

Good University Governance in Higher Education: a Case Study in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Good governance is a well-known term that is used as a system of rules, practices, and processes to run and control an institution. The university applies good governance to manage the institution effectively and run its functions according to authority and responsibility. This study intends to determine how effective university governance has been implemented in three Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia, with a focus on determining the institutions' transparency, accountability, and effectiveness in administering their functions. Additionally, it outlines the factors inhibiting and supporting the application of good university governance. This research uses a qualitative approach. Research data is gathered through interviews, observation, and documentation methods. The data is analyzed by being presented, reduced, and concluded. The results showed that the three universities have implemented good university governance to manage their institutions and enhance staff performance, even though their policies and norms did not always have the desired effects. The three Islamic institutions used similar processes to ensure transparency, particularly when it came to staff involvement, institution quality improvement, and programme priority determination. The leaders' commitment to making adjustments to improve the quality and their firmness if there are any who do not carry out their obligations in accordance with the rules is a supporting factor in the implementation of effective university governance. This study highlights that the role of leaders is essential in ensuring the overall success and sustainability of the institution. They are also the ones who should promote a culture of transparency and integrity.

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INTRODUCTION

Education evolves alongside technological and cultural shifts, positioning higher education as a vital institution for addressing the demands of modernization (Schofer & Meyer, 2005). To maintain legitimacy, universities must balance their traditional role as guardians of academic values with the modern necessity for innovation across science, technology, and the humanities (Abidin et al., 2025; Aslihah & Wasehudin, 2023; Aziz et al., 2024; Badrudin et al., 2025; Hasbiyallah et al., 2024; Risanty & Kesuma, 2019). This pursuit of human understanding is supported by a combination of rigorous research, faculty expertise, and public engagement, all aimed at shielding the academic community from external value distortions while contributing to the expansion of knowledge (Ahmad Kusaini et al., 2024; Hidayat et al., 2026; Mokodompit et al., 2025; Susilowati et al., 2025).

To foster national competitiveness, universities are compelled to advance institutional development through strategic planning in teaching, administration, and community engagement (Al-Husainy & Jadah; Mubarak et al., 2023). Universities, as educational institutions, are expected to train generations capable of contributing to national growth, whether through expertise in governance, business, or social matters (Muktiyanto et al., 2015.). Modern research confirms that the adoption of Good University Governance (GUG) is a crucial factor for success, directly linked to enhanced educational service quality and improved international rankings (Puspitasari et al., 2025; Fatmawati et al., 2024; Mubarak et al., 2023). Research indicates that a strong governance framework, focused on transparency and accountability, improves operational efficiency and reduces agency issues between university management and stakeholders (Al-Husainy & Jadah, 2024). By promoting these principles, institutions can effectively manage resources, enhance academic productivity, and secure the public trust necessary for long-term sustainability.

Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions (PTKI) in Indonesia strive to uphold these same professional standards. However, the path to sound governance for PTKI is often obstructed by challenges in internal management, service quality, and institutional sustainability. To address this, the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) requires PTKI to submit public performance accountability reports (LAKIP) and establish performance contracts with university leaders. These strategies serve as essential quality control frameworks to ensure that PTKI's mission and supporting systems, including human resources and infrastructure, are managed effectively within the MORA framework.

This research intends to identify the good governance at three Islamic universities: UIN Surabaya, UIN Makassar, and UIN Jakarta. The three universities were selected as representatives of PTKIN to illustrate their management practices in accordance with the three principles of good governance: transparency, accountability, and effectivity. The research also identifies factors that both foster and hinder the adoption of good governance within these academic institutions. Addressing this issue is essential, as PTKIN are generally regarded as a secondary tier of higher education institutions in Indonesia, and their management may not significantly differ from that of universities under the Ministry of Education. By learning about the three good governance principles and how they are used in the three PTKIN, we can find places where institutional management could be better.

METHODS

This article discusses an overview of the implementation of good governance in Indonesian Islamic higher institutions. In particular, this research aims to identify the three good governance principles (e.g. transparency, accountability, and effectivity) applied in Islamic higher education institutions and the supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of good governance in the universities. To address these issues, this research employs a qualitative approach by conducting interviews with policy stakeholders in the three universities. The qualitative approach is suitable to obtain in-depth and detailed information (Creswell, 2012) about how the three universities implement good governance principles and the supporting and inhibiting factors of applying good governance.

Three universities at the same level are involved: UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, UIN Alauddin Makassar, and UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. These three universities share similarities in terms of the quality of human resources, facilities and infrastructure, services, information systems, and accreditation achievement (all three universities have '*unggul*' (excellent) accreditation). Higher education institution must obtain accreditation in order to achieve specific academic criteria. This certification acts as an external validation of the institution's quality. An institution's professors, curriculum, facilities, and overall educational procedures are all evaluated by an accrediting authority. Key participants in the research include deans, heads of study programmes (Kaprodi), heads of units (Kapus), and the head of the Internal Audit Unit (SPI). Only one representative from each of the Kaprodi, Kapus, and Dean positions—officials who are willing to engage in the study—is included in this analysis. The Head of SPI, Dean, Kaprodi, and Kapus from UIN Alauddin Makassar and UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya are among the participants from the three PTKIN that agree to participate. The Dean of the Faculty of Education and the Head of the English Study Programme are the only representatives of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah.

Prior to gathering data, the researchers formally requested permission from the three universities via letter. The letter included an explanation of the requested information and the goals of the research. The researcher contacted the participants and set up the interviews after receiving approval. Participants from UIN Syarif Hidayatullah were interviewed online, while those from UIN Alauddin Makassar and UIN Sunan Ampel were interviewed in person. 'Interview protocol' was employed to expedite the interview process and guarantee that the questions are relevant to the subjects to be investigated. In addition to the interview, this study analysed pertinent papers and distributed questionnaires but a small number of respondents from each university who completed the questionnaires. As a result, the questionnaire data was unable to give a comprehensive picture, particularly when it came to details about the degree of accountability, openness, efficiency, and efficacy in the good governance's implementation in three PTKIN. As such, the data from the analysis of the policy stakeholders' interviews are the only ones covered in this paper. All recorded interviews were transcribed word-for-word. The transcripts were then reviewed for accuracy, especially regarding factual and relevant information conveyed by the participants. Some responses were not transcribed if they discussed different topics or were unrelated to the questions (for example, one participant explained the challenges of being the Head of SPI and dealing with parties dissatisfied with the review results). The interview data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Flick, 2014) identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes in the data. This method provides flexibility in developing relevant theories based on emerging themes in the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that the theoretical freedom in thematic analysis makes the research flexible and provides a rich and detailed description.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

Implementation of Good University Governance in Higher Education

This study examines the application of the three principles of good governance: transparency, accountability, and effectiveness. Transparency denotes to a system that guarantees all stakeholders access to pertinent information and services. For example, academic staff and students have access to information regarding research funds, mobility programs and other participatory opportunities. Accountability refers to an institution's capacity to clearly define its performance and the specifics of its tasks and responsibilities with transparency and equity. We highlight effectiveness as the final principle. In the realm of good governance, effectivity refers to an institution's capacity to fulfil its

objectives and mission by adhering to the principles of efficiency, accountability, transparency, and responsiveness to stakeholder requirements. The findings revealed that the three universities employed these three concepts to ensure it operates the business as expected although the notion of 'good governance' identified in some areas; a detailed description of the three principles provided in the subsequent sections.

Transparency in academic and non-academics

Transparency of good university governance in the three PTKIN is apparent in financial operations, decision-making procedures, and services that foster trust among stakeholders. This encompasses the accessibility and availability of information for internal stakeholders, such as students, faculty, and staff, as well as the broader community. The accessibility of information suggests that the institution is assured in its services and accountable for its responsibilities. The three Islamic universities exhibited academic transparency to promote effective governance. The university's efforts in academic transparency include making course syllabi, learning objectives, and assessment methods accessible to students. The university's website offered access to the curriculum and learning procedures within the academic domain. This facilitates a deeper comprehension of the university's academic programs. The curriculum information is not publicly accessible; it is restricted to the university community. Another instance of academic transparency involves the disclosure of academic policy. Universities provide access to academic policies, including admissions procedures and requirements for new students, grading policies, and student conduct codes, on their official websites. Research findings are transparent; the internal public has unrestricted access to research grants, which disclose the recipients, amounts, and titles of the grants. Research data and publications vary in accessibility; some are available to the broader community, while others are restricted to internal access due to storage in the library system. Access to the digital archives is restricted to library members only. This indicates that the university recognises the significance of transparency in governance structures and aims to foster trust with stakeholders.

In another university, transparency of governance structure was seen at the faculty level. For instance, the dean constantly promotes the university's top priorities and pushes academic units and departments to carry out these directives. To facilitate the implementation of targeted programmes more quickly, socialisation is carried out through official notes and coordination meetings. The leadership understands that it is doubtful that programme goals would be met in a way that meets expectations if pertinent parties, like departments, study programmes, faculty, and staff, do not support it. Collective conversations lead to policies or decisions. The Dean goes on to say that the faculty leadership interprets the university's target goals because they are an extension of the university's highest leadership, the Rector. Departments, study programmes, and faculty personnel must therefore comprehend programme priorities and discuss the goals as a group.

The example above demonstrates that universities exhibit transparency in information delivery by articulating program priorities to academic units and departments. However, two participants noted a lack of transparency in financial management. Faculty leaders provide the department with the flexibility to design programs that align with the institution's plan; however, they lack the authority to organize the budget, possessing only the program without the financial resources. The budget allocated by the faculty may not align with the program's needs, resulting in a lack of flexibility for program adjustments. One participant further explains that the department occasionally designs the same program as before to ease administrative and technical processes.

Accountability aspects

Accountability is a principle that guarantees each individual or unit within a university is responsible for all actions, decisions, and resource utilization to stakeholders. The implementation of accountability in one of Islamic universities (e.g., UIN Surabaya) is carried out by forming a GUG team consisting of seven (7) standard working groups, namely (1) policies for Independent Learning and Campus Learning (Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka/MBKM); (2) policies for the Consortium of Faculty Members in the Field of Science and Homebase Faculty Members; (3) policies for the Research and Community Service Roadmap Based on the Integration of Twin Towers; (4) policies to strengthen institutional regulations and organizational governance in the revision of the Statute and the Preparation of the University Management System; (5) policies for the acceleration of international classes and the double degree blueprint; (6) policies for Brand Guidelines and Internal University Values; and (7) developing and strengthening the Information System Based on accrediting body's (SAPTO BAN- PT) eligibility.

Similar opinions about openness in their department are expressed by the heads of the language centres at three different universities. The Language Centre offers three ongoing programmes: (1) student training for the TOEFL and TOAFL; (2) article writing workshops for publication; and (3) journal management. All students will receive training for the TOEFL and TOAFL, with funds provided by the UKT, for those enrolled in classes sixth semester and above. By sending formal notes on student involvement in TOEFL and TOAFL training and collaborating with the Vice Dean 1 for Academic Affairs regarding the protocols and mechanisms for conducting TOEFL and TOAFL training, the Language Centre demonstrates its transparency. Informing the departments in their respective faculties about the programmes is the duty of Vice Dean 1. Open information on the Language Centre website further contributes to the programmes' transparency. Users can readily access all information pertaining to the Language Center's services and programmes, including training for the TOEFL and TOAFL. There are, however, restrictions on transparency. For example, the funding of the TOEFL and TOAFL training covered in the UKT is not publicly disclosed. Even though the Language Centre does not formally disclose this information, some students might be aware of it. The Language Center's sole responsibility is to advise the program's implementation process and manage it as effectively as possible in order to help the institution reach its annual goal of educating students for the TOEFL and TOAFL.

The Internal Audit Unit also oversees accountability and transparency at the three universities. SPI is in charge of overseeing institutional management internally, which includes planning, reporting, and budget processes. Along with the teams made up of the academic, financial, planning, personnel, and faculty staff, SPI performs its obligations. The fact that this composition consists of individuals with a variety of backgrounds and specialities makes it excellent. These two teams are composed of the Vice Rector 2 for Finance and Personnel and the AUPK Bureau, taking into account recommendations from different sources. The team members' varied backgrounds and levels of experience are taken into consideration. For instance, when it comes to budgetary monitoring or review, certain team members are well knowledgeable about it and are able to do these tasks to the best of their abilities. Accountability and transparency go hand in hand. By completing the tasks assigned by the university, the leadership of the institution is held accountable to the public through transparency, or information to the public. In addition, reporting serves as a means of accountability in the form of Key Performance Indicators to the Rector or the ministry. Based on the priority programmes for academic growth, including consortiums, national and international conferences, and other academic development programmes, budget absorption demonstrates other good

governance principles, including responsibility, effectiveness, and efficiency.

Differences and Similarities in implementing good governance

The three universities' approaches to implementing good governance vary and are similar at the same time. The way governance is implemented in the three pillars of higher education—research, community service, and education and teaching—is one of the commonalities. In the context of education and instruction, good governance is implemented transparently in course evaluations. The academic systems of these three Islamic religious universities openly publish course grades. For instance, students have the ability to examine their course grades online and have a complaint period if their grades fall short of expectations. The three universities exhibit transparency in the research sector through their meticulously designed research processes, which include financial reporting, research funding, recruiting announcements, and research reporting.

The implementation of good governance places a strong emphasis on the notion of accountability in the realm of community service. Lecturers utilise their knowledge by taking part in a variety of community service projects that are seen as advantageous to society in their capacity as academics and members of the community. The creation of a dedicated team, however, is what makes the three universities' good governance implementations different from one another. A GUG Team has been established at State Islamic University Sunan Ampel Surabaya by the Rector's Decree. Though they do not have a formal GUG team, State Islamic University Suarif Hidayatullah Jakarta and State Islamic University Alauddin Makassar actively internalise the good governance ideals in the pursuit of their higher education *tridharma*, which consists of teaching, research, and public service. The strategy implemented by the leadership will greatly affect the quality of the institution.

Supporting factors and challenges in implementing good governance

The examination of the questionnaire results revealed a number of elements that helped and hindered the three universities' implementation of good governance (see Table 1.1). The dedication of leaders and the backing of students, faculty, and other pertinent parties are the supporting elements. Other supporting elements in the implementation of good governance include having qualified human resources, sufficient facilities and infrastructure, and making sure budgetary allocations for activities are made. Clear objectives and a well-established system are two other elements that can guarantee the efficacy of university governance.

Table 1. Supporting factors & challenges of GUG

Supporting Factors	Challenges
Leadership commitment	Low leadership commitment
Support from faculty, students, stakeholders & relevant parties	Lack of coordination among units & relevant parties
Competent human resources	Human resources mismatched with their positions
Facilities & infrastructure	Insufficient communication regarding programs & policies
Budget allocation	Budget limitations
Well-established system/clear rules	Complicated bureaucracy
Clear targets & objectives	Absence of performance & program evaluation

Table 1 illustrates the seven factors that impede the successful implementation of good governance. These problems include inadequate communication of leadership policies and programmes, misaligned human resources with their roles, and low leadership commitment. Other barriers to GUG adoption include budgetary constraints, bureaucratic bureaucracy, and the lack of performance and programme assessment. Despite facing various challenges, effective GUG implementation has the potential to bring substantial positive impacts on the performance and quality of higher education institutions. These findings emphasize the importance of a holistic and contextual approach in GUG implementation, taking into account the uniqueness of each institution and the Indonesian higher education environment.

DISCUSSION

From the presentation of data in the field at the three universities above, it is necessary to discuss the application of the three principles of good governance: transparency, accountability, and effectiveness. Transparency refers to the ways that institutions keep businesses running by making sure that relevant information and services are easy for stakeholders to find and understand (Fatkuroji et al., 2025; Rukmana et al., 2024). Accountability refers to an institution's capacity to clearly define its performance and the specifics of its tasks and responsibilities with transparency and equity. We highlight effectiveness as the final principle. In the realm of good governance, effectivity refers to an institution's capacity to fulfil its objectives and mission by adhering to the principles of efficiency, accountability, transparency, and responsiveness to stakeholder requirements (Adeoye et al., 2025; Alhadi et al., 2024).

Good governance in higher education institutions serves critical purposes, including establishing future direction, ensuring sustainability, enhancing institutional performance, and contributing to societal development (Taj et al., 2024). Transparency is a fundamental principle of effective governance that fosters trust and confidence (Bahri et al., 2026; Fatkuroji et al., 2025; Heryati et al., 2026; Tukijan et al., 2024). Transparent operations in finance, decision-making processes, and services will enhance trust among stakeholders. This includes accessibility and availability of information. These three universities have done this well. Another indication that these three universities practice transparency can be seen in the research sector. These three universities are transparent in terms of research, such as announcing research recipients, the amount of research funding, and the titles of research conducted by lecturers and students. Research data can also be accessed publicly in a transparent manner. The three universities recognise that openly sharing research publications can foster collaboration and expedite knowledge advancement (Salamah et al., 2025; Toisuta et al., 2024). This will be particularly useful for potential partners intending to initiate collaboration, as they can search for information on academic staff and their areas of expertise (Rosdiana et al., 2024). Transparency is also demonstrated in terms of the transparency of the institution's leadership structure (Mozin & Nggilu, 2023; Fatkuroji et al., 2025; Bui et al., 2024).

The second principle of implementing good university governance is accountability. Accountability constitutes a crucial component in the governance of higher education. The recognition of public interests in higher education is evident. Hénard and Mitterie stated that an institution will gain public interest if it provides benefits to the community and ensures academic quality and standards. This quality can be ensured through various means, including a quality assurance framework, the participation of external stakeholders in governing bodies, and market mechanisms. Transformational leadership empowers universities to thrive amidst accountability

demands while fostering innovation and global awareness (Adeoye et al., 2025; Safinatun Najah et al., 2025; Purhasanah, 2024).

The Internal Audit Unit also oversees accountability and transparency at the three universities. The Internal Audit Unit is in charge of overseeing institutional management internally, which includes planning, reporting, and budget processes (Basri et al., 2024; Larsen et al., 2009). Along with the teams made up of the academic, financial, planning, personnel, and faculty staff, The Internal Audit Unit performs its obligations (Hartono, 2024; Elena, 2023). Meanwhile, the effectiveness in the implementation of good university governance at these three universities can be said to be very effective. This can be seen from various policies, programs, organizational structures, as well as program evaluations (Musrifah & Ali Shah, 2025; Hénard & Mitterle, 2010).

Accountability, transparency, and effectiveness go hand in hand (Rosdiana et al., 2024; Riski et al., 2024). By completing the tasks assigned by the university, the leadership of the institution is held accountable to the public through transparency, or information to the public (Rukmana et al., 2024; Wahyudin et al., 2025; Thoha & Hannan, 2022). Among other things, accountability is demonstrated via the recording, networking (Ismiatun et al., 2023) and publishing of activities carried out via the official university website. These three universities, in implementing good university governance, have different strategies. And each of these university strategies actively applies the principles of good governance in good university governance, namely applying the principles of transparency, accountability, and effectiveness in carrying out the three pillars of higher education (Rekan et al., 2025).

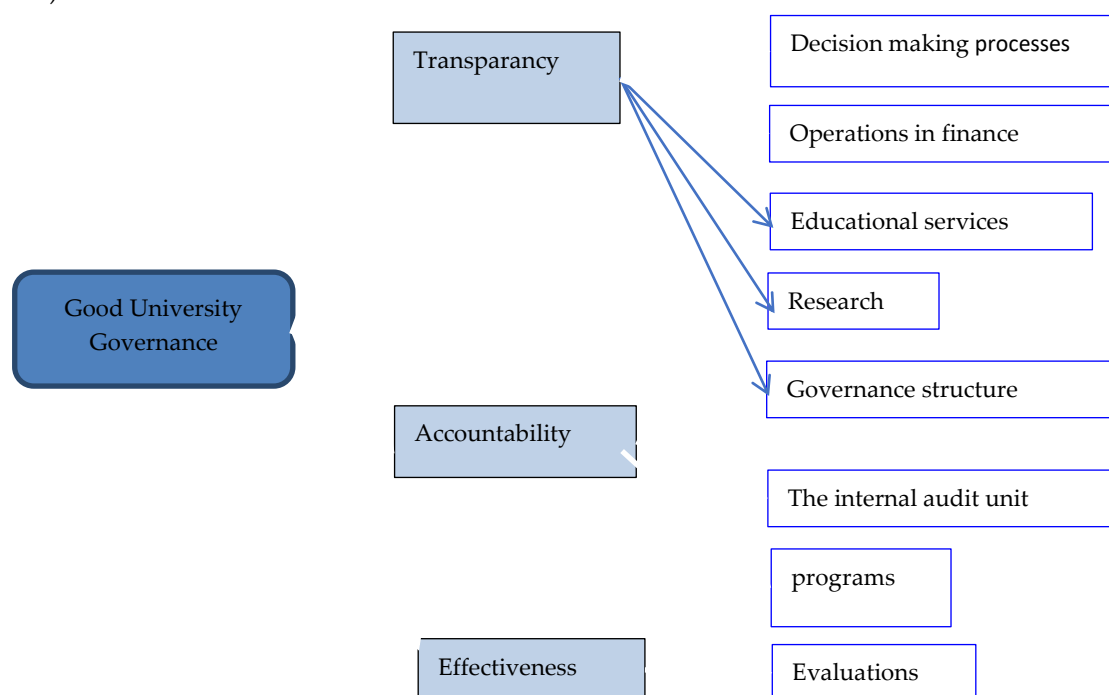


Figure 1. Implementation of the Good University Governance principles in Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia

From the previous data presentation, it can be stated that there are supporting factors as well as obstacles in the implementation of good university governance. Some of the supporting factors include the dedication of university leaders, the support of students, lecturers, and staff, high-quality human resources, facilities, budget, clear objectives, and an already good system (Musrifah & Ali

Shah, 2025; Basri et al., 2024). Meanwhile, the factors that can hinder the implementation of good university governance are low leadership commitment, lack of coordination, mismatched human resources, insufficient programs and policies, budget limitations, complicated bureaucracy, and program evaluation.

Transparency and effectiveness go hand in hand (Rosdiana et al., Riski et al., 2024). By completing the tasks assigned by the university, the leadership of the institution is held accountable to the public through transparency, or information to the public (Rukmana et al., 2024; Wahyudin et al., 2025). Among other things, accountability is demonstrated via the recording, networking (Ismiatun et al., 2023; Alimah, 2020) and publishing of activities carried out via the official university website. These three universities, in implementing good university governance, have different strategies. And each of these university strategies actively applies the principles of good governance in good university governance, namely applying the principles of transparency, accountability, and effectiveness in carrying out the three pillars of higher education (Rekan et al., 2025; Taj et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

Overall, managing the organizational structure, initiatives, and operations of Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia in order to accomplish the institution's objectives is a key component of good university governance. This study shows that good university governance has been implemented at three Islamic higher education institutions: State Islamic University Sunan Ampel Surabaya, State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, and State Islamic University Alauddin Makassar. These institutions adhere to a number of principles, including transparency, accountability, and effectiveness. All of the universities' administrative and academic operations now follow these governance standards. By implementing these transparency acts, the universities are likely to show their commitment to good governance and build trust with their stakeholders. This may result in a more accountable, responsive, and effective institution. The leaders' commitment to making adjustments to improve the quality and their firmness if there are any who do not carry out their obligations in accordance with the rules is a supporting factor in the implementation of effective university governance. In addition, the support from faculty, students, stakeholders & relevant parties, competent human resources, facilities & infrastructure, budget allocation, and a well-established system/clear rules, clear targets & objectives are the supporting factors in the implementation of effective university governance. Meanwhile, several factors that inhibit the implementation of Good University Governance in the three Islamic higher education institutions are: Low leadership commitment, Lack of coordination among units & relevant parties, Human resources mismatched with their positions, Insufficient communication regarding programs & policies, Budget limitations, Complicated bureaucracy, and Absence of performance & program evaluation.

This research supports previous theories and research findings that state that in order to have good university governance, a university must implement governance well, based on the principles of transparency, accountability, and effectiveness. In realizing good university governance, there are certainly many influencing factors. Therefore, universities must have their own innovation strategies that align with the character and performance culture of each higher education institution.

This research is still limited to three main principles in realizing good university governance in Islamic higher education institutions. This research is also still limited by the short duration of the study, which is only one year of university performance. For future research, it can be developed to study other principles in realizing good university governance such as responsibility and independence and conducted over four years or one leadership period of a university.

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