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Operationalizing *al-Qawiyy* and *al-Amīn*: Asymmetric Competence–Integrity Decision-Making in Islamic Teacher Management

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Abstract

Islamic schools often struggle to find teachers who are both pedagogically capable and morally reliable, yet they usually quote the Qur'anic criterion for this problem rather than apply it. This qualitative single-case study examines how the Qur'anic pair al-qawiyy (strong, competent) and al-amīn (trustworthy) in QS. al-Qaṣaṣ [28]: 26 is interpreted and operationalized as a framework for managing teachers at SD Fastabiqul Khairat Samarinda, Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with twelve purposively selected informants, participant observation, and document analysis, and were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis with source and method triangulation. The findings show that the two attributes operate as paired criteria across the employment cycle: a Qur'an and worship gate followed by dual-track selection, a one-year mentored probation with parallel programs for competence and for amānah, an appraisal instrument weighted equally between teaching competence and discipline-spiritual conduct, and a four-category competence-integrity matrix for retention and promotion in which integrity deficits are sanctioned more strictly than competence deficits. The study also reports three frictions that qualify the model: the Qur'an-first gate narrowed the applicant pool; the integrity track could soften competence demands; and integrity sanctions operated partly through attrition rather than counseling. The study contributes an operational, context-specific model that moves Islamic human resource management from normative exegesis toward explicit indicators, thresholds, and decision rules, while acknowledging that the model presupposes institutional autonomy and religious homogeneity and therefore cannot be generalized to all Islamic schools.

Keywords:*al-qawiyy al-amīn; amānah; Islamic human resource management; Islamic primary school; Qur'anic management*

INTRODUCTION

Across global education systems, the debate over teacher quality is no longer confined to counting academic qualifications; it has shifted to a more fundamental question: whom can a school trust to educate its children? Large-scale classroom observations in Indonesia, for instance, reveal a significant variance in teaching quality across regions, with many educators still grappling with the more demanding aspects of instructional delivery (Irnidayanti & Fadhilah, 2023). In Islamic schools, this challenge acquires an additional, complex layer. Teachers are not merely expected to be pedagogically skilled instructors but are also positioned as moral exemplars *(uswah ḥasanah)*. Recent fieldwork in integrated Islamic schools shows that recruitment processes still often rely heavily on personal recommendations, resulting in weak transparency, inconsistent selection standards, and mismatches between

teachers' expertise and their assigned roles (Saputra et al., 2026). Parents who consciously choose Islamic schools expect two outcomes: academic excellence and character formation. Consequently, a failure on either side quickly translates into a failure of institutional trust (Agustin & Arifin, 2026; Djamil et al., 2026).

Conventional human resource management (HRM) typically responds to this dilemma by relying on competency frameworks. Here, competence is defined as measurable knowledge, skills, and observable behavior. At the same time, character is often relegated to a code of conduct or left entirely to the hiring committee's intuition. This separation is visible even in Muslim-majority settings. A study of Saudi public universities, for example, found that devolving HR tasks to academic leaders produced overlapping roles, unclear standards, and weakened the credibility of HR decisions (Alqahtani & Ayentimi, 2021). Similarly, a qualitative study of Muslim-owned firms in Quebec demonstrated that while Islamic values do shape hiring and rewards, this influence operates mostly through informal judgment rather than explicit systems (Toumi & Su, 2023). A scoping review of 91 studies on HRM in Islamic educational institutions corroborates this, revealing that competence and HR development dominate the literature. In contrast, integrated multilevel frameworks and validated instruments remain scarce (Ramly et al., 2026). The theoretical gap, therefore, is not a lack of Islamic principles, but a lack of operational models that instruct a principal on how to weigh skill against trustworthiness when the two do not align perfectly in the same candidate.

To address this, one must look at the foundational texts of Islamic tradition. The Qur'an offers a compact formulation in QS. al-Qaṣaṣ [28]: 26, where the daughter of the Prophet Shu'ayb says of Mūsā: *inna khayra mani'sta'jarta'l-qawiyyu'l-amīn* ("indeed, the best one you can hire is the strong and the trustworthy"). This pairing is far from isolated. The same two qualities recur whenever the Qur'an describes someone entrusted with a task: the *ʿifrīt* who offers to bring the throne of the Queen of Sheba declares *innī ʿalayhi la-qawiyyun amīn* (QS. al-Naml [27]: 39); the king tells Yūsuf *innaka'l-yawma ladaynā makīnun amīn*, and Yūsuf presents himself for the storehouses of the land as *ḥafīẓun ʿalīm* (QS. Yūsuf [12]: 54–55); and the bearer of revelation is described as *dhī quwwatin ʿinda dhī'l-ʿarshi makīn, muṭāʿin thamma amīn* (QS. al-Takwīr [81]: 20–21). Read together, these verses form a consistent Qur'anic pattern in which capability (*quwwah, makānah, ʿilm*) is never presented without trustworthiness (*amānah, ḥifẓ*). Exegetes read *al-quwwah* as the capacity to carry out a task and *al-amānah* as honesty, reliability, and accountability for what has been entrusted (Hussin et al., 2025). However, exegetical literature also emphasizes that interpreting these divine attributes requires a coherent epistemological model. As contemporary tafsīr studies argue, deriving ethical meanings from the Qur'an requires an integrative approach that balances textual stability with contextual relevance (Supena, 2024; Rokhim et al., 2025).

Classical Islamic political thought subsequently turned this textual pattern into a principle of appointment. Ibn Taymiyyah (2008) holds that every office of authority (*wilāyah*) rests on two pillars: strength and trustworthiness. Citing QS. al-Qaṣaṣ [28]: 26 alongside the parallel verses mentioned above, he observes that these two qualities seldom come together fully in one person. For this reason, he argues that those who appoint must weigh them according to the nature of the post: strength takes priority where the task chiefly demands capability, whereas trustworthiness takes priority where the task chiefly involves guarding

what has been entrusted. Hussin et al. (2025) extend this reading to contemporary public governance, arguing that a deficit in either quality erodes public trust. Yet, in modern organizational practice, the verse is far more often quoted as a moral justification than translated into recruitment criteria, development programs, or appraisal indicators that a school can actually use. The classical question of how to weigh the two qualities when they diverge has rarely been asked in relation to teachers, even though Islamic leadership frameworks consistently emphasize trust (*amānah*), justice (*ʿadl*), and consultation (*shūrā*) as core administrative principles (Arar et al., 2026; Babali, 2025).

A substantial body of quantitative research has examined Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) as a predictor of employee outcomes in mainstream HRM literature. Hassi et al. (2021) found that, among spirituality, intrinsic religiosity, and IWE, only IWE had a significant direct effect on job performance among Moroccan employees. Aman-Ullah and Mehmood (2023) linked IWE to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and loyalty in the banking sector, while Badar et al. (2024) showed that the employee relations climate partly mediates IWE's effect on organizational performance in Qatar. In Indonesia, Hamzah et al. (2021) reported that Islamic work values strengthen engagement and satisfaction but do not directly raise in-role performance, suggesting that values need organizational channels before they can affect results. In education, Abu-Saad and Haj Ali (2024) validated a two-dimensional IWE measure among 1,245 Palestinian Arab teachers. Studies of Indonesian madrasah teachers point in the same direction: IWE and work discipline improved teacher performance, whereas Islamic leadership affected performance only indirectly through job satisfaction (Aceh et al., 2024); Islamic values-based management raised performance mainly through organizational commitment (Khoiri et al., 2026); and prophetic leadership was associated with higher job satisfaction among primary madrasah teachers (Juhji et al., 2025). Bibliometric reviews confirm that the field has moved from normative discussion toward outcome studies, yet it remains dominated by survey designs that treat values as individual attitudes rather than institutional mechanisms (Suprayitno et al., 2025; Udin, 2024).

School-level studies in Indonesia have begun to examine specific HRM functions. Agustin and Arifin (2026) described how spiritual leaders select teachers using Islamic moral criteria, alignment with the school vision, and open, merit-based procedures, and linked this to teachers who are more disciplined and dependable. Saputra et al. (2026) mapped recruitment models in integrated Islamic schools, while Hazaa et al. (2025) and Arrifa'i et al. (2025) examined teacher development in pesantren, highlighting supervision, reflective practice, and values such as *tazkiyah* and *ikhlāṣ*. Aziz and Marlina (2025) showed that planned recruitment, continuous training, and regular evaluation raised educator performance in Islamic schools, and Hamzah and Maulida (2026) described how the principal of an Islamic elementary school strengthened teachers' Islamic character through professional development and collaboration with Qur'an teachers. Furthermore, integrating Maqasid Sharia into HR development has been shown to foster personal and organizational growth by balancing professional competencies with ethical and spiritual maturity (Firmansah et al., 2026). In organizational behavior, empirical research has tested the relationship between Islamic HRM practices and trust, showing that principles, recruitment, training, and reward systems are significantly related to organizational trust (Nik Ab. Rahman et al., 2013). Leadership studies add that madrasah principals must combine managerial competence with

moral authority (Djamil et al., 2026; Putri et al., 2026), and that *amānah* in madrasah leadership appears as oversight, transparent reporting, and assigning tasks according to competence (Siswahyuningsih et al., 2025). Beyond the classroom, *amānah* has also been identified as the spiritual value that underpins financial accountability in pesantren (Zahirah & Suhaedi, 2025). At the conceptual level, Lubis et al. (2026) proposed a *ta'dīb*-based HRM model for Islamic religious education teachers that includes value-driven recruitment, *adab*-oriented development, and ethical performance appraisal.

Taken together, the literature reveals three distinct gaps. First, Islamic values are mostly measured as individual attitudes rather than designed into HRM systems as structural mechanisms (Hamzah et al., 2021; Suprayitno et al., 2025). Second, school-based studies examine single functions—such as recruitment or training—in isolation, while the more comprehensive Islamic HRM models remain conceptual and untested in schools (Hazaa et al., 2025; Lubis et al., 2026; Saputra et al., 2026). Third, and most importantly, the *qawiyy-amīn* pair has been discussed mainly at the level of exegesis, classical political thought, and public governance, but has not been examined as a practical, decision-making framework for managing teachers (Hussin et al., 2025; Ibn Taymiyyah, 2008; Ramly et al., 2026).

This study therefore seeks to bridge this gap by treating *al-qawiyy* and *al-amīn* as two complementary dimensions of a single HRM framework that runs through the entire employment cycle. By formulating a competence-integrity matrix that school leaders can use for practical decisions, the study moves from text to institution: from a Qur'anic pattern and its classical juristic reading to concrete indicators, procedures, and decision rules observed in a real school. Unlike mainstream HRM models that rely on secular "Integrity Testing" or standard "Performance-Potential" grids, this study explores how a religious ontological framework addresses the principal-agent problem in faith-based schools.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze how *al-qawiyy* and *al-amīn* are interpreted and operationalized in the HRM of SD Fastabiqul Khairat Samarinda. It addresses three questions: (1) how school stakeholders interpret the two attributes in relation to their Qur'anic source; (2) how the attributes are embedded in recruitment and selection, development, performance appraisal, and retention; and (3) what HRM model emerges from these practices and how it relates to the classical reading of the two qualities. The focus on a primary school is deliberate. Children at this level spend long contact hours with their teachers and absorb habits as much as content, so the cost of hiring a teacher who is competent but untrustworthy, or trustworthy but incompetent, is unusually high. A foundation-run school also has autonomy over its HR decisions, which makes it a suitable, bounded setting for observing how a Qur'anic criterion is turned into everyday institutional practice.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a single case study design. A qualitative approach was chosen because the research questions ask how stakeholders give meaning to *al-qawiyy* and *al-amīn* and how these meanings are carried into HRM practice—questions that require close attention to context, language, and documents rather than measurement of predefined variables (Miles et al., 2020). The case study design allowed the researchers to follow one bounded system, the HRM cycle of a single school, in depth and to trace the links between principles, procedures, and decisions (Yin, 2018). The case was treated

as instrumental rather than intrinsic: the school was studied not only for its own sake but to build a conceptual model of Qur'an-based HRM that can be examined in other Islamic schools (Naeem et al., 2023). This design follows analytical rather than statistical generalization, selecting the case for its revelatory potential rather than its representativeness (Yin, 2018).

Participants and Sampling

The research was conducted at SD Islam Fastabiqul Khairat Samarinda (hereafter SD Fastabiqul Khairat), a private Islamic primary school with A accreditation in Samarinda, East Kalimantan, managed by Yayasan Fastabiqul Khairat. The school runs an integrated curriculum that combines the national *Kurikulum Merdeka* with its own distinctive program built on Islamic, academic, leadership, entrepreneurship, and global pillars. The site was selected for three reasons. First, as a foundation-run private school, it recruits, contracts, develops, and appraises its own teachers, so the institution controls the entire HRM cycle. This is observable directly, unlike in public schools, where the government handles teacher recruitment. Second, the school frames its expectations of teachers in explicitly Islamic terms, which makes it an information-rich case for examining how a Qur'anic criterion is applied. Third, Samarinda lies in a province undergoing rapid change with the development of Indonesia's new national capital, and demand for quality Islamic schooling, together with competition for qualified teachers, is rising.

Informants were purposively selected based on their involvement in, and knowledge of, the school's HRM processes. Inclusion required direct involvement in, or recent first-hand experience of, at least one HRM function at the school. They comprised the principal, the vice principal for curriculum, two senior teachers, two Qur'an and Islamic studies staff, the coordinator of the teacher working group (KKG), an inclusion support teacher, three teachers in their first year of service, and the staff member responsible for personnel administration, totaling twelve informants. Sampling continued until additional interviews produced no new codes. Empirical tests of saturation suggest that between nine and seventeen interviews are usually sufficient in relatively homogeneous groups with a focused objective (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). The twelve interviews conducted here fall within this range, and the homogeneity of the informant group—all directly involved in one school's HRM cycle—supported thematic saturation.

Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

Because the study examines a religiously framed HRM system and the researchers are themselves situated within Islamic educational networks, reflexive awareness of positionality was treated as a methodological requirement rather than a procedural formality. Two of the authors have prior professional acquaintance with the school's foundation through academic networks in East Kalimantan, which facilitated access but also created a risk that informants would present practices in a favorable light. To mitigate this, interviews were conducted by the author with the least direct relationship to the foundation, and the research purpose was framed neutrally as an inquiry into "how the school manages teachers," without signaling an evaluative stance toward the religious criteria. During analysis, the team maintained a reflexive journal in which interpretations were repeatedly checked against the raw transcripts, and peer debriefing sessions were held to challenge emerging readings that appeared to align too neatly with the school's own self-description. Following Braun and Clarke (2021),

reflexivity is understood here not as a confession of bias but as a practice of interrogating how the researchers' theological familiarity and institutional proximity shaped what was noticed, what was probed, and what was taken for granted.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected from 15 July to 30 September 2026. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted in Indonesian between 16 July and 21 September 2026, audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim. The interview protocol was developed around the three research questions and piloted with one teacher and one administrative staff member before the main round; minor adjustments were made to the wording of questions about integrity sanctions, which pilot respondents found abstract when asked directly. The authors conducted participant observation in four sessions, recorded in field notes and coded OB-01 to OB-04: the morning routine and congregational *ḍuḥā* prayer; the Qur'an test and micro-teaching for new applicants; the weekly teachers' study session; and a KKG and peer-teaching meeting. The authors collected documents from the school administration and its official website during the same period, including the recruitment and staff development procedure (DK-02), the teacher performance appraisal instrument (DK-03), the daily discipline and worship record (DK-04), and curriculum partnership documents (DK-05 to DK-07). The authors translated interview excerpts presented in the results into English.

Data Analysis

The authors analyzed the data using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021), following the step-by-step procedure Naeem et al. (2023) proposed for developing a conceptual model from qualitative data. The analysis moved through familiarisation with transcripts and field notes, initial coding, keyword selection, theme development, and conceptualization. Coding combined a deductive starting point, using the two Qur'anic attributes as sensitizing concepts, with inductive coding that allowed new categories to emerge from the data. Following Miles et al. (2020), the process also involved data condensation, data display in matrices that cross-tabulated attributes and HRM functions, and drawing and verifying conclusions. The matrices were the basis for the model presented in the results. To guard against the circularity risk identified in studies that use a text's own categories to validate findings derived from that text, the analysis deliberately sought disconfirming instances: cases where the school's practices did *not* fit the *qawiyy-amīn* pairing, or where the pairing produced tensions the school had not resolved.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted with the school's permission. All informants gave informed consent before interviews and observation; participation was voluntary, and informants were told that they could decline to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any stage without consequence. Interviews were audio-recorded only with the informant's agreement. Informants are identified by codes, and no names or identifying details of teachers or students are reported. Because the school is a single, identifiable institution in Samarinda, the school's name is used with the foundation's written permission, but individual informants remain anonymous.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The analysis produced four themes that follow the stages of the HRM cycle: (1) the meaning of *al-qawiyy* and *al-amīn* for members of the school; (2) a two-stage, dual-track recruitment and selection process; (3) the parallel development of competence and *amānah*; and (4) two-dimensional appraisal and retention decisions based on a competence-integrity matrix. All four themes were confirmed across interviews, observation, and documents. To provide a rigorous and critical rather than purely descriptive account, this section also examines disconfirming evidence—instances where the school's practices departed from the qawiyy-amīn pairing or produced unresolved tensions—so that the model is presented with its frictions intact rather than as a frictionless ideal.

The Meaning of *al-Qawiyy* and *al-Amīn* for Members of the School

Members of the school understood the two attributes holistically and as inseparable. *Al-qawiyy* was understood not only as mastery of subject matter and modern teaching methods, such as digital and differentiated learning, but also as classroom management skills and the ability to recite the Qur'an with correct *tartīl*. *Al-amīn* was understood as the teacher's moral and professional foundation, expressed through exemplary conduct (*uswah ḥasanah*), honesty, punctual attendance, consistent worship such as congregational *ḍuḥā* and *ẓuhr* prayers, and commitment to maintaining the institution's confidentiality and good name. The school's documents frame both sides: its mission commits the school to instilling faith and noble character based on the Qur'an and Hadith in all school activities. At the same time, its stated objectives include professional human resources and an innovative, technology-based learning system (DK-01, DK-05). Table 1 summarises the indicators in the school's own terms.

Table 1

Indicators of al-Qawiyy and al-Amīn in the School's Own Terms

Dimension	Aspect	Concrete behavioural indicators
Al-qawiyy (competence)	Pedagogy and methodology	Designs differentiated teaching modules that integrate Islamic values; uses IT-based media (academic information system, smart board); manages the class in a conducive and inclusive way
	Professional expertise	Masters subject content and interactive strategies; recites the Qur'an with correct *faṣāḥah* and *tajwīd* (Ummi standard); evaluates and analyses learning outcomes objectively
	Personal and social	Communicates well with students and parents; adapts to changes in curriculum and school policy
Al-amīn (integrity)	Worship and exemplary conduct	Sets an example in congregational prayer, *ḍuḥā* prayer, and Qur'an recitation; dresses neatly and modestly according to school rules
	Professional integrity and honesty	Is punctual for teaching, meetings, and duty rosters; is honest in entering grades and handling school funds; keeps student and school data confidential and protects the institution's good name
	Academic and social responsibility	Completes teaching administration on time without reminders; shows care for students' safety and moral development at school

Note. Compiled from interviews and school documents.

Although both attributes were treated as essential, informants placed *al-amīn* at the base. The principal explained, "At Fastabiqul Khairat, being a clever teacher is not enough. Being clever is *al-qawiyy*, and that can be tested through micro-teaching and IT skills. But what comes

first is *al-amīn*, the teacher's character. Children watch their teacher's example every minute at school, from how they pray to how they speak" (PR, 20 July 2026). A senior teacher added that trustworthiness is much harder to build than skill: "If a teacher is not yet fluent in making digital media, we can train them in the KKG in two weeks. But discipline, honesty, and awareness of worship need commitment from the heart" (GC1, 5 August 2026). Observation confirmed that this view was enacted in daily routines: all teachers arrived before 07.00 WITA to welcome students at the gate and accompanied them to the *ḍuḥā* prayer (OB-01).

Two-Stage, Dual-Track Recruitment and Selection

The school's recruitment and staff development procedure, revised in June 2026, sets out a two-stage selection process (DK-02). The first stage serves as an elimination gate and consists of a Qur'an reading test and a practical worship test. Candidates must reach at least grade B (good) in *tajwīd* and *faṣāḥah* according to the Ummi method used by the school; those who fall below this standard are eliminated regardless of their academic record. Only candidates who pass this gate continue to the second stage, which runs on two tracks: Track A assesses competence through a subject test and micro-teaching, with a minimum score of 75 out of 100. In contrast, Track B assesses integrity and commitment through a commitment interview and a psychological test. The admission decision is taken only after both tracks have been passed.

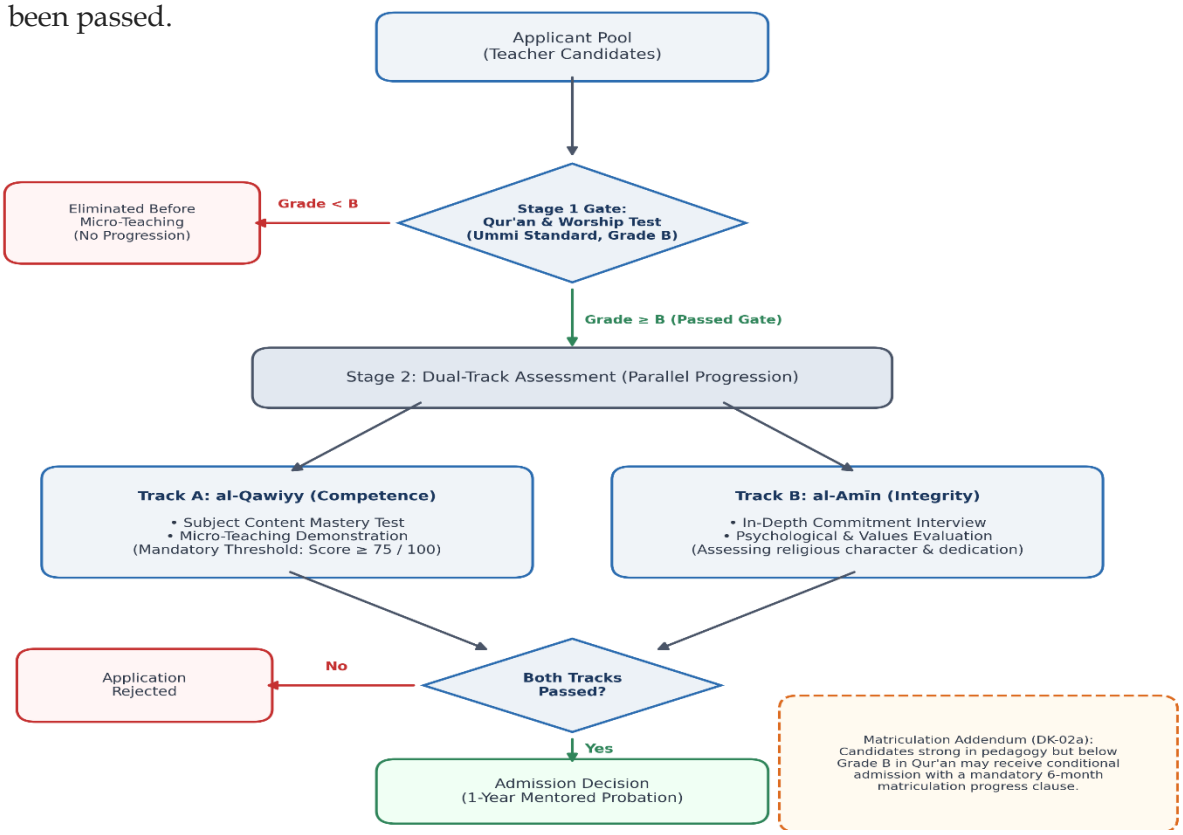


Figure 1

Two-Stage, Dual-Track Recruitment and Selection Process at SD Fastabiqul Khairat

Note. Compiled from the school's recruitment and staff development procedure (DK-02, DK-02a) and interview data. The dashed pathway indicates the conditional matriculation route introduced in the 2026 revision.

The personnel staff member described how strictly the first gate is applied: "The first stage of our selection is the Qur'an test. Even if a candidate has a GPA of 3.9 and excellent

certificates, if their Qur'an reading is not up to standard or has many *tajwīd* mistakes, we do not call them to the micro-teaching stage" (AS, 16 July 2026). This was observed during the selection held on 16 July 2026, when candidates were tested by the school's Qur'an team before entering the micro-teaching room, and one candidate was eliminated at the recitation test (OB-02). A teacher recruited in that round recalled that the most memorable part of the process was the commitment interview, in which she was asked about the dawn prayer, daily recitation, and her readiness to take part in religious coaching at school (NT1, 15 September 2026).

The gate, however, is not without institutional costs, and the empirical data illustrate an inherent pedagogical-religious trade-off. Of the eleven applicants processed in the July 2026 round, four were eliminated at the Qur'an gate before micro-teaching; of these, two had subject-test scores above 85 and prior teaching experience at other schools (DK-02, OB-02). The principal acknowledged this openly: "We know we sometimes lose good teachers at the Qur'an gate. Last year we lost a mathematics teacher who was excellent in the classroom but weak in *tajwīd*. We did not change the gate. Instead, we now offer Qur'an matriculation for candidates we consider strong in pedagogy but weak in recitation, on the condition that they reach grade B within six months" (PR, 20 July 2026). This matriculation route was confirmed in the documents as an addendum to the 2026 procedure (DK-02a). The school's response is therefore not to lower the gate but to create a conditional pathway through it—an important qualification to the impression that the first gate is absolute.

Parallel Development of Competence and *Amānah*

After recruitment, teachers take part in a development program that runs on two parallel tracks. The *al-qawiyy* track includes the internal teacher working group (KKG), IT training on learning media and school systems such as the smart board and the academic information system, lesson study and peer teaching, regular academic supervision, and curriculum workshops. Because the school runs an integrated curriculum that combines the national Kurikulum Merdeka with its own distinctive program and lists Cambridge among its education partners, curriculum training covers both the Kurikulum Merdeka and the Cambridge curriculum used for selected subjects (DK-05, DK-06). During the research period, for example, a mathematics teacher attended the Cambridge Primary Program Orientation Session organized by Mentari Group, one of the school's education partners, together with Marshall Cavendish Education on 8 August 2026. The session, titled "From Framework to Classroom Practice: Teaching Mathematics with Cambridge Primary," focused on translating the Cambridge Primary Mathematics framework into classroom practice (DK-07). The *al-amīn* track consists of weekly religious study sessions, mentoring and teacher *ḥalaqah*, and Qur'an matriculation and coaching. The vice principal summarised the arrangement: "We have weekly study sessions and *ḥalaqah* as spiritual nourishment for teachers, so the strengthening of *al-amīn* runs routinely, while for *al-qawiyy* there are KKG meetings and regular classroom supervision" (VP, 22 July 2026).

New teachers must complete a one-year probation period with a senior teacher as mentor. Mentoring focuses on writing teaching modules, classroom management in the Fastabiqul Khairat way, adjusting to school culture, and standardizing Qur'an reading. A novice teacher described the mentoring as covering both dimensions: "My mentor not only corrects my lesson plans, but also guides me on how to handle children with a friendly and

Islamic approach" (NT2, 17 September 2026). Observation showed both tracks in action: a weekly study session on the chapter of *amānah* and the responsibilities of educators was attended by the school leaders and all teachers (OB-03), and a KKG meeting saw class teachers discussing interactive teaching modules and sharing digital media for mathematics and thematic learning (OB-04).

The parallel tracks are not always experienced as balanced. One first-year teacher described the *al-amīn* track as more demanding than the competence track: "The KKG is scheduled, but the *ḥalaqah* and the personal mentoring feel like they follow me home. Sometimes I feel I am being assessed on my worship more than on my teaching" (NT3, 17 September 2026). A senior teacher acknowledged the same tension from the other side: "Teachers who are very active in *ḥalaqah* but weak in classroom management sometimes receive gentler supervision, because they are seen as 'good people.' We are aware of this, and the principal has reminded the KKG coordinator to keep the competence track equally strict" (ST3, 2 September 2026). These accounts suggest that the school's aspiration of parallel tracks is real but imperfect, and that the integrity track can, in practice, soften the demands of the competence track for teachers perceived as religiously committed.

Two-Dimensional Appraisal and the Competence-Integrity Matrix

The school's teacher performance appraisal instrument gives equal weight to the two dimensions: 50% for indicators of teaching competence and 50% for indicators of discipline and spiritual conduct (DK-03). The latter are supported by a daily record of attendance, participation in congregational prayer, and progress in Qur'an recitation (DK-04). A coordinator explained the consequence: "Performance appraisal here is balanced. It records attendance and discipline in worship. If a teacher teaches very well but is often late and neglects to accompany the children's prayers, they will certainly be called in and warned" (ST3, 2 September 2026).

Appraisal results feed into a four-category decision matrix for contracts, development, and promotion (Table 2). The matrix is not symmetrical. Teachers with strong integrity but weaker competence are retained on condition that they complete further development. In contrast, teachers with strong competence but integrity problems face suspension of their contract extension, written warnings, and intensive counseling by the principal and the foundation, and they are not retained if their conduct does not change. The principal stated the principle plainly: "If a teacher is trustworthy and has very good character but their teaching ability is still lacking, the school does not let them go straight away. We give them intensive coaching and mentoring. It is different if the problem is integrity; the sanction is heavy" (PR, 20 July 2026).

Table 2. Competence-Integrity Matrix for Performance Decisions

Category	Profile	Retention and HRM decision	Observed cases in 2025–2026
A (ideal)	High *al-qawiyy*, high *al-amīn*	Contract extended or permanent status; promotion to coordinator or vice principal; scholarship recommendation; performance bonus	14 teachers

Category	Profile	Retention and HRM decision	Observed cases in 2025–2026
B (high risk)	High *al-qawiyy*, low *al-amīn*	Contract extension suspended; first or second written warning; intensive counselling by the principal and the foundation; not renewed if no change	3 teachers
C (potential)	Low *al-qawiyy*, high *al-amīn*	Conditional extension with a coaching period; mandatory retraining, peer teaching, and assistance from senior teachers	5 teachers
D (elimination)	Low *al-qawiyy*, low *al-amīn*	Contract not renewed at the end of the evaluation period	2 teachers

Note. Compiled from interviews, the appraisal instrument (DK-03), and the personnel administration record for the 2025–2026 academic year. Category counts refer to teachers whose appraisal outcomes were discussed in interviews; they are indicative rather than a full census.

Two observations from the matrix data deserve emphasis because they qualify the model's apparent neatness. First, the consequences attached to categories B and C differ sharply even though both are "mixed" categories: category B teachers face sanctions that can end their employment. In contrast, category C teachers receive coaching and time. Second, and less expected, the follow-up data for category B are thin. Of the three category B teachers discussed in interviews, one resigned before the sanction process concluded, one improved after a written warning and remained, and one left at the end of the contract. When asked directly whether the warning process had ever been formally appealed, the personnel staff member stated that no teacher had appealed, adding, "Usually they choose to leave rather than go through the counseling" (AS, 16 September 2026). This suggests that the strictness of the integrity sanction operates partly through attrition rather than through the formal counseling mechanism the model describes—a finding that complicates the claim that the school "develops" rather than "dismisses" teachers with integrity deficits. Figure 2 shows the model linking the two attributes to the four HRM functions, incorporating this attrition pathway.

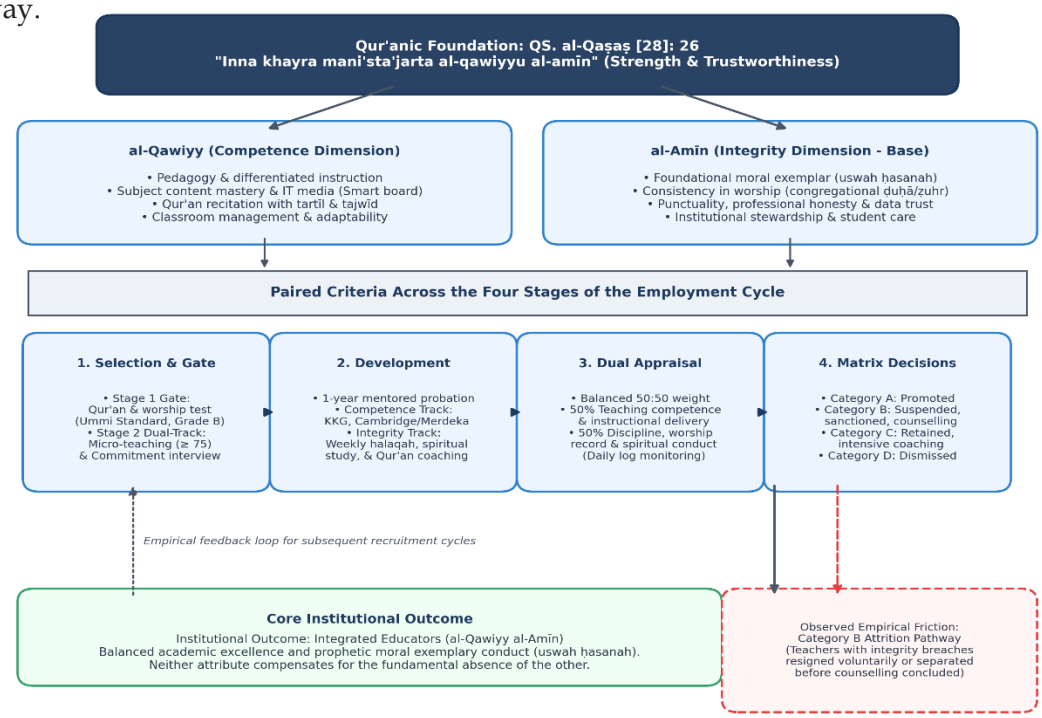


Figure 2

The al-Qawiyy al-Amīn Model of Human Resource Management at SD Fastabiqul Khairat Samarinda

Note. Compiled from interviews, observation, and school documents. The dashed feedback arrow indicates that appraisal outcomes inform the following recruitment cycle; the attrition pathway for category B is an empirical addition not anticipated in the school's formal procedure.

Together, the four themes describe an HRM cycle in which the two Qur'anic attributes are not invoked as background values but are attached to specific thresholds, weightings, and decision rules. At the same time, the disconfirming evidence shows that the cycle operates with three frictions: a Qur'an gate that narrows the applicant pool and requires a matriculation addendum to remain workable; a parallel development track in which the integrity strand can soften competence demands for teachers seen as religiously committed; and an integrity sanction whose strictness is realized partly through voluntary attrition rather than through the counseling mechanism the formal model describes.

Discussion

The findings show that the verse becomes useful for management only when it is broken into observable indicators and attached to specific decisions. This is consistent with Hussin et al. (2025), who argue that *al-quwwah* and *al-amānah* must operate together. Still, it extends their governance-level framework into the daily management of teachers. It also helps to explain why Hamzah et al. (2021) found that Islamic work values do not automatically improve in-role performance. At SD Fastabiqul Khairat, values shape decisions because they are built into thresholds (grade B for Qur'an reading, a score of 75 for micro-teaching), a 50:50 appraisal weighting, and a written decision matrix, rather than being left as personal attitudes. In this sense, the case supports Toumi and Su (2023) that Islamic values shape HRM, while showing that moving from informal judgment to explicit criteria makes this influence consistent and open to scrutiny. This mechanism also speaks to the wider literature on Islamic human resource management, which has established a robust empirical link between Islamic HRM practices and organizational trust (Nik Ab. Rahman et al., 2013) but has rarely specified *how* such practices are translated into institutional routines. The present case offers one such specification: trust is not produced by the mere presence of religious values in the school's discourse, but by attaching those values to verifiable gates, weightings, and consequences that teachers can anticipate.

The selection design addresses the weaknesses identified by Saputra et al. (2026), namely reliance on recommendations and inconsistent standards, by making every candidate pass written thresholds on both dimensions. It also complements the moral-criteria selection described by Agustin and Arifin (2026) by adding separate, verifiable evidence of teaching competence. One feature, however, deserves critical attention: the Qur'an and worship test is placed before any assessment of pedagogy, so a candidate who is pedagogically strong but whose recitation is below standard never reaches micro-teaching. For a school whose identity rests on Qur'anic literacy, this ordering is coherent. Yet it also narrows the applicant pool, and evidence from the July 2026 round shows the school lost two candidates with subject-test scores above 85 at this gate. The matriculation addendum the school introduced in response—admitting strong pedagogues conditionally on reaching grade B within six months—is an instructive compromise. Still, it also reveals the limits of the model as originally conceived. The gate does not so much disappear as acquire a bypass, and the bypass itself creates a new

administrative burden (tracking conditional teachers' recitation progress) that the school has only begun to formalize. Schools with teacher shortages may find this compromise attractive, but they should be aware that it shifts, rather than resolves, the tension between religious compliance and pedagogical excellence. This dynamic demonstrates that the tension between religious compliance and pedagogical specialization is manageable rather than fully eliminable.

The parallel development tracks resemble the supervision and reflection practices reported in pesantren (Arrifa'i et al., 2025; Hazaa et al., 2025) and the character-strengthening practices of another Islamic elementary school (Hamzah & Maulida, 2026), but they differ in treating *amānah* as something that is scheduled, coached, and recorded with the same seriousness as pedagogy. Placing Cambridge curriculum training alongside the Kurikulum Merdeka also shows that *al-qawiyy* is interpreted in line with the school's vision of graduates with a global outlook, not only as compliance with national standards. Yet the finding that the integrity track can, in practice, soften the competence track for teachers perceived as religiously committed cautions against reading the "parallel" arrangement as genuinely symmetrical. The school has built a system in which both dimensions are formally present, but the informal authority of religious commitment can still tilt the balance. This is a familiar pattern in faith-based organizations, where spiritual capital and professional competence are not always weighted evenly, and it suggests that formal symmetry in appraisal instruments is a necessary but not sufficient condition for substantive symmetry in practice. The school's awareness of this tendency—evidenced by the principal's reminders to the KKG coordinator—is itself a resource for correction. Still, it depends on continued vigilance rather than on system design alone.

The competence-integrity matrix offers a practical answer to the gap noted by Ramly et al. (2026), who found few integrated, multilevel HRM frameworks in Islamic educational institutions. It also gives empirical form to the value-driven recruitment and ethical appraisal that Lubis et al. (2026) proposed conceptually, and it adds what such models leave open: a decision rule for cases in which competence and integrity diverge. The asymmetry between the two mixed categories is particularly instructive. Leaders regarded integrity as harder to build than skill, so trustworthy but less competent teachers were developed, while competent teachers with integrity problems were placed under stricter conditions. This reflects the view of informants that *al-amīn* is the foundation on which *al-qawiyy* is built, and it is consistent with evidence that Islamic work ethics and discipline are strong predictors of performance, including among madrasah teachers (Aceh et al., 2024; Badar et al., 2024; Hassi et al., 2021), and that effective madrasah leaders combine managerial competence with moral authority (Djamil et al., 2026). The appraisal instrument's two-dimensional structure also aligns with the two-factor structure of teachers' work ethics reported by Abu-Saad and Haj Ali (2024), suggesting that future research could develop the matrix into a validated measurement instrument.

The category B attrition finding, however, complicates the matrix's normative appeal. The formal model describes a graduated sanction process culminating in counseling. Still, the empirical pattern shows that teachers with integrity deficits tend to leave before the counseling process runs its course. This means that the school's strictness on integrity is realized partly through exit rather than through voice or development, which sits uneasily

with the developmental ethos that the matrix's category C treatment embodies. In Hirschman's (1970) classic terms, the school has designed a system with strong "exit" consequences for integrity failures and strong "loyalty-and-development" consequences for competence failures. Still, it has not built equally strong "voice" mechanisms for the former. A teacher facing an integrity sanction is offered counseling, but the data suggest that counseling is rarely taken up, and the school has not yet examined why. This gap is one future research could address directly, and it is also a practical challenge for school leaders who want to preserve the model's developmental promise without letting integrity standards become a mechanism of quiet dismissal.

For Islamic studies, the case shows how a Qur'anic pattern can travel from text to institution. The asymmetry observed at the school closely mirrors the classical rule articulated by Ibn Taymiyyah (2008): because strength and trustworthiness seldom meet fully in one person, the appointing authority should prioritize whichever quality the post most requires. Teaching young children is a post in which the teacher acts as *uswah ḥasanah* and holds both the children and the institution's name in trust, so the school prioritizes *amānah* and treats competence as a quality that can still be acquired through mentoring. The school does not, however, accept a permanent trade-off: it retains category C teachers only on the condition that their competence improves, keeping the Qur'anic ideal of the two qualities together as the end point. The two qualities are also mutually dependent at the level of leadership: *amānah* itself requires leaders to assign tasks according to competence (Siswahyuningsih et al., 2025). Hence, a school that hires and retains teachers by both criteria exercises its own institutional *amānah* toward the children and parents it serves. Read this way, *al-qawiyy al-amīn* is not an Islamic label added to a conventional HRM system but an institutional logic that orders its priorities, and the findings add an empirical, school-level case to discussions on integrating Qur'anic values into the management of Islamic educational institutions. This contribution is also consistent with recent systematic reviews of Islamic educational leadership, which identify trustworthiness (*amānah*), honesty (*ṣidq*), and justice (*ʿadl*) as core administrative principles that operate across Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority contexts (Arar et al., 2026), and with the argument that spiritual leadership in Islam is grounded in *tawḥīd*, *khilāfah*, *shūrā*, and *amānah* rather than in generic ethics (Babali, 2025). The present case adds an operational layer to these normative frameworks: it shows what *amānah* looks like when it is translated into a recruitment gate, an appraisal weighting, and a retention matrix, and it shows where that translation remains incomplete.

The matrix's logic also differs from the standard "performance-potential" grid used in mainstream HRM. In the conventional nine-box grid, high performance combined with high potential typically leads to accelerated promotion, while high performance with low potential leads to retention in a specialist role. The Fastabiqul Khairat matrix reverses the usual priority in one respect: it treats integrity deficits as more disqualifying than competence deficits, meaning a teacher who performs well but is judged untrustworthy is placed in a more precarious position than a teacher who is trustworthy but performs poorly. This reversal is not a rejection of mainstream HRM logic but a contextual specification: the school has decided that, for the post of primary school teacher, trustworthiness is the more "critical" competency, and has weighted the matrix accordingly. This is a defensible position, but not a universal one, and it should be presented as a contextual choice rather than a general principle. The

reviewers' concern about overgeneralization is relevant here: the matrix is best understood as a school-level decision tool whose weighting reflects a particular institutional charism, not as a template that other Islamic schools should adopt without examining their own priorities.

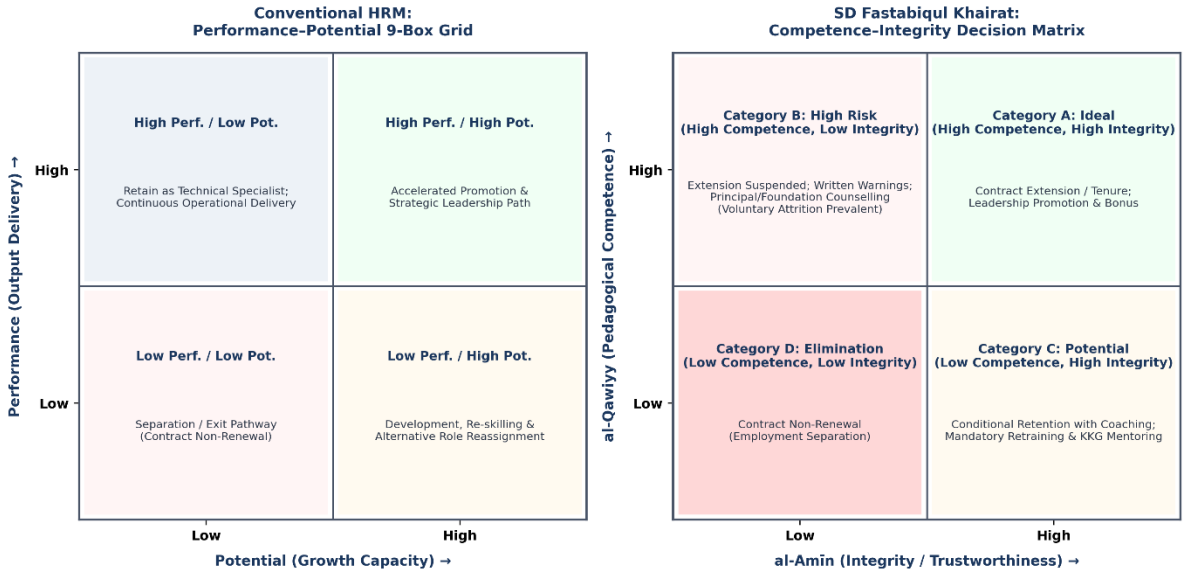


Figure 3

Comparison Between the Fastabiqul Khairat Competence-Integrity Matrix and the Conventional Performance-Potential Grid

Note. Compiled from interview and documentary data for the Fastabiqul Khairat matrix, and from standard HRM literature on the performance-potential grid for the comparison matrix. The comparison is structural, not evaluative: the two matrices weight different qualities as critical for the post.

The comparison clarifies what is distinctive about the school's approach and what is not. The four-cell structure itself is not novel; what is distinctive is the decision to treat integrity as the primary axis and to attach asymmetric consequences to the two mixed categories. This is consistent with the classical juristic principle that the appointing authority should weigh strength and trustworthiness according to the nature of the post (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2008). Still, it also means that the matrix is only as good as the school's ability to assess integrity reliably. The data show that integrity assessment at the school relies on a combination of commitment interviews, daily worship records, and senior staff judgment, and that these are not immune to halo effects and social desirability biases. A visibly pious teacher may be rated more favorably on integrity than one who is equally honest but less demonstrative in worship, and the senior teacher's comment about "gentler supervision" for *ḥalaqah*-active teachers suggests that this risk is not merely hypothetical. Future research could usefully examine the reliability of integrity judgments in Islamic school settings, ideally through multi-rater designs that separate observed conduct from reputational assessments.

Finally, the study's contribution to the broader field of Islamic HRM should be stated with appropriate modesty. The case does not demonstrate that the Fastabiqul Khairat model produces better student outcomes, lower teacher turnover, or higher institutional trust than alternative models; it demonstrates only that the model is coherent, operational, and internally consistent with the school's theological commitments. Establishing effectiveness would require a different research design, ideally a comparative or longitudinal study that tracks outcomes across schools with different HRM arrangements. The present study offers a

detailed, empirically grounded account of how a Qur'anic pair can be translated into an institutional logic, along with a candid account of the frictions that translation produces. That is a more limited contribution than the original manuscript claimed, but it is also a more honest one, and it represents an analytically candid contribution to the literature.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that *al-qawiyy* and *al-amīn* can function as an integrative framework for human resource management at SD Fastabiqul Khairat Samarinda because they translate into observable indicators and attach to concrete decisions, not because they are invoked as background values. The two attributes are applied as paired criteria throughout the HRM cycle: a Qur'an and worship gate followed by dual-track selection; a one-year mentored probation with parallel development of competence and *amānah;* an appraisal instrument that weights the two dimensions equally; and a four-category matrix for retention and promotion. Within this framework, *al-amīn* is treated as the foundation, so deficits in integrity are sanctioned more strictly than deficits in competence. This ordering mirrors the classical principle of weighing strength and trustworthiness according to the nature of the post (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2008). The competence-integrity matrix is the study's main empirical contribution.

Theoretically, the study moves Islamic HRM from normative exegesis toward an operational model that links a recurring Qur'anic pattern and its classical juristic reading to every stage of the HRM cycle. This responds to the gap identified by Ramly et al. (2026) and gives empirical form to the conceptual proposals of Lubis et al. (2026), while also specifying the mechanism by which Islamic HRM practices generate organizational trust (Nik Ab. Rahman et al., 2013). At the same time, the study is deliberately modest in its claims. It does not demonstrate that the model produces better student outcomes, lower turnover, or higher institutional trust than alternative arrangements; it demonstrates only that the model is coherent, operational, and internally consistent with the school's theological commitments. Establishing effectiveness would require a comparative or longitudinal design that tracks outcomes across schools with different HRM configurations, and future research should pursue this direction rather than treating the present model as a validated template.

Three findings qualify the model's apparent neatness and should be carried forward as cautions rather than footnotes. First, the Qur'an-first elimination gate narrows the applicant pool and, in the July 2026 round, eliminated two candidates with strong subject-test scores; the school's matriculation addendum is a workable compromise, but it shifts rather than resolves the tension between religious compliance and pedagogical excellence. Second, the parallel development tracks are not experienced as symmetrical: the integrity strand can, in practice, soften competence demands for teachers perceived as religiously committed, meaning formal symmetry in appraisal instruments is necessary but not sufficient for substantive symmetry in practice. Third, the strictness of the integrity sanction is realized partly through voluntary attrition rather than through the counseling mechanism the formal model describes. This pattern complicates the school's developmental ethos and invites future research on why teachers facing integrity sanctions choose exit over voice (Hirschman, 1970). These frictions are not defects to be eliminated but features to be managed, and naming them openly is itself part of the contribution.

Practically, principals and school foundations can adapt the indicators, thresholds, and matrix to design selection rubrics, development programs, and appraisal forms. Still, they should do so with two boundary conditions in mind. The model presupposes institutional autonomy over HR decisions, which foundation-run private schools possess, but public schools generally do not; and it presupposes a relatively homogeneous religious community whose members share the school's understanding of *amānah*, which may not hold in Muslim-minority or religiously diverse settings. Policymakers may consider including verifiable evidence of integrity alongside competence in teacher recruitment and certification. Still, such proposals should be framed as options for private Islamic institutions rather than general standards for all schools.

The study is limited to one private Islamic primary school and relies on qualitative data, so its findings cannot be generalized statistically. Future research should test the model across several types of Islamic schools, compare public and private settings, examine the effect of the Qur'an-first selection gate on the applicant pool and on teacher quality over time, investigate the reliability of integrity judgments through multi-rater designs, and develop a validated instrument for measuring *al-qawiyy* and *al-amīn* among teachers. A longitudinal study tracking teachers across the four matrix categories would be particularly valuable for establishing whether the model's asymmetric sanctions produce the developmental outcomes the school intends. The present study offers a detailed, empirically grounded account of how a Qur'anic pair can be translated into an institutional logic, along with a candid account of the frictions that translation produces—a more limited contribution than a claim of universal applicability, but also a more honest and useful one.

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DECLARATIONS

Declaration Category	Statement Details
Use of AI Statement	The authors declare that no Artificial Intelligence (AI) or generative tools were utilized in the study design, data collection, analysis, or manuscript drafting.
Authors' Contributions	Hendry Putra contributed to research conceptualization, methodology design, field data collection, and initial manuscript drafting. Mursalim contributed to theological-exegetical synthesis, theoretical framing, and conceptual framework refinement. Muhammadiyah Amin contributed to institutional analysis, qualitative data interpretation, and discussion development. Ishmatul Maula contributed to formal qualitative analysis, critical manuscript revision, and final proofreading. All authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.
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Declaration Category	Statement Details
Conflict of Interest	The authors declare that they have no financial, institutional, or personal competing interests that could inappropriately influence or bias this work.

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