



TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP STRATEGY IN STRENGTHENING MADRASAH CULTURE AND IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

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Abstract:

Strengthening madrasah culture has become an urgent necessity amid increasing public demands for the quality of Islamic educational services. Many madrasahs face challenges in establishing a consistent, adaptive, and service-oriented culture, thereby requiring a leadership approach capable of driving change in a visionary and participatory manner. The urgency of this study lies in the need for an implementative model of transformational leadership that can strengthen madrasah culture while simultaneously improving the quality of educational services in a sustainable way. This study aims to describe the implementation of the principal's transformational leadership strategies in strengthening madrasah culture and to analyze their contribution to improving the quality of educational services. The research employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, and were analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing techniques through source and method triangulation. The findings reveal that the madrasah principal implemented transformational strategies through inspirational motivation, individualized support, reinforcement of the madrasah's cultural vision, and the strengthening of collaboration. These strategies were effective in fostering a religious, disciplined, and service-oriented madrasah culture, which in turn contributed to improvements in both academic and non-academic educational services. The findings confirm that transformational leadership serves as a strategic approach to developing a quality-oriented madrasah culture. This study highlights the importance of visionary leadership as a fundamental foundation for enhancing the quality of educational services in madrasahs.

Keywords: *Transformational Leadership; Madrasah Culture; Educational Service Quality.*

INTRODUCTION

Improving the quality of Islamic education is a strategic agenda in the national education system, particularly amid the increasing demands of the public for professional, competitive, and quality-oriented educational services (Hamdani & Syamsudin, 2022; Zahra et al., 2023). Madrasahs, as formal educational institutions grounded in Islamic values, are required not only to deliver effective learning processes but also to build an institutional culture that is religious, disciplined, and service-oriented (Rohman & Nurhadi, 2021; Fitriani,

2024). In this context, the leadership of the madrasah principal plays a central role as a driver of change and a guide for institutional development (Amin & Wahyudi, 2023; Sari et al., 2022).

Various studies have demonstrated that effective leadership significantly contributes to improvements in teacher performance, collective commitment, and educational service quality (Hallinger, 2018; Leithwood et al., 2020). One leadership model that has received considerable attention in educational management literature is transformational leadership, which emphasizes the leader's capacity to build a shared vision, provide inspiration, encourage innovation, and offer individual attention to organizational members (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In educational contexts, transformational leadership has been shown to enhance teachers' work motivation, strengthen professional collaboration, and reinforce the institution's quality orientation (Sun & Leithwood, 2019; Gumus et al., 2022).

Transformational leadership is not merely oriented toward administrative target achievement but also toward the formation of values, commitment, and sustainable work patterns. Within the context of madrasahs, the formation and strengthening of madrasah culture is of paramount importance. Madrasah culture can be understood as a system of values, norms, habits, and practices that develop and are internalized by all members of the madrasah community, reflecting the integration of educational professionalism and Islamic values. A strong madrasah culture is characterized by consistent religiosity, discipline, exemplary behavior, cooperation, and an orientation toward service to students.

A number of studies have shown that transformational leadership influences the strengthening of values and organizational culture in educational institutions (Bellibaş et al., 2021; Liu & Hallinger, 2022; Leithwood et al., 2023). However, in the context of madrasahs, the relationship among transformational leadership, madrasah culture, and educational service quality has not been extensively studied in depth. Many existing studies focus predominantly on inter-variable relationships using quantitative approaches, thus failing to provide a comprehensive picture of how such leadership strategies are implemented in daily practice and how they shape a service-oriented madrasah culture (Ritonga & Mulyadi, 2023; Fauzi & Anwar, 2024).

Madrasahs have distinctive characteristics as religious-value-based educational institutions, so leadership within them is not merely managerial but also moral and spiritual in nature. The madrasah principal functions not only as an administrator but also as an exemplary figure who builds vision, internalizes values, and creates a conducive working climate for strengthening madrasah culture. Therefore, examining the implementation of transformational leadership within the madrasah context is essential for understanding the mechanisms of real change in the field (Fauzi & Anwar, 2024; Hidayat & Syukur, 2021; Mulyadi, 2022).

Based on the above explanation, this study aims to: (1) describe the implementation of the madrasah principal's transformational leadership strategies; (2) analyze their role in strengthening madrasah culture; and (3) explain their contribution to improving the quality of educational services.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design. The qualitative approach was selected because the research aims to achieve an in-depth understanding of the implementation process of

transformational leadership strategies in the natural context of a madrasah, and to comprehensively describe the dynamics of madrasah culture strengthening and educational service quality improvement. This approach is relevant for exploring complex and contextual social phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

A case study design was adopted because the research focuses on a specific unit of analysis examined in a thorough and holistic manner. Case study methodology allows researchers to explore leadership phenomena within a particular bounded system by considering its social and institutional context (Yin, 2018). The madrasah under investigation is positioned as an instrumental case for understanding transformational leadership strategies in the strengthening of madrasah culture and the improvement of educational service quality.

The research location was selected purposively, with the consideration that the madrasah is currently in a phase of strengthening its institutional culture and improving educational service quality through the leadership of a principal who is visionary and participatory. This context makes the madrasah relevant for examining the implementation of transformational leadership in institutional practice.

The focus of this research was defined to delimit its scope for more directed and in-depth analysis, encompassing: (1) strategies for implementing transformational leadership by the madrasah principal; (2) the process of strengthening madrasah culture; and (3) the contribution of those strategies to improving educational service quality. This is consistent with the qualitative research principle emphasizing depth of analysis over breadth of variables (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Research subjects were determined through purposive sampling, selecting informants based on their relevance and the depth of information required (Patton, 2015). The primary informant was the madrasah principal as the central actor of transformational leadership. Supporting informants included the deputy principal, teachers, educational staff, and several students directly involved in the implementation of madrasah culture. The number of informants was determined based on the principle of data saturation, meaning the point at which information obtained displayed consistent patterns and no significant new data emerged (Guest et al., 2017).

Data collection was conducted through primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through: (1) in-depth interviews using semi-structured interview guides to explore transformational leadership strategies based on four main dimensions—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Riggio, 2006)—and their implications for madrasah culture and educational service quality; (2) participatory observation using structured observation sheets to observe the principal's leadership practices, interactions among madrasah members, implementation of madrasah cultural values, and dynamics of academic and non-academic educational services; and (3) documentation, involving analysis of documents such as the madrasah's work programs, strategic plans, quality evaluation reports, meeting minutes, and internal policy documents relevant to madrasah culture strengthening and service quality improvement.

The trustworthiness of data was verified based on the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data credibility was strengthened through source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information from the

principal, teachers, educational staff, and students. Technique triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained through interviews, observation, and documentation for the same phenomenon. Additionally, member checking was conducted with selected informants to ensure the accuracy of data interpretation. Transferability was achieved by providing detailed contextual descriptions of the madrasah's conditions, while dependability and confirmability were maintained through audit trails and systematic documentation of the research process.

Data analysis utilized the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), comprising four stages: (1) data collection, (2) data reduction, (3) data display, and (4) conclusion drawing and verification. The analysis process was conducted simultaneously from the outset of data collection. Data reduction was performed by categorizing information into main themes relating to transformational leadership strategies, madrasah culture strengthening, and educational service quality improvement. Data were then presented in thematic matrices and descriptive narratives to facilitate systematic and verified conclusion drawing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of the Madrasah Principal's Transformational Leadership Strategy

The implementation of the madrasah principal's transformational leadership strategy in this study represents a leadership process oriented not merely toward institutional administrative functions but toward transforming the behavior, mindset, and commitment of madrasah members through inspirational, participatory, and value-based leadership influence. In the context of Islamic education, transformational leadership is understood as the principal's capacity to integrate moral, spiritual, professional, and organizational dimensions in order to create sustainable institutional change.

The findings reveal that the implementation of transformational leadership strategies was manifested through idealized influence, positioning the principal as a central figure in the formation of organizational norms. This exemplary behavior was reflected in behavioral consistency, moral integrity, discipline, and commitment to fulfilling institutional duties. In educational organizations, consistent leader behavior significantly influences the formation of leadership legitimacy, as organizational members tend to regard the leader's actions as a normative reference for building professional conduct. These findings indicate that the principal not only fulfills organizational control functions but also serves as a role model providing symbolic influence on the formation of madrasah members' work culture.

This argument is consistent with the findings of Fitrah (2017), who concluded that the effectiveness of a principal's transformational leadership is determined by the capacity to present moral exemplariness capable of building collective commitment and a change orientation. Wahyudi, Supriyanto, and Burhanuddin (2019) similarly affirmed that exemplariness in educational leadership contributes to strengthening organizational discipline, increasing work loyalty, and forming a professional culture within schools.

Beyond exemplariness, the implementation of transformational leadership was also realized through the mobilization of vision and collective motivation (inspirational motivation), directed toward building shared awareness of institutional objectives. The findings show that the organizational vision was not merely positioned as a formal administrative document but was

constructed as a change orientation continuously communicated in the practice of madrasah management. Vision communication was conducted repeatedly through coordination forums, program evaluations, teacher professional development activities, and other institutional activities, enabling the organizational vision to gain substantive legitimacy in the work behavior of madrasah members.

The implementation of intellectual stimulation was evident through the development of academic supervision in a dialogic, reflective, and professionally oriented manner. The findings show that supervision was no longer understood solely as an administrative control instrument but evolved into a medium for professional mentoring, enabling teachers to receive professional feedback on the effectiveness of their teaching. This approach reflects a paradigm shift in supervision from an evaluative toward a professional capacity-building orientation. The findings are consistent with Suriansyah (2015), who showed that transformational leadership significantly influences teachers' professional competence through the strengthening of reflective and collective learning culture.

In the dimension of individualized consideration, the implementation of transformational leadership was manifested through a personal approach that positioned teachers and educational staff as individuals with different professional needs and challenges. The principal developed interpersonal communication patterns that were more dialogic through individual mentoring, emotional support, and persuasive problem-solving. This approach indicates that leadership was directed not only at achieving institutional targets but also at strengthening the psychological well-being of organizational members. These findings are consistent with Nurhayati (2021), who found that individual attention from school principals influences increased job satisfaction, organizational loyalty, and teachers' professional engagement.

The Role of Transformational Leadership in Strengthening Madrasah Culture

The implementation of transformational leadership in strengthening madrasah culture shows that the principal occupies a strategic position as the primary actor in building, internalizing, and reproducing organizational values into the collective behavior of madrasah members. Madrasah culture does not form spontaneously but develops through a systematic process of social interaction in which leadership plays a central role in shaping the mindset, values, beliefs, and work practices of organizational members. In educational organizations, the leader functions as a cultural architect—a figure who shapes cultural direction through exemplariness, value communication, behavioral habituation, and the reinforcement of institutional meaning (Schein, 2017).

The findings show that transformational leadership plays a significant role in the value internalization process of the madrasah through strategies of habituation, symbolic reinforcement, and consistency of leadership behavior. Internalization of values is not conducted through a normative-administrative approach alone but is realized through daily practices that enable madrasah members to understand values as part of their professional identity. The findings are consistent with Maulana and Priatmoko (2021), who found that the success of school culture internalization is greatly influenced by the transformational leadership style of school principals capable of integrating institutional values into routine organizational activities.

In its implementation, the exemplariness of the madrasah principal serves as the primary medium of cultural transmission, enabling organizational values to undergo social reproduction in the behavior of madrasah members. The principal's behavior reflecting discipline, responsibility, integrity, and professional consistency influences the formation of collective behavior among organizational members. Exemplariness is an important instrument because organizational members tend to interpret the leader's actions as a concrete representation of values that must be practiced in daily professional activities. This is consistent with Anwar and Minsih (2022), who demonstrated that principal exemplariness significantly contributes to the formation of a culture of discipline, work ethics, and organizational loyalty among teachers.

The strengthening of religious culture was also evident in the findings. Religiosity was not understood as a formalistic ritual activity but developed into an organizational culture influencing the orientation of thinking, social relational patterns, and the professional behavior of madrasah members. Religious culture was realized through the habituation of spiritual values, the strengthening of moral responsibility, and the integration of Islamic principles into professional work practices. Azizah and Hasanah (2021) found that religious culture in madrasahs has a positive correlation with the improvement of teachers' professional responsibility, organizational discipline, and the quality of social interaction among school members.

The role of transformational leadership in transforming organizational communication patterns toward more dialogic, open, and participatory forms was also identified. The principal developed organizational communication through evaluation forums, collective reflections, professional development activities, and interpersonal communication that enabled madrasah members to express ideas, work challenges, and professional reflections more openly. This communication pattern reflects a shift from bureaucratic-hierarchical leadership toward participatory leadership that positions organizational members as strategic partners in madrasah development. Wibowo and Sutrisno (2021) showed that dialogic leadership communication influences the improvement of school organizational culture through the reinforcement of teachers' participation in decision-making.

In synthesis, the findings show that transformational leadership has a substantive role in strengthening madrasah culture through value internalization, the strengthening of religious culture, organizational communication transformation, the formation of work ethos, and the reinforcement of collective commitment among madrasah members. Madrasah culture does not develop naturally but is shaped through consistent, reflective, and value-based leadership practices.

Contribution of Transformational Leadership to Improving Educational Service Quality

The contribution of transformational leadership to improving educational service quality reflects a close relationship between the principal's leadership practices and the improvement of academic and non-academic service effectiveness. Transformational leadership contributes not only to organizational management but also plays a strategic role in transforming the orientation of educational services to become more adaptive, professional, and quality-oriented. In the context of education, service quality is not merely understood as administrative success but encompasses the institution's ability to effectively,

responsively, and sustainably meet the needs of students, teachers, educational staff, and parents (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2020).

The findings show that transformational leadership makes a significant contribution to the strengthening of academic services, particularly through improvements in learning quality, the strengthening of academic supervision, the enhancement of teacher professionalism, and the development of learning innovation. The principal plays a role in creating an academic system that emphasizes not only the administrative completeness of learning but also the quality of the teaching-learning process as the core of educational services. Firmansyah and Nurhadi (2023) showed that reflective academic supervision significantly influences the improvement of teachers' learning quality through the strengthening of evaluative and reflective culture.

The contribution to non-academic service quality was also evident through the strengthening of administrative effectiveness, internal coordination, services to students and parents, and institutional responsiveness to the needs of madrasah members. Wibowo and Sutrisno (2021) showed that educational service effectiveness is significantly influenced by leadership capacity in building a responsive and collaborative organizational coordination system. The findings also revealed that the principal developed more participatory coordination patterns through open communication, joint evaluation forums, and the strengthening of cross-unit cooperation, which positively impacted the effectiveness of administrative tasks and minimized communication barriers.

The contribution of transformational leadership to service quality improvement was also evident from the increased satisfaction and trust of madrasah members regarding the services provided. Teachers, students, and educational staff had more positive perceptions of the quality of madrasah management because they perceived improvements in communication quality, organizational transparency, service effectiveness, and professional support. Nurhayati (2021) showed that transformational principal leadership has a positive correlation with improvements in teacher job satisfaction and organizational loyalty. Fadilah et al. (2024) further found that educational service quality improves when school principals can build a service culture responsive to stakeholder satisfaction.

In synthesis, the findings demonstrate that transformational leadership makes a real contribution to improving educational service quality through the strengthening of madrasah culture, the transformation of the professional behavior of teaching and educational staff, improvements in the effectiveness of academic and non-academic services, and the strengthening of madrasah members' satisfaction and trust. These findings reveal a systemic relationship in which transformational leadership drives organizational culture strengthening, a strong culture shapes the professional behavior of madrasah members, and this professional behavior implies improvements in overall educational service quality.

CONCLUSION

This study focused on the examination of transformational leadership strategies in the context of strengthening madrasah culture and improving educational service quality. Based on the findings, data analysis, and systematic discussion, the following conclusions are drawn.

First, the implementation of the madrasah principal's transformational leadership strategy was effectively realized through four main dimensions:

idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The principal not only fulfilled managerial and administrative functions but also acted as a change agent capable of building shared vision, cultivating work motivation, encouraging innovation, and developing the professional capacity of teachers and educational staff.

Second, transformational leadership has a significant role in strengthening madrasah culture. Through value internalization, the habituation of positive behavior, the reinforcement of institutional vision, and consistent exemplariness, the principal successfully built an organizational culture supporting the achievement of educational objectives. The madrasah culture that developed was reflected in the strengthening of religiosity, integrity, discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and commitment to quality.

Third, transformational leadership and madrasah culture made a positive contribution to improving educational service quality. The strengthening of organizational culture positively impacted teacher professionalism, institutional coordination effectiveness, academic and non-academic service quality, and the madrasah's ability to respond to the needs of students and parents more swiftly, precisely, and humanely.

Overall, this study affirms that transformational leadership is a relevant and strategic leadership approach in madrasah management. The principal's ability to inspire, empower, and mobilize all members of the organization is a critical factor in building a positive madrasah culture and sustainably improving the quality of educational services. Future studies are recommended to investigate the relationships among these variables quantitatively or to extend the research scope to multiple madrasah contexts for broader generalization.

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