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Best Practice Strategies and Challenges in Quality Management in Senior High Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to examine quality management strategies, best practices, and implementation challenges in Indonesian senior high schools (SMA). Although previous studies have investigated various dimensions of quality management, including Total Quality Management (TQM), School Based Management (SBM), and quality assurance systems, existing evidence remains fragmented and lacks a comprehensive synthesis at the national level. Literature was retrieved from Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), Dimensions, and SINTA databases. Following the PRISMA framework, 24 peer-reviewed articles published between 2015 and 2025 were selected for analysis. The findings indicate that TQM, SBM, the PDCA cycle, quality assurance mechanisms, and transformational leadership are the most prominent quality management strategies. Effective practices integrate strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, curriculum development, and continuous improvement processes. However, implementation remains constrained by limited resources, human resource capacity, resistance to change, and policy related challenges. This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of educational quality management by synthesizing the relationships among quality management strategies, best practices, and implementation challenges in Indonesian senior high schools. In practice, the findings provide evidence-based insights for school leaders and policymakers in developing adaptive, sustainable quality improvement initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

Improving the quality of education at the senior high school (SMA) level remains one of Indonesia's foremost educational priorities, as senior secondary education plays a pivotal role in preparing graduates with the competencies required to compete in an increasingly dynamic global environment (Izzah et al., 2024; Dumitrescu & Stanescu, 2024). Despite continuous educational reforms, national learning outcomes have shown limited progress, with recent Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results indicating persistent challenges in students' academic achievement and educational quality (Ratnasari & Nugraheni, 2024). These challenges extend beyond instructional practices and reflect broader structural issues, including socioeconomic inequality, unequal access to educational resources, and disparities in learning opportunities across regions. Schools in remote and

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underdeveloped areas continue to face inadequate infrastructure, uneven teacher distribution, and limited technological support, hindering effective learning management and educational innovation. Consequently, the national senior high school completion rate remained at 66.79% in 2023, underscoring the ongoing challenge of achieving equitable and sustainable educational quality across Indonesia (Gilang, 2024). Addressing these multidimensional issues requires comprehensive quality management that integrates strategic planning, human resource development, and continuous quality improvement (Martusewicz et al., 2024; Pudjono et al., 2026). Evidence from several successful schools has demonstrated that integrating Total Quality Management (TQM) principles with strategic institutional planning and professional development can substantially strengthen school performance and educational quality (Mulyaningsih, 2021).

Previous research has consistently highlighted the importance of quality management in improving educational outcomes within Indonesian senior high schools. Existing studies have examined various dimensions of educational quality management, including Total Quality Management (TQM), School-Based Management (SBM), internal quality assurance systems, educational leadership, and strategic planning (Fitri, 2022). Collectively, these studies demonstrate that effective quality management contributes positively to institutional effectiveness, teacher performance, organizational improvement, and student achievement (Hamdi et al., 2024, Murtadlo et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the current body of literature remains fragmented because most investigations have focused on individual schools or specific regional contexts while examining isolated management approaches. Consequently, limited attention has been devoted to understanding how different quality management strategies interact, complement one another, and generate sustainable improvements across diverse educational settings (Sadikin et al., 2024). Moreover, previous studies have rarely synthesized empirical findings at the national level to identify recurring implementation patterns, common success factors, and persistent barriers that could inform evidence-based educational policies and management practices. (Sulistiyanto et al., 2023)This gap underscores the need for a comprehensive synthesis that integrates existing evidence to develop a broader conceptual understanding of quality management in Indonesian senior high schools.

The primary objective of this study is to systematically synthesize the existing body of empirical evidence concerning the implementation of quality management practices in Indonesian senior high schools. Specifically, the study aims to identify and categorize the dominant quality management approaches that have been adopted across different educational contexts, including strategic planning, leadership, continuous improvement, stakeholder involvement, and quality assurance mechanisms. Furthermore, this study seeks to examine the best practices reported in previous empirical research that have contributed to improving educational quality, organizational performance, and student outcomes. Another important objective is to analyze the major challenges and barriers encountered by schools during the implementation of quality management systems, such as limitations in leadership capacity, teacher competence, organizational culture, resource availability, and policy support. Through the application of a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), this study also aims to integrate fragmented findings from previous studies into a comprehensive national perspective, identify existing research gaps, and develop evidence-based

recommendations that can inform future academic research, school management practices, and educational policy formulation for sustainable quality improvement in Indonesian secondary education.

This study argues that educational quality management should be understood as an integrated and dynamic system rather than a collection of isolated managerial practices. Sustainable improvements in school quality are expected to emerge when strategic planning, leadership, quality assurance mechanisms, human resource development, stakeholder participation, and continuous evaluation operate synergistically within a coherent management framework. In this perspective, quality management is not merely concerned with administrative compliance or procedural control, but with the continuous alignment of institutional goals, educational processes, and expected learning outcomes. The interaction among these elements is considered essential for fostering a culture of quality improvement, accountability, and organizational learning within schools. Accordingly, synthesizing existing empirical evidence through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is expected to establish a more comprehensive conceptual foundation for understanding the factors that strengthen quality management practices. The findings are also expected to contribute to the development of evidence based strategies that support continuous improvement and sustainable educational quality enhancement in Indonesian senior high schools.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to synthesize evidence on quality management strategies, best practices, and implementation challenges in Indonesian senior high schools (SMA). The review followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework to ensure a systematic, transparent, and replicable review process (Jain et al., 2023), while the SLR procedures were adapted from the guidelines proposed by Kitchenham et al. (2009) and Richter et al. (2019).

The review was guided by three research questions concerning: (RQ1) quality management strategies, (RQ2) best practices, and (RQ3) implementation challenges in Indonesian senior high schools. Literature searches were conducted between January and March 2025 using the SciSpace AI platform across four databases—Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), Dimensions, and SINTA. Eligible studies were limited to peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2025 that addressed quality management practices in Indonesian senior high schools.

Following the PRISMA procedure, 1,050 records were initially identified. After duplicate removal and screening based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, 24 studies were selected for qualitative synthesis.

The fifth stage is to assess the quality of studies. The assessment criteria include:
QA1: Was the journal article published between 2015 and 2025 and indexed in reputable databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, or SINTA?
QA2: Is the article relevant to the research topic?
QA3: Does the journal article provide recommendations for quality improvement in senior high schools (SMA)?

Each reference article will be evaluated by answering "yes (Y)" or "no (X)" to these questions. The results of the study assessment are presented in Table A.1.

Table 1

Assess the Quality of Studies

No	Journal Identity	Title	QA1	QA2	QA3	Results
1	R...dkk (2025). *Manajerial*, *4*(4), 269–277.	Strategi Manajemen Mutu untuk Meningkatkan Efektivitas Pembelajaran	Y	Y	Y	✓
2	M...dkk (2022). *Scaffolding: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Multikulturalisme*, *4*(2), 12–24.	*Learning Management Strategies to Improve the Quality of Education in Senior High School*	Y	Y	Y	✓
3	I...dkk (2019). *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Administrasi Publik*. *9*(2), 335–344.	*The Urgency of Management Functions in Improving the Quality of Education Services in Public Senior High Schools 1 Biak*	Y	Y	Y	✓
4	W....dkk (2023). *Improvement: Jurnal Ilmiah untuk Peningkatan Mutu Manajemen Pendidikan*, *10*(1), 1–11.	*Excellent Program Management Towards Quality Schools in SMA IT Thariq Bin Ziyad Of Bekasi*	Y	Y	Y	✓
5	S...dkk (2024). *Mediterranean Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*, *08*(04), 100–107.	*School-Based Management in Improving the Quality of Education at Public Senior High Schools in West Aceh*	Y	Y	Y	✓
6	S...dkk (2024). *Sinar Dunia: Jurnal Riset Sosial Humaniora dan Ilmu Pendidikan*, *3*(2), 97–106.	Pengimplemantasian Manajemen Mutu Pendidikan di SMA Negeri 2 Plus Panyabungan	Y	Y	Y	✓
7	Z...dkk (2023). *Tarbawi*, *9*(02), 267–278.	*Enhancing Student Achievement in Senior High School through Curriculum Management in Indonesia.*	Y	Y	Y	✓
8	F... (2022). *Jurnal Isema (Islamic Educational Management)*, *7*(1), 97–104.	*Strategy in Improving the Quality of Graduates Through Authentic Assessment Management in Senior High School*	Y	Y	Y	✓
9	A... (2024). *Abjadia: International Journal of Education*, *9*(1), 212–218	*The Urgency of Management Standards in Supporting Quality of School Education*	Y	Y	Y	✓
10	I...dkk (2022). *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Kependidikan Islam*	*The Implementation of Internal Quality Assurance Cycle in Private Senior High School*	Y	Y	Y	✓

No	Journal Identity	Title	QA1	QA2	QA3	Results
	Fakultas Tarbiyah Institut Agama Islam Negeri Raden Intan, *12*(2), 195–206.					
11	B...dkk (2024). *Tarbawi: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, *10*(02), 243–250.	*The Strategic Role of Education Quality Management Function on Competitiveness in High School*	Y	Y	Y	✓
12	N... (2020). *JUPIIS: Jurnal Pendidikan Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial*, *12*(2), 455–468.	Penerapan Manajemen Berbasis Sekolah dalam Mengembangkan Kualitas Peserta Didik	Y	Y	Y	✓
13	K... (2019). *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Current Issues in Education* (ICCIE 2018), 152–155.	*Total Quality Management In 3 and 8 Yogyakarta State Senior High Schools*	Y	Y	Y	✓
14	H...dkk (2024). *Path of Science Scopus*, *10*(6), 5016–5025.	*Quality Management of Education at SMAN 10 Mataram, Indonesia*	Y	Y	Y	✓
15	M...dkk (2024). *Jurnal Inovasi Pembelajaran Di Sekolah*, *5*(2), 775–782.	Manajemen Peningkatkan Mutu di Sekolah Menengah Atas Negeri 1 Pecangaan Kabupaten Jepara	Y	Y	Y	✓
16	S... (2022). *Multiverse: Open Multidisciplinary Journal. 1*(2), 115–121.	Manajemen Pengendalian Mutu di Sekolah Menengah Atas (SMA) Gembala Baik Kota Pontianak	Y	Y	Y	✓
17	A...dkk (2024). *International Journal of Religion*, *5*(12), 1103–1112.	*Analysis of Management to Improve the Quality of Education at SMA Muhammadiyah 7 Makassar*	Y	Y	Y	✓
18	A... I. (2023). *Educational Insights*, *1*(2), 106-119.	*Quality School Management (Study of School Committees, Principal and School Achievement at Cirebon City Public High School)*	Y	Y	Y	✓
19	M... (2021). *Jurnal Dimensi*. *10*(3), 482–496	Strategi SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Rotan Dalam Meningkatan Mutu Pendidikan	Y	Y	Y	✓
20	F.... (2024). *Journal of Law, Administration, and Social Science*, *4*(5), 973–980.	Problematika Penyusunan dan Penerapan Perencanaan Strategis di SMAN 1 Rambutan-Banyuasin	Y	Y	Y	✓
21	S... (2023). *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan*, *12*(1)	Implementasi Sistem Penjaminan Mutu Internal di SMA Negeri 1 Batang	Y	Y	Y	✓

No	Journal Identity	Title	QA1	QA2	QA3	Results
22	T... (2020). *Utile: Jurnal Kependidikan 6*(2), 128–136.	Manajemen Berbasis Sekolah Untuk Meningkatkan Mutu Pendidikan Di SMAN 5 Kabupaten Tangerang	Y	Y	Y	✓
23	S...dkk (2020). *IJORER: International Journal of Recent Educational Research 1*(2), 124–133.	*Implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance Process: Quality Mapping Analysis at State Senior High School in Tomohon City, North Sulawesi, Indonesia*	Y	Y	Y	✓
24	K...dkk (2023). *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Dasar, Menengah Dan Tinggi [JMP-DMT].*	Implementasi Manajemen Berbasis Sekolah: Analisis Keterlibatan Stakeholders di SMA Perguruan Ahmad Yani Binjai	Y	Y	Y	✓

Note:
✓ : indicates that the study met all predefined quality assessment criteria and was included in the final synthesis.

All selected studies satisfied the established quality criteria. Relevant data were then extracted, categorized into quality management strategies, best practices, and implementation challenges, and synthesized using qualitative thematic analysis. The findings were systematically reported to answer the research questions and identify patterns, trends, and research gaps in the literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This SLR maps publications from 24 selected journal articles that discuss case studies, best practices, and challenges in quality management in Indonesian senior high schools (SMA). The analysis transcends descriptive reporting by synthesizing how these management elements interact within the Indonesian educational landscape.

RQI What are the main strategies commonly used in quality management in senior high schools (SMA) in Indonesia?

The analysis identifies a predominant reliance on Total Quality Management (TQM), adopted by 14 out of 24 studies (Table 2). This dominance suggests a significant shift in Indonesian SMA towards a "customer-centric" paradigm, where student and parent satisfaction are prioritized through continuous improvement. However, a comparative analysis of the data reveals that, while TQM is popular, its integration with School-Based Management (SBM) and the PDCA cycle is often fragmented. While TQM provides the philosophical framework, SBM acts as the structural vehicle for decentralization. The limited number of articles focusing on Principal Leadership (n=2) indicates a research gap; although leadership is recognized as a catalyst, few studies critically analyze how leadership styles specifically adapt to the rigid bureaucratic structures often found in Indonesian public schools.

Table 2
Results of Quality Strategy Analysis in Senior High Schools

No	Strategy	Number of Articles
1	*Total Quality Management* (TQM)	14
2	School-Based Management	3
3	Quality Assurance Cycle	3
4	PDCA (*Plan-Do-Check-Act*)	2
5	Principal Leadership	2

RQ2 What are the best practices in quality management for senior high schools in Indonesia?

Best practices in Indonesian SMA centers on a multidimensional approach (Table 3). The highest synergy (n=22) is found in the integration of TQM, SWOT, and SBM. This indicates that successful schools do not rely on a single model but rather use SWOT analysis to contextualize global TQM principles into local SBM realities. A critical observation in this section is the role of Stakeholder Involvement and Democratic Communication (n=11). Contextually, schools that move away from top-down management toward participatory governance show higher teacher commitment. Furthermore, the emergence of technology integration and authentic assessment (n=2), though still infrequent, represents the "digital frontier" of quality management. These practices are essential for aligning school outputs with the demands of the 4.0 industrial revolution, yet they remain concentrated in elite or "top-tier" schools, highlighting a disparity in practice implementation.

Table 3
Results of Best Practice Quality Management Analysis in Senior High Schools

No	Best Practice	Outcome Achieved	Number of Articles
1	TQM principles, SWOT analysis, PDCA, SBM	Achieving quality standards and stakeholder satisfaction	22
2	Stakeholder involvement, effective democratic communication	Improved student and teacher performance	11
3	Strategic planning and facility optimization	Enhanced competitiveness and human resource development	6
4	Integrated quality management, curriculum development, and teacher training	Increased teacher commitment	6
5	Innovative learning management	Increased teaching effectiveness and student experience	3
6	Authentic assessment and technology integration	Improved graduate quality and streamlined evaluation	2

RQ3 What are the challenges of implementing quality management in senior high schools in Indonesia?

The challenges identified (Table 4) reveal a stark contrast between management theory and field reality. Technical constraints, specifically funding and infrastructure, remain the most pervasive obstacle (n=20). From a contextual perspective, this finding suggests that

quality management in Indonesia is often "resource-dependent" rather than "process-driven." Even with a strong TQM framework, schools struggle when the basic physical and financial infrastructure is absent. Furthermore, the resistance to change (n=6) and centralized policy issues (n=5) point to a cultural-structural barrier. There is an inherent tension between the decentralized spirit of SBM and the reality of centralized administrative regulations. This mismatch often leads to "symbolic compliance," where schools implement quality cycles to meet government standards rather than to achieve genuine institutional transformation.

Table 4

Results of the Analysis of Quality Management Challenges in Senior High Schools

No	Challenge	Cause	Number of Articles
1	Technical constraints (funding, infrastructure, technology, supervision)	Limited budget and inadequate facilities	20
2	Human resource limitations	Low competency and poor quality of teaching	6
3	Resistance to change and low awareness	Lack of stakeholder support and understanding	6
4	Policy and regulation issues	Centralized management, insufficient training	5

Discussion

This study reveals that the main strategies in quality management in senior high schools (SMA) in Indonesia include implementing Total Quality Management (TQM), School-Based Management (SBM), the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle, and effective leadership. These findings reinforce Deming's Quality Theory of continuous improvement and data-driven decision-making, as well as Juran's Quality Trilogy, which encompasses planning, control, and quality improvement (Sulistiyanto et al., 2023). The PDCA cycle, which has proven to aid continuous monitoring and evaluation, aligns with the findings of Septrisia et al. (2024), who describe the planning, implementation, inspection, and corrective action stages as a systematic process for quality improvement. Furthermore, these findings are highly relevant to Systems Theory, which views schools as integrated systems; thus, quality improvement must involve all organizational components in an integrated manner rather than in isolation.

The implementation of SBM as an educational decentralization strategy aligns with Contingency Theory, which emphasizes the importance of adapting management policies to specific local needs (Nurpratiwi & Amaliyah, 2020). The success of SBM is also heavily influenced by the quality of human resources, particularly teachers, supporting the Human Relations Movement Theory, which posits that motivation, interpersonal relationships, and competence directly influence organizational productivity (Budiaji et al., 2024). This is further reinforced by Human Capital Theory, which views improving teacher competence not as a cost, but as a strategic investment in enhancing national educational quality.

The principal's role as a transformational leader supports Bass's Transformational Leadership Theory, where visionary leaders build a culture of quality and empower organizational members (Izzah et al., 2024; Dumitrescu & Stanescu, 2024). This finding also aligns with Instructional Leadership Theory, highlighting the principal's role in academic

supervision, curriculum development, and teacher capacity building (Saleh & Mutiani, 2021; Solikhin & Palius, 2022). Thus, school leadership is established as a multidimensional role, not only administrative but also strategic and pedagogical.

In terms of best practices, integrating TQM with SWOT analysis and stakeholder engagement reflects Strategic Management Theory. By analyzing internal strengths and external threats, schools can optimize facility use and curriculum development effectively (Retnawati et al., 2025). These practices have a proven positive impact on graduate quality and academic performance, consistent with the findings of Fahmi (2022) and Muttaqin, Khasanudin, & Sariman (2022) regarding the urgency of authentic assessment and educational technology.

However, implementation still faces critical challenges, including limited funding, infrastructure, and human resource readiness. This condition can be explained by the Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory, which holds that organizational excellence is strongly influenced by the availability of valuable and strategic resources (Sadikin et al., 2024). These limitations hinder schools' ability to fully leverage educational technology and implement learning innovations (Ashari, 2024). Consequently, schools need to proactively seek external funding and establish strategic partnerships, an approach that aligns with Social Capital Theory, emphasizing that collaboration creates a resource-sharing ecosystem (Amir et al., 2024). Overcoming resistance to change also requires "unfreezing" mindsets through ongoing training and clear communication, as suggested by Lewin's Change Management Model (Pubodhya & Rajapakshe, 2026; Zulkifli et al., 2023).

Finally, the success of education quality management depends heavily on building collaborative relationships with all relevant parties, reinforcing Stakeholder Theory (Hamdi et al., 2024). Partnerships with the government, community, and private sector contribute to building a more adaptive and sustainable education ecosystem (Murtadlo et al., 2024). Therefore, education quality management in Indonesian SMAs requires a holistic, participatory, and sustainable approach to navigate global challenges.

A cross-study synthesis reveals that successful quality management in Indonesian senior high schools is not determined by adopting a single management model (Rodliyah et al., 2024). Rather, schools achieve sustainable quality improvement when strategic planning, continuous improvement mechanisms, stakeholder participation, and transformational leadership operate in an integrated manner (Martusewicz et al., 2024; Pudjono et al., 2026). Across the reviewed studies, variations in outcomes are primarily associated with differences in resource availability, organizational culture, and institutional readiness for change. This finding suggests that quality management should be understood as a context-dependent process in which managerial strategies must be adapted to local conditions rather than implemented as universal prescriptions. Consequently, the effectiveness of TQM (Gupta, 2024; Lepistö et al., 2023), SBM, and quality assurance systems depends largely on the extent to which schools can align these frameworks with their specific organizational capacities and environmental challenges.

The limitations of this study lie in its focus on the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, which depends on the quality and scope of available literature. This may overlook field practices that have not been academically documented and limit the generalization of

results beyond the Indonesian national context. Additionally, the qualitative nature of this study does not utilize statistical analysis to strengthen empirical inferences.

For future research, it is recommended to conduct quantitative or mixed-methods studies examining the relationships among quality management strategies, best practices, leadership effectiveness, and implementation challenges in different educational contexts. Further investigation into the roles of organizational culture, digital transformation, and stakeholder engagement may also provide deeper insights into sustainable quality improvement in schools.

CONCLUSION

Based on a systematic literature review of 24 articles published between 2015 and 2025, this study concludes that quality management in Indonesian senior high schools is increasingly shaped by the integration of Total Quality Management (TQM), School-Based Management (SBM), quality assurance mechanisms, and transformational leadership. The findings indicate that sustainable quality improvement is achieved not through a single management model but through the alignment of strategic planning, stakeholder participation, continuous improvement processes, and adaptive leadership. Theoretically, this study contributes to the educational management literature by synthesizing fragmented evidence and providing a comprehensive understanding of the relationships among quality management strategies, best practices, and implementation challenges in Indonesian senior high schools.

Practically, the findings emphasize the need to strengthen leadership capacity, teacher professional development, stakeholder engagement, and context-sensitive quality assurance systems. However, the study is limited by its reliance on published literature and its focus on the Indonesian context. Future research is recommended to examine the relationships among quality management strategies, organizational culture, leadership effectiveness, and digital transformation using quantitative, mixed-methods, or comparative approaches across different educational settings.

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