

Leading with Prophetic Values: How Islamic Leadership Transparency Cultivates Organizational Trust

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the implementation of Islamic leadership transparency, its role in building trust-based management, and the organizational factors that support and hinder its implementation. This study used a qualitative approach with a case study method at two Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, with validation through source triangulation and member checking. The results show that Islamic leadership transparency is realized through the internalization of prophetic values, namely *tabligh*, *sidq*, *amanah*, and *fatānah*, which contribute to building organizational trust by strengthening procedural justice, interactional justice, and distributive justice. The implementation of transparency is supported by the integrity of leaders, open communication, and a strong Islamic organizational culture. Conversely, a hierarchical bureaucratic structure and limited access to information are inhibiting factors in its implementation. This research highlights the importance of developing governance in Islamic educational organizations based on transparency, accountability, and prophetic values to strengthen trust and the effectiveness of organizational management on a sustainable basis.

Keywords: *Leadership, Trust-Based Management, Prophetic Values, Islamic Higher Education*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi transparansi kepemimpinan Islami, perannya dalam membangun manajemen berbasis kepercayaan, serta faktor-faktor organisasi yang mendukung dan menghambat penerapannya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus pada dua institusi pendidikan tinggi Islam di Indonesia. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi nonpartisipan, dan analisis dokumen. Data dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña yang meliputi kondensasi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan kesimpulan, dengan validasi melalui triangulasi sumber dan member checking. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa transparansi kepemimpinan Islami diwujudkan melalui internalisasi nilai-nilai kenabian, yaitu *tabligh*, *sidq*, *amanah*, dan

faṭānah, yang berkontribusi dalam membangun kepercayaan organisasi melalui penguatan keadilan prosedural, keadilan interaksional, dan keadilan distributif. Implementasi transparansi didukung oleh integritas pemimpin, komunikasi terbuka, serta budaya organisasi Islami yang kuat. Sebaliknya, struktur birokrasi yang hierarkis dan keterbatasan akses terhadap informasi menjadi faktor penghambat dalam penerapannya. Penelitian ini berimplikasi pada pentingnya pengembangan tata kelola organisasi pendidikan Islam berbasis transparansi, akuntabilitas, dan nilai-nilai kenabian untuk memperkuat kepercayaan serta efektivitas manajemen organisasi secara berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: *Kepemimpinan, Manajemen Berbasis Kepercayaan, Nilai Kenabian, Pendidikan Tinggi Islam*

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INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions occupy a strategic position in shaping human resources capable of supporting sustainable social, economic, and cultural development (Mahesh, Aithal, & Sharma, 2024). Beyond producing graduates with academic competence, higher education is expected to cultivate ethical integrity, social responsibility, and public accountability that strengthen democratic governance and institutional legitimacy (Aminah et al., 2025; Gbadago et al., 2025; Hasanah et al., 2026). As societies become increasingly interconnected and information-driven, stakeholders demand greater openness regarding institutional decision-making, financial management, and policy implementation (Steenmans et al., 2023). Transparency has therefore evolved from a managerial preference into a societal expectation that influences public confidence in educational organizations. Institutions perceived as transparent are more likely to attract stakeholder participation, encourage collaborative governance, and sustain organizational credibility over time. Conversely, limited transparency often undermines institutional legitimacy because stakeholders become uncertain about leadership's intentions and the organization's integrity. Consequently, leadership transparency has become a strategic concern that extends beyond organizational efficiency to broader societal interests, making it an increasingly significant issue in contemporary educational management research (Adole, 2024; Gupta et al., 2025; Arifin, 2026).

Despite this growing expectation, many higher education institutions continue to face governance challenges stemming from inadequate transparency and limited stakeholder engagement (Basheer, Ahmed, Bahrour, & Anane, 2025; Hasanah et al., 2026). Organizational decisions are frequently communicated only after implementation, while opportunities for lecturers, staff, students, and external stakeholders to participate in policy formulation remain relatively restricted (Muhaeminah & Munawwaroh, 2025; Ukeje et al., 2026). Such conditions create information asymmetry that encourages misunderstanding, resistance to institutional policies, and a decline in organizational trust. The absence of transparent communication also weakens perceptions of fairness and accountability, reducing employees' commitment and stakeholders' willingness to support institutional development. These governance problems become more critical within Islamic higher educational

institutions because leadership is expected not only to achieve managerial effectiveness but also to embody ethical values derived from Islamic teachings, including honesty, justice, trustworthiness, and responsibility (Ibrahim et al., 2025; Ulum et al., 2025; Syadidunniam et al., 2026). Consequently, strengthening leadership transparency is no longer merely an administrative obligation but a strategic necessity for restoring trust, reinforcing institutional legitimacy, and ensuring sustainable educational governance.

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that ethical leadership, transparency, and organizational trust contribute positively to educational effectiveness and institutional sustainability (Brigue & Orlu, 2023; Ulum et al., 2025; Syafrudin, 2026; Khomairohtusshiyamah et al., 2026). Research on Islamic leadership highlights that leaders who practice justice, integrity, consultation, and responsibility foster stronger organizational commitment, healthier institutional culture, and improved organizational performance. Other investigations emphasize that transparent governance enhances accountability, stakeholder participation, and institutional credibility by reducing uncertainty surrounding organizational decisions (Abdullah & Sukriyah, 2026; Efunniyi et al., 2024; Fitri, Hilmiyati, & Juhji, 2026). Likewise, studies of organizational trust identify openness, fairness, competence, and integrity as essential antecedents influencing collaboration and long-term organizational commitment. Although these studies collectively confirm the importance of Islamic leadership and transparency, they predominantly examine these constructs independently or treat transparency as a single dimension within broader governance practices. Consequently, existing literature provides only a partial explanation of how transparency specifically serves as the mechanism by which Islamic leadership values are translated into trust-based management within higher education institutions.

Although previous research has generated valuable insights into ethical leadership and organizational governance, several important limitations remain unresolved. First, most studies focus primarily on the direct influence of Islamic leadership on organizational performance, employee commitment, or job satisfaction, while giving limited attention to the governance mechanisms that explain how these outcomes are achieved (Du & Bhumithavara, 2026; Sodiq et al., 2024; Yakubu et al., 2025). Second, transparency is generally examined as a component of good governance rather than as an independent construct that links Islamic leadership values to organizational trust (Mursid et al., 2026; Rastgar et al., 2023). Third, existing studies rarely investigate the dynamic interaction among transparency, ethical leadership, and trust within higher Islamic educational institutions, despite their distinctive organizational context that integrates managerial responsibilities with religious and moral obligations (Nasir & Nazar, 2026; Noor et al., 2025; Rosalina et al., 2026). As a result, empirical evidence on how leadership transparency rooted in Islamic values fosters sustainable, trust-based management remains fragmented. This unresolved gap restricts

theoretical advancement and limits practical guidance for strengthening governance in Islamic higher education.

To address these limitations, this study positions Islamic leadership transparency as the central mechanism linking Islamic ethical leadership to trust-based management. Unlike previous studies that investigate leadership, transparency, or organizational trust in isolation, this research integrates these constructs into a unified conceptual framework that explains how transparency transforms Islamic leadership principles into institutional trust and sustainable governance practices. The proposed perspective argues that transparency grounded in Islamic values encourages open communication (*tabligh*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), honesty (*shiddiq*), wisdom (*fathanah*), accountability, and participatory decision-making, thereby strengthening organizational legitimacy and stakeholder confidence. This conceptual integration represents the study's primary novelty because it extends existing theories of educational governance by emphasizing transparency not merely as an administrative practice but as a moral and strategic leadership process that reinforces trust-based educational management within higher Islamic educational institutions.

Building on this perspective, the study seeks to address an important research problem concerning how Islamic leadership transparency contributes to the establishment of trust-based management in higher education institutions. Although transparency is widely acknowledged as a prerequisite for good governance, little empirical evidence explains how transparency derived from Islamic leadership values is implemented in everyday organizational practices and how it influences stakeholder trust. Accordingly, this study argues that leadership transparency serves as the critical mechanism through which ethical values are translated into organizational legitimacy, collaborative governance, and sustainable institutional development. Guided by this argument, the research addresses three questions: how transparency is implemented within Islamic leadership practices, how transparent leadership contributes to the development of trust-based management, and what organizational factors facilitate or hinder this relationship. Answering these questions is expected to advance Islamic educational management theory and provide practical recommendations for developing transparent, trustworthy, and sustainable governance in higher education institutions.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design to explore the implementation of Islamic leadership transparency and its contribution to trust-based management in higher education institutions. A qualitative descriptive approach was selected because transparency and organizational trust are socially constructed phenomena that require an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and institutional contexts.

The research was conducted at the Diniyyah Islamic Institute of Pekanbaru and the Islamic University of Indragiri Riau, Indonesia. These institutions were purposively selected due to their integration of Islamic

values, accountability, ethical leadership, and transparent governance practices. Participants included institutional leaders, lecturers, and educational staff selected through purposive sampling for their involvement in leadership, decision-making, and institutional management.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. Interviews explored participants' perspectives on leadership transparency, organizational trust, and managerial practices, while observations and document analysis examined communication patterns, decision-making processes, institutional policies, accountability reports, and governance documents. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification (Hidana et al., 2026).

The trustworthiness of the findings was ensured through source and methodological triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, and an audit trail. These procedures strengthened the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transparency of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Implementation of Islamic Leadership Transparency

Islamic leadership transparency in this study refers to leadership practices that consistently demonstrate openness in communicating institutional policies, honesty in decision-making, accountability in human resources and financial management, and exemplary behavior that reflects the Islamic values of *tabligh*, *şidq*, and *amanah*. Field findings indicate that transparency is not merely understood as providing information but as an ethical process through which leaders explain the rationale behind decisions, involve organizational members, and ensure that institutional governance is perceived as fair and accountable. Although both institutions have implemented various transparency mechanisms, the level of implementation differs across managerial domains, with strategic policies generally receiving greater transparency than operational decisions.

The first interview finding demonstrates that transparency is primarily reflected through the communication of academic policies. One rector explained: "Every policy decision, whether curriculum changes, new program establishment, or academic calendar adjustments, is first discussed in leadership meetings, then conveyed through official decrees posted on our internal portal. I also personally explain major policies during plenary lecturer meetings each semester. This is not just administration; it is *tabligh*, our obligation to deliver information clearly and completely." (Rector, DINI-001).

This statement indicates that transparency is interpreted as an institutional obligation to communicate decisions systematically and openly. The researcher interprets *tabligh* as not merely information dissemination but as a leadership principle that strengthens organizational legitimacy by ensuring that institutional members understand both the content and the rationale of strategic policies.

A different perspective emerged from another participant regarding operational transparency: “We receive policy information through meetings and official letters. The transparency is good for major policies. But for routine operational decisions budget adjustments, workload changes, task assignments sometimes the explanation comes after implementation, not before. True tabligh would mean informing before deciding, not just after.” (Lecturer, UNISI-009). This interview reveals that transparency is perceived differently between strategic and operational management. While strategic policies are communicated openly, routine managerial decisions often remain less transparent. The researcher interprets this finding as evidence that transparency tends to be reactive rather than participatory, indicating that institutional openness has not yet been fully integrated into everyday managerial practices.

Field observations corroborated the interview findings, showing that Islamic leadership transparency was implemented through formal communication mechanisms, accountable decision-making, and ethical leadership practices. During three leadership meetings, institutional leaders communicated policy rationales through presentations, question-and-answer sessions, and the dissemination of official documents via internal information systems, reflecting procedural transparency. However, lecturer participation remained limited due to a hierarchical organizational culture that discouraged open questioning of leadership decisions. This indicates that while procedural transparency has been established, participatory transparency remains underdeveloped. Overall, transparency was stronger in strategic policy communication than in operational areas such as workload distribution, financial management, and administrative processes. Thus, Islamic leadership transparency operates through a hierarchical model that strengthens accountability but remains constrained in promoting inclusive participation, equal access to information, and collaborative decision-making.

Table 1. Implementation of Transparency in Islamic Leadership

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
Rector (DINI-001)	Academic policies are discussed collectively and communicated through meetings, official decrees, and institutional portals before implementation.	Academic policy openness (tabligh)
Lecturer (UNISI-009)	Operational decisions are often explained only after implementation rather than before.	Participatory transparency
Director (UNISI-002)	Leaders explain the rationale, supporting data, and constraints behind controversial decisions.	Honest decision-making (şidq)
Senior Lecturer (DINI-012)	Committee positions are openly announced with published selection criteria.	Fair human resource management (amanah)
Junior Lecturer (UNISI-014)	Teaching workload allocation lacks transparent criteria and adequate explanation.	Accountability in human resource management

Staff (UNISI-019)	Leaders demonstrate transparency through consistent personal examples and a modest lifestyle.	Leadership exemplarity (şidq & amanah)
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Table 1 presents representative interview excerpts illustrating how Islamic leadership transparency is implemented across various organizational functions in higher education institutions. Findings indicate that transparency is realized through open academic policies (tabligh), honest decision-making (şidq), fair human resource management (amanah), and exemplary leadership. However, evidence also reveals inconsistencies in transparency and participatory accountability, particularly in operational decision-making and workload allocation, suggesting that transparency is more firmly embedded in strategic governance than in routine managerial practices.

The Role of Transparency in Building Trust-Based Management

Trust-based management in this study refers to an organizational system in which cooperation, commitment, and performance are built on mutual trust rather than excessive control. Findings show that transparency is the primary mechanism for building trust by promoting procedural fairness, respectful communication, equitable resource allocation, and collaboration. Transparency is perceived not only as information disclosure but also as a leadership practice that enhances confidence in decision-making, strengthens leader-employee relationships, and increases institutional trust.

The first interview demonstrates that transparent decision-making contributes directly to perceptions of procedural justice. One faculty dean explained, "When leaders explain how decisions are made who was consulted, what criteria applied, what alternatives considered even unfavorable decisions become acceptable. I may disagree with a policy, but if I understand the process, I trust the leadership's good faith. Without process transparency, every decision feels potentially biased." (Dean, UNISI-004). The researcher interprets this finding as evidence that organizational trust is influenced not only by policy outcomes but also by the transparency of the decision-making process itself. Participants were more willing to accept unfavorable decisions when leaders openly communicated the rationale, the consultation process, and the criteria used to reach those decisions. This indicates that transparency strengthens procedural justice, thereby reducing perceptions of bias and reinforcing leadership legitimacy.

A similar pattern emerged regarding the relationship between transparency and employee commitment. A senior lecturer stated, "When I trust leadership, I stop checking. I stop demanding written approvals for every small decision. I use my judgment aligned with institutional goals. I volunteer for extra assignments because I believe leadership will recognize contributions fairly. I speak honestly about problems because I trust leadership to respond constructively rather than punitively. That is trust-based management, control through shared commitment rather than

surveillance." (Senior Lecturer, DINI-003). This statement demonstrates that transparency extends beyond communication and gradually transforms organizational behavior. The researcher interprets that trust generated through transparent leadership reduces excessive administrative control, encourages initiative, and promotes collaborative problem-solving. In this context, trust functions as an informal governance mechanism that replaces bureaucratic supervision with shared responsibility and organizational commitment.

Field observations confirmed that transparency was embedded in formal governance mechanisms and daily leadership practices. Leaders encouraged questions, explained policy rationales, respected differing opinions, and provided written clarifications when needed. Institutional documents also showed accessible strategic plans, budget formulas, and policy guidelines. These findings indicate that transparency extends beyond information disclosure by shaping organizational culture. It strengthens trust-based management through procedural, interactional, and distributive transparency, which promote collaboration, professional autonomy, commitment, and effective educational governance.



Figure 1. The Process of Building Organizational Trust through Leadership Transparency

Figure 1 shows the sequential process by which leadership transparency contributes to the development of organizational trust in higher education institutions. Organizational trust begins with transparent disclosure of information that enables stakeholders to access relevant institutional information. This transparency enhances members' understanding of the organization's decision-making processes, thereby strengthening perceptions of procedural fairness. As fairness becomes clearer, organizational members increasingly recognize the legitimacy of leadership based on integrity, accountability, and ethical decision-making. Ultimately, these interrelated processes foster organizational trust, characterized by confidence in institutional governance and leadership integrity. This model demonstrates that trust is not solely generated by leadership authority but emerges through transparent communication, fair decision-making, and legitimate leadership practices that collectively support trust-based management.

Islamic Leadership Transparency in Trust-Based Management

Supporting and inhibiting factors refer to organizational conditions that facilitate or constrain the implementation of Islamic leadership transparency in trust-based management. Findings show that transparency is shaped not

only by leadership practices but also by organizational culture, communication systems, institutional structures, and stakeholder expectations. Leadership integrity, open communication, and shared Islamic values support transparency, while hierarchical bureaucracy and limited access to information hinder the development of trust. Thus, transparency emerges from the interaction between ethical leadership and institutional governance.

The first interview identified leadership integrity as the most influential supporting factor for transparency. A senior administrator explained, "Our rector's integrity is unquestionable – transparent personal finances, consistent values, willingness to admit mistakes. When leaders model transparency, institutional transparency follows. When leaders exempt themselves, all transparency becomes hypocrisy." (Senior Administrator, UNISI-022). The researcher interprets this statement as evidence that leadership integrity functions as the moral foundation of organizational transparency. Participants associated transparency not merely with formal governance mechanisms but with leaders' consistency between words and actions. Ethical leadership behavior strengthens employees' confidence because organizational members perceive that institutional policies are implemented according to the same standards expected from everyone within the organization. Consequently, transparency becomes a shared organizational value rather than a symbolic administrative procedure.

A contrasting perspective emerged regarding the barriers to transparency. One department head stated, "Even when I want to share information, protocols require approval. Information flows up, then down, through filtered channels. By the time information reaches those who need it, it is delayed, summarized, sometimes distorted. Not maliciously, but hierarchical structures inherently limit direct transparency." (Department Head, DINI-014). This finding indicates that organizational structure itself may restrict transparency despite leaders' willingness to communicate openly. The researcher interprets hierarchical bureaucracy as creating multiple layers of communication that slow information flow, reduce message accuracy, and limit direct interaction between leadership and organizational members. As a result, transparency is influenced not only by leadership commitment but also by institutional systems that regulate information dissemination.

Field observations reinforced these interview findings. Researchers observed that both institutions conducted regular coordination meetings, leadership briefings, and policy dissemination sessions supported by multiple communication channels, including institutional portals, official circulars, and digital messaging platforms. Leaders generally encouraged communication with lecturers and staff through scheduled meetings and open consultation sessions. However, observations also revealed that access to strategic documents, detailed financial reports, and accreditation materials remained restricted to senior management. Furthermore, several organizational decisions required lengthy administrative approval processes before information could be disseminated to lower organizational levels. These

observations indicate that while communication mechanisms support transparency, bureaucratic procedures continue to constrain timely and comprehensive information sharing.

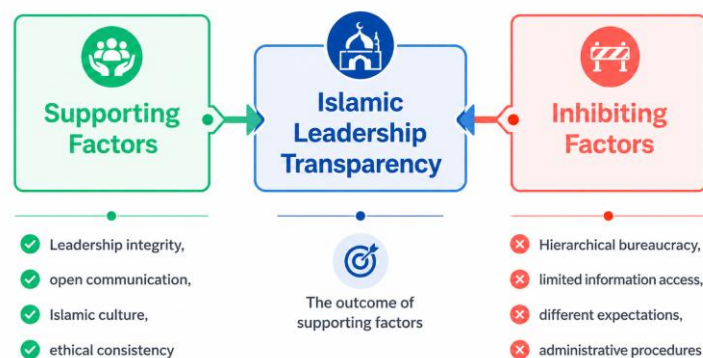


Figure 2. Organizational Factors Affecting Islamic Leadership Transparency

Figure 2 shows organizational factors influencing the implementation of Islamic leadership transparency in higher education institutions. Transparency is facilitated by enabling factors such as leadership integrity, open communication, an Islamic organizational culture, and ethical consistency, which collectively strengthen accountability and stakeholder trust. At the same time, transparency is constrained by inhibiting factors such as hierarchical bureaucracy, limited access to information, differing stakeholder expectations, and administrative procedures that limit participatory governance. The findings suggest that Islamic leadership transparency emerges from the dynamic interaction between enabling and constraining organizational conditions, rather than from leadership behavior alone, as sustainable trust-based management requires ethical leadership and organizational systems that support transparent governance.

The overall findings reveal that organizational factors influencing transparency operate at two interrelated levels. Individual-level factors, including leadership integrity, openness, and ethical consistency, foster trust by demonstrating authentic Islamic leadership values. Meanwhile, institutional-level factors, such as communication systems, bureaucratic structures, and information governance policies, determine whether transparency can be consistently implemented across the organization. These findings suggest that trust-based management thrives most effectively when ethical leadership is supported by an organizational structure that facilitates open communication, equitable access to information, and participatory governance.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that Islamic leadership transparency is constructed through four interrelated dimensions rooted in prophetic leadership values, namely *tabligh* (open communication), *ṣidq* (truthfulness), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and *faṭānah* (wisdom) (Auliyah et al., 2026; Syafrudin et al., 2026). These dimensions were reflected in leadership practices through policy disclosure, accountable

decision-making, transparent resource management, and ethical leadership behavior. The findings are consistent with previous studies arguing that transparency strengthens organizational trust by improving accountability, communication quality, and governance effectiveness (Hasan et al., 2022; Mursid et al., 2026). Likewise, the dimensions of transparency identified in this study correspond with organizational transparency theory, which emphasizes disclosure, clarity, and accuracy as prerequisites for organizational trust. However, this study extends the existing literature by demonstrating that transparency in Islamic higher education is not merely an administrative or governance mechanism but also a moral and spiritual obligation rooted in Islamic leadership values. Unlike conventional transparency models that primarily emphasize compliance with organizational procedures, the present findings indicate that transparency is interpreted as an ethical responsibility through which leaders maintain integrity, fulfill amanah, and demonstrate consistency between words and actions (Hidayat, 2026). This distinctive perspective explains why participants associated leadership credibility more strongly with ethical behavior than with formal transparency procedures alone.

The findings further reveal that transparency contributes to trust-based management through three complementary justice mechanisms: procedural justice, interactional justice, and distributive justice (Aminatun et al., 2025; Visser & Scheepers, 2022). Participants consistently reported that organizational trust increased when leaders openly explained decision-making procedures, communicated respectfully, and disclosed the rationale for allocating institutional resources. These findings support previous research highlighting the importance of transparency and ethical governance in strengthening organizational trust and collaborative management (Surjono, 2022; Syafrudin et al., 2026). Nevertheless, the present study provides a more comprehensive explanation of the mechanism through which transparency influences organizational trust. While earlier studies generally concluded that Islamic leadership improves organizational commitment, ethical culture, or governance quality, they rarely explained how leadership values shape the formation of trust (Khofi et al., 2026). The present findings suggest that transparency alone is insufficient to develop trust unless it simultaneously creates perceptions of procedural fairness, respectful interpersonal communication, and equitable resource distribution. Therefore, transparency functions not simply as information disclosure but as an organizational process that transforms ethical leadership into institutional trust through perceptions of justice.

Another important finding concerns the organizational factors that facilitate and inhibit transparency. Leadership integrity, open communication systems, and organizational cultures grounded in Islamic values emerged as the principal supporting factors. In contrast, bureaucratic hierarchy, limited access to information, and differing stakeholder expectations regarding transparency were the major constraints (Hessen et al., 2026; Hilal et al., 2025). These findings are consistent with previous studies reporting that institutional culture and governance structures influence the effectiveness of transparency implementation. However, this study differs by showing that leadership integrity plays a more influential role than formal accountability mechanisms in fostering organizational trust. Participants repeatedly emphasized that consistency between leaders' personal conduct and institutional values generated stronger trust than documentation,

regulations, or compliance procedures (Aminah et al., 2025; Long & Sitkin, 2026). This finding suggests that in Islamic educational institutions, interpersonal trust and ethical exemplarity remain fundamental determinants of organizational legitimacy. Consequently, transparency should be understood as an interaction between ethical leadership and organizational systems rather than as a purely bureaucratic governance practice.

The findings provide several theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, this study integrates Islamic leadership theory with organizational transparency, justice, and trust-based management by proposing transparency as the connecting mechanism through which Islamic leadership values are translated into organizational trust (Andriani et al., 2026; Syafrudin et al., 2026). This contributes to the development of educational management theory by offering a contextual framework that combines universal governance principles with Islamic ethical values. In practice, the findings suggest that higher education institutions should strengthen transparency by improving procedural communication, encouraging participatory decision-making, establishing equitable resource allocation mechanisms, and promoting leadership integrity as a core criterion in leadership development. Rather than focusing exclusively on expanding the quantity of disclosed information, institutional leaders should prioritize the quality, accessibility, clarity, and consistency of transparent communication. Such an approach is expected to strengthen stakeholder trust, improve organizational collaboration, and support the implementation of sustainable trust-based management within Islamic higher educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Islamic leadership transparency serves as an ethical and strategic mechanism for developing trust-based management in higher education institutions. Transparency rooted in prophetic values of *tabligh*, *ṣidq*, *amanah*, and *faṭānah* strengthens organizational trust through procedural, interactional, and distributive justice. The findings highlight that the effectiveness of transparency depends on leaders' integrity, consistency, and ability to translate Islamic values into daily managerial practices. The study contributes to Islamic educational management by integrating perspectives on leadership, transparency, justice, and trust into a unified framework. However, the findings are limited by the qualitative design and focus on two institutions. Future studies should test this framework through broader quantitative or mixed-method research across diverse institutional contexts.

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