



THE ROLE OF THE MADRASAH PRINCIPAL IN LEARNING QUALITY MANAGEMENT THROUGH A TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE IN MADRASAH IBTIDAIYAH

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to analyze the role of madrasah principals in the management of learning quality from the perspective of transformational leadership in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. **Methods:** The method used is qualitative research with a case study approach. The research subjects were madrasah principals, vice principals in charge of curriculum, teachers, and madrasah committees at three State Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Bandar Lampung City, selected purposively based on A accreditation criteria and academic achievement. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model through the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and methodological triangulation. **Results:** The research findings indicate that madrasah principals who consistently practice transformational leadership are able to improve the quality of learning through four main channels, namely (1) building a shared vision that inspires the entire madrasah community; (2) developing teachers' professional capacity through needs-based coaching; (3) the creation of an innovative and collaborative learning culture; and (4) the strengthening of a learning evaluation system oriented toward continuous improvement.

ABSTRAK

Objective: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran kepala madrasah dalam manajemen mutu pembelajaran melalui perspektif kepemimpinan transformasional di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. **Methods:** Metode yang digunakan adalah penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Subjek penelitian adalah kepala madrasah, wakil kepala bidang kurikulum, guru, dan komite madrasah pada tiga Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri di Kota Bandar Lampung yang dipilih secara purposive berdasarkan kriteria akreditasi A dan pencapaian prestasi akademik. Teknik pengumpulan data mencakup wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan dengan model Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña melalui tahap kondensasi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Keabsahan data dijamin melalui triangulasi sumber dan triangulasi teknik. **Results:** Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepala madrasah yang menerapkan kepemimpinan transformasional secara konsisten mampu meningkatkan mutu pembelajaran melalui empat jalur utama, yaitu (1) pembangunan visi bersama yang menginspirasi seluruh warga madrasah; (2) pengembangan kapasitas profesional guru melalui pembinaan berbasis kebutuhan; (3) penciptaan budaya belajar yang inovatif dan kolaboratif; serta (4) penguatan sistem evaluasi pembelajaran yang berorientasi pada perbaikan berkelanjutan.

Kata kunci: Kepala Madrasah, Kepemimpinan Transformasional, Manajemen Mutu, Mutu Pembelajaran, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

INTRODUCTION

The quality of education is a central variable in efforts to improve Indonesia's globally competitive human resources. In the context of Islamic education, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah plays a strategic role as a basic education level that not only transfers general knowledge but also shapes the character and religious identity of students (Munawir et al., 2025). However, empirical reality shows that most madrasahs still face serious challenges in terms of learning quality, which is reflected in the low literacy and numeracy competencies of students, limited pedagogical competencies of teachers, and the suboptimal quality management system at the educational unit level (Noviandari et al., 2025).

The quality of learning in madrasahs is inextricably linked to the leadership quality of the principal as a manager and instructional leader. A madrasah principal is not simply an administrator who manages the technical-bureaucratic aspects of education delivery, but rather an agent of change responsible for creating conditions conducive to the growth of a high-quality learning culture. From a contemporary educational management perspective, the effectiveness of a madrasah principal's leadership is seen as a primary determinant of a school's success in achieving established quality standards (Bush, 2020; Ma & Marion, 2024).

The transformational leadership theory, developed by (Eaton et al., 2024) and then operationalized in greater detail, (Den Hartog, 2023) provides a relevant conceptual framework for understanding how madrasah principals can influence the quality of learning. Transformational leadership is characterized by four main dimensions: idealized influence (exemplary behavior and charisma), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These four dimensions are theoretically positively correlated with improved teacher performance and the quality of the learning process (Wilson Heenan et al., 2024; Ytterstad & Olaisen, 2023).

Several previous studies have explored educational leadership. First, a study (Supandi, 2023) examining transformational leadership in public elementary schools found that the dimensions of inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation contributed most to improving teacher performance. However, this study did not address the madrasah context with its inherent Islamic values. Second, a study (Hakim, 2016) on school-based management in madrasahs identified that the main weaknesses lie in the aspects of quality planning and monitoring and evaluation of learning, without explicitly linking them to the leadership style of the madrasah principal. Third, comparative research (Nadeem, 2024) shows that effective transformational leadership models in Western countries require contextual adaptation when applied in countries with a tradition of religious-based education. Fourth, a study (Sarinah et al., 2024) on the influence of transformational leadership on teacher work motivation in South Sumatra found a significant positive correlation, but did not specifically explore the mechanism of the relationship between principal leadership and learning quality management.

These studies have identified three gaps that remain unaddressed. First, there has been no comprehensive study linking all dimensions of transformational leadership with integrated learning quality management practices in the context of elementary madrasahs. Second, existing studies tend to use a quantitative approach that measures variable correlations, thus under-detailing the process mechanisms by which transformational leadership influences learning quality. Third, Islamic values, which are characteristic of madrasahs, have not been positioned as meaningful explanatory variables within the transformational leadership framework. Based on these gaps, this study aims to analyze the

role of madrasah principals in learning quality management through the perspective of transformational leadership in elementary madrasah.

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative research method with a case study approach. This approach was chosen based on the exploratory-interpretive research objective, namely to deeply understand how the transformational leadership of madrasah principals operates within the specific and context-bound context of learning quality management. The case study approach was chosen because it allows researchers to examine phenomena in their natural settings, integrate various sources of evidence, and produce rich and meaningful descriptions (DeMarrais et al., 2024; Hancock et al., 2021). The design used was a multiple case study with three case units selected purposively. This design selection allows for cross-case analysis that produces findings with a stronger level of analytical generalization than a single case study.

The research subjects consisted of key informants and supporting informants. Key informants were the principals of three State Elementary Madrasahs in Bandar Lampung City. Supporting informants included the deputy head of curriculum, senior teachers, and the head of the madrasah committee from each institution. The selection of informants used a purposive sampling technique with the following criteria: (1) the madrasah has been accredited A; (2) the madrasah principal has served for at least three years; (3) the madrasah has shown a trend of increasing quality of learning outcomes in the last three years. A total of 27 informants were involved (3 madrasah principals, 6 deputy principals, 12 teachers, and 6 committee members). The object of the research was the transformational leadership practices of madrasah principals and their implementation in learning quality management.

Data were collected through three main techniques. First, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with all informants using an interview guide developed based on the dimensions of transformational leadership and components of learning quality management. Each interview lasted 60 to 90 minutes and was recorded with the informant's consent. Second, participant observations were conducted in various forums: teacher council meetings, academic supervision, Teacher Working Group activities, and classroom learning processes. Observations used a structured observation guide recorded in observation sheets and field notes. Third, a documentation study was conducted on various documents: the madrasah principal's work program, academic supervision reports, madrasah work plans, madrasah budget work plans, madrasah quality profiles, and accreditation documents.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, (Vanover et al., 2021) which consists of three simultaneous activity streams: data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. The data condensation stage involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming data from field notes, interview transcripts, and documents. The data presentation stage organized the condensed information into matrices, graphs, and narratives to facilitate conclusion drawing. Cross-case analysis was conducted to identify consistent patterns and meaningful variations across the three cases. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation (comparing data from the principal, teachers, and documents), technical triangulation (comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation), and member checking, which involved submitting a summary of findings to key informants for confirmation. The transferability of the research results was supported by the presentation of a detailed contextual description

(thick description).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Implementation of Idealized Influence in Learning Quality Management

The results of the study at three State Islamic Elementary Schools (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri) showed that the principals consistently displayed exemplary behavior (role modeling) that served as the foundation for all components of quality management. The principals arrived earlier than all teaching staff, actively participated in learning activities, and demonstrated a personal commitment to Quranic values in their daily professional lives. Teacher informants stated that the principals' exemplary behavior created positive normative pressure that encouraged all teachers to improve their discipline and commitment to teaching quality.

"I always try to be the first to arrive at the madrasah before the teachers arrive. This isn't just a routine, but a form of my moral responsibility as a leader. If the principal isn't disciplined, how can I expect the teachers and students to be?" (Interview, Principal of State Elementary Madrasah 1, February 14, 2026)

"The principal never missed the Dhuha prayer in congregation with us. He also always accompanied us in the morning memorization process. From that, we felt that he himself upheld the standards he demanded of us." (Interview, Senior Teacher at State Elementary School 2, February 21, 2026)

In the quality management dimension, idealized influence is manifested through the development of an institutional vision grounded in Islamic values and oriented toward academic excellence. The three madrasah principals studied had a vision for their madrasah that was formulated in a participatory manner and continuously communicated through various formal and informal forums. This vision serves as a moral compass that guides every quality management decision, including the establishment of learning standards, curriculum development, and resource allocation.

"Our madrasah's vision, 'Excellent in Achievement, Noble in Morals,' isn't just a wall-print. Every meeting, every decision, we always return to that vision. Does it support excellence? Does it reflect noble morals? If not, we revise it." (Interview, Principal of State Elementary School 2, February 22, 2026)

"When we were developing the local content curriculum this year, the principal invited all the teachers, even the committee and parents, to sit down together to formulate it. No one felt that the vision belonged solely to the principal; it was a shared vision for all of us." (Interview, Deputy Principal of Curriculum, State Elementary School 3, March 5, 2026)

A process of developing a local-content curriculum that involves both internal and external stakeholders as a tangible manifestation of a participatory vision. The success of "idealized influence" here is measured not by compliance with the authority of the madrasah principal, but by a sense of shared ownership a stronger indicator of the vision's sustainability than mere passive acceptance.

Implementation of Inspirational Motivation in Improving Teacher Performance

The madrasah principals in all three cases actively fostered a motivational atmosphere that encouraged teachers to exceed minimum performance standards. Practices found included (1) public appreciation for learning innovations developed by teachers in teacher council meetings and ceremonial activities; (2) progressive communication about madrasah quality achievements that linked teachers' hard work to real impacts on student development; and (3) collaboratively setting ambitious yet realistic quality targets.

"At the beginning of every school year, the principal always encourages us to set shared goals. He never imposes a specific number, but he always asks, 'What do you think we can achieve if we work harder this year?' That way of asking motivates us to dream bigger." (Interview, Grade IV Teacher, State Elementary School 1, February 15, 2026)

The impact of this inspirational motivation practice is evident in the average teacher attendance rate of 97.3% across the three madrasahs, as well as increased teacher initiative in developing innovative media and learning methods without being explicitly asked by the madrasah principal. Eight of the twelve teachers interviewed stated that their motivation to innovate has increased significantly since the current madrasah principal took office.

"Since the current principal took over, I feel more valued as a teacher. When I first tried the project-based learning method, he immediately asked me to share my experience at a teacher council meeting. Even though the results weren't perfect, it gave me the confidence to continue innovating." (Interview, Grade VI Teacher, State Islamic Elementary School 3, March 7, 2026)

"He often said in meetings that every child who graduates from this madrasah and becomes a useful person is a continuous reward for all of us. Such words moved me more than mere allowances or incentives." (Interview, Islamic Religious Education Teacher, State Elementary Madrasah 2, February 23, 2026)

Inspirational motivation in the context of madrasahs operates through transcendental channels that are not covered by Western theories of transformational leadership (which generally focus on professional-secular motivation).

Implementation of Intellectual Stimulation in Teacher Professional Development

The intellectual stimulation dimension is realized through a series of systematic and ongoing teacher professional development programs. The principals of the three State Elementary Madrasahs (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah) have designed an academic supervision system that is collegial and formative, rather than evaluative-punitive. Supervision is conducted at least twice per semester using instruments developed collaboratively by the principal, the deputy head of curriculum, and senior teachers.

"Supervision used to be scary, like being examined by a superior. Now it's different. The principal comes into class not to judge, but to help. After supervision, we sit together and he mostly asks questions like, 'What do you think could be improved?' That makes me feel respected as a professional." (Interview, Grade III Teacher, State Islamic Elementary School 1, February 16, 2026)

The development programs identified included In-House Training (IHT) held at the beginning of the school year and mid-semester, the establishment of cross-grade teacher learning communities (CLCs), and the assignment of teachers to participate in structured Teacher Working Group activities at the sub-district and city levels. The principal also encouraged teachers to conduct classroom action research and present the results in internal madrasa forums.

"The IHT we conduct at the beginning of each semester is different from regular training. The principal asks us to determine the topics ourselves based on our reflections on the previous semester's learning. So the material is truly relevant to the issues we face in class." (Interview, Deputy Head of Curriculum, State Elementary School 2, February 24, 2026)

"I was initially hesitant when asked to conduct Classroom Action Research. But the principal assured me that it wasn't an additional burden, but rather the most effective way to solve a problem I'd long faced in learning mathematics. It turned out to be true; the results also helped my students." (Interview, Mathematics Teacher, State Elementary School 3, March 8, 2026)

The effectiveness of intellectual stimulation depends on the principal's ability to reframe the task (from an "additional burden" to a "solution to a real problem"), rather than simply instructing students to conduct research.

Implementation of Individualized Consideration in Human Resource Management

The principals in all three cases demonstrated individualized concern for each teacher's development needs. Through teacher competency mapping based on supervision data, the principals designed personalized and differentiated development programs. Teachers with weaknesses in classroom management received mentoring from senior teachers, while teachers who demonstrated high competency were encouraged to serve as instructors or resource persons in professional development activities.

"The principal once called me in private after reviewing the results of my supervision. He didn't immediately judge me, but instead asked, 'What do you need to make your class more conducive?' From there, we agreed that I would be a one-week internship in Mrs. Lilis's class, which is known for its excellent classroom management." (Interview, Grade II Teacher at State Elementary School 1, February 17, 2026)

"Every teacher here has their own development roadmap, developed in collaboration with the principal. As a long-time teacher, I was given the responsibility of mentoring the new teachers. This makes me feel like I still have a vital role to play, even though I'm older." (Interview, Senior Teacher at State Elementary School 2, February 25, 2026)

Individual attention is also demonstrated through open, informal communication between the principal and teachers. Observations revealed that the principal routinely engages in informal conversations with teachers outside of formal supervision schedules, inquiring about learning progress and challenges. This practice creates a safe psychological climate for teachers to acknowledge weaknesses and seek help without fear.

"The principal often comes up to me in the cafeteria or the hallway, just to ask, 'How are you, ma'am? Are there any difficulties in class this week?' A small question like that feels very meaningful. I don't hesitate to tell him if I have a problem, because I know he really cares and is ready to help." (Interview, Grade 1 Teacher, State Islamic Elementary School 3, March 10, 2026)

Individualized consideration here is fostered not through formal mechanisms, but through repeated informal interactions in everyday spaces such as the cafeteria and hallways an approach that actually lowers teachers' psychological barriers to opening up about their difficulties ("feeling comfortable"), as reflected in the asymmetry between the small scale of the questions and the perceived significant impact ("feels very meaningful"); Nevertheless, the claim that the madrasah principal "truly cares" remains a subjective attribution by the informants that is difficult to verify independently.

Integration Model of Transformational Leadership with Learning Quality Management

This study found that the four dimensions of transformational leadership do not operate independently, but rather reinforce each other within an integrated system. Idealized influence builds a foundation of trust and institutional commitment; inspirational motivation generates collective energy for change; intellectual stimulation provides the capacity and competence for change; and individualized consideration ensures that change occurs in an inclusive and sustainable manner. These four dimensions synergize to create conditions that support effective learning quality management, including: data-driven learning planning, innovative learning implementation, formative monitoring and evaluation systems, and a culture of continuous improvement.

"From my observation, what makes this madrasa different is not its facilities or large budget, but rather its principal who truly leads with heart. He is our role model, our inspiration, our educator, and our conversation partner. These four things cannot be separated." (Interview, Head of the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 1 Committee, February 18, 2026)

"We on the committee have seen very real changes in the past three years. Test scores have improved, but more importantly, our children have become more disciplined and morally upright. This wouldn't have been possible without a leader who consistently implemented those values every day." (Interview, Member of the Committee of State Elementary School 3, March 12, 2026)

From the committee's external perspective, academic improvement is mentioned as an outcome with a clear hierarchy of values, yet it is explicitly placed below changes in students' character as something "more important," in line with the vision of "Excellence in Achievement, Nobility in Character"; however, the causal claim that this change "could not have occurred" without consistent leadership is a subjective attribution by the informant that, methodologically, cannot rule out the possibility that other factors (such as curriculum changes or student characteristics) also contributed.

Discussion

Transformational Leadership as a Catalyst for Learning Quality

The research findings showing that the idealized influence of madrasah principals

serves as a foundation for quality management broaden and deepen the conceptualization (Ridic et al., 2025) of the role of charisma in transformational leadership. The research (Fawaid & Goffar, 2025) emphasized the charisma dimension in the context of business organizations. This study found that in the madrasah context, this dimension is strengthened by religious values that become the institutional ethos. Madrasah principals who consistently display exemplary behavior based on Islamic values not only build personal credibility but also strengthen the madrasah's institutional identity as a holistic educational institution that integrates academic excellence with moral integrity. This finding is in line with studies (Silvia & Nurhadi, 2023) on Islamic leadership in the madrasah context, which found that the integration of Islamic values into leadership practices significantly increases the effectiveness of leaders' influence on followers.

The inspirational motivation mechanisms identified in this study are unique compared to those reported (Leithwood et al., 2020) in the Canadian public school context. In the madrasah context, teachers' intrinsic motivation is strengthened not only by a professional orientation but also by a transcendental motivation based on the belief that teaching is an act of worship (*amal shalih*). Madrasah principals who are able to link quality improvement programs with spiritual dimensions successfully build teacher commitment that goes beyond mere compliance with rules. The theoretical implication of these findings is the need to develop a religiously sensitive transformational leadership model in the study of educational leadership in Muslim countries.

Academic Supervision as an Implementation of Intellectual Stimulation

The findings on a collegial and formative academic supervision system as a form of intellectual stimulation enrich the discourse on instructional leadership. In contrast to the (Arasli et al., 2025) still-dominant evaluative-punitive supervision model in many schools, this study found that effective madrasah principals have successfully shifted the supervision paradigm from bureaucratic control to professional coaching. This paradigm shift did not occur spontaneously, but rather as the result of a process of organizational culture transformation consciously led by the madrasah principals. Teachers at the three State Madrasahs reported that this shift in supervision paradigm directly increased their comfort in experimenting with new learning methods, as mistakes were viewed as learning opportunities, rather than as failures that would impact performance assessments.

Comparisons with research (Windiawan et al., 2024) show similarities in the importance of collegial supervision, but this study adds the dimension that, in the madrasah context, supervision effectiveness is also influenced by the level of trust established through the principal's exemplary behavior. Without a foundation of idealized influence, the implementation of intellectual stimulation could potentially be perceived as a form of covert supervision by teachers, thus reducing its effectiveness.

Individualized Consideration and Human Capital Development

The individualized consideration practices found in this study resonate with the concept of Human Capital Development (HCD) in educational human resource management. Unlike studies (Hariyasasti, 2025; Rachmad et al., 2023) that measure the aggregate influence of transformational leadership on teacher work motivation, this research reveals the micro-mechanisms of how individual attention from madrasah principals creates gradual and sustainable teacher capacity development. The competency mapping system

based on supervisory data found in the three State Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (Islamic Elementary Schools) represents an innovative practice that synergistically integrates quality management and human resource development functions.

The practical implication of these findings is the importance of madrasah principals developing supervisory data literacy to design coaching programs that are truly responsive to individual teacher needs. Within the context of national policy, these findings support the urgency of strengthening madrasah principals' capacity in teacher performance data analysis as a core competency of instructional leadership.

Integrative Model as a Theoretical Contribution

The most important finding of this study is the identification of an integrative model of transformational leadership in madrasah learning quality management, which places Islamic values as a contextual factor that strengthens and colors all dimensions of transformational leadership. This model has significant theoretical implications for the development of educational leadership theory, particularly in addressing criticism that transformational leadership theory developed in Western contexts requires recontextualization when applied in Islamic education environments (Jain et al., 2022; Wilson Heenan et al., 2023). This model also has policy implications for the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in designing madrasah principal training programs that integrate modern leadership competencies with the strengthening of professional identity based on Islamic values.

CONCLUSION

The transformational leadership of madrasah principals has been proven to be a driving force for improving the quality of learning through four mutually reinforcing channels: Islamic value-based role models that build institutional trust, inspirational motivation that activates teachers' transcendental commitment, intellectual stimulation that continuously enhances professional capacity, and individual attention that ensures the inclusive development of each teacher. What distinguishes this model from generic conceptualizations of transformational leadership is the central role of Islamic values as a catalyst that strengthens all dimensions of leadership while providing moral legitimacy for the entire quality management program. The integrative model produced by this study emphasizes that learning quality management in madrasahs cannot be adequately understood solely through a value-neutral modern management framework, but rather requires integration with the dimensions of Islamic spirituality and wisdom that are the soul of madrasah institutions. Effective madrasah principals are those who are able to bridge these two dimensions harmoniously in their daily leadership practices.

For future researchers, it is recommended to develop a quantitative instrument that can operationalize the integrative model generated by this study, so that its generalizability can be tested across a broader population. Comparative research between madrasahs and public schools with similar quality profiles will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of religious factors in moderating the relationship between transformational leadership and learning quality. Furthermore, longitudinal studies are needed to understand the dynamics of changes in madrasah quality culture as a long-term impact of transformational leadership.

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