least one co-author, and only studies that cleared the threshold went forward to synthesis (documented in *Selected_Final_13_Articles.xlsx*).

Data Extraction and Analysis

With the final 13 studies confirmed, data extraction followed. The process was guided by the research questions and objective, so that only data bearing on how Shariah principles are operationalised, and on the institutional challenges that come with them, were captured (Xiao & Watson, 2019).

To keep extraction consistent and limit bias, the principal author pulled the relevant material, working mainly from the results and discussion sections where the core findings sat, and a co-author then validated the extracted data for accuracy and balance. Where a study's approach needed more context, other sections, its methodology, theoretical framing or introduction, were read as well.

Because the included studies used a mix of designs, the extracted material was synthesised thematically. Thematic analysis works well in systematic reviews for surfacing patterns across a heterogeneous body of work (Thomas & Harden, 2008), and the analysis here followed the six-phase approach of Braun and Clarke (2006):

Familiarisation with the data. The team read the extracted material closely and repeatedly to get a feel for its depth and to notice early patterns.

1. **Generating initial codes.** Segments of data relevant to the research questions were coded systematically across the dataset.
2. **Searching for themes.** Codes were grouped into candidate themes on the basis of conceptual similarity.
3. **Reviewing themes.** Candidate themes were checked back against the coded extracts and the full dataset to confirm they held.
4. **Defining and naming themes.** Each theme was refined into a clear definition and given a coherent narrative and name.
5. **Producing the report.** The synthesis was written up, weaving the analytic narrative together with the supporting extracts.

This process produced three analytical themes that map onto the review's objectives: (1) integration of Shariah in policy and curriculum design; (2) quality assurance and ethical leadership; and (3) institutional tensions and regulatory challenges.

Results and Discussion

Study Background

The final synthesis rests on 13 articles that cleared every inclusion and quality criterion, and together they give a fairly clear read on where research into Shariah principles and educational governance currently stands. The publication timeline is strikingly recent, running from 2025 to 2026 with almost everything (n = 12) appearing in 2026. That clustering suggests a sub-field expanding quickly under contemporary pressure for religiously responsive models of governance (Paul & Criado, 2020). Geographically, the work is concentrated in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, with Indonesia (n = 8), Jordan (n = 2) and Saudi Arabia (n = 1) accounting for most of it. This points to a strong regional priority in Muslim-majority countries, but it also

exposes a real gap: apart from a small comparative nod to the United Kingdom and France, there is little on how these frameworks translate into Western or non-Muslim-majority settings. Methodologically, the literature leans heavily qualitative ($n = 9$), with phenomenological, socio-legal and comparative doctrinal work outnumbering the quantitative studies ($n = 4$) that use statistical or econometric modelling. That balance tells us the field is still largely in an exploratory, theory-building phase rather than one chasing statistical generalisation. The studies sit across Islamic jurisprudence, institutional governance and Islamic economics, and they cluster around higher education institutions and traditional Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), which leaves other tiers, early-childhood and public primary education in particular, largely untouched. Taken together, the picture is of a maturing but highly localised domain: the foundational ideas are well established in specific contexts, yet the field would gain a good deal from methodological variety and from cross-national comparison.

Quality Appraisal Results

Every selected article was appraised before inclusion to keep the synthesised evidence dependable. The framework was adapted from Abouzahra, Sabraoui and Afdel (2020) and rated each study on six criteria: clarity of objective; usefulness of the findings; appropriateness and clarity of the methodology; definition of core concepts; comparison with similar studies; and acknowledgement of limitations. Each criterion was scored Yes (1.0), Partly (0.5) or No (0), for a maximum of 6.0 marks. Table 1 sets out the results; all 13 articles met the 3.0 threshold.

Table 1: Quality Appraisal Results

Study	QA1	QA2	QA3	QA4	QA5	QA6	Total	Decision
Ab Rahman et al. (2026)	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	P	5.0	Included
Omar & Badar (2026)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	5.5	Included
Wahab et al. (2026)	Y	Y	P	Y	P	N	4.0	Included
Supani et al. (2026)	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	P	5.0	Included
Rafiq et al. (2026)	Y	Y	Y	P	Y	P	5.0	Included
Al Shammari (2026)	Y	Y	P	Y	P	N	4.0	Included
Noval & Ardianto (2026)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	5.5	Included
Candraningrum et al. (2026)	Y	P	Y	Y	P	N	4.0	Included
Basir et al. (2026)	Y	Y	P	Y	P	P	4.5	Included
Dzar et al. (2026)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	5.5	Included
Alghathian et al. (2026)	Y	Y	Y	P	P	N	4.0	Included
Niza et al. (2026)	Y	Y	P	Y	P	N	4.0	Included
Razak et al. (2026)	Y	Y	Y	P	Y	P	5.0	Included

Note: Yes (Y) = 1.0, Partly (P) = 0.5, No (N) = 0. Maximum score = 6.0. Inclusion threshold = 3.0.

All 13 articles cleared the 3.0 threshold, and the spread of scores points to adequate-to-high methodological quality: five scored 4.0, one 4.5, four 5.0 and three 5.5. Looking across the criteria, QA1 (clarity of objective) and QA2 (usefulness) were the most consistently met, which says these studies are theoretically relevant and clear about their aims. The weakest points were QA6 (limitations) and QA5 (comparison with similar studies), a common shortfall that reflects limited self-reflexivity and thin contextual positioning in this particular cohort. The final sample is admittedly small, but for a review with a narrow conceptual scope, strict multi-stage criteria and an emerging, specialised topic, 13 studies is a defensible and methodologically acceptable base (Xiao & Watson, 2019).

Thematic Findings

The thematic analysis produced three themes that, between them, capture the current discourse on Shariah principles in educational governance: (1) integration of Shariah in policy and curriculum; (2) quality assurance and ethical leadership; and (3) institutional tensions and regulatory challenges (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These were the most recurrent conceptual patterns across the 13 studies, and each speaks directly to the review's questions about how Shariah is put into practice and where it runs into trouble.

Theme 1: Integration of Shariah in Policy and Curriculum

This first theme is about the deliberate work of building Islamic legal, ethical and philosophical principles into formal educational frameworks, teaching content and governance guidelines. It is where the dual pull of the whole enterprise shows up most plainly: how does an institution keep a distinct religious identity while also meeting secular or global academic expectations? The evidence (detailed in *Selected_Final_13_Articles.xlsx*) suggests that integration is rarely a passive absorption of doctrine; more often it is an active, strategic negotiation. Candraningrum et al. (2026), for instance, show how in Indonesian faith-based higher education a globally dominant subject like English language teaching gets re-signified to align with dakwah and nationalist moral education. In a similar vein, the shift of traditional tahfiz institutions into recognised higher-education providers calls for a deliberate blend of classical Islamic values with modern research expectations and digital readiness (Razak et al., 2026). At the level of policy, Maqasid al-Shariah keeps surfacing as the conceptual mechanism that makes integration possible, whether in setting learning thresholds (Had Ta'alum) to govern the educational welfare of Muslim converts (Basir et al., 2026) or in designing decentralised, Shariah-compliant frameworks for distributing student zakat within universities (Ab Rahman et al., 2026).

Set side by side, though, the studies also reveal tension. Where Candraningrum et al. (2026) and Razak et al. (2026) describe adaptive synthesis, Rafiq et al. (2026) offer a harder case: comprehensive sexuality education in Muslim-majority countries, where rigid readings of Shariah governance, reinforced by cultural taboo, tend to produce fragmented policy, curricular exclusions and undertrained teachers. The contrast is largely about context. In more pluralistic settings such as Indonesia, institutions often have the pedagogical room to harmonise a global curriculum with contested Islamic identities; under stricter state-level Shariah governance, religious interpretation can instead become a structural barrier to reform (Rafiq et al., 2026).

The implications run in two directions. Theoretically, the literature pushes toward a decolonial, Maqasid-based reading of educational planning, one that credits Islamic institutions with adaptive frameworks capable of mediating modern academic hierarchies without abandoning their religious ethos (Candraningrum et al., 2026). Practically, the recurring policy friction signals a need for context-sensitive national guidelines that actually equip educators to work at the meeting point of traditional Islamic epistemologies and modern schooling. The obvious next step for research is cross-national comparison, testing how different socio-political environments, both Muslim-majority and minority, accommodate or resist this kind of integration.

Theme 2: Quality Assurance and Ethical Leadership

The second theme concerns the structures, oversight bodies and leadership models that institutions use to keep their practice Shariah-compliant while still meeting modern standards of quality. The underlying question is how institutional actors balance religious accountability against the everyday demands of performance and innovation.

Across the dataset (Selected_Final_13_Articles.xlsx), effective Shariah governance turns out to depend on specialised oversight rather than generic leadership. Noval and Ardianto (2026) point to the role of Sharia Supervisory Boards (SSBs), showing that board members with specific professional qualifications, an accounting background in their case, tend to improve corporate performance and tighten adherence to Shariah principles. Niza et al. (2026) make a related point about board independence: diverse boards are useful, but it is structural independence that turns that diversity into genuinely innovative leadership. The jurisprudential grounding for such leadership lies in *siyasah* (governance), which classical frameworks treat not as raw political power but as an ethically bound legal logic oriented toward the public interest, or *maslahah* (Dzar et al., 2026).

There is friction here too, mostly around diversity versus competency. Niza et al. (2026) find that board independence positively moderates the link between gender diversity and strategic innovation, whereas Noval and Ardianto (2026) report that SSB gender diversity has no significant effect on institutional performance in their setting. Read together, the two suggest that in highly specialised Islamic governance, auditable professional expertise may matter more to quality assurance than representation on its own. A further strain appears when traditional institutions try to take on modern quality frameworks: Razak et al. (2026) document how transitioning *tahfiz* institutions are held back by rigid, seniority-based leadership and limited autonomy, both of which sit awkwardly against the dynamic, performance-oriented culture that modern academic progression assumes.

What this points to is a move away from broad ethical exhortation toward reproducible, auditable governance procedures (Omar & Badar, 2026). Theoretically, the work refines the Islamic corporate governance model by showing that ethical leadership needs both a structurally bound legal logic (*siyasah*) and modern regulatory independence. Practically, it presses policymakers and educational stakeholders to weight professional competency when appointing Shariah supervisors, and to reform the seniority-based hierarchies that slow transitioning institutions (Razak et al., 2026). Future research could usefully ask how different institutional cultures, from traditional boarding schools to Islamic digital platforms, might standardise quality metrics without eroding their distinct religious identities.

Theme 3: Institutional Tensions and Regulatory Challenges

The third theme captures the systemic frictions, legal ambiguities and administrative hurdles that surface when classical Islamic jurisprudence has to coexist with modern statute, global regulatory norms and contemporary bureaucracy. As the synthesised evidence shows (Selected_Final_13_Articles.xlsx), managing the twin demands of strict Shariah compliance and modern legal or educational standards regularly generates structural strain for institutions. Much of that strain comes from jurisdictional gaps between historical Islamic doctrine and current state law. Wahab et al. (2026) illustrate this in the administration of the Baitulmal in Malaysia: although the institution is legally recognised as a rightful heir and trustee for surplus inheritance under the Shafi'i school, overlapping statutory constraints and administrative bottlenecks often stop it managing wealth effectively or serving the community's *maslahah*. In cross-border governance, Alghathian et al. (2026) trace the regulatory friction involved in aligning international arbitration doctrines, such as separability and party autonomy, with definitive (*qat'i*) Sharia prohibitions that count as public order in Arab jurisdictions. Beneath both cases lies the same mechanism: the absence of codified, modernised Shariah guidance for contemporary operations, which forces institutions to improvise *ad hoc* interpretations and can tip them into paralysis. The pattern is especially visible where traditional educational settings try to become modern universities, and restricted autonomy and archaic governance actively impede reform (Razak et al., 2026).

Comparing sectors reveals a clear split in how these tensions get handled. In commercial, financial and technological domains, institutions often manage to reconcile the friction through structured juristic reasoning: Alghathian et al. (2026) propose a cumulative method for arbitration that preserves party autonomy while respecting Sharia public order, and Omar and Badar (2026) build a standardised *ijtihad* procedure to close the legal gap around digital-asset monetisation. In the educational and sociopolitical domains, by contrast, the same tensions more often produce fragmentation than resolution. Rafiq et al. (2026) show how varying state-level readings of Shariah governance, together with entrenched cultural norms, leave policy frameworks fractured and block comprehensive reform across Muslim-majority countries. The difference seems contextual: market pressure pushes the economic and legal sectors to engineer pragmatic, standardised compliance tools, whereas educational policy stays tangled in local ideological, cultural and political dispute.

Theoretically, this implies that classical legal formalism alone will not clear modern institutional bottlenecks. There is a case instead for operationalising *Maqasid al-Shariah* and *siyasah* as dynamic, adaptive frameworks that can bridge traditional norms and contemporary public welfare (Dzar et al., 2026; Supani et al., 2026). Practically, the persistence of these tensions underlines the need for unified, context-responsive regulation that draws clear jurisdictional lines and modernises administrative procedure. Future work should prioritise empirical, cross-jurisdictional studies of how resolving specific regulatory ambiguities affects the long-term resilience and autonomy of Shariah-compliant educational institutions.

Conclusion

This review brought together 13 peer-reviewed studies, screened and synthesised under PRISMA, to examine how Shariah principles are embedded in contemporary educational governance and what that embedding costs and yields. The thematic analysis showed that successful integration tends to rest on aligning modern curricula with Islamic values, work

largely made possible by operationalising the higher objectives of Islamic law (Maqasid al-Shariah). At the same time, institutions run into familiar obstacles: rigid, seniority-based leadership, gaps in digital infrastructure, and deep jurisdictional friction between classical jurisprudence and globalised regulation, all of which point to the value of specialised, independent Shariah supervisory oversight.

Before this review, there was a pronounced gap in understanding how these paired legal and educational demands actually affect institutional resilience, beyond theoretical or theological argument. By consolidating fragmented, cross-jurisdictional evidence, the study narrows that gap and offers concrete evidence of both the bottlenecks and the adaptive strategies that faith-based institutions are already using. Its contributions are threefold. Theoretically, it advances a decolonial, Maqasid-based framework that treats Shariah integration as an adaptive legal logic rather than a static constraint. Methodologically, it shows the value of applying a structured quality appraisal to a highly multidisciplinary literature in order to distil usable policy insight. Practically, it gives educational stakeholders and policymakers an evidence-based case for prioritising professional competency on supervisory boards and for drafting unified, context-sensitive guidelines for institutions in transition.

Two research directions follow fairly directly. First, longitudinal mixed-methods work could test whether formalising traditional tahfiz centres into recognised higher-education providers in Southeast Asia improves graduates' long-term employability relative to secular equivalents. Second, cross-national comparative case studies could examine the hypothesis that strict, state-level Shariah governance in Middle Eastern contexts structurally impedes the adoption of progressive global curricula, with particular attention to the day-to-day pedagogical adjustments secondary-school teachers actually make. In the end, designing resilient and adaptive Shariah-compliant models of education is not only a local administrative problem; it is part of the wider task of building an inclusive knowledge economy that keeps diverse epistemological and ethical traditions genuinely in play.

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