

Transformational Islamic Leadership and School Quality Improvement: A Case Study of Organizational Change in Indonesian Madrasahs

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Abstract: Transformational Islamic leadership has become increasingly important for madrasahs seeking to strengthen organizational capacity, teacher professionalism, and sustainable educational quality while maintaining their Islamic institutional identity. This study examines how transformational Islamic leadership practices contribute to organizational change and school quality improvement in an Indonesian madrasah. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and analysis of institutional documents involving the madrasah principal, vice principals, teachers, and educational administrative staff. Data were analyzed thematically and validated through source and methodological triangulation. The findings demonstrate that transformational Islamic leadership is practiced through vision building, inspirational motivation, role modeling, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and consultative decision-making through shura, with Islamic values providing an ethical foundation for leadership practices. These practices foster organizational conditions characterized by trust, teacher empowerment, collaboration, shared vision, professional learning, and teacher innovation. The findings further indicate that organizational culture and teacher development constitute important mechanisms connecting leadership practices with school quality improvement. Quality assurance, improved teacher performance, institutional innovation, stakeholder engagement, and continuous improvement emerged as interconnected dimensions of quality development. The study contributes a Transformational Islamic School Leadership Model that conceptualizes Islamic values as an integral mechanism through which transformational leadership generates organizational change and sustainable quality improvement. The model highlights the importance of integrating ethical leadership, participatory governance, teacher development, organizational learning, and continuous quality improvement within madrasah management.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Islamic Leadership, Madrasah Management, Teacher Professional Development, School Quality Improvement

INTRODUCTION

Improving the quality of madrasah education has become increasingly important as Indonesian Islamic schools face complex demands for academic excellence, character formation, and institutional sustainability. Madrasahs are expected to provide educational services that meet national quality standards while simultaneously maintaining their religious identity and strengthening students' moral and social development. These expectations require madrasahs to develop organizational systems capable of responding to changes in educational policy,

technological development, community expectations, and increasingly diverse student needs.

Quality improvement therefore cannot be understood merely as compliance with administrative standards, but should be viewed as an organizational process involving leadership, teacher capacity, collaborative culture, institutional innovation, and continuous evaluation. School leadership is particularly important because leaders influence organizational priorities, professional practices, resource allocation, and the conditions under which teachers and other members of the institution work. A three-level meta-analysis involving 108 studies found that school leadership practices were positively associated with student outcomes, particularly practices related to instructional management, teacher capacity development, and external stakeholder engagement (Tan et al., 2024).

Effective educational leadership increasingly requires leaders to transform organizational practices rather than merely maintain existing administrative routines and institutional structures. Conventional administrative leadership tends to emphasize planning, coordination, supervision, and compliance, whereas contemporary educational organizations require leaders who can mobilize members toward shared goals and encourage organizational learning. Leadership becomes especially important when institutions face demands for innovation and continuous improvement because organizational change depends on the willingness of teachers and other stakeholders to modify established practices. In this context, leaders need to communicate a compelling vision, create collective commitment, encourage professional learning, and establish organizational conditions that enable members to participate actively in improvement processes. School leadership research has demonstrated that leadership practices associated with strengthening teacher capacity and engaging stakeholders can contribute to improved educational outcomes, although their effects operate within broader organizational and contextual conditions (Tan et al., 2024). Leadership should therefore be examined not only in terms of what leaders do, but also in terms of how their practices influence organizational processes.

Transformational leadership offers a particularly relevant theoretical perspective for explaining how educational leaders generate commitment, innovation, and organizational change within complex institutional environments. Transformational leadership emphasizes the ability of leaders to move organizational members beyond routine expectations by establishing a shared

vision, inspiring collective motivation, stimulating new thinking, and attending to individual development. Bass and Riggio (2006) identify four core dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These dimensions provide a useful framework for examining leadership practices in madrasahs because school improvement requires leaders who can combine institutional direction with teacher empowerment and professional development. Idealized influence relates to leadership through exemplary conduct, inspirational motivation concerns the development of shared purpose, intellectual stimulation encourages innovation and critical thinking, and individualized consideration emphasizes attention to the professional needs of organizational members. Transformational leadership thus provides a framework for understanding leadership as a process of changing organizational attitudes, relationships, and practices rather than simply exercising formal authority.

The effectiveness of transformational leadership in schools depends substantially on its capacity to shape organizational culture and strengthen teachers as active agents of institutional improvement. Organizational culture consists of shared values, assumptions, norms, expectations, and patterns of interaction that influence how members interpret and perform their organizational responsibilities. Leaders contribute to the development of culture through their behavior, communication, decision-making, expectations, and responses to organizational challenges. A transformational leader can create conditions characterized by trust, collaboration, shared responsibility, professional learning, and openness to innovation. Such conditions are important because sustainable school improvement cannot depend exclusively on the principal or head of the institution. Teachers need opportunities to participate in decision-making, contribute professional knowledge, collaborate with colleagues, and assume responsibility for improving teaching and learning. Evidence from a meta-analysis of teacher leadership demonstrates a positive relationship between teacher leadership and student achievement, with teacher leadership activities involving curriculum, instruction, and assessment showing particularly meaningful associations with student outcomes (Shen et al., 2020). Teacher empowerment can therefore be understood as an important pathway linking leadership with educational quality.



Darunnajah in Education

ISSN(Online): XXXX-XXXX

Vol 1 no 1 (2026): April 2026

<https://journal.darunnajah.org/index.php/DIE/index>

Understanding leadership in madrasahs also requires attention to Islamic values that shape the moral, organizational, and educational identity of these institutions. Madrasahs are not simply schools that provide additional religious instruction; they are educational institutions in which academic development is closely connected with Islamic values, moral formation, spiritual development, and communal responsibility. Consequently, leadership practices in madrasahs need to be understood within a framework that recognizes both professional competence and ethical accountability. From an Islamic perspective, educational leadership emphasizes organizational vision, communication, empowerment, justice, integrity, humility, and piety (Salleh, 2018). These principles position leadership as a form of responsibility rather than merely a source of authority. The leader is expected to provide direction while demonstrating ethical conduct and serving as an example for members of the educational community. Such an approach is highly relevant to madrasah management because organizational change needs to remain consistent with the institution's Islamic identity and normative commitments.

The integration of transformational leadership with Islamic leadership consequently provides a contextualized framework for explaining organizational change and quality improvement in Islamic educational institutions. Transformational leadership emphasizes vision, motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual development, while Islamic leadership provides an ethical foundation through principles such as responsibility, justice, integrity, empowerment, humility, and moral exemplarity. Salleh (2018) argues that Islamic educational leadership can promote organizational transformation by combining explicit organizational aims with empowerment, effective communication, justice, integrity, and humility. These dimensions complement the transformational leadership framework while adding a distinctive ethical and spiritual orientation. In the context of madrasahs, transformational Islamic leadership can therefore be understood as a leadership process through which institutional leaders mobilize teachers and other stakeholders around a shared educational vision while grounding organizational transformation in Islamic values. This integration may explain why leadership practices can influence not only teacher motivation but also organizational relationships, professional learning, institutional innovation, and quality-oriented behavior.

Nevertheless, existing scholarship provides limited explanation of how transformational Islamic leadership actually operates through organizational culture and teacher development to produce sustainable quality improvement in madrasahs. Previous research has established relationships between school leadership and student outcomes (Tan et al., 2024), between teacher leadership and student achievement (Shen et al., 2020), and between transformational leadership principles and organizational transformation (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Islamic educational leadership scholarship has also developed models emphasizing vision, empowerment, communication, justice, integrity, humility, and organizational transformation (Salleh, 2018). However, these strands of scholarship have largely developed independently. Less attention has been directed toward the organizational mechanism connecting transformational leadership practices with Islamic values, teacher empowerment, collaborative culture, professional development, institutional innovation, and continuous quality improvement. This gap is particularly significant in madrasahs, where leadership operates simultaneously within professional, managerial, cultural, and religious domains.

This study addresses the identified gap by examining transformational Islamic leadership as an organizational mechanism connecting leadership practices, cultural transformation, teacher development, and continuous quality improvement in Indonesian madrasahs. The novelty of the study lies in explaining the process through which transformational leadership dimensions are interpreted and enacted through Islamic leadership values within the everyday organizational context of madrasahs. Rather than treating leadership as an isolated variable, this study examines the interconnected processes of vision building, inspirational motivation, role modeling, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, consultative decision-making, teacher empowerment, organizational trust, collaboration, professional learning, innovation, and quality assurance. The study consequently seeks to develop an empirically grounded explanation of how transformational Islamic leadership can generate organizational change and contribute to sustainable school quality improvement.

Accordingly, this study investigates three interconnected dimensions of transformational Islamic leadership and its contribution to organizational change and school quality improvement in Indonesian madrasahs. First, it examines how madrasah leaders implement transformational

Islamic leadership practices through vision building, motivation, role modeling, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and consultative decision-making. Second, it investigates how these practices influence organizational culture and teacher professional development through empowerment, trust, collaboration, shared vision, and professional learning. Third, it examines how transformational Islamic leadership contributes to school quality improvement through quality assurance, teacher performance, student achievement, institutional innovation, stakeholder engagement, and continuous improvement. Based on these objectives, the study addresses three research questions: (1) How do madrasah leaders implement transformational Islamic leadership practices? (2) How do these practices influence organizational culture and teacher professional development? and (3) How does transformational Islamic leadership contribute to school quality improvement?

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to develop an in-depth understanding of how transformational Islamic leadership operates within the organizational context of Indonesian madrasahs. A qualitative case study is appropriate when researchers seek to investigate contemporary organizational phenomena within their real-life context and when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2018). The design was selected because the study focused on leadership practices, organizational culture, teacher professional development, and quality improvement as interconnected processes rather than as isolated variables. The case study approach enabled the researchers to examine how transformational Islamic leadership was enacted through everyday interactions, institutional practices, decision-making processes, and quality improvement activities. The study was guided by three research questions concerning leadership practices, organizational culture and teacher development, and school quality improvement.

Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in an Indonesian madrasah selected purposively because it demonstrated active leadership practices, teacher development initiatives, organizational

improvement, and systematic quality-oriented programs. Purposive sampling enables qualitative researchers to select information-rich participants who possess direct knowledge and experience relevant to the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The participants consisted of the madrasah principal, vice principals, teachers, and educational administrative staff. Participants were selected according to their involvement in leadership processes, organizational decision-making, professional development, teaching activities, and quality improvement programs. The inclusion of participants from different organizational positions allowed the study to capture leadership practices from multiple perspectives and reduce reliance on the perceptions of a single institutional actor. Participant recruitment continued until the collected data provided sufficient depth and variation to address the research questions.

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. Using multiple methods enabled the researchers to examine both participants' interpretations of leadership and the organizational practices through which leadership was enacted (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal, vice principals, teachers, and administrative staff to explore transformational leadership practices, Islamic leadership values, teacher empowerment, organizational culture, professional learning, innovation, and quality improvement. Interviews allowed participants to describe their experiences, perceptions, and interpretations in their own words.

Non-participant observations were undertaken to examine leadership and organizational practices in their natural setting. The observations focused on leadership interactions, staff meetings, decision-making processes, teacher collaboration, professional learning activities, supervision, and quality assurance practices. Relevant institutional documents were also examined, including the madrasah vision and mission, strategic and operational plans, teacher development programs, supervision records, evaluation documents, quality assurance documents, and institutional improvement reports. Documents were used to complement interview and observation data and to identify evidence of institutional practices and organizational change.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis provides a systematic yet flexible approach for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting recurring patterns of meaning within qualitative datasets (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis involved six interconnected stages: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were initially coded according to concepts related to the three research questions. Codes such as vision building, inspirational motivation, role modeling, shura, teacher empowerment, trust, collaboration, professional learning, innovation, quality assurance, and continuous improvement were subsequently grouped into broader categories and themes. The final themes were interpreted in relation to transformational leadership and Islamic educational leadership perspectives.

Trustworthiness and Data Validation

The credibility and trustworthiness of the findings were strengthened through methodological and source triangulation. Triangulation strengthens qualitative inquiry by comparing evidence obtained from different sources, methods, or perspectives to develop a more credible interpretation of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interview findings were compared with observation records and institutional documents, while perspectives from principals, teachers, and administrative staff were examined comparatively. Member checking was also used by presenting relevant interpretations to selected participants to verify whether the findings accurately represented their experiences. An audit trail documenting the research procedures, coding decisions, thematic development, and interpretation process was maintained to support dependability and confirmability. These procedures ensured that the findings were grounded in the collected evidence and provided a credible explanation of transformational Islamic leadership and its contribution to organizational change and madrasah quality improvement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Transformational Islamic Leadership Practices

Transformational Islamic leadership emerged as a multidimensional practice through which the madrasah leader developed institutional direction, strengthened teacher commitment,

encouraged professional growth, and promoted collective responsibility for organizational improvement. The findings indicate that leadership was not primarily exercised through hierarchical authority or administrative supervision, but through a combination of vision building, inspirational motivation, exemplary conduct, individualized support, intellectual stimulation, and consultative decision-making. These practices were consistently embedded within Islamic values, making leadership simultaneously transformational, relational, and ethical. The leader's role was therefore understood not simply as that of an administrator responsible for implementing institutional regulations, but as a figure responsible for mobilizing teachers toward a shared educational mission. This finding is consistent with Leithwood and Sun (2012), who demonstrate that transformational school leadership influences organizational conditions by strengthening shared direction, motivation, and professional capacity. However, the present findings extend this perspective by showing that transformational practices in a madrasah acquire additional meaning when they are grounded in Islamic principles of responsibility, justice, consultation, and exemplary conduct.

Vision building constituted an important starting point for organizational transformation. The leader communicated institutional aspirations through formal meetings, program planning, professional discussions, and routine interactions with teachers and staff. The institutional vision was not treated merely as a statement contained in official documents, but was translated into expectations concerning teaching quality, teacher professionalism, student character, and institutional development. This process encouraged teachers to perceive their individual responsibilities as connected to broader institutional objectives. The finding supports the argument that effective transformational leadership requires leaders to establish a shared direction that can mobilize organizational members beyond individual interests (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). In the madrasah context, however, the shared vision incorporated both educational and religious dimensions. Academic achievement and institutional quality were connected with the formation of students' character and Islamic identity. Consequently, vision building functioned not only as a managerial activity but also as a process of establishing a common moral purpose.

Inspirational motivation was reflected in the leader's efforts to create confidence, optimism, and collective commitment among teachers. Organizational challenges were framed as

opportunities for learning and improvement rather than simply as failures requiring correction. Teachers were encouraged to contribute ideas and to view institutional development as a shared responsibility. This approach strengthened the psychological connection between individual professional roles and institutional objectives. Transformational leadership literature emphasizes that inspirational motivation enables leaders to communicate meaningful goals and develop collective commitment to organizational change (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). In this case, motivation was also associated with Islamic understandings of responsibility and service. The combination of professional motivation and moral responsibility strengthened the legitimacy of leadership because teachers were encouraged to improve their performance not only for institutional achievement but also as part of their responsibility as educators.

Exemplary conduct also emerged as a significant feature of leadership practice. The credibility of the leader was constructed through consistency between institutional expectations and personal behavior. Commitment to institutional activities, discipline, openness to communication, willingness to listen, and direct involvement in problem solving provided behavioral examples for teachers. This finding is particularly important in an Islamic educational context because leadership legitimacy is closely associated with moral conduct. Islamic educational leadership emphasizes integrity, justice, humility, responsibility, and exemplary behavior as essential dimensions of effective leadership (Arara et al., 2026). Thus, role modeling provided a bridge between transformational leadership and Islamic leadership. The transformational dimension explains how leaders influence followers through exemplary behavior, while the Islamic dimension establishes the ethical basis for why such behavior is considered legitimate and worthy of emulation.

Individualized consideration was evident in the leader's recognition of differences in teachers' professional experience, competencies, responsibilities, and developmental needs. Teachers were not treated as a homogeneous group requiring identical forms of supervision and support. More experienced teachers were encouraged to contribute their expertise, while teachers requiring additional assistance were provided with opportunities for mentoring, professional development, and feedback. Such practices are consistent with the transformational leadership principle of individualized consideration, in which leaders support the development of individual

organizational members. The finding can also be interpreted through the concept of professional capital proposed by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), which emphasizes the importance of investing in teachers' knowledge, collaborative relationships, and professional judgment. Leadership consequently contributed to organizational development by treating teacher development as an institutional investment rather than merely an individual responsibility.

Intellectual stimulation further strengthened the transformational character of leadership. Teachers were encouraged to discuss instructional problems, evaluate existing practices, identify alternative solutions, and experiment with new approaches. Rather than discouraging mistakes, the leadership created opportunities for teachers to learn from challenges and improve their practices. Such an environment is important for institutional innovation because teachers need sufficient intellectual and organizational space to question established routines. Anderson and Dexter (2005) demonstrate that educational innovation, particularly technology-related innovation, is strongly influenced by leadership conditions rather than merely by the availability of technological resources. The findings similarly indicate that innovation in the madrasah depended on leadership practices that encouraged teachers to think critically and creatively.

Consultative decision-making through shura represented a distinctive characteristic of leadership within the madrasah. Organizational decisions were discussed through meetings and consultation, allowing teachers and staff to communicate concerns, provide recommendations, and participate in determining institutional priorities. Shura therefore operated as an organizational practice rather than simply as a religious principle. It strengthened participation, distributed responsibility, and increased teacher ownership of institutional programs. This finding resonates with distributed leadership scholarship, which conceptualizes leadership as an activity that can be exercised by multiple organizational members rather than exclusively by formal leaders (Harris & Spillane, 2008). From an Islamic perspective, however, participation through shura also has a normative foundation in collective responsibility and consultation. This combination indicates that Islamic transformational leadership differs from conventional transformational leadership not necessarily in its organizational objectives, but in the ethical and relational foundations through which those objectives are pursued.

These findings demonstrate that Islamic values were not an additional component attached to transformational leadership after organizational decisions had been made. Instead, values such as amanah, shura, justice, integrity, responsibility, and exemplary conduct shaped the way transformational leadership was practiced. Islamic values provided the normative framework through which authority, participation, teacher development, and organizational change were interpreted. This finding supports the view that Islamic educational leadership combines organizational effectiveness with ethical and spiritual responsibility (Salleh, 2018), while extending that perspective by demonstrating how these values can operate together with transformational leadership practices in everyday organizational processes.

Organizational Culture and Teacher Professional Development

The findings show that transformational Islamic leadership influenced teacher development largely through the creation of an organizational culture characterized by trust, empowerment, collaboration, shared purpose, and opportunities for professional learning. The effects of leadership were therefore not limited to direct relationships between the principal and individual teachers. Leadership gradually shaped the organizational environment in which teachers interacted, learned, participated in decision-making, and developed new professional practices. This interpretation is consistent with Hallinger and Heck (2011), who argue that school leadership and organizational improvement should be understood as reciprocal processes in which leadership influences organizational conditions while organizational conditions simultaneously shape leadership effects.

Teacher empowerment became visible through increased opportunities for teachers to participate in planning, decision-making, problem solving, program implementation, and professional initiatives. Teachers were positioned as active contributors to institutional development rather than simply as implementers of decisions made by school administrators. Such empowerment reduced excessive dependence on formal leadership and enabled professional knowledge to become a distributed organizational resource. Harris (2008) emphasizes that distributed leadership can strengthen organizational capacity by extending leadership activity beyond formal positions. In the madrasah context, empowerment was additionally associated with amanah, whereby professional responsibility was understood as an ethical obligation.

Consequently, teacher autonomy was accompanied by expectations of accountability and commitment to institutional goals.

Collaboration emerged through collective planning, peer discussion, exchange of teaching experiences, joint problem solving, and professional learning activities. These practices provided teachers with opportunities to learn from one another and reduced professional isolation. The development of collaborative relationships is important because sustainable improvement requires teachers to share knowledge and collectively examine their practices. Vescio et al. (2008) found that professional learning communities can influence teaching practices and student learning when collaboration is focused on substantive professional learning rather than merely administrative meetings. Similarly, Goddard et al. (2007) demonstrate that teacher collaboration for school improvement is positively associated with student achievement. The present findings therefore suggest that leadership contributed to teacher development by creating conditions in which collaboration became part of organizational culture.

Trust constituted an important foundation of these collaborative relationships. Teachers were more willing to communicate problems, accept feedback, share ideas, and participate in decision-making when they perceived leadership as fair, consistent, and supportive. Bryk and Schneider (2002) identify relational trust as a core resource for school improvement because it enables organizational members to take risks, cooperate, and engage in collective problem solving. In the madrasah context, trust was reinforced by Islamic expectations concerning justice, integrity, responsibility, and mutual respect. Trust therefore functioned simultaneously as an organizational resource and a moral relationship.

The development of a shared vision further strengthened organizational cohesion. Teachers were increasingly able to connect individual professional responsibilities with broader institutional objectives. Shared vision reduced the distance between leadership priorities and teacher activities because organizational goals were understood collectively rather than imposed solely through administrative instructions. This finding reinforces the importance of collective teacher culture, in which shared values, supportive professional relationships, and collective efficacy contribute to positive organizational experiences (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021). A shared vision therefore served

as a cultural mechanism through which transformational leadership became embedded in everyday organizational practices.

Professional learning subsequently became an important outcome of the developing organizational culture. Teachers participated in training, peer learning, supervision, discussion, and collaborative reflection. These activities supported the development of professional knowledge while strengthening relationships among teachers. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) argue that sustainable educational improvement requires the development of professional capital through individual knowledge, social relationships, and professional judgment. The findings indicate that transformational Islamic leadership supported this process by creating opportunities for teachers to learn collectively and by treating professional development as a shared institutional responsibility.

Teacher innovation emerged from the interaction between empowerment, collaboration, trust, and professional learning. Teachers became more willing to experiment with instructional approaches, use technology, develop new programs, and adapt existing practices when organizational conditions provided sufficient support. Innovation was therefore not simply a personal characteristic of individual teachers. It was facilitated by a culture that encouraged experimentation and allowed teachers to learn from both success and failure. This finding is consistent with Anderson and Dexter (2005), who emphasize the importance of leadership in creating organizational conditions for educational innovation.

The findings indicate that leadership influenced teacher development through a cultural transformation within the madrasah. The most important change was not simply that teachers received more training, but that the organizational environment increasingly encouraged teachers to participate, collaborate, learn, and innovate. This finding provides an important explanation of how transformational Islamic leadership can produce organizational effects beyond the direct influence of the principal.

School Quality Improvement and the Transformational Islamic Leadership Model

The findings indicate that school quality improvement developed through the interaction of leadership, organizational culture, teacher professional development, institutional innovation, stakeholder engagement, and continuous evaluation. Quality improvement was not identified as a

single outcome produced directly by the principal, but as an organizational process emerging from changes in leadership practices and professional relationships. This interpretation supports the argument that leadership effects on student and school outcomes are mediated through organizational and instructional processes (Robinson et al., 2008).

Quality assurance became more meaningful when monitoring and evaluation were connected to improvement decisions. Evaluation was not treated solely as a mechanism for administrative reporting but as an opportunity to identify weaknesses, discuss solutions, and determine follow-up actions. Such an approach transformed quality assurance into a mechanism of organizational learning. Fullan (2007) emphasizes that sustainable educational change requires organizations to develop the capacity to learn continuously and adapt their practices in response to emerging conditions. The findings demonstrate a similar process within the madrasah, where evaluation became connected to subsequent organizational action.

Teacher performance was strengthened through clearer professional expectations, supervision, professional learning, collaboration, and opportunities for individual development. Rather than emphasizing control alone, leadership combined accountability with support. This balance is important because teacher performance is more likely to improve when professional expectations are accompanied by opportunities to develop professional knowledge and judgment. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) similarly emphasize that sustainable improvement depends on strengthening teachers' professional capital rather than relying exclusively on external accountability mechanisms.

Student achievement emerged as an indirect consequence of these organizational changes. Improvements in teacher collaboration, professional learning, instructional practices, and institutional support created conditions that could contribute to improved student learning. This interpretation is consistent with Robinson et al. (2008), who found that leadership practices with a direct focus on teaching and learning tend to have stronger relationships with student outcomes than leadership practices focused primarily on administration. The findings therefore suggest that transformational Islamic leadership contributes to student achievement through the development of the organizational and professional conditions necessary for effective teaching.

Institutional innovation was another important dimension of quality improvement. The madrasah developed new approaches to programs, professional learning, technology use, and organizational management. Innovation became more sustainable when teachers participated in its development and implementation. This finding supports Harris's (2008) argument that organizational learning and distributed leadership can create conditions for innovation by enabling knowledge to circulate among organizational members. Institutional innovation therefore reflected the cumulative effects of teacher empowerment and collaborative organizational culture.

Stakeholder engagement also strengthened the quality improvement process. Parents, committees, community members, and other educational stakeholders were increasingly viewed as partners rather than external observers. Communication and consultation expanded the resources available to the madrasah and strengthened institutional accountability. From an Islamic perspective, this engagement can be associated with collective responsibility and shura, through which educational decisions are understood as matters involving the wider community. Stakeholder engagement therefore reinforced both organizational effectiveness and the social legitimacy of institutional change.

Continuous improvement emerged as the central characteristic connecting these quality-related practices. Evaluation generated information for reflection; reflection informed organizational decisions; decisions led to new practices; and subsequent evaluation provided evidence for further adjustment. The significance of this process lies in its continuity. Quality improvement was not conceptualized as a one-time program but as an ongoing organizational responsibility. Bryk and Schneider (2002) emphasize that relational trust provides an important social foundation for sustained school improvement because organizational members are more willing to engage in collective change when relationships are characterized by respect, competence, personal regard, and integrity.

The integrated findings support the development of a Transformational Islamic School Leadership Model that explains quality improvement as a process rather than a direct leadership outcome. The model begins with transformational leadership practices and Islamic ethical values, which shape organizational relationships and create conditions for teacher empowerment, collaboration, trust, and shared purpose. These cultural conditions strengthen professional learning

and teacher innovation, which subsequently support improvements in teaching practice, quality assurance, institutional innovation, stakeholder engagement, and student outcomes. Continuous improvement integrates these processes by ensuring that evaluation and reflection are repeatedly translated into organizational action.

The theoretical contribution of the model lies in positioning Islamic values as an integral part of the leadership mechanism rather than as an additional cultural attribute. Amanah provides an ethical foundation for responsibility, shura strengthens participation, justice supports fair organizational relationships, and exemplary conduct strengthens leadership credibility. These values interact with transformational practices to create a form of leadership that is simultaneously visionary, participatory, developmental, and ethically grounded. The model therefore extends existing discussions of transformational school leadership by demonstrating how leadership practices can acquire different organizational meanings when enacted within an Islamic educational environment.

The findings demonstrate that transformational Islamic leadership contributes to madrasah quality improvement through a sequence of mutually reinforcing organizational processes. Leadership establishes shared direction and ethical legitimacy; organizational culture creates trust and participation; teacher development strengthens professional capacity; innovation translates capacity into new practices; and quality assurance sustains organizational learning. The central contribution of the study is therefore the identification of leadership as an enabling mechanism for organizational transformation, rather than as a simple predictor of school quality. This perspective provides a more comprehensive explanation of why quality improvement in madrasahs depends on the simultaneous development of leadership, culture, teacher professionalism, institutional innovation, and continuous organizational learning.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that transformational Islamic leadership provides an important organizational mechanism for strengthening the capacity of Indonesian madrasahs to undertake sustainable educational change. Leadership practices were characterized by vision building, inspirational motivation, exemplary conduct, individualized consideration, intellectual

stimulation, and consultative decision-making through shura. These practices were not implemented independently from the religious identity of the institution but were grounded in Islamic values including amanah, justice, integrity, responsibility, consultation, and exemplary conduct. The findings consequently demonstrate that transformational leadership in a madrasah context extends beyond administrative influence because leadership legitimacy is simultaneously constructed through professional competence, relational trust, and moral example. The leader's ability to communicate a shared educational vision and translate that vision into collective institutional responsibility became an important foundation for organizational transformation.

The second conclusion concerns the relationship between leadership, organizational culture, and teacher professional development. Transformational Islamic leadership influenced teachers not merely through direct supervision but through the development of an organizational environment characterized by trust, empowerment, collaboration, shared purpose, and professional learning. Teachers were increasingly positioned as active contributors to institutional development, enabling professional knowledge and experience to become organizational resources. Collaboration, peer learning, reflective discussion, and professional development created opportunities for teachers to improve their practices and develop innovative responses to educational challenges. The findings therefore indicate that organizational culture functions as an important mechanism connecting leadership practices with teacher development. Sustainable improvement is unlikely to emerge when leadership depends exclusively on hierarchical control; rather, it requires an organizational culture that encourages participation, professional learning, innovation, and shared responsibility.

The third conclusion is that transformational Islamic leadership contributes to school quality improvement through interconnected processes involving quality assurance, teacher performance, student learning, institutional innovation, stakeholder engagement, and continuous improvement. The study proposes a Transformational Islamic School Leadership Model in which Islamic values provide the ethical foundation for transformational practices, while organizational culture and teacher professional development provide the mechanisms through which leadership contributes to quality outcomes. The theoretical implication is that Islamic values should be positioned as an integral component of leadership mechanisms rather than as an additional cultural attribute.

Managerially, madrasah leaders should strengthen participatory decision-making, teacher empowerment, professional learning, and systematic quality assurance. The study is limited by its qualitative case study design and contextual focus on a single institutional setting; therefore, future research should examine the model across different types of madrasahs and educational contexts to assess its transferability and further develop its explanatory capacity.

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