

Islamic Market Orientation in Madrasah Education: A Value-Based Framework for Educational Leadership

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Abstract

Educational institutions increasingly operate within environments characterised by competition, accountability, and heightened stakeholder expectations. In faith-based education, particularly within madrasah institutions, these pressures are accompanied by the normative responsibility to preserve moral, spiritual, and epistemic integrity. Although market orientation has been widely discussed in educational management, existing studies frequently treat it as a culturally neutral managerial construct, resulting in limited conceptual integration with Islamic educational philosophy and value-based governance. This paper adopts a theory-building conceptual approach to propose the Islamic Market Orientation Framework (IMOF) as an integrative framework for educational leadership and strategic orientation in madrasah education. Drawing on market orientation theory, Islamic educational philosophy, and faith-based educational leadership literature, the framework reconceptualises market orientation through an Islamic epistemological lens by positioning Islamic Value Integration as the epistemic core shaping ethical stakeholder partnership, ecosystem-aware strategic positioning, and value-based organisational coherence. Within the framework, Islamic Brand Positioning is conceptualised as institutional authenticity, while institutional performance is theorised as a multidimensional construct encompassing academic quality, moral–spiritual development, social trust, and organisational effectiveness. The framework further suggests that sustainable institutional development emerges through the reinforcement of value coherence, stakeholder trust, and mission-consistent strategic responsiveness. Rather than offering empirical validation, this study provides conceptual clarification and an analytical foundation for future empirical research concerning leadership, governance, and sustainability in Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: Islamic market orientation, Educational leadership, Madrasah education, Value-based governance, Conceptual framework

Introduction

Educational leadership in contemporary schooling systems increasingly operates within environments characterised by accountability, competition, and heightened stakeholder expectations. Across diverse educational systems, institutions are required not only to maintain organisational effectiveness but also to sustain legitimacy and public trust within increasingly plural and competitive educational landscapes. These dynamics have contributed to the growing incorporation of strategic concepts, including market orientation, into educational administration and leadership discourse (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990).

Within management and marketing scholarship, market orientation has been conceptualised as an organisational orientation emphasising responsiveness to stakeholders, awareness of the competitive environment, and internal coordination (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990). More recently, educational management literature has extended this concept to school and higher education contexts, often framing market orientation as a mechanism for institutional positioning and responsiveness within educational markets (Dwyer, 2024; Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2007). However, these extensions largely retain the construct's managerial and instrumental assumptions, treating market orientation as culturally neutral and broadly transferable across organisational settings.

Such assumptions raise theoretical concerns when market orientation is applied to faith-based educational institutions. Madrasahs are not value-neutral organisations; they are grounded in Islamic epistemology and educational philosophy that prioritise moral formation, spiritual development, and communal responsibility as integral educational purposes (Al-Attas, 1999; Halstead, 2004). In these contexts, educational engagement is shaped by ethical commitments and religious meanings that extend beyond service provision or competitive positioning. Studies on faith-based schooling further indicate that parents and communities engage with religious schools not merely as consumers of educational services, but as moral stakeholders invested in institutional authenticity, trust, and value coherence (Aziz et al., 2025; Hussain & Read, 2015; Iner, 2021; Panjwani, 2014). In Islamic education, stakeholder expectations are therefore inherently multidimensional, encompassing academic quality, religious authenticity, moral climate, and institutional credibility. Comparative research on religious schooling also suggests that faith-based institutions actively negotiate identity and legitimacy while operating within educational markets (Fontdevila et al., 2024; Mouritsen et al., 2023; Nasution et al., 2025).

Despite growing discussions on market orientation in educational and faith-based contexts, existing studies remain conceptually fragmented in relation to Islamic education. Previous scholarship has largely examined market orientation through managerial and instrumental perspectives, emphasising competitiveness, stakeholder responsiveness, and institutional positioning without sufficiently addressing the epistemological and ethical foundations underlying strategic orientation in madrasah education (Dwyer, 2024; Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2007). Studies within Islamic educational contexts have similarly tended to focus on institutional competitiveness, branding, or operational adaptation in isolation, rather than theorising how Islamic values fundamentally shape strategic interpretation and organisational conduct (Aziz et al., 2025; Ghufon et al., 2023; Zebal, 2018). Consequently, limited conceptual attention has been devoted to developing an integrative framework that positions Islamic values not merely as contextual influences, but as epistemic foundations governing market-oriented practices in Islamic educational institutions.

To provide the theoretical grounding for the proposed framework, it is important to recognise that market orientation in educational contexts cannot be interpreted solely through managerial and instrumental perspectives. Within educational management discourse, market orientation has increasingly been associated with stakeholder responsiveness, strategic positioning, and organisational adaptation to competition and accountability pressures (Dwyer, 2024; Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2007). However, these discussions frequently retain assumptions derived from business-oriented frameworks while paying limited attention to normative educational purposes and institutional ethics.

In faith-based educational contexts, the incorporation of market-oriented practices becomes more conceptually complex. Religious schools operate not only as educational providers, but also as institutions responsible for maintaining moral legitimacy, communal trust, and value coherence (Hussain & Read, 2015; Panjwani, 2014). Comparative studies further suggest that faith-based institutions actively negotiate identity, accountability, and institutional positioning within increasingly marketised educational environments (Fontdevila et al., 2024; Mouritsen et al., 2023; Nasution et al., 2025). In Islamic educational settings, these dynamics are particularly pronounced, as madrasahs are evaluated not solely on academic performance, but also on their perceived religious authenticity, moral climate, and alignment with Islamic values (Ghufon et al., 2023; Zebal & Saber, 2014). Consequently, responsiveness to stakeholders cannot be understood merely in terms of customer satisfaction or competitive advantage, but must also be interpreted through ethical commitments and educational responsibility.

Islamic educational philosophy provides an epistemological foundation that integrates knowledge acquisition, moral cultivation, and spiritual development. Central to this philosophy is the concept of *ta'dīb*, which conceptualises education as the formation of ethical character and proper understanding rather than the mere transmission of information (Al-Attas, 1999). These principles extend to leadership and governance through values such as *amanah* (trust), *adl* (justice), *ihsan* (excellence), and *maslahah* (public good), which function as normative guides for organisational conduct and strategic decision-making (Halstead, 2004; Zakaria & Abdul-Talib, 2010). Accordingly, strategic orientation within madrasah education cannot be theorised as a culturally neutral managerial construct. Rather, it requires reconceptualisation as a value-governed process in which stakeholder engagement, competitive awareness, and organisational coordination are interpreted through Islamic educational purpose and moral accountability. This conceptual repositioning provides the theoretical grounding for the Islamic Market Orientation Framework (IMOF) developed in the following sections.

Methodology

This study adopts a conceptual and theory-building approach aimed at developing an integrative framework for understanding strategic orientation in madrasah education through an Islamic epistemological lens. Rather than generating empirical findings, the paper seeks to construct analytical relationships among market orientation, Islamic educational philosophy, and faith-based educational leadership literature in order to propose the Islamic Market Orientation Framework (IMOF). The study was developed through an analytical synthesis of interdisciplinary literature drawn from four principal domains: classical market orientation theory, market orientation in educational contexts, Islamic educational philosophy and organisational ethics, and scholarship on faith-based schooling and Islamic branding. The selected sources were reviewed purposively based on their conceptual relevance to strategic orientation, stakeholder engagement, institutional legitimacy, and value-based educational governance.

The framework development process involved several analytical stages. First, the study identified conceptual tensions between conventional market orientation theory and the normative foundations of Islamic education. Second, core dimensions of market orientation—customer orientation, competitor orientation, and interfunctional coordination—were critically reinterpreted through Islamic ethical and educational principles. In this process, customer orientation was reconceptualised as ethical stakeholder partnership, competitor orientation as ecosystem-aware strategic positioning, and interfunctional coordination as value-based organisational coherence. Islamic Value Integration was subsequently positioned as the epistemic core guiding strategic interpretation and institutional conduct. Finally, the conceptual relationships among Islamic Value Integration, value-consistent market orientation dimensions, Islamic Brand Positioning, and multidimensional institutional performance were synthesised into the IMOF, from which a series of analytically derived research propositions were formulated to provide a coherent analytical foundation for future empirical research in Islamic educational leadership and governance.

Result And Discussion

The Islamic Market Orientation Framework (IMOF) is proposed as a conceptual model that reconceptualises market orientation through an Islamic epistemological lens. Rather than treating market orientation as a culturally neutral managerial capability, the IMOF positions it as a value-governed strategic

orientation embedded within Islamic educational philosophy and organisational ethics. The framework is developed through an analytical synthesis of classical market orientation theory (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990), critical discussions of market orientation in educational contexts (Dwyer, 2024; Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2007), and Islamic conceptions of education, leadership, and organisational ethics (Al-Attas, 1999; Halstead, 2004; Zakaria & Abdul-Talib, 2010).

The core assumption underlying the IMOF is that values function as epistemic foundations rather than peripheral moderators of strategic orientation. In madrasah education, Islamic values shape how leaders interpret stakeholder expectations, respond to environmental pressures, and coordinate organisational processes. Strategic responsiveness is therefore theorised as a moral–strategic practice guided by educational purpose rather than as an instrumental reaction to market signals alone. Within this conceptual logic, Islamic Value Integration functions as the foundational epistemic orientation governing value-consistent market orientation dimensions, which subsequently shape Islamic Brand Positioning and multidimensional institutional performance through processes of strategic reinforcement and institutional learning.

At the centre of the IMOF lies Islamic Value Integration, conceptualised as the degree to which Islamic ethical principles and educational ideals are coherently embedded within leadership practices and organisational decision-making. This perspective is consistent with Brooks and Ezzani's (2022) notion of critical spirituality, which emphasises the integration of spiritual consciousness, ethical leadership, and organisational responsibility in Islamic schools. Drawing on the concept of ta'dīb and Islamic educational philosophy, Islamic Value Integration reflects an orientation towards amanah (trust), 'adl (justice), ihsan (excellence), and maslahah (public good) as guiding principles of institutional conduct (Al-Attas, 1999; Halstead, 2004; Syaharuddin et al., 2025).

Islamic Value Integration functions as an epistemic filter through which strategic information is interpreted and evaluated. Leadership decisions are not assessed solely in terms of efficiency, competitiveness, or stakeholder demand, but in relation to their coherence with Islamic educational purpose and moral accountability. Within the IMOF, values precede strategy: they define the meaning, direction, and ethical boundaries of market-oriented practices rather than being adjusted to accommodate them. This position aligns with Islamic perspectives on organisational ethics that emphasise value primacy in strategic reasoning (Zakaria & Abdul-Talib, 2010). Drawing from classical formulations of market orientation (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990), the IMOF reinterprets its core dimensions in ways that are epistemically consistent with Islamic education and faith-based schooling contexts.

Customer orientation is reconceptualised as ethical stakeholder partnership. Parents, students, and communities are understood not as passive consumers of educational services, but as moral collaborators in a shared educational mission. Responsiveness is therefore oriented towards fulfilling educational trust and supporting holistic development rather than maximising satisfaction metrics alone. This interpretation reflects empirical insights from faith-based schooling, which emphasise trust, moral expectations, and value alignment as central to stakeholder engagement (Hussain & Read, 2015; Iner, 2021; Panjwani, 2014).

Competitor orientation is reframed as ecosystem-aware strategic positioning. Other educational institutions are conceptualised as participants within a shared educational and moral ecosystem rather than as adversaries in zero-sum competition. Strategic differentiation is guided by institutional authenticity, ethical positioning, and mission clarity rather than by market domination. This perspective resonates with comparative

analyses of religious schools operating within marketised educational environments ([Fontdevila et al., 2024](#); [Mouritsen et al., 2023](#)).

Interfunctional coordination is extended beyond technical integration to encompass value-based organisational coherence. Coordination across academic, administrative, and religious functions is evaluated in terms of consistency between pedagogical practice, institutional culture, and moral messaging. In Islamic educational institutions, such coherence is critical, as fragmentation between values and practice may undermine legitimacy and stakeholder trust ([Ghufron et al., 2023](#); [Zebal & Saber, 2014](#)).

Within the IMOF, Islamic Brand Positioning is introduced as a construct capturing the external manifestation of internally integrated values and strategic orientations. Rather than conceptualising branding as a promotional or marketing activity, Islamic Brand Positioning is understood as institutional authenticity as perceived by stakeholders.

When Islamic values are coherently integrated into leadership practices and organisational processes, they generate perceptions of credibility, trust, and moral consistency among stakeholders ([Ambarwati & Sari, 2024](#); [Cahyanto et al., 2025](#); [Ghufron et al., 2023](#); [Hamdanah & Mardia, 2025](#)). Islamic Brand Positioning therefore emerges as an outcome of lived institutional values rather than as a strategically manufactured image. This conceptualisation aligns with Islamic branding scholarship emphasising ethical consistency and value embodiment as the foundation of reputational strength ([Nasution et al., 2025](#)). Within the IMOF, Islamic Brand Positioning also functions as an intermediary mechanism through which internally integrated Islamic values and value-consistent strategic practices contribute to institutional legitimacy and sustainable performance outcomes.

Consistent with the holistic aims of Islamic education, the IMOF conceptualises institutional performance as multidimensional. Performance encompasses academic quality, moral–spiritual development, social trust, and organisational effectiveness, reflecting both educational outcomes and institutional sustainability. This perspective aligns with broader discussions concerning leadership, governance, and performance within faith-based and values-driven educational institutions ([Bakti et al., 2025](#); [Zakaria & Abdul-Talib, 2010](#)).

According to the proposed framework, value-governed market orientation contributes to institutional performance not through market domination, but through sustained legitimacy, stakeholder trust, and mission-consistent effectiveness. Sustainability is therefore theorised as the capacity of madrasah institutions to maintain relevance, credibility, and educational purpose over time. The framework further suggests that multidimensional institutional performance may reinforce organisational learning, institutional credibility, and long-term strategic coherence, thereby contributing to the sustainability of value-governed strategic orientation within madrasah education.

Taken together, the IMOF proposes a layered conceptual logic in which Islamic Value Integration functions as the epistemic core shaping value-consistent market orientation dimensions. These dimensions influence Islamic Brand Positioning, which subsequently contributes to multidimensional institutional performance. This integrative logic provides a coherent theoretical explanation of how madrasahs may engage strategically with their environments while preserving Islamic educational principles.

The conceptual relationships among Islamic Value Integration, value-consistent market orientation dimensions, Islamic Brand Positioning, and multidimensional institutional performance are synthesised in Fig. 1, illustrating the epistemic and strategic logic underlying the IMOF.

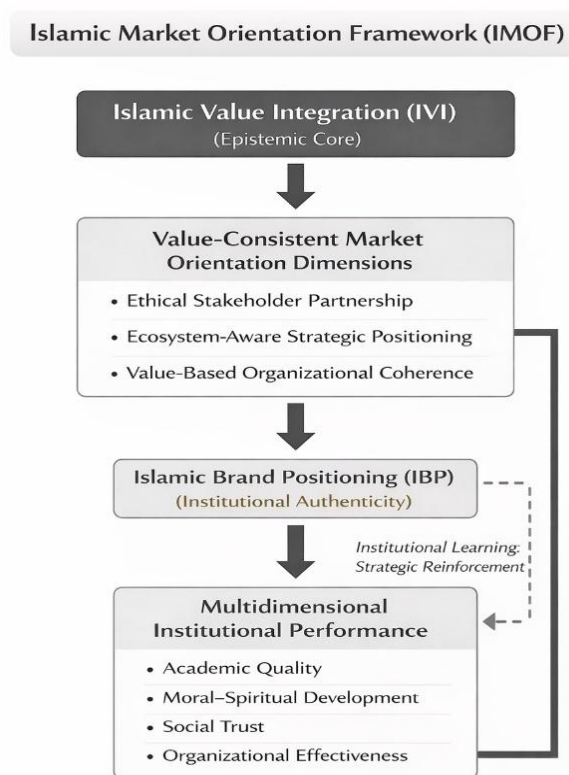


Fig. 1. Islamic Market Orientation Framework (IMOF).

Building on the conceptual relationships articulated within the Islamic Market Orientation Framework (IMOF), this study advances a series of analytically derived propositions that formalise the framework’s internal logic. Consistent with the theory-building orientation of the paper, these propositions are not presented as empirically tested hypotheses, but rather as conceptual statements intended to clarify the relationships among Islamic Value Integration, value-consistent market orientation dimensions, Islamic Brand Positioning, and multidimensional institutional performance. This conceptualisation resonates with [Brooks and Ezzani's \(2022\)](#) framework of critical spirituality, which emphasises the integration of spiritual consciousness, ethical responsibility, and organisational decision-making within Islamic school leadership.

In this conceptualisation, Islamic Value Integration is positioned as the epistemic foundation shaping how strategic responsiveness is interpreted and enacted in madrasah education. Rather than functioning merely as a contextual influence, Islamic values are theorised to guide the interpretation of stakeholder expectations, organisational priorities, and environmental pressures through Islamic educational purpose and moral accountability ([Al-Attas, 1999](#); [Halstead, 2004](#); [Zakaria & Abdul-Talib, 2010](#)).

Proposition 1

Islamic Value Integration functions as the epistemic foundation of strategic orientation in madrasah education, shaping how market-oriented practices are interpreted and enacted. The framework further proposes that internally integrated Islamic values contribute to external perceptions of institutional authenticity and legitimacy. In faith-based educational settings, stakeholder trust is shaped not solely by functional performance, but also by perceptions of moral consistency, credibility, and value coherence

(Fontdevila et al., 2024; Hussain & Read, 2015). Islamic Brand Positioning is therefore conceptualised as an outcome of lived organisational values rather than as a promotional or symbolic strategy.

Proposition 2

Islamic Value Integration is positively associated with Islamic Brand Positioning, such that stronger coherence between Islamic values and organisational practices enhances stakeholder perceptions of institutional authenticity and moral credibility (Ambarwati & Sari, 2024; Ghufron et al., 2023).

Proposition 3

Value-consistent market orientation dimensions—namely ethical stakeholder partnership, ecosystem-aware strategic positioning, and value-based organisational coherence—contribute positively to Islamic Brand Positioning (Dwyer, 2024; Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2007). The framework also conceptualises institutional performance as multidimensional, encompassing academic quality, moral–spiritual development, social trust, and organisational effectiveness (Bakti et al., 2025; Zakaria & Abdul-Talib, 2010). Within this conceptual logic, Islamic Brand Positioning functions as an important mechanism linking Islamic Value Integration and value-consistent strategic orientation with sustainable institutional outcomes.

Proposition 4

Islamic Brand Positioning is positively associated with multidimensional institutional performance, encompassing academic quality, moral–spiritual development, social trust, and organisational effectiveness.

Proposition 5

Beyond indirect pathways, Islamic Value Integration exerts a direct conceptual influence on multidimensional institutional performance by aligning organisational behaviour with Islamic educational purpose and moral accountability.

Proposition 6

Islamic Brand Positioning mediates the relationship between (a) Islamic Value Integration and multidimensional institutional performance, and (b) value-consistent market orientation dimensions and multidimensional institutional performance, while contributing to long-term institutional legitimacy and strategic reinforcement.

Taken together, these propositions provide a coherent analytical explanation of how strategic orientation may be integrated with Islamic educational values within madrasah institutions. From a leadership perspective, the framework suggests that institutional sustainability depends not merely on competitiveness or market responsiveness, but on the alignment between strategic action, moral legitimacy, and educational purpose. The IMOF therefore reframes educational leadership as a value-governed strategic orientation grounded in institutional authenticity, stakeholder trust, and long-term mission coherence.

As a theory-building contribution, the IMOF does not claim empirical validation or universal applicability. Rather, the framework provides a coherent conceptual vocabulary for analysing the relationships among Islamic values, strategic orientation, institutional authenticity, and multidimensional performance within madrasah education. Future empirical studies may therefore employ qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approaches to examine how Islamic Value Integration and value-consistent strategic orientation are enacted across diverse institutional contexts.

Further research may also investigate the mediating role of Islamic Brand Positioning in shaping stakeholder trust, organisational legitimacy, and institutional sustainability. Quantitative approaches, including structural equation modelling, may be particularly valuable for empirically examining the conceptual relationships proposed within the framework, while qualitative studies may provide deeper insight into leadership practices, governance dynamics, and stakeholder perceptions in Islamic educational institutions.

Beyond the Indonesian madrasah context, comparative studies across faith-based educational systems may further enrich understanding of how moral commitments and strategic responsiveness interact within increasingly plural and marketised educational environments. Such research would contribute not only to Islamic educational leadership scholarship, but also to broader discussions concerning values-based governance, institutional authenticity, and sustainable educational management in faith-based schooling contexts.

Conclusion

This conceptual paper has proposed the Islamic Market Orientation Framework (IMOF) as a value-based framework for understanding strategic orientation in madrasah education. By reconceptualising market orientation through an Islamic epistemological lens, the framework challenges the assumption that strategic responsiveness and Islamic values necessarily represent competing institutional logics. Instead, the IMOF positions Islamic Value Integration as the epistemic foundation shaping stakeholder engagement, strategic positioning, organisational coherence, and institutional authenticity within Islamic educational institutions. The framework further suggests that sustainable institutional development emerges through the continuous reinforcement of value coherence, stakeholder trust, and mission-consistent strategic responsiveness.

The framework further conceptualises institutional performance as a multidimensional construct encompassing academic quality, moral–spiritual development, social trust, and organisational effectiveness. In doing so, the study contributes to broader discussions concerning educational leadership, faith-based governance, and sustainability in increasingly competitive educational environments. The IMOF may also provide conceptual guidance for educational leaders and policymakers seeking to balance strategic responsiveness with Islamic educational values, particularly within faith-based institutions operating in market-oriented educational systems.

Nevertheless, this study remains a theory-building conceptual contribution and has not yet been empirically validated. The framework is also primarily situated within the context of madrasah education, which may limit its broader applicability across different educational and cultural settings. Future research may therefore employ qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approaches to examine the applicability of the IMOF across diverse Islamic and faith-based educational institutions, particularly in relation to leadership practices, stakeholder trust, and sustainable institutional development.

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