



TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION MANAGEMENT IN THE DIGITAL ERA: STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE INNOVATION, QUALITY, AND COMPETITIVENESS OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract:

This research aims to analyze the role of transformational leadership in Islamic education management in the digital era and identify strategies that can be applied to improve the innovation, quality, and competitiveness of educational institutions. The research uses a qualitative approach with the library research method. Data sources were obtained from books, scientific journal articles, proceedings, and relevant academic documents regarding transformational leadership, Islamic education management, and digital transformation. Data collection techniques are carried out through documentation and literature review, while data analysis uses the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive model which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The results of the study show that transformational leadership plays an important role in encouraging educational innovation through the digitalization of learning, strengthening teachers' digital competencies, and developing an adaptive organizational culture. In addition, the application of inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individual attention, and exemplary values based on Islamic values has been proven to be able to improve the quality of educational services and strengthen the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions in the digital era. This study concludes that the integration of transformational leadership with Islamic values and the use of digital technology is an effective strategy to realize innovative, quality, and sustainable Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: *Transformational leadership; Islamic education management; Educational innovation; Quality of education; Institutional competitiveness.*

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought fundamental changes in education governance in various countries, including Indonesia. Digital transformation not only affects the learning process, but also requires a change in leadership paradigm in managing Islamic educational institutions in order to be able to adapt to the dynamics of the times, improve service quality, and maintain their Islamic identity. Islamic education leaders in the digital era are required to have a strategic vision, innovative capabilities, and skills in utilizing information technology as an instrument for the development of educational organizations (Bass, 1985)(Burns, 1978). Transformational leadership is one of the relevant approaches to answer these challenges. This concept emphasizes the

ability of leaders to inspire, motivate, and encourage positive change through a shared vision, human resource empowerment, and the creation of an organizational culture that is adaptive to change (Bernard M. Bass, 1994).

In the context of Islamic education, transformational leadership is not only oriented to organizational effectiveness, but must also be based on Islamic values such as trust, deliberation, justice, and example. The integration between modern leadership principles and Islamic values is an important factor in building superior and competitive educational institutions in the digital era (Marzuki et al., 2023). Various studies show that transformational leadership contributes to improving the quality of education, learning innovation, strengthening organizational culture, and developing teacher competencies. Study (Burns, 1978) and (Bass, 1985) affirms that transformational leaders are able to shift the orientation of individuals from personal interests to the collective goals of the organization. In the field of education, this kind of leadership has been proven to increase the commitment, creativity, and performance of educators (Bernard Bass, 2006). In Indonesia, the implementation of transformational leadership in madrassas and pesantren also shows a positive impact on the modernization of education management and the strengthening of Islamic identity in the midst of globalization and digitalization (Halil, 2025).

Previous research has extensively examined the relationship between transformational leadership and the development of Islamic education. (Marzuki et al., 2023) highlighting the importance of transformational leadership in madrasah management in Indonesia to improve the effectiveness of educational organizations. (Ratnawati, Nursalim, 2025) develop a transformational leadership model based on Islamic values that is oriented towards improving teacher competence in the digital era. Meanwhile, (Shobri & Jaosantia, 2025) explained that digital transformation in Islamic education management requires leadership that is able to integrate technology, innovation, and organizational culture simultaneously. Other research also shows that the success of the adaptation of Islamic boarding schools and madrasas to technological developments is greatly influenced by the ability of leaders to build a vision of change and encourage the participation of all school residents (Pangestu et al., 2025).

However, there is still a gap in the study of concrete strategies for transformational leadership in improving innovation, quality, and competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions in an integrated manner in the digital era. Most of the research focuses on leadership aspects or partial digitalization, so a more comprehensive examination of the integration of the two in the context of Islamic education management is needed. This condition is important considering that Islamic educational institutions are currently facing challenges in the form of accelerating technological developments, changing student characteristics, competition between educational institutions, and demands to improve the quality of sustainable educational services.

Based on these problems, this article aims to analyze the role of transformational leadership in Islamic education management in the digital era and identify strategies that can be applied to improve innovation, quality, and competitiveness of educational institutions. This article is expected to be able to make a conceptual contribution regarding the integration of Islamic leadership values with modern transformational leadership principles as the foundation of adaptive, professional, and sustainability-oriented education management.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses Qualitative Approach by the Library Research. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to deeply understand the concepts, strategies, and implementation of transformational leadership in Islamic education management in the digital era through the analysis of various relevant scientific sources (John W. Creswell, 2014). The literature study method allows researchers to conduct a systematic study of theories, previous research results, and various academic documents to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The scope of this research includes the study of transformational leadership in the management of Islamic educational institutions, especially madrasas, Islamic boarding schools, and Islamic schools, in facing the challenges of digital transformation. The object of the research is focused on leadership strategies that are oriented towards improving innovation, quality of education, and the competitiveness of institutions in the midst of the development of information and communication technology.

The focus of the research consists of three main variables. First, Transformational Leadership, which is defined as the ability of leaders to influence, inspire, motivate, and empower organizational members through the dimensions of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bernard M. Bass, 1994). Second, Educational Innovation, namely the ability of Islamic educational institutions to develop learning, administration, and educational services based on digital technology. Third, Quality and Competitiveness of Educational Institutions, which is defined as the ability of institutions to provide quality educational services, adaptive to change, and able to compete nationally and globally.

Because this study is a literature study, the study was not conducted in a specific location so it did not involve the population and sample in a statistical sense. Instead, Research informant in the form of academic sources that are purposively selected based on their level of relevance, credibility, and contribution to the research theme. These resources include scientific books, accredited journal articles, conference proceedings, theses, and dissertations that discuss transformational leadership, Islamic education management, and digital transformation in education.

The research data sources consist of data primer and Data Seconds. Primary data includes fundamental works on transformational leadership, such as (Burns, 1978), (Bass, 1985), and (Bernard M. Bass, 1994), as well as cutting-edge scientific articles on Islamic education leadership in the digital age. Secondary data were obtained from supporting literature related to education management, educational innovation, digital technology, and quality development of Islamic educational institutions. The main instrument of the research is the researcher himself (human instrument) which is in charge of identifying, classifying, interpreting, and synthesizing various data obtained from library sources (John W. Creswell, 2014).

The data collection technique is carried out through Documentation and literature review. The researcher collected various relevant scientific documents, then made a selection based on the suitability of the theme, year of publication, quality of the source, and relevance to the focus of the research. Furthermore, the data that has been collected is categorized into themes such as transformational leadership, digital innovation, improving the quality of education, and the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions (Syihabuddin, 2024).

Data analysis was carried out using an interactive analysis model (Miles, Huberman, 2014) which includes three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. At the data reduction stage, the

researcher selects and focuses information that is relevant to the research objectives. The data presentation stage is carried out through the grouping of study results into systematic conceptual themes. Furthermore, conclusions are drawn by integrating various findings to obtain a comprehensive picture of transformational leadership strategies in improving innovation, quality, and competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions in the digital era.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of a review of various scientific literature on transformational leadership in Islamic education management in the digital era, it was found that the success of Islamic educational institutions in increasing innovation, quality, and competitiveness is greatly influenced by the ability of leaders to integrate Islamic values with digital transformation strategies. The findings of the study show three main aspects that are interrelated, namely: (1) strengthening digital-based innovation, (2) improving the quality of education through transformational leadership, and (3) developing institutional competitiveness in the era of Society 5.0.

Table 1. Key Findings: Transformational Leadership in Islamic Education Management in the Digital Age				
No	Aspects of the Findings	Implementation in Islamic Educational Institutions	Impact Generated	Source
1.	Digital Innovation	Use of <i>Learning Management System</i> (LMS), digital-based administration, and online learning	Effectiveness and efficiency of education management	(Syihabuddin, 2024); (Nurfathina et al., 2026)
2.	Quality Improvement	Teacher empowerment through digital literacy training, and academic supervision	The quality of learning and teacher competence is improved	(Siregar & Hadijaya, 2026); (Bernard Bass, 2006)
3.	Institutional Competitiveness	<i>Digital branding</i> , external cooperation, and strengthening Islamic identity	Increase public trust and institutional competitiveness	(Nurfathina et al., 2026); (Al Ghozali, 2024)
4	Organizational Culture	Deliberation, example, sustainable innovation, and collaboration	Organizational adaptation to digital change	(Burns, 1978); (Bernard M. Bass, 1994)
5	Visionary Leadership	Preparation of a digital transformation vision based on Islamic values	Sustainability of educational institution development	(Bass, 1985); (Syihabuddin, 2024)

Source: Results of the researcher's literature synthesis (2026).

Transformational Leadership as a Driver of Islamic Education Innovation

The results of the study show that transformational leadership has a central role in encouraging Islamic educational innovation in the digital era. Leaders no longer only function as administrators, but also as change *agents* who are able to build a common vision, motivate teachers, and develop an innovative culture in educational institutions. The implementation of information

technology such as *the Learning Management System* (LMS), the digitization of school administration, and the use of interactive learning media are tangible forms of innovation initiated by transformational leaders.

These findings are in line with the theory (Bernard M. Bass, 1994) which states that transformational leaders are able to create intellectual stimulation so that organizational members are encouraged to produce new ideas and methods in solving organizational problems. In the context of Islamic education, these innovations do not eliminate Islamic values, but rather strengthen the effectiveness of da'wah and learning through the use of digital technology (Syihabuddin, 2024).

Research (Nurfathina et al., 2026) It also shows that the application of technology-based strategic leadership and artificial intelligence increases the adaptability of Islamic educational institutions to changes in the external environment. The findings show that transformational leadership is an important foundation in creating sustainable innovation that is relevant to the needs of the digital generation.

Improving the Quality of Education through Human Resource Empowerment

The next findings show that the improvement of the quality of Islamic education is greatly influenced by the ability of leaders to empower teachers and education personnel. Transformational leaders provide individualized attention, build open communication, and provide training that supports the improvement of teachers' digital competencies.

Table 2. Transformational Leadership Strategies in Improving the Quality of Islamic Education

Leadership Strategy	Form of Implementation	Impact on Education Quality	Source
Inspirational Motivation	Preparation of the joint vision and goals of the institution	Increase teacher commitment and loyalty	(Bernard M. Bass, 1994)
Intellectual stimulation	Educational technology training and learning innovation	Increasing teachers' creativity and digital competence	(Bernard Bass, 2006); (Siregar & Hadijaya, 2026)
Individual Attention	Professional mentoring and teacher performance evaluation	Improvement of pedagogic and professional competence	(Bass, 1985)
Ideal Influence (Example)	Integration of the values of trust, deliberation, and morals in leadership	Strengthening the culture of Islamic organizations	(Burns, 1978); (Syihabuddin, 2024)

Table source: The author has processed various references related to transformational leadership and Islamic education management.

These findings support research (Bernard Bass, 2006) which explains that individual attention and inspirational motivation are important factors in improving the performance of educational organizations. From the perspective of Islamic education, human resource empowerment is also in line with the principle of *Trust*, *Courtesy*, and *Discussion* which places each individual as an important part of the institution's development process.

Research (Siregar & Hadijaya, 2026) It shows that madrasah heads who apply transformational leadership are able to improve teachers' digital competence through continuous training and technology-based academic

supervision. This condition has an impact on improving the quality of learning and the effectiveness of education management as a whole. In addition, the quality of education is not only measured from the academic aspect, but also from the ability of the institution to form the character of students based on Islamic values. Therefore, transformational leadership in Islamic educational institutions must be able to integrate the mastery of technology with the moral and spiritual development of students.

Strengthening the Competitiveness of Islamic Education Institutions in the Digital Era

The findings of the study show that the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions in the digital era is influenced by the ability of leaders to build a strong institutional identity while being adaptive to technological developments. Transformationally led institutions tend to be more open to collaboration, innovation in educational services, and the use of digital media as a means of promotion and public communication.

The use of digital platforms for the publication of school activities, academic information systems, and online administrative services has been proven to increase public trust in the quality of Islamic educational institutions. This condition shows that digital transformation is not only related to technology, but also to visionary management and leadership strategies. The findings are in line with the results of the study (Nurfathina et al., 2026) which emphasizes that the integration of strategic management and artificial intelligence technology is able to increase the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions at the national and global levels. Similarly, (Syihabuddin, 2024) Finding that Kyai's transformational leadership is the main factor in maintaining the identity of the pesantren while encouraging the modernization of kele bagaan in the digital era.

From the perspective of Islamic education management, competitiveness is not interpreted as competition alone, but as the ability of institutions to provide superior, relevant, and still based on Islamic values. Therefore, transformational leaders must be able to develop strategies that balance between technological innovation and the preservation of the character of Islamic education.

Integrative Model of Transformational Leadership in Islamic Education Management

Based on the results of the literature synthesis, this study produced an integrative model of transformational leadership consisting of four main components, namely: (1) Leadership vision based on Islamic values and digital transformation. (2) Teacher empowerment through improving technological and pedagogic competence. (3) Development of an innovative and collaborative organizational culture. (4) Strengthening the competitiveness of institutions through the digitization of educational services.

The four components interact with each other in forming an Islamic education management system that is adaptive to global changes without losing its Islamic identity. This model expands on the findings (Bernard M. Bass, 1994) by adding the spiritual dimension and Islamic values as the basis for the transformation of educational organizations. Thus, the results of the study confirm that transformational leadership is not just a modern managerial approach, but also an effective strategy in improving the innovation, quality, and competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions in the digital era. The success

of its implementation is highly dependent on the ability of leaders to integrate technology, organizational culture, and Islamic values in harmony.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that transformational leadership is an effective strategy in Islamic education management to improve the innovation, quality, and competitiveness of educational institutions in the digital era. The findings of the study show that transformational leaders play a role as agents of change who are able to integrate Islamic values with the use of digital technology through adaptive vision development, human resource empowerment, and strengthening an innovative and collaborative organizational culture.

The results of the study also show that the implementation of transformational leadership encourages the creation of educational innovation through the digitization of learning, the development of technology-based administrative systems, and the improvement of digital literacy of teachers and education personnel. In addition, a leadership approach that emphasizes inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individual attention, and exemplary has been proven to contribute to improving the quality of educational services and strengthening Islamic character within educational institutions.

In terms of competitiveness, transformational leadership allows Islamic educational institutions to be more responsive to social changes and technological developments without abandoning their Islamic identity and values. The use of digital media, strengthening cooperation networks, and innovation in educational services are important factors in increasing public trust and institutional sustainability in the midst of increasingly dynamic educational competition. These findings are in line with research (Ratnawati, Nursalim, 2025), (Halil, 2025), and (Haryadi,Mudofir, 2026) which emphasizes that transformational leadership based on Islamic values is the main foundation for the development of the quality and competitiveness of Islamic education in the digital era.

Based on the results of the study, it is recommended that leaders of Islamic madrasas, Islamic boarding schools, and schools strengthen digital leadership competencies, develop a culture of innovation based on Islamic values, and increase the capacity of teachers through continuous educational technology training. In addition, further research is recommended to use a field research approach involving different types of Islamic educational institutions so that more in-depth empirical data on the implementation of transformational leadership in different contexts can be obtained.

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