

Research Article

Sufi Epistemology and the Reconstruction of Contemporary Islamic School Governance: Toward a Spiritual-Humanistic Governance Paradigmz

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Abstract: The transformation of educational governance in the digital era has encouraged Islamic schools to adopt modern administrative models emphasizing organizational effectiveness, accountability, and performance-based management. However, the dominance of technocratic and performativity-driven paradigms tends to marginalize the ethical, spiritual, and humanistic dimensions that constitute the normative foundations of Islamic education. Existing studies on Islamic school governance have predominantly focused on managerial effectiveness and leadership practices, while the integration of Sufi epistemology into educational governance frameworks remains limited. This study aims to reconstruct a contemporary Islamic school governance paradigm grounded in Sufi epistemology through the development of a spiritual-humanistic governance framework. This study employed a qualitative library-based design using philosophical-conceptual analysis, theory synthesis, and model development informed by Jaakkola's conceptual research framework. Data were derived from classical and contemporary literature on Islamic educational administration, Educational Governance, New Public Management (NPM), Islamic epistemology, and Sufi thought, and analyzed through qualitative content analysis and a critical-hermeneutic approach. The findings indicate that Sufi epistemology provides an alternative foundation for addressing the reductionist and instrumental orientation of contemporary educational governance. Core concepts, including *tazkiyat al-nafs*, *muraqabah*, *ihسان*, *hikmah*, and *ma'rifah*, strengthen ethical accountability, transcendental responsibility, reflective leadership, humanistic organizational culture, and value-based decision-making. These findings culminate in the formulation of a spiritual-humanistic governance paradigm that bridges organizational effectiveness with the ethical objectives of Islamic education and promotes sustainable Islamic school governance. The study's primary novelty lies in reconstructing Sufi epistemology as an institutional governance paradigm rather than merely a framework for individual spiritual formation, thereby offering a value-based perspective for contemporary Islamic educational administration.

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Introduction

The advancement of globalization, digital transformation, and the modernization of educational systems have fundamentally reshaped the paradigm of educational governance across various parts of the world. Contemporary educational institutions are increasingly required to establish administrative systems that are effective, accountable, adaptive, and performance-oriented in order to respond to the growing complexity of social change, technological advancement, and the evolving demands of modern society. Within this context, educational governance has gradually evolved toward a model that emphasizes institutional efficiency, strategic leadership, data-driven management, and the cultivation of a professional and competitive organizational culture (Geertsema & Harland, 2026). This paradigm has subsequently become a dominant framework in modern educational administration reforms, including the governance and management of Islamic educational institutions.

Contemporary Islamic schools no longer function solely as institutions for the transmission of religious knowledge; they are also expected to become high-performing, innovative educational organizations capable of competing in an increasingly globalized environment. Consequently, various modern governance models have been adopted within

Islamic school administration systems, including e-governance, total quality management, performance-based leadership, and data-driven decision-making. Nevertheless, this modernization process often unfolds within a technocratic framework that prioritizes administrative efficiency, organizational performativity, and institutional achievement as the primary objectives of educational governance (Salomo, 2023). In practice, such an orientation tends to marginalize the ethical, spiritual, and humanistic dimensions that constitute the philosophical foundation of Islamic education.

These conditions have generated several fundamental problems in the governance of contemporary Islamic schools. Many educational institutions face crises of leadership integrity, the weakening of reflective organizational culture, the rise of administrative formalism, and the reduction of educational values into mere indicators of institutional performance. Education is no longer understood as a process of cultivating civilized human beings (*ta'dib*), but is increasingly reduced to a mechanism for producing academic achievement, performance accountability, and organizational efficiency. From a critical perspective, this phenomenon reflects the growing dominance of instrumental rationality and performance-oriented governance, which risks marginalizing the spiritual, ethical, and moral dimensions of education (Salomo & Rahmayanti, 2023). Furthermore, this condition illustrates the tension between the demands of modern institutional effectiveness and the fundamental objectives of Islamic education, which emphasize the cultivation of *adab*, moral integrity, and holistic human development (Zul, Huda, Fuad, & Abdullah, 2026).

Conceptually, modern educational governance is rooted in positivist paradigms and bureaucratic rationality, which view organizations as administrative systems that should be managed objectively, systematically, and efficiently. Within this framework, New Public Management (NPM) emphasizes efficiency, accountability, performance measurement, and organizational competition as key instruments for improving the quality of public institutions, including the education sector (Krejsler & Moos, 2023). Furthermore, educational governance theory increasingly positions data, regulation, evaluation, and organizational control as central mechanisms for guiding decision-making processes and enhancing educational quality (Conn et al., 2022). Although these paradigms have contributed significantly to strengthening administrative professionalism and institutional effectiveness, critical scholarship suggests that such approaches remain limited in accommodating ethical-spiritual dimensions, moral reflexivity, and the humanistic values that constitute essential characteristics of faith-based educational institutions (Biesta, 2022).

The integration of Sufi epistemology into Islamic school governance is essential because Islamic education is fundamentally oriented not only toward institutional effectiveness but also toward the cultivation of morally responsible, civilized, and spiritually conscious individuals (Raimi, Abdur-Rauf, & Olaide Raimi, 2024). From the perspective of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, Islamic education constitutes a process of *ta'dib*, namely the instillation of *adab* and the recognition of the proper order of knowledge and human spiritual reality (Noer, 2024). Therefore, the governance of Islamic schools should not be constructed solely upon administrative rationality and managerial efficiency, but should also be grounded in ethical and spiritual values that preserve the humanistic orientation of education and ensure that organizational effectiveness remains aligned with the broader objectives of character formation, moral integrity, and civilizational development (Sahin, 2018).

Although studies on Islamic educational administration, educational leadership, and institutional governance have expanded considerably, most existing research continues to focus on organizational effectiveness, leadership models, digital transformation, quality culture, and performance-based educational management (Mariyono, Yunus, Junaidi, Syam, & Mazhabi, 2026). On the other hand, research on Sufism within Islamic education has generally been limited to the domains of character formation, moral education, and individual spirituality. Scholarly works that explicitly connect Sufi epistemology with the reconstruction of institutional governance in educational settings remain relatively scarce. Consequently, a significant research gap exists regarding the development of an Islamic school governance model that integrates modern administrative paradigms with the spiritual-humanistic epistemology of Islam.

Building upon this research gap, the present study offers a novel contribution through the construction of a spiritual-humanistic governance paradigm as an alternative model for the governance of contemporary Islamic schools. This paradigm positions Sufi spirituality as an ethical and epistemological foundation for educational administration, aiming to integrate organizational effectiveness with moral integrity, reflective leadership, humanistic culture, and institutional sustainability (Biesta, 2022). Unlike previous studies that have primarily situated Sufism within the domain of individual character formation and spiritual development, this study reconstructs Sufi epistemology within the sphere of institutional governance and organizational decision-making processes. Consequently, the study contributes to the

advancement of educational governance theory by establishing a conceptual linkage between governance practices and spiritual-humanistic values within the framework of contemporary Islamic education (Sahin, 2018).

Unlike existing approaches such as spiritual leadership, ethical governance, and humanistic governance, the spiritual-humanistic governance paradigm proposed in this study positions spirituality not merely as a personal attribute of leaders or an ethical supplement to organizational management, but as an epistemological foundation that shapes the entire governance system (Piwowar-Sulej & Iqbal, 2024). While spiritual leadership theory primarily focuses on the influence of leaders' spiritual values on organizational performance, organizational commitment, and employee well-being, and ethical governance emphasizes normative principles for responsible decision-making and institutional accountability (Huijser & Nullens, 2024), both approaches remain largely grounded in contemporary managerial and organizational paradigms. In contrast, the present study draws upon Sufi epistemology to conceptualize governance as an integrative process that connects organizational effectiveness with spiritual consciousness, moral refinement, transcendental accountability, and human flourishing. Consequently, spirituality is not treated as an external variable influencing governance outcomes but as a foundational source of knowledge, values, and institutional orientation that informs leadership practices, accountability mechanisms, organizational culture, and educational decision-making processes within contemporary Islamic schools.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the advancement of Islamic educational administration by integrating educational governance theory, humanistic paradigms, and Sufi epistemology within the framework of contemporary Islamic school governance. It further extends the scope of Islamic epistemological studies from their predominantly metaphysical and philosophical orientation toward the practical domains of institutional governance and educational leadership. In addition, the study offers a conceptual contribution to the development of a governance model that is more reflective, ethical, humanistic, and oriented toward long-term institutional sustainability in the modern era.

Based on this background, the study aims to construct a conceptual framework for contemporary Islamic school governance grounded in Sufi epistemology, with particular emphasis on the integration of spiritual and humanistic values into educational administration. Furthermore, it seeks to explain how Sufi epistemology can serve as an alternative foundation for reconstructing the governance paradigm of Islamic schools toward a more transformative, ethical, and civilized institutional model. Ultimately, the study proposes a spiritual-humanistic governance paradigm that reconciles organizational effectiveness with moral responsibility, spiritual consciousness, and holistic human development within contemporary Islamic education.

Proposed Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a library research design oriented toward philosophical, conceptual, and interpretive analysis. This approach was selected because the study does not aim to statistically measure empirical variables; rather, it seeks to reconstruct the paradigm of contemporary Islamic school governance through the integration of Sufi epistemology and modern educational administration theories. Within the traditions of educational and social-humanities research, qualitative inquiry is widely utilized to explore meanings, conceptual constructions, epistemological relationships, and the contextual dynamics of social phenomena in a comprehensive and in-depth manner (Frank & Hatak, 2014). Accordingly, this study positions scholarly texts, academic literature, and scientific documents as its primary sources of analysis for developing a theoretical framework of spiritual-humanistic governance in Islamic educational administration. The data sources consisted of primary and secondary literature relevant to the study's focus. Primary sources included classical and contemporary works on Sufi epistemology, Islamic educational philosophy, educational governance, and educational administration theories. Secondary sources comprised peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, conference proceedings, and other scholarly publications discussing Islamic school governance, educational leadership, spirituality in education, and humanistic educational paradigms. Data were collected through systematic literature review procedures involving identification, selection, classification, and critical examination of relevant sources. Subsequently, the collected data were analyzed using a philosophical-hermeneutic approach and qualitative content analysis. This analytical process aimed to identify key concepts, uncover epistemological relationships, and synthesize theoretical perspectives into an integrated conceptual framework. Through this process, the study formulated a model of spiritual-humanistic governance as an alternative paradigm for the governance of contemporary Islamic schools.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed source triangulation, theoretical comparison, and critical interpretation of the literature. These strategies enabled the researcher to validate conceptual consistency across different sources and to construct a coherent theoretical framework that integrates Sufi spirituality, humanistic values, and contemporary educational governance.

Methodologically, this study employs a conceptual qualitative analysis approach, a research method aimed at developing theoretical synthesis through the exploration, interpretation, and integration of relevant scholarly literature (Jaakkola, 2020). Following (Jaakkola, 2020), framework for conceptual research, this study specifically adopts the strategies of theory synthesis and model development. Theory synthesis was employed to integrate previously disconnected bodies of knowledge, namely modern educational governance and Sufi epistemology, by identifying their conceptual intersections, epistemological assumptions, and complementary contributions. Building upon this synthesis, the study further engaged in model development to formulate a novel explanatory framework of spiritual-humanistic governance for contemporary Islamic schools. Through these methodological strategies, the research moves beyond descriptive literature review toward the construction of a theoretically grounded paradigm that offers new insights into the integration of organizational effectiveness, ethical responsibility, spiritual consciousness, and holistic human development within Islamic educational administration. This approach was selected because the study seeks to bridge two domains of knowledge that have traditionally evolved in relative isolation: the paradigm of modern educational governance, grounded in administrative rationality, organizational effectiveness, and institutional accountability, and the paradigm of Sufi epistemology, which emphasizes spirituality, ethics, transcendental consciousness, and Islamic humanism (Carrera-Rivera, Ochoa, Larrinaga, & Lasa, 2022).

The integration of these paradigms is considered essential because Islamic educational governance requires not only managerial competence and organizational efficiency but also moral and spiritual foundations capable of guiding decision-making processes toward the broader objectives of educational benefit and human flourishing. Accordingly, this study moves beyond a merely descriptive account of educational administration and Sufi epistemology by undertaking an epistemological reconstruction aimed at formulating a governance framework for Islamic schools that is more reflective, ethical, humanistic, and transformative.

Within this perspective, Sufi epistemology is not viewed merely as a doctrine of individual spirituality but as a normative source of knowledge that can contribute to the development of educational governance models oriented toward integrity, civility, moral responsibility, and institutional sustainability. Through this conceptual reconstruction, the study proposes a spiritual-humanistic governance framework capable of reconciling organizational effectiveness with ethical leadership, spiritual accountability, and holistic human development within contemporary Islamic educational institutions.

This study was designed as a library research project employing a critical conceptual analysis approach. The research focuses on exploring the epistemological relationship between modern educational governance and Sufi values within the administration of contemporary Islamic schools. Critical conceptual analysis was adopted to examine the limitations of modern educational administration paradigms, which are often characterized by technocratic and performance-oriented tendencies, while simultaneously reconstructing an alternative governance paradigm grounded in the spiritual and humanistic values of Islam (Carrera-Rivera et al., 2022).

This approach enables an in-depth interpretation of theories, paradigms, and philosophical constructs that have shaped contemporary Islamic educational administration. Within the context of this study, Sufi epistemology is positioned not merely as a normative discourse of spirituality but as an epistemological framework with practical implications for educational leadership, organizational culture, decision-making processes, and institutional governance. Accordingly, the study seeks to develop a conceptual model of spiritual-humanistic governance that integrates organizational effectiveness with ethical responsibility, spiritual consciousness, and holistic human development in contemporary Islamic educational institutions (Raharjo, Musthafa, Syafei, Rahmi, & Refani, 2025).

Table 1. Research Design

Research Component Deskripsi	
Research Type	Qualitative Research
Research Design	Library Research
Research Approach	Philosophical-Conceptual and Critical-Hermeneutic Approach
Research Focus	Integration of Sufi Epistemology into Islamic School Governance

Research Component Deskripsi

Analytical Orientation Reconstruction of the Spiritual-Humanistic Governance Paradigm

Research Character Exploratory, Interpretive, and Theoretical

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources to construct a comprehensive theoretical framework for the development of a spiritual-humanistic governance paradigm in contemporary Islamic school administration. Primary sources consisted of seminal and authoritative works on Sufi epistemology, Islamic educational philosophy, Islamic educational administration, educational governance, and modern theories of educational management. Particular emphasis was placed on the writings of Al-Ghazali concerning Sufism, self-purification, and spiritual ethics (Fadhil & Sebgag, 2021). Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas on the concepts of ta'dib, adab, and the Islamization of knowledge; and Seyyed Hossein Nasr on Islamic epistemology, sacred knowledge, and spiritual consciousness (Asiah & Desky, 2025). These foundational works were selected because they provide the philosophical and epistemological basis for understanding the role of spirituality, ethics, and human development within Islamic educational thought.

To critically examine contemporary governance practices, the study also incorporated major theoretical perspectives from New Public Management (NPM), educational governance, data-driven administration, and educational leadership. These perspectives served as analytical lenses for identifying the dominant characteristics of modern educational governance, including efficiency, accountability, performance measurement, managerialism, organizational control, and bureaucratic rationality.

Secondary sources were drawn from peer-reviewed international journal articles, scholarly books, conference proceedings, research reports, and educational policy documents relevant to Islamic education, educational governance, spirituality in education, leadership studies, and humanistic educational paradigms. The selection of literature followed rigorous academic criteria, including scholarly credibility, publication quality, thematic relevance, citation impact, and theoretical significance. Priority was given to publications indexed in internationally recognized databases and to works that have made substantial contributions to discussions on educational governance, Islamic educational philosophy, organizational leadership, and the integration of ethical-spiritual values into educational administration.

To ensure conceptual rigor and analytical depth, the literature selection process adhered to the principles of relevance, authority, credibility, and theoretical contribution. This strategy enabled the study to synthesize diverse intellectual traditions and construct a coherent framework that bridges modern educational governance with the spiritual-humanistic foundations of Islamic educational thought.

Table 2. Sources of Research Data and Analytical Focus

Data Category	Data Sources	Analytical Focus
Primary Data	Works of Al-Ghazali	Sufism, spiritual ethics, self-purification (tazkiyat al-nafs), and moral formation
Primary Data	Works of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas	Ta'dib, adab, Islamization of knowledge, and Islamic educational philosophy
Primary Data	Works of Seyyed Hossein Nasr	Islamic epistemology, sacred knowledge, and spirituality of education
Primary Data	Literature on Educational Governance and New Public Management (NPM)	Contemporary educational governance, organizational effectiveness, accountability, and managerialism
Secondary Data	Scopus-indexed journal articles and scholarly books	Contemporary Islamic educational administration and governance
Secondary Data	Conference proceedings, research reports, and policy documents	Spiritual leadership, organizational culture, and institutional transformation

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through documentation techniques and systematic literature exploration. Documentation was employed to identify, retrieve, classify, and organize scholarly sources relevant to the research objectives. To ensure the comprehensiveness and academic quality of the literature, the researcher accessed internationally recognized academic databases, including Scopus, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and SpringerLink (Snyder, 2019).

The literature search was conducted systematically using a combination of keywords related to the research focus, including "Sufi epistemology," "Islamic educational governance," "spiritual leadership," "humanistic education," "Islamic school governance," "educational administration," and "spiritual governance." The search strategy aimed to capture both classical and contemporary scholarly discussions concerning the intersection of

spirituality, educational governance, leadership, and Islamic educational administration(Jaakkola, 2020).

The retrieved literature was subsequently screened and evaluated according to predefined inclusion criteria, including thematic relevance, publication quality, scholarly credibility, year of publication, journal indexing status, and theoretical contribution to the development of the study's conceptual framework. Following the selection process, the literature was systematically documented, categorized, and synthesized to facilitate the identification of major themes, conceptual patterns, and epistemological relationships relevant to the reconstruction of the proposed *spiritual-humanistic governance* paradigm.

Table 3. Data Collection Procedures

Data Collection Stage	Research Activities
Literature Identification	Defining the research focus, objectives, and search keywords
Database Search	Retrieving scholarly publications from international academic databases
Literature Screening	Evaluating sources based on relevance, quality, credibility, and theoretical significance
Data Documentation	Classifying and organizing literature according to thematic categories
Literature Organization	Developing literature matrices and conceptual classifications for analysis

Data Extraction

Data extraction was conducted through the systematic identification and classification of key concepts related to modern educational governance and Sufi epistemology. At this stage, the researcher reviewed the selected literature to identify, categorize, and map the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, and paradigmatic assumptions relevant to the study. The purpose of the data extraction process was to generate a coherent conceptual structure that would facilitate subsequent interpretation, comparison, and theoretical synthesis (Fadhil & Sebgag, 2021).

The extracted concepts included educational governance, New Public Management (NPM), educational leadership, *tazkiyat al-nafs* (self-purification), *ihsan* (spiritual excellence), *muraqabah* (spiritual self-awareness), *bikmah* (wisdom), and *ma'rifah* (spiritual knowledge) . These concepts were selected because they represent the core theoretical constructs of the two paradigms under investigation: modern educational administration and Sufi epistemology (Jaakkola, 2020).

Following the extraction process, the identified concepts were systematically analyzed to explore their epistemological foundations, underlying assumptions, and practical implications for educational governance. Particular attention was given to examining the relationship between the administrative rationality that characterizes contemporary governance models and the spiritual-humanistic values embedded within the Sufi intellectual tradition. Through this analytical process, the study sought to identify points of convergence, conceptual tensions, and potential areas of integration that could inform the reconstruction of a spiritual-humanistic governance framework for contemporary Islamic schools.

Table 4. Key Concepts Extracted from the Literature

Conceptual Domain	Key Concepts
Modern Governance	Educational Governance, New Public Management (NPM), Accountability, Organizational Effectiveness, Educational Leadership
Sufi Epistemology	Tazkiyat al-Nafs, Ihsan, Muraqabah, Hikmah, Ma'rifah
Integrative Framework	Governance Spiritual Leadership, Ethical Governance, Humanistic Culture, Spiritual-Humanistic Governance

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis and a critical-hermeneutic approach. Qualitative content analysis was employed to identify conceptual patterns, theoretical tendencies, and epistemological relationships within the selected literature. As a systematic and replicable analytical technique, content analysis enables researchers to generate valid inferences from textual data through the careful examination of meanings, themes, and conceptual structures (Giannantonio, 2010).

In addition, a hermeneutic approach was applied to interpret the philosophical meanings embedded in Sufi concepts within the context of contemporary Islamic educational administration. Hermeneutic inquiry was considered particularly appropriate because concepts such as *ihsan*, *bikmah*, and *ma'rifah* cannot be adequately understood through literal interpretation alone; rather, they require contextual, epistemological, and philosophical interpretation within the broader intellectual tradition of Islam (George, 2025).

The analytical process involved three interrelated stages: (1) identifying and categorizing key concepts from the literature, (2) interpreting the epistemological foundations and philosophical meanings of these concepts, and (3) synthesizing the findings into an integrated

conceptual framework. Through this process, the study reconstructed a spiritual-humanistic governance paradigm that bridges modern educational governance with the ethical, spiritual, and humanistic principles of Sufi epistemology.

Data Synthesis and Framework Development

The final stage of the analysis involved a process of conceptual integration, paradigm reconstruction, theory building, and framework development. This stage was designed to transform the findings derived from the literature into a coherent theoretical model capable of explaining the role of Sufi epistemology in the governance of contemporary Islamic schools (Jaakkola, 2020; Snyder, 2019).

The first stage, conceptual integration, focused on synthesizing key concepts extracted from the literature, including educational governance, New Public Management (NPM), educational leadership, *taẓkiyat al-nafs*, *ihsan*, *muraqabah*, *hikmah*, and *ma'rifah*. Through this process, the study identified the epistemological relationships and conceptual intersections between modern administrative rationality and the spiritual-humanistic values embedded within the Sufi intellectual tradition.

The second stage involved paradigm reconstruction. At this stage, the dominant assumptions underlying contemporary educational governance were critically examined and reinterpreted through the lens of Sufi epistemology. This reconstruction process sought to move beyond technocratic, managerial, and performance-oriented approaches by incorporating ethical responsibility, spiritual consciousness, reflective leadership, and humanistic organizational values into the governance framework.

The third stage consisted of theory building, whereby the integrated concepts were systematically organized into a coherent explanatory structure. The objective was to formulate a theoretical proposition capable of explaining how spiritual values can function as epistemological foundations for educational governance while maintaining institutional effectiveness, accountability, and organizational sustainability.

The final stage focused on framework development. Based on the results of conceptual integration, paradigm reconstruction, and theory building, the study formulated a *spiritual-humanistic governance* framework as an alternative model for contemporary Islamic school governance. The framework conceptualizes governance as a multidimensional process that integrates organizational effectiveness, ethical leadership, spiritual accountability, reflective organizational culture, and holistic human development. As such, the proposed framework contributes to the advancement of Islamic educational administration by providing a theoretically grounded model that bridges contemporary governance practices with the ethical and spiritual foundations of Islamic educational thought.

Table 5. Data Synthesis and Research Outputs

Synthesis Stage	Research Output
Conceptual Integration	Identification of epistemological relationships between modern educational governance and Sufi epistemology
Paradigm Reconstruction	Reinterpretation of governance assumptions through spiritual-humanistic principles
Theory Building	Development of theoretical propositions linking spirituality and educational governance
Framework Development	Formulation of the <i>Spiritual-Humanistic Governance</i> framework
Theoretical Contribution	Alternative paradigm for contemporary Islamic educational administration
Practical Implications	Ethical leadership model, reflective organizational culture, and sustainable institutional governance

Research Trustworthiness and Methodological Rigor

To ensure the trustworthiness and methodological rigor of the study, several quality assurance procedures were employed throughout the research process. Given the conceptual and library-based nature of the study, the credibility of the findings was established through source triangulation, theoretical triangulation, and continuous evaluation of conceptual coherence.

Source triangulation was conducted by systematically examining and comparing diverse bodies of literature, including classical Islamic texts, contemporary works on Sufi epistemology, studies on Islamic educational philosophy, and scholarly publications on educational governance and educational administration. The use of multiple sources enabled the researcher to identify recurring themes, verify conceptual consistency, and reduce the risk of interpretive bias across different intellectual traditions (Chen, 2022).

Theoretical triangulation was employed by integrating complementary theoretical perspectives, including Educational Governance, New Public Management (NPM), Humanistic Education, and Sufi Epistemology. The purpose of this strategy was to examine the phenomenon from multiple analytical perspectives and to strengthen the explanatory capacity of the proposed conceptual framework. Through this process, the study sought to

develop a more comprehensive understanding of how spiritual and humanistic values can be integrated into contemporary Islamic school governance.

To enhance theoretical robustness, all concepts and theoretical propositions were subjected to iterative comparison, critical interpretation, and conceptual validation across the selected literature. This procedure ensured that the resulting framework was not derived from a single theoretical tradition but emerged from a systematic synthesis of diverse yet interconnected bodies of knowledge (Jaakkola, 2020).

Furthermore, conceptual coherence and analytical consistency were maintained throughout the stages of conceptual integration, paradigm reconstruction, theory building, and framework development. The final framework was evaluated based on its internal consistency, theoretical plausibility, and capacity to explain the relationship between organizational effectiveness, ethical leadership, spiritual accountability, and humanistic educational values. These procedures were intended to ensure that the proposed spiritual-humanistic governance model possesses sufficient theoretical credibility and scholarly rigor to contribute meaningfully to the advancement of Islamic educational administration and educational governance studies.

Table 7. Research Trustworthiness and Quality Assurance Strategies

Quality Strategy	Assurance	Implementation
Source Triangulation		Comparing classical, modern, and contemporary literature on Islamic epistemology, Sufism, educational governance, and educational administration
Conceptual Validation		Cross-examining concepts and theoretical propositions across multiple scholarly sources
Theoretical Triangulation		Integrating Educational Governance, New Public Management, Humanistic Education, and Sufi Epistemology
Analytical Consistency		Maintaining coherence throughout conceptual integration, paradigm reconstruction, and theory building
Theoretical Robustness		Evaluating the explanatory power and internal consistency of the proposed framework
Scholarly Credibility		Prioritizing peer-reviewed, high-impact, and internationally recognized academic publications

Results And Discussion

The Transformation of Contemporary Islamic School Governance

The findings reveal that the transformation of contemporary educational governance has significantly influenced the administrative practices of Islamic schools. In response to globalization, digitalization, and increasing demands for institutional accountability, Islamic educational institutions have progressively adopted governance approaches characterized by efficiency, performance measurement, evidence-based decision-making, and organizational accountability (Di Vaio, Latif, Gunarathne, Gupta, & D'Adamo, 2023). These developments reflect the growing influence of Educational Governance and New Public Management (NPM), which emphasize managerial effectiveness, performance evaluation, organizational competitiveness, and data-informed policy implementation as central mechanisms for improving educational quality (Rainy & Chowdhury, 2022).

However, the analysis also indicates that the modernization of educational governance frequently operates within a framework of managerial rationality that prioritizes efficiency, measurable outcomes, and organizational performance. As governance systems become increasingly dependent on performance indicators, educational success tends to be evaluated through quantifiable measures such as academic achievement, institutional accreditation, organizational productivity, and managerial effectiveness. This tendency reflects a broader shift toward performativity, in which educational institutions are expected to continuously demonstrate measurable outputs and institutional competitiveness (Clarke, 2023).

From a critical perspective, these developments reveal the growing dominance of instrumental rationality within contemporary educational governance. While performance-oriented management has strengthened institutional effectiveness, it has also contributed to the marginalization of ethical reflection, spiritual development, and humanistic educational values. Education is increasingly positioned as a mechanism for achieving organizational targets rather than as a transformative process aimed at cultivating moral integrity, wisdom, and holistic human flourishing (Gourlay, 2023).

Table 1. Governance Transformation and Its Implications for Islamic Schools

Governance Reform	Dominant Orientation	Implications for Islamic Schools
Educational Governance	Accountability and regulation	Institutional strengthening
New Public Management	Efficiency and performance	Performance-based management
Data-Driven Governance	Evidence-based decision-making	Strategic effectiveness
E-Governance	Digital transformation	Administrative modernization
Organizational Culture Reform	Professionalism and competitiveness	Greater institutional adaptability

The Crisis of Instrumental Rationality in Educational Governance

The findings indicate that the growing dominance of performativity-oriented governance has contributed to a gradual reduction of the philosophical foundations of Islamic education. Traditionally, Islamic education is oriented toward the formation of ethical, spiritually conscious, and civilized human beings through the process of *ta'dib*. However, contemporary governance reforms increasingly position educational institutions within a framework of performance management, accountability systems, and organizational efficiency, thereby redefining educational success in terms of measurable outputs and institutional achievements rather than moral and spiritual development (Gourlay, 2023).

This transformation reflects the expanding influence of instrumental rationality in educational governance, whereby administrative indicators, performance metrics, and accountability mechanisms become the primary criteria for evaluating educational quality. Within such a framework, educational institutions are expected to demonstrate continuous improvement through quantifiable outcomes, often at the expense of broader educational purposes related to ethical formation, character development, and human flourishing. As Ball argues, the culture of performativity reshapes professional practices and institutional priorities by privileging measurable performance over intrinsic educational values.

From the perspective of Islamic education, this trend creates a profound epistemological challenge. The increasing emphasis on managerial effectiveness and institutional competitiveness risks weakening the normative foundations of Islamic education, which are grounded in *ta'dib*, moral responsibility, spiritual consciousness, and the cultivation of virtuous individuals (Sahin, 2018). Consequently, educational governance may become detached from its ethical and civilizational purposes, leading to a growing discrepancy between institutional performance and educational meaning.

The analysis further reveals several institutional consequences associated with the dominance of instrumental rationality in Islamic schools. These include the expansion of bureaucratic formalism, the erosion of reflective organizational culture, the marginalization of ethical and spiritual values, and the growing tendency to view education primarily as a mechanism for organizational performance enhancement. Under these conditions, educational governance becomes increasingly oriented toward compliance, efficiency, and accountability, while issues of moral formation, spiritual development, and humanistic growth receive less institutional attention.

Such developments demonstrate a fundamental tension between the demands of modern organizational effectiveness and the normative mission of Islamic education. While contemporary governance frameworks contribute to institutional accountability and operational efficiency, they may simultaneously undermine the holistic educational vision embodied in the concept of *insan kamil* (the complete human being). This tension suggests that existing governance paradigms remain insufficient for addressing the ethical, spiritual, and humanistic dimensions of Islamic education. Therefore, a more integrative governance framework is required one that reconciles managerial effectiveness with moral responsibility, spiritual awareness, and the broader civilizational objectives of Islamic education.

These findings provide a strong theoretical foundation for the reconstruction of educational governance through Sufi epistemology. The limitations of instrumental rationality identified in this study highlight the need for an alternative paradigm capable of re-centering spirituality, ethical leadership, and human flourishing within the governance of contemporary Islamic schools.

Table 9. Institutional Consequences of Instrumental Rationality in Educational Governance

Institutional Problem	Key Characteristics	Implications for Islamic Education
Administrative Formalism	Excessive proceduralism and bureaucratic control	Mechanistic educational practices
Performativity Culture	Emphasis on targets, indicators, and measurable outcomes	Reduction of humanistic educational values
Leadership Crisis	Weak ethical commitment and moral integrity	Declining culture of role modeling
Marginalization of Spirituality	Limited attention to ethical and spiritual development	Weakening of institutional moral consciousness
Reduction of Educational Meaning	Education viewed primarily as organizational performance	Erosion of the <i>ta'dib</i> orientation

Sufi Epistemology as an Alternative Paradigm for Educational Governance

The findings indicate that Sufi epistemology offers a promising alternative paradigm for reconstructing the governance of contemporary Islamic schools. Unlike positivist and managerial approaches, which primarily define knowledge in terms of objective observation, technical rationality, and measurable outcomes (Muhammad Farras Abiyyu & Isa Anshori, 2025), Sufi epistemology conceptualizes knowledge as an integrated process involving intellectual inquiry, ethical refinement, spiritual experience, and transcendental consciousness.

Within this perspective, knowledge is not merely a cognitive instrument for understanding reality but also a transformative process aimed at cultivating moral integrity, self-awareness, and spiritual maturity, thereby linking epistemological development with ethical and spiritual formation (Hussain, 2023).

This epistemological orientation provides a significant corrective to the limitations of contemporary governance models that are heavily influenced by instrumental rationality and performativity. Whereas modern governance frameworks emphasize efficiency, accountability, and organizational performance, Sufi epistemology introduces a deeper ethical and spiritual dimension by linking knowledge, action, and moral responsibility. Consequently, governance is understood not only as a technical process of institutional management but also as a moral and spiritual practice oriented toward human flourishing and the realization of educational purposes. Unlike governance models that rely predominantly on bureaucratic accountability, external regulation, and instrumental rationality, Sufi epistemology offers a more holistic understanding of institutional responsibility by integrating technical competence with ethical consciousness and spiritual awareness. Bureaucratic governance frameworks often assess effectiveness through compliance with procedures, measurable outcomes, and performance indicators, which may inadvertently encourage administrative formalism and reduce educational practice to the fulfillment of institutional targets (Biesta, 2022). In contrast, Sufi epistemology emphasizes the internal cultivation of integrity, sincerity, and moral responsibility as indispensable foundations of governance (Nasrun, 2025). Through this orientation, accountability is not confined to external scrutiny by regulatory authorities and stakeholders but is also grounded in transcendental consciousness and self-reflection. Consequently, educational governance is directed not merely toward organizational efficiency and institutional competitiveness but toward the realization of educational *maslahah*, human flourishing, and the formation of morally responsible individuals as the ultimate purposes of Islamic education (Abdalla, 2025).

The analysis further reveals that several core concepts of Sufi epistemology possess direct relevance for educational governance. The concept of *taẓkiyat al-nafs* (self-purification) provides a foundation for leadership integrity by emphasizing self-discipline, ethical responsibility, and continuous moral refinement. In governance contexts, this principle encourages leaders to exercise authority with humility, sincerity, and accountability rather than merely pursuing organizational performance or institutional prestige.

Similarly, *muraqabah* (spiritual self-awareness and consciousness of divine observation) expands conventional notions of accountability beyond bureaucratic compliance and external evaluation. While contemporary governance systems typically emphasize accountability to stakeholders, regulations, and performance indicators, *muraqabah* introduces a transcendental dimension of accountability in which decision-makers remain conscious of their ethical obligations before God, society, and future generations. This perspective strengthens governance by embedding responsibility within a broader moral framework.

The concept of *ihsan* (spiritual excellence) contributes to the development of a humanistic organizational culture. Rather than viewing organizational members merely as resources for achieving institutional objectives, *ihsan* promotes compassion, justice, dignity, and mutual respect as guiding principles of educational practice. Through this orientation, governance becomes a means of nurturing both institutional effectiveness and human well-being.

Furthermore, *hikmah* (wisdom) and *ma'rifah* (spiritual-intuitive knowledge) enrich decision-making processes by incorporating reflection, ethical judgment, and contextual understanding. These concepts challenge purely technocratic approaches to governance by emphasizing the importance of wisdom, discernment, and moral insight in addressing complex educational problems. As a result, educational leadership is transformed from a managerial function into a reflective and ethically grounded practice.

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that Sufi epistemology offers more than a spiritual discourse; it provides an alternative epistemological foundation for educational governance. By integrating ethical responsibility, spiritual accountability, reflective leadership, and humanistic organizational values, Sufi epistemology contributes to the development of a governance paradigm capable of reconciling institutional effectiveness with the broader moral and civilizational objectives of Islamic education.

Table 10. Sufi Epistemological Concepts and Their Governance Implications

Sufi Concept	Philosophical Meaning	Governance Implication
<i>Taẓkiyat al-Nafs</i>	Self-purification and moral refinement	Leadership integrity and ethical responsibility
<i>Muraqabah</i>	Awareness of divine observation	Transcendental accountability
<i>Ihsan</i>	Spiritual excellence and moral consciousness	Humanistic organizational culture
<i>Hikmah</i>	Wisdom and sound judgment	Reflective and ethical decision-making

Sufi Concept	Philosophical Meaning	Governance Implication
<i>Ma'rifah</i>	Spiritual-intuitive knowledge	Ethical awareness in leadership and governance

Integration of Sufi Epistemology and Modern Educational Governance

The findings of this study indicate that Sufi epistemology is not intended to negate modern educational administration systems; rather, it seeks to complement their limitations by integrating spiritual and humanistic values into institutional governance. Modern governance paradigms continue to play a significant role in enhancing organizational professionalism, institutional efficiency, and educational accountability systems (Mayseless & Kizel, 2022). However, without an ethical and spiritual foundation, educational governance risks becoming dehumanized and losing its broader educational and philosophical purposes (Biesta, 2022).

Based on the conceptual synthesis conducted in this study, a paradigm of *spiritual-humanistic governance* is proposed as an alternative model for the governance of contemporary Islamic schools. This paradigm represents a synthesis between modern administrative rationality and Sufi epistemology, offering a more holistic framework for Islamic educational governance. By integrating organizational effectiveness with moral responsibility, spiritual consciousness, and humanistic values, spiritual-humanistic governance seeks to balance institutional performance with the broader objectives of Islamic education. This integrative orientation is consistent with recent scholarship emphasizing the importance of spirituality, ethical leadership, and humanistic values in educational institutions.

Table 4. Integration of Modern Governance and Sufi Epistemology

Governance Dimension	Modern Paradigm	Sufi Paradigm	Integrative Model
Organizational Effectiveness	Efficiency and performance	Public benefit (<i>maslahah</i>) and ethics	Humanistic governance
Leadership	Managerial and bureaucratic	Moral and spiritual	Reflective leadership
Accountability	Audit and evaluation	Transcendental consciousness	Ethical-spiritual accountability
Organizational Culture	Competitive and administrative	Humanistic and reflective	Civilized organizational culture
Decision-Making	Rational and data-driven	Wise and ethical	Integrative decision-making

The proposed framework demonstrates that effective educational governance does not require a dichotomous choice between administrative efficiency and spiritual values. Instead, contemporary Islamic schools can benefit from an integrative approach that combines organizational professionalism, evidence-based management, ethical leadership, and spiritual accountability. In this regard, spiritual-humanistic governance provides a novel theoretical framework for reconciling modern governance demands with the normative objectives of Islamic education, namely the cultivation of moral integrity, spiritual awareness, and holistic human development.

Construction of the Spiritual-Humanistic Governance Paradigm

One of the principal findings of this study is the construction of a *spiritual-humanistic governance* paradigm as an alternative framework for the governance of contemporary Islamic schools. This paradigm positions spirituality, ethics, reflectivity, and humanism as the epistemological foundations of educational governance, thereby aligning institutional management with broader educational purposes and human development (Mayseless & Kizel, 2022). Consequently, institutional effectiveness is understood not merely as administrative success but also as the capacity of educational institutions to cultivate moral culture, ethical responsibility, and organizational spiritual consciousness.

Theoretically, this paradigm extends the study of Islamic epistemology beyond its conventional metaphysical and philosophical domains toward the practical and institutional dimensions of educational governance. The findings demonstrate that Sufi epistemology is not only relevant to individual character formation but also possesses significant structural implications for educational administration, organizational leadership, and institutional culture. By integrating spiritual accountability, reflective leadership, ethical decision-making, and humanistic organizational values, the proposed paradigm contributes to the development of a more holistic governance framework for contemporary Islamic education.

Table 5. Core Characteristics of the Spiritual-Humanistic Governance Paradigm

Governance Dimension	Core Characteristics	Governance Implications
Epistemological Foundation	Integration of rationality, spirituality, and ethical consciousness	Balanced decision-making grounded in moral responsibility
Governance Orientation	Humanistic, ethical, and reflective	Alignment of institutional effectiveness with educational values

Governance Dimension	Core Characteristics	Governance Implications
Leadership Model	Spiritually grounded and integrity-based leadership	Promotion of ethical accountability and moral exemplarity
Organizational Culture	Shared moral values and collective spiritual awareness	Development of a reflective and value-driven institutional culture
Educational Purpose	Formation of the <i>insān kāmil</i> through <i>ta'dib</i>	Holistic human development and character formation
Institutional Orientation	Sustainability, public benefit (<i>maslahah</i>), and social responsibility	Long-term institutional resilience and educational well-being

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this study contributes to the advancement of Islamic educational administration by demonstrating that contemporary governance challenges cannot be adequately addressed through administrative rationality alone. The findings suggest that Islamic school governance requires an epistemological foundation capable of integrating organizational effectiveness with ethical responsibility, spiritual consciousness, and humanistic values. In this regard, the proposed *spiritual-humanistic governance* paradigm extends existing educational governance scholarship by incorporating Sufi epistemology into the domains of institutional leadership, organizational culture, and educational decision (Biesta, 2022).

Furthermore, the study broadens the scope of Islamic epistemology by moving beyond its conventional association with individual spirituality and moral formation toward its application within organizational and institutional contexts. This theoretical shift contributes to the growing discourse on value-based governance and provides a conceptual bridge between contemporary educational governance theories and the normative objectives of Islamic education.

Practically, the findings offer important implications for the development of governance systems in contemporary Islamic schools. Educational institutions should not focus exclusively on efficiency, accountability, and performance indicators but should also cultivate ethical leadership, reflective organizational culture, and spiritual accountability. Such an approach can strengthen institutional sustainability while preserving the moral and educational purposes of Islamic schooling.

The proposed framework also provides guidance for school leaders, administrators, and policymakers seeking to balance managerial effectiveness with value-oriented governance. By integrating spiritual awareness, ethical decision-making, and humanistic organizational practices into administrative processes, Islamic schools may enhance both institutional quality and holistic educational outcomes.

Table 6. Theoretical and Practical Implications of Spiritual-Humanistic Governance

Implication Area	Key Contribution	Expected Outcome
Educational Governance Theory	Integration of Sufi epistemology and governance studies	Development of a holistic governance paradigm
Islamic Educational Administration	Expansion of governance beyond managerial rationality	Stronger ethical and spiritual foundations
Educational Leadership	Promotion of reflective and integrity-based leadership	Enhanced moral accountability
Organizational Culture	Incorporation of humanistic and spiritual values	Value-driven institutional culture
Decision-Making Processes	Integration of ethical and spiritual considerations	More balanced and responsible decisions
Institutional Development	Alignment of effectiveness with educational values	Sustainable and meaningful organizational growth

Discussion

Reconstructing Islamic School Governance through the Lens of Sufi Epistemology

The findings reveal that contemporary Islamic school governance is undergoing a significant transformation driven by educational globalization, digitalization, accountability reforms, and the growing influence of modern management paradigms. Within this context, Islamic schools have increasingly adopted governance models characterized by performativity, institutional accountability, performance measurement, and data-driven decision-making as mechanisms for improving organizational effectiveness and educational quality. These developments reflect the broader influence of Educational Governance and New Public Management (NPM), which emphasize organizational efficiency, managerial effectiveness, evidence-based policy implementation, and evaluative cultures as key indicators of institutional success (Prøitz, Novak, & Mausethagen, 2022).

From an administrative perspective, these transformations have contributed positively to institutional professionalism, transparency, accountability, and managerial effectiveness. Contemporary Islamic schools have become better equipped to respond to policy demands,

technological developments, and societal expectations. Nevertheless, the findings indicate that the growing dominance of instrumental rationality within educational governance has generated profound epistemological and philosophical challenges. Educational governance is increasingly reduced to a technical and managerial process focused on institutional performance, while the ethical, spiritual, and humanistic dimensions that constitute the philosophical foundations of Islamic education receive diminishing attention (Biesta, 2022).

This finding reinforces the argument advanced by Stephen J. Ball, who contends that the culture of performativity encourages educational institutions to prioritize measurable outputs, accountability indicators, and organizational competitiveness over the broader purposes of education (Jones, 2026). Similarly, (Biesta, 2022) argues that excessive reliance on effectiveness-oriented educational frameworks risks transforming education into an instrumental enterprise, thereby neglecting its moral, democratic, and human-formative functions. In this regard, the central challenge facing contemporary Islamic school governance does not lie in administrative modernization itself, but rather in the predominance of a technocratic paradigm that separates organizational effectiveness from the ethical and spiritual objectives of Islamic education.

The growing influence of New Public Management (NPM) has also contributed to the commodification of education, whereby educational institutions are increasingly governed according to market-oriented principles such as competition, efficiency, benchmarking, and measurable outputs (Prøitz et al., 2022). Within this framework, schools are encouraged to demonstrate their value through performance indicators, rankings, accreditation outcomes, and quantifiable achievements. Consequently, educational quality tends to be equated with institutional productivity and competitive advantage, while broader educational purposes become subordinated to managerial imperatives. Such developments risk transforming education from a moral and social endeavor into a quasi-economic enterprise in which students, teachers, and educational processes are evaluated primarily in terms of their contribution to organizational performance and institutional reputation.

For Islamic educational institutions, the implications of this performative culture are particularly significant. The traditional orientation of Islamic education toward the formation of *insan beradab* through the cultivation of *adab*, moral responsibility, and spiritual consciousness may gradually be displaced by an excessive emphasis on institutional targets and performance indicators (Abdalla, 2025). In such circumstances, success is increasingly measured by examination results, accreditation status, and administrative compliance rather than by the extent to which educational processes nurture ethical character, spiritual maturity, and holistic human development (Biesta, 2022). This shift represents not merely a managerial adjustment but an epistemological transformation that redefines the purposes of Islamic education from the formation of morally grounded individuals toward the pursuit of organizational performativity. As Al-Attas argues, the ultimate aim of Islamic education lies in the cultivation of *adab* and the development of a just and civilized human being, rather than the mere production of technically competent individuals (Biesta, 2022).

From the perspective of Islamic educational philosophy, such a separation represents a fundamental epistemological problem. Islamic education is not merely concerned with the transmission of knowledge or the achievement of institutional targets; rather, it is oriented toward the cultivation of *ta'dib*, moral responsibility, spiritual consciousness, and the holistic development of the human person (Biesta, 2022). Consequently, governance models that prioritize performance indicators while neglecting ethical and spiritual dimensions risk undermining the normative foundations of Islamic education. The findings therefore suggest the necessity of reconstructing educational governance through an alternative epistemological framework capable of integrating administrative effectiveness with moral integrity, spiritual accountability, and humanistic values.

It is within this context that Sufi epistemology emerges as a relevant conceptual foundation for governance reconstruction. By emphasizing self-purification (*taḥkiyat al-nafs*), transcendental accountability (*muraqabah*), spiritual excellence (*ihsan*), wisdom (*hikmah*), and intuitive knowledge (*ma'rifah*), Sufi epistemology offers an alternative vision of governance that transcends the limitations of instrumental rationality. Rather than rejecting modern administrative principles, this perspective seeks to embed them within a broader ethical and spiritual framework, thereby providing the foundation for the proposed paradigm of spiritual-humanistic governance (Fadhil & Sebgag, 2021).

Sufi Epistemology as a Critique of Modern Administrative Paradigms

The findings indicate that Sufi epistemology provides a valuable theoretical framework for reconstructing contemporary Islamic school governance by offering a more holistic understanding of the relationship between knowledge, morality, and social action. Unlike positivist and managerial paradigms that conceptualize organizations as bureaucratic systems governed through regulation, performance measurement, and instrumental rationality, Sufi

epistemology understands knowledge as an integration of intellectual reasoning, ethical formation, spiritual awareness, and moral responsibility. From this perspective, knowledge is not merely a tool for controlling organizational processes but a transformative force that shapes individual character and institutional culture.

This finding highlights an important limitation of contemporary governance models that rely heavily on performativity, accountability metrics, and managerial efficiency. While these approaches contribute to organizational effectiveness, they often overlook the ethical and spiritual dimensions that guide responsible leadership and meaningful educational practice (Biesta, 2022). In the context of Islamic education, such a tendency risks reducing governance to a technical-administrative function while neglecting the broader objectives of moral cultivation, spiritual development, and holistic human formation.

From the perspective of Sufi thought, human crises emerge when intellectual capacities become disconnected from ethical and spiritual consciousness. Consequently, *tazkiyat al-nafs* (self-purification) is understood as a process of moral refinement, self-regulation, and spiritual transformation. Within educational governance, this concept provides a foundation for leadership models that integrate organizational effectiveness with moral integrity and spiritual responsibility. Such an approach resonates with contemporary scholarship on spiritual leadership, which emphasizes values-based leadership, intrinsic motivation, and ethical accountability as essential components of sustainable organizational development.

The findings further demonstrate that the concept of *muraqabah* expands conventional understandings of accountability in educational administration. Whereas modern governance frameworks typically associate accountability with audits, performance evaluation, and regulatory compliance, *muraqabah* introduces a transcendental dimension of accountability grounded in the awareness that all human actions are ultimately subject to divine observation and judgment. This form of accountability transcends external control mechanisms by fostering internal ethical commitment, honesty, and moral responsibility. As a result, organizational governance becomes not only administratively accountable but also ethically and spiritually grounded.

Moreover, the concept of *ihsan* provides an important ethical foundation for organizational culture within Islamic schools. In the Sufi tradition, *ihsan* signifies the pursuit of excellence through sincerity, responsibility, and awareness of divine presence. When applied to educational governance, this concept encourages the development of a humanistic organizational culture that values service, compassion, respect, and professional responsibility. Rather than focusing exclusively on administrative targets and performance indicators, governance informed by *ihsan* prioritizes the quality of human relationships, ethical educational practices, and respect for human dignity.

Taken together, these findings suggest that Sufi epistemology offers a substantive critique of modern administrative paradigms by challenging the dominance of instrumental rationality and managerialism in educational governance. Rather than rejecting administrative effectiveness, Sufi epistemology seeks to reorient governance toward a more balanced framework in which efficiency, accountability, and organizational performance are integrated with ethical responsibility, spiritual awareness, and humanistic values. This perspective provides a crucial foundation for the development of the proposed spiritual-humanistic governance paradigm in contemporary Islamic education.

Table 1. Conceptual Contributions of Sufi Epistemology to Islamic School Governance

Sufi Concept	Philosophical Dimension	Governance Function	Institutional Implication
<i>Tazkiyat al-Nafs</i> (Self-Purification)	(Self-Moral refinement and self-regulation	Ethical leadership development	Strengthening leadership integrity and personal accountability
<i>Muraqabah</i> (Transcendental Awareness)	Consciousness of divine supervision	Spiritual accountability	Promoting transparency, honesty, and ethical governance
<i>Ihsan</i> (Spiritual Excellence)	Moral-spiritual excellence and sincerity	Humanistic organizational culture	Fostering compassion, professionalism, and service-oriented practices
<i>Hikmah</i> (Wisdom)	Reflective and contextual judgment	Ethical decision-making	Supporting balanced and value-based institutional decisions
<i>Ma'rifah</i> (Spiritual-Intuitive Knowledge)	Deep ethical and spiritual understanding	Strategic and reflective governance	Enhancing moral awareness and organizational responsibility

Integrating Modern Governance and Sufi Spirituality

One of the central findings of this study is that Sufi epistemology should not be understood as an alternative that replaces modern educational administration, but rather as an epistemological framework that complements its limitations through the integration of spiritual and humanistic values into institutional governance. While contemporary governance models have contributed significantly to organizational professionalism, accountability, efficiency, and institutional effectiveness, they often provide limited space for ethical

reflection, spiritual responsibility, and human development as essential dimensions of educational practice (Biesta, 2022).

In response to this limitation, the study proposes the paradigm of spiritual-humanistic governance as an alternative framework for contemporary Islamic school governance. This paradigm is founded on the assumption that organizational effectiveness and spirituality are not mutually exclusive but can be integrated within a coherent governance system. Consequently, educational governance should not be confined to achieving administrative efficiency and performance targets; it should also foster ethical consciousness, reflective leadership, and organizational cultures oriented toward the broader purposes of education and human flourishing.

The findings identify four interrelated characteristics of the proposed paradigm. First, it integrates organizational effectiveness with moral integrity, ensuring that institutional decision-making is guided not only by managerial considerations but also by ethical responsibility. Second, it promotes reflective leadership grounded in the Sufi principles of *ihsan* (spiritual excellence) and *muraqabah* (transcendental accountability), thereby strengthening both personal integrity and institutional trustworthiness. Third, it encourages the development of a humanistic organizational culture that recognizes human dignity, compassion, and collective responsibility as central elements of governance. Fourth, it reorients educational institutions toward the principle of *ta'dib*, emphasizing the cultivation of virtuous and civilized individuals rather than the exclusive pursuit of measurable academic performance.

These findings suggest that the modernization of Islamic schools does not inevitably lead to the secularization of educational governance. Rather, modernization can be reconstructed through the integration of professional management practices and Islamic spiritual values. Such an approach enables Islamic educational institutions to maintain organizational effectiveness while preserving their ethical, spiritual, and civilizational missions. In this regard, the proposed spiritual-humanistic governance paradigm offers a novel conceptual framework that bridges contemporary educational governance theories with the normative foundations of Islamic education.

Table 2. Core Principles of the Spiritual-Humanistic Governance Paradigm

Core Principle	Sufi Foundation	Governance Orientation	Institutional Outcome
Ethical Effectiveness	<i>Tazkiyat al-nafs</i>	Integration of performance and moral responsibility	Sustainable institutional quality
Reflective Leadership	<i>Ihsan</i> and <i>Muraqabah</i>	Integrity-based leadership	Trustworthy and accountable governance
Humanistic Organizational Culture	<i>Ihsan</i>	Respect for human dignity and collective well-being	Inclusive and value-driven institutions
Civilizational Educational Purpose	<i>Ta'dib</i>	Holistic human development	Formation of ethical and civilized individuals

Building upon the integration framework presented above, this study formulates several theoretical propositions that further explain the mechanisms through which Sufi epistemology contributes to the reconstruction of contemporary Islamic school governance. In line with the logic of conceptual research and theory synthesis, these propositions articulate the explanatory relationships underlying the proposed spiritual-humanistic governance paradigm.

The integration of *tazkiyat al-nafs* into educational leadership enhances the ethical accountability of school leaders by fostering self-discipline, sincerity, moral integrity, and continuous self-reflection in governance practices. The principle of *muraqabah* strengthens governance accountability beyond bureaucratic mechanisms by cultivating transcendental consciousness and reinforcing leaders' awareness of their responsibilities before God, society, and future generations. Spiritual-humanistic governance functions as a mediating framework that bridges organizational effectiveness with the ethical, spiritual, and humanistic purposes of education, enabling Islamic schools to reconcile managerial performance with moral responsibility and holistic human development. The integration of Sufi epistemology into contemporary educational governance contributes to the realization of sustainable Islamic school governance by aligning institutional effectiveness with spiritual values, civilizational objectives, and the long-term formation of virtuous and civilized individuals. Collectively, these propositions demonstrate that the proposed framework extends beyond normative reflection by offering theoretically grounded explanations of how spiritual values may operate within governance systems. They reinforce the argument that the reconstruction of Islamic school governance requires not the rejection of modern administrative principles, but their integration within an epistemological framework rooted in ethical responsibility, spiritual accountability, and humanistic educational values.

More importantly, the study contributes to the emerging discourse on value-based governance by demonstrating that spirituality can function not merely as a personal attribute of educational leaders but as an institutional principle capable of shaping leadership practices, accountability systems, organizational culture, and governance structures. This constitutes the primary theoretical contribution of the study and distinguishes it from previous research that has largely confined Sufi thought to the domains of character education and individual moral development.

Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to the advancement of Islamic educational administration by integrating Educational Governance, New Public Management (NPM), humanistic educational theory, and Sufi epistemology into a comprehensive conceptual framework for contemporary Islamic school governance. While existing governance theories have largely emphasized organizational effectiveness, accountability, and managerial performance, the present study demonstrates that these dimensions can be enriched through the incorporation of ethical, spiritual, and humanistic foundations. Consequently, the study offers a broader understanding of educational governance that extends beyond administrative rationality toward value-oriented institutional development (Brunila & Nehring, 2023).

A significant theoretical contribution of this study lies in its reconceptualization of Sufi epistemology as an institutional rather than exclusively individual framework. Previous scholarship has predominantly examined Sufism within the domains of character education, moral development, and personal spirituality (Kosim, Muqoddam, Mubarak, & Laila, 2023). By contrast, this study demonstrates that Sufi epistemology possesses important structural implications for educational leadership, organizational culture, institutional accountability, and governance practices. This finding expands the scope of Islamic epistemological studies from metaphysical and philosophical discussions toward practical and organizational applications within contemporary educational institutions.

Furthermore, the study introduces the concept of spiritual-humanistic governance as a novel paradigm in Islamic educational administration. Unlike conventional governance models that prioritize performativity, managerial efficiency, and measurable outcomes, this paradigm integrates organizational effectiveness with ethical responsibility, spiritual consciousness, reflective leadership, and humanistic organizational values (Pagès, Ferrer-Esteban, Verger, & Prieto, 2024). In doing so, it provides an alternative framework for addressing the limitations of performance-centered governance while preserving institutional professionalism and accountability.

Theoretically, the proposed paradigm contributes to the emerging discourse on value-based and human-centered governance by demonstrating that spirituality can function not merely as a personal attribute but as an epistemological and organizational principle capable of shaping governance structures, leadership practices, and institutional culture. This perspective bridges contemporary governance theory with the normative objectives of Islamic education, thereby offering a transformative framework for the future development of Islamic educational institutions.

More specifically, the contributions of this study can be elaborated into four interrelated domains. First, the contribution to governance theory lies in the introduction of a value-based governance model grounded in spiritual and ethical principles. The proposed spiritual-humanistic governance paradigm demonstrates that organizational effectiveness, accountability, and professionalism can coexist with transcendental accountability, moral integrity, and humanistic values, thereby extending the scope of contemporary governance theories beyond managerial rationality.

Second, the contribution to Islamic educational theory is reflected in the integration of the concept of *ta'dib* with modern governance principles. By reconciling the civilizational objectives of Islamic education with contemporary demands for institutional effectiveness and accountability, the study provides a conceptual framework through which Islamic schools can pursue organizational excellence without neglecting their ethical, spiritual, and educational missions.

Third, the contribution to Sufism studies lies in expanding the function of Sufi epistemology from the domain of individual spirituality toward the institutional sphere. Rather than understanding Sufism solely as a source of personal moral formation and spiritual cultivation, this study demonstrates its relevance as an epistemological foundation for educational governance, organizational culture, accountability systems, and institutional transformation.

Fourth, the contribution to educational leadership theory is manifested in the development of a reflective leadership model grounded in the Sufi principles of *ihsan* and *muraqabah*. This model reconceptualizes educational leadership not merely as a managerial function directed toward performance achievement, but as an ethical and reflective practice

characterized by integrity, self-awareness, transcendental accountability, and responsibility toward the broader educational community.

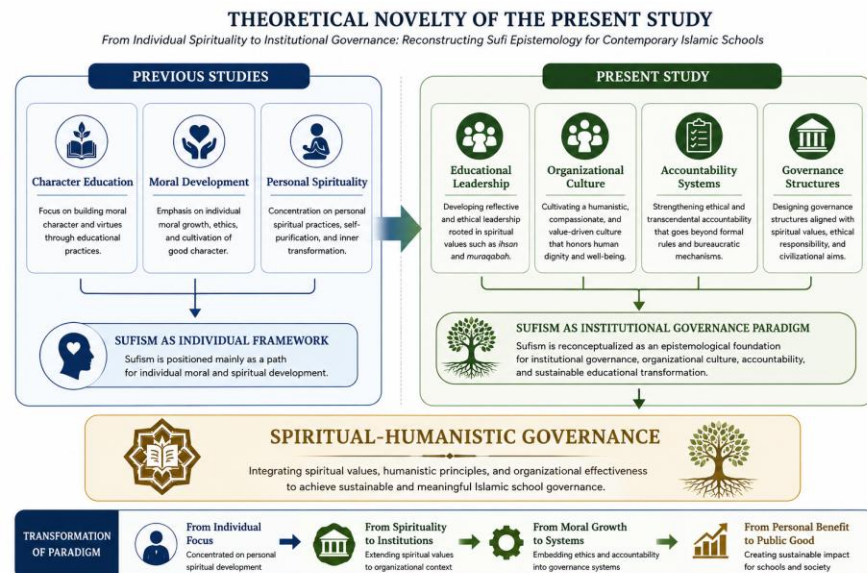


Figure 2. summarizes the theoretical novelty of the present study by illustrating the shift from previous understandings of Sufism as a framework for individual spiritual formation toward its reconceptualization as an institutional governance paradigm. This transformation provides the epistemological foundation for the proposed spiritual-humanistic governance model, which integrates organizational effectiveness with ethical responsibility, spiritual accountability, and humanistic educational values in contemporary Islamic schools.

Table 12. Theoretical Contributions of the Study

Domain Contribution	of Existing Literature	Contribution of the Present Study
Governance Theory	Emphasizes efficiency, accountability, and performance	Introduces a value-based governance model grounded in spiritual and ethical principles
Islamic Educational Theory	Focuses on <i>ta'dib</i> and educational philosophy	Integrates <i>ta'dib</i> with modern governance principles
Sufism Studies	Primarily concerned with individual spirituality and moral development	Extends Sufi epistemology to institutional governance
Educational Leadership Theory	Emphasizes managerial effectiveness	Develops reflective leadership based on <i>ihsan</i> and <i>muraqabah</i>

The primary novelty of this study lies in its reconstruction of Sufi epistemology as an institutional governance paradigm rather than merely a framework for individual spiritual development. Unlike previous studies that predominantly position Sufism within the domains of character education, moral formation, and personal spirituality, this study demonstrates that Sufi epistemology can function as an epistemological foundation for educational leadership, organizational culture, accountability systems, and governance structures. Consequently, the proposed spiritual-humanistic governance paradigm offers a novel theoretical framework that bridges contemporary educational governance with the ethical and spiritual objectives of Islamic education, thereby addressing the limitations of performativity-driven and managerialist models of educational administration.

Practical Implications for Islamic School Governance

The findings of this study suggest that contemporary Islamic schools need to develop governance systems that extend beyond administrative effectiveness and managerial performance by incorporating moral integrity, reflective organizational practices, and spiritual consciousness as integral dimensions of institutional governance. While modern educational administration provides important mechanisms for accountability, quality assurance, and organizational efficiency, the findings indicate that these mechanisms should be complemented by ethical and humanistic values to ensure that educational modernization remains aligned with the broader purposes of Islamic education (Biesta, 2022).

From a leadership perspective, the proposed spiritual-humanistic governance paradigm provides a practical foundation for developing leadership models that integrate managerial competence with ethical responsibility and spiritual awareness. Educational leaders are expected not only to achieve institutional goals and performance targets but also to cultivate

organizational trust, moral integrity, and a shared commitment to educational excellence grounded in human dignity and social responsibility. Such an approach resonates with contemporary discussions on ethical and values-based leadership, which emphasize the importance of moral purpose, relational accountability, and organizational trust in educational institutions (Qian, Walker, & Xu, 2023).

The findings further imply that Islamic schools should foster organizational cultures grounded in the principles of *ihsan*, *muraqabah*, and *hikmah*. These values can strengthen professional commitment, encourage reflective decision-making, and promote a culture of collective responsibility. Rather than relying exclusively on bureaucratic procedures and performance indicators, governance systems informed by these principles encourage educational communities to balance institutional effectiveness with ethical conduct, social compassion, and spiritual responsibility.

At the administrative level, the study highlights the importance of integrating evidence-based management with value-based decision-making. Data analytics, performance evaluation, and quality assurance mechanisms remain essential components of contemporary educational governance (Vanari, Reinaru, & Eisenschmidt, 2025). However, their implementation should be guided by ethical considerations, professional judgment, and the broader educational mission of the institution rather than solely by performance metrics (Biesta, 2022). This integration enables Islamic schools to maintain organizational effectiveness and institutional competitiveness while preserving their distinctive identity as educational institutions committed to moral formation, spiritual development, and social responsibility.

More broadly, the proposed paradigm offers practical guidance for policymakers, school leaders, and educational administrators seeking to develop governance models that are simultaneously effective, ethical, and sustainable. By integrating organizational professionalism with spiritual and humanistic values, Islamic schools can strengthen institutional resilience while remaining faithful to the normative objectives of Islamic education.

Table 4. Practical Implications of the Spiritual-Humanistic Governance Paradigm

Area of Implementation	Sufi Foundation	Practical Implication	Expected Institutional Outcome
School Leadership	<i>Tazkiyat al-Nafs</i>	Development of reflective, ethical, and spiritually grounded leadership	Increased integrity, trust, and ethical accountability
Accountability Systems	<i>Muraqabah</i>	Expansion of accountability beyond bureaucratic compliance toward transcendental responsibility	Trustworthy and morally responsible governance
Organizational Culture	<i>Ihsan</i>	Promotion of compassion, human dignity, and collective responsibility	Humanistic and value-driven institutional culture
Decision-Making	<i>Hikmah</i> and <i>Ma'rifah</i>	Integration of evidence-based management with reflective and ethical judgment	More context-sensitive and ethically grounded decisions
Educational Administration	Spiritual-Humanistic Governance	Alignment of efficiency, accountability, and moral responsibility	Balanced and sustainable governance practices
Islamic School Governance	<i>Ta'dib</i>	Reinforcement of educational <i>maslahah</i> and civilizational objectives	Sustainable Islamic school governance and preservation of institutional identity

The practical significance of this study lies in demonstrating that spiritual values can be operationalized as governance principles rather than remaining solely within the domain of personal religiosity. By translating Sufi epistemological concepts into leadership practices, accountability mechanisms, organizational culture, and decision-making processes, the proposed spiritual-humanistic governance paradigm offers a practical pathway for reconciling institutional effectiveness with the ethical and civilizational objectives of Islamic education.

Taken together, these practical implications reflect the operationalization of the theoretical propositions developed in this study. The cultivation of *tazkiyat al-nafs* within educational leadership strengthens ethical accountability and integrity among school leaders, while the principle of *muraqabah* expands accountability beyond bureaucratic compliance toward transcendental responsibility. Likewise, the implementation of spiritual-humanistic governance enables Islamic schools to reconcile organizational effectiveness with the ethical and educational values of Islam through reflective leadership, humanistic organizational culture, and value-based decision-making. Ultimately, the integration of Sufi epistemology into governance practices provides a practical pathway toward sustainable Islamic school governance, whereby institutional professionalism, moral responsibility, spiritual

consciousness, and long-term educational purposes are maintained in a balanced and mutually reinforcing manner.

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