



Changing Institutional Leadership in Islamic Schools as a Spark for the Development of Religious Values

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Abstract:

This study analyses forming religious values in the context of leadership change in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. This study is based on the importance of leadership in maintaining religious values in Islamic educational institutions, especially during the leadership transition period, which often raises organizational challenges. This study uses a qualitative and case study approach to explore phenomena. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, then analyzed using data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion-drawing steps. This study focuses on educational institutions' strategies, roles, and internal support in maintaining religious values. The study results indicate that leadership has a crucial role in maintaining and developing religious values; strategies used to maintain religious values involve preserving existing traditions and implementing religion-based programs; support from teachers and staff plays a significant role in realizing a sustainable religious environment. The study's results are expected to contribute to developing effective leadership models in Islamic educational institutions, especially in structural change, and enrich the literature on education based on religious values.

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INTRODUCTION

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, as an Islamic educational institution, has a vital role in shaping the religious character of its students (Hasanah, 2021; Jannah et al., 2024; Karwadi & Indrawan, 2023; Muzakki & Nurdin, 2022). Religious values not only include aspects of faith and worship but also involve moral, ethical, and behavioural values that reflect the teachings of Islam (Akram et al., 2022; Arifin, 2024; Muzakki & Nurdin, 2022; Zahira et al., 2024). The formation of religious character is the main goal in education at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, along with the broader goal of producing individuals who are responsible, moral, and contribute positively to society (Khotimah et al., 2024; Komariah & Nihayah, 2023). In the context of Islamic education, leadership at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah has a significant role in shaping the religious character of students. The change of leadership, be it the head of the madrasah or the management of the foundation, is an important moment in the life of an educational institution (Ataman et al., 2024; El Widdah, 2022; Fathih et al., 2021; Wahib, 2024). The management transition can affect various aspects, including the approach, vision, mission, and educational practices at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

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Many previous researchers have researched the formation of religious values and the influence of leadership in educational institutions. A study by Sanjani et al. (2024) highlights that leadership changes often affect the stability of religious values in schools, so adaptive strategies are needed to maintain these values. Another research by Abbas et al. (2024) shows that spiritual-based leadership significantly influences the religious character of students in Islamic-based schools. In the context of madrasas, McKimm et al. (2023) found that consistently implementing religious value-based programs can increase students' internalization of religious values.

A study by Rifa'i and Ma'arif (2024) also revealed that collaboration between school principals, teachers, and parents plays an important role in forming religious characters in madrasas. In addition, Sanou (2021) shows that a well-planned leadership transition can reduce resistance to change and increase the efficiency of implementing religious programs. Research by Sanjani (2024) emphasizes the importance of teachers in integrating religious values into daily learning activities to strengthen students' religious character. Overall, previous research has shown that the success of religious character formation in educational institutions is highly dependent on visionary, collaborative, and value-based leadership.

The novelty of this study is that Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Raudlatul Ulum in Jabung Wetan, Paiton District, Probolinggo Regency, is one of the Islamic educational institutions that has undergone a leadership transition. This transition can significantly change the pattern of fostering students' religiosity in the madrasah. Research investigating how this leadership transition improves the development of students' religious character has important relevance in optimizing religious education in madrasas.

In reality, this study aims to dig deeper into how the change of leadership at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Raudlatul Ulum, Jabung Wetan, Paiton District, Probolinggo Regency can affect the process of forming students' religious character. We will identify the impact of the leadership change on the educational approach, the values instilled, and how the change affects the teaching and learning process at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Raudlatul Ulum, Jabung Wetan, Paiton District, Probolinggo Regency.

Through this research, we hope to provide valuable insights into ways to maximize the positive influence of leadership change in shaping the religious character of students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Raudlatul Ulum, Jabung Wetan, Paiton District, Probolinggo Regency. With a better understanding of this dynamic, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Raudlatul Ulum, Jabung Wetan, Paiton District, Probolinggo Regency can continue to improve the quality of its Islamic education and make a more significant contribution to the formation of individuals with noble character and firm faith by Islamic teachings.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, a qualitative method of case study type is used by conducting research that intends to describe the problem and analyze the problems that occur (Williams, 2021). The researcher collects data through several stages such as; observation, direct observation at the research site. On the data collection technique by; Interviews, interviewing a number of informants at the research site. Observation, making visits to research sites. Documentation studies, analyzing documents related to research. The place of research was carried out at an institution under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, namely the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Raudlatul Ulum Institute in Jabung Wetan, Paiton District, Probolinggo Regency. Accurate data was obtained from

several informants who were able to inform and describe events in the field. Some of the informants who gave an overview of the field conditions can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Informant Source

Informant	Sum	Initials
Head of Madrasah	1	HF
Deputy Head	1	SM
Teacher	12	AM, KH, NH, ZN, NF, MY, TT, MD, RB, SF, JM, SF
Student	10	IN, ZK, SR, ZN, SS, AZ, MR, AN, VB, NM
Student Parents	10	MT, MK, SW, KH, MZ, SN, NR, HM, OL, YT,

It can be seen in the table above that the source of information was received from five informants including the head of madrasah ibtidaiyah, then the deputy head of madrasah ibtidaiyah, then the curriculum waka and finally the teachers. The initial process is data collection, then data reduction is sorted in the form of records, then data display to understand the data which is then drawn conclusions from the data studied.

The data analysis in this study uses an analysis model developed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawn (Köhler, 2024). In the first stage, data reduction, the researcher focuses on sorting and filtering the data obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation studies, to identify information relevant to the research problem. The disaggregated data is then presented (display data) in a more structured form, such as tables and narratives, to facilitate understanding. In this stage, researchers analyze the data to find patterns, categories, and themes that emerge from the information collected. Furthermore, conclusions were drawn to conclude the main findings related to the formation of religious values in the context of the change of leadership at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Raudlatul Ulum. This process allows researchers to formulate a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied and provide recommendations based on the data analysis that has been carried out.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Leadership Roles

The role of leadership is a very important aspect in every organization, including in the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah or Islamic educational institutions. Good leadership has a significant impact on the management and achievement of institutional goals. One of the main roles of a leader is to determine the vision and mission of the madrasah. As stated in the vision at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Raudlatul Ulum institution in Jabung Wetan, Paiton District, Probolinggo Regency, is "*The Formation of Graduates with Superior Achievements Based on Faith and Piety*" shows a picture of the desired future for the institution, while the mission of the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Raudlatul Ulum institution in Jabung Wetan, Paiton District, Probolinggo Regency is "*Organizing education in a professional, innovative manner and always striving to improve service and stakeholder satisfaction.*"

To realize the vision and mission that has been formulated, the school takes strategic steps aimed at instilling religious values, increasing concern for the environment, and providing professional educational services based on religious values. This focus is also designed to face the challenges of globalization through an active,

creative, effective, and fun learning process. In addition, the school strives to create academic and non-academic achievements through improving the quality of learning and providing supporting facilities. This vision and mission is the foundation in shaping the focus and direction of the madrasah so that it is oriented towards solid religious education.

In achieving these goals, school principals play a key role as thoughtful leaders in managing resources. One of its main responsibilities is to ensure the efficient and effective allocation of funds for religious education programs, such as the purchase of textbooks, teaching materials, equipment, and support extracurricular activities that shape students' religious character. In addition, school principals have an important role in the selection process of qualified teachers, especially those who have a deep understanding of religion. The principal also prioritizes continuous training for teachers so that they continue to improve their competence in educating students to become individuals with religious character.

Madrasah budget management is an important part of the role of school principals. This includes monitoring expenditures, planning annual budgets, and prioritizing funding to support religious education programs. Leaders must also consider the long-term interests of the madrasah through strategic planning to ensure the sustainability of the program that is able to shape the character of students in the future. In addition, the principal establishes partnerships with other organizations or institutions that can provide support in the form of resources, training, or facility construction assistance.

The results of interviews with several teachers and staff revealed that the principal has a high commitment in prioritizing religious values-based programs. The teacher stated that the principal always provides full support in the procurement of teaching materials and the implementation of teacher training. One of the teachers said, *"Our principal is very supportive of programs that strengthen students' religious character, including providing facilities for extracurricular activities such as memorizing the Qur'an."* The administrative staff added that budget planning is carried out with high transparency, so that each program has clear and adequate funding. All of these efforts show that the leadership of the principal who is wise and oriented to religious values is a determining factor in the success of the madrasah in shaping the religious character of students.

This study's results align with previous findings that emphasize the importance of leadership in the formation of religious character in Islamic educational institutions. Transformational leadership oriented to religious values can create an environment that supports the growth of students' spiritual character through religion-based programs (Desai & Wane, 2022; Effendi et al., 2021; Karim et al., 2022; Ridlo & Yanti, 2023). Another research by El Widdah (2022) shows that madrasahs' success in shaping students' religious character is greatly influenced by the ability of the principal to manage human resources and budgets effectively. This is also corroborated by the results of the study by Amin (2024) and Mulyana et al. (2023), which found that continuous teacher training is one of the key strategies in ensuring the success of religious value-based learning. Thus, the results of this study add to the literature by emphasizing the importance of the strategic vision of school principals and their ability to establish partnerships to support programs that strengthen students' religiosity.

Strategy of Existing Religious Values Maintained

At the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Raudlatul Ulum institution in Jabung Wetan, Paiton District, Probolinggo Regency with this new leadership, it does not erase the old leadership pattern, but renews and improves old activities into new things in the form of new programs. The new leadership in an institution, including Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, has great potential to influence the continuity of values and traditions that have been built by the previous leadership. In this discussion, we will explain how the new leadership can influence existing values and traditions.

Some old programs are continued in a new way, for example, by Modifying or updating existing policies and programs, including those related to religious education and the formation of religious character. These changes can include changes in the curriculum, teaching methods, or approaches to shaping students' character. Two the principal at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Raudlatul Ulum in Jabung Wetan, Paiton District, Probolinggo Regency, often interacts with students' parents, and the surrounding community can also influence how existing values and traditions are maintained or modified. Both through meetings, groups of student guardians and going directly to homes. These new leaders may strengthen relationships with parents and the community or choose a different approach to communicating and collaborating.

From the results of the interview (WS) is to ensure that the existing religious values are maintained in a Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Raudlatul Ulum in Jabung Wetan, Paiton District, Probolinggo Regency, here are some strategies that can be applied; *First*, Integrating Religious Education, namely religious education is an integral part of the madrasah curriculum. It involves teaching the religious teachings, ethics, and moral values of Islam in each subject taught. Thus, religious values can be seen in the context of other lessons. In particular, the Islamic religious education teacher at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Raudlatul Ulum is easier to apply. *Second*; The development of the Character Development Program includes special programs designed to shape students' religious character. This can include extracurricular activities, lectures, seminars, and social activities that support the development of Islamic values and morality. It is proven that competitions are carried out on Islamic holidays and Ramadan cottages. *Third*, Involving parents and the community in terms of inviting parents of students and community members to participate in efforts to form religious character. They can be involved in school activities, such as group discussions, seminars, or social projects, which have strong Islamic values. *Fourth*, teacher development and school leadership in the form of providing necessary training and support to teachers and school staff to develop their understanding of Islamic values and how to educate students in these values. Make sure school leaders also have a strong understanding of religious education. *Fifth*, Guidance and Counseling, the school provides guidance and counseling services for students so that they can overcome moral and ethical dilemmas in their daily lives. School counselors can help students understand and apply religious values in real-life situations. *Sixth*, Implement school rules and disciplines that reflect Islamic values. This includes running schools with integrity, honesty, and fairness, as well as promoting good behavior and avoiding behavior that is contrary to religious values. And *Seventh*, Continuous Evaluation and Monitoring is conducting routine evaluations of existing religious character and religious value formation programs. Table 2, use the results of these evaluations to identify areas for improvement and evaluate the impact of those efforts.

Table 2. Strategy for Instilling Religious Values

Strategy	Description
Integrating Religious Education	Religious education is an integral part of the curriculum, by teaching religious teachings, ethics, and Islamic values in each subject.
Development of Character Development Programs	Special programs such as extracurricular activities, lectures, seminars, Islamic holiday competitions, and Ramadan huts to shape students' religious character.
Involving Parents and the Community	Invite parents and the community to participate in school activities such as discussions, seminars, or social projects based on Islamic values.
Teacher Development and School Leadership	Provide training to teachers and staff to improve understanding of Islamic values and ensure school leaders understand religious education.
Guidance and Counseling	Provide counseling services to help students overcome moral and ethical dilemmas and apply religious values in daily life.
Implementation of School Rules and Discipline	Enforce school rules that reflect Islamic values, such as integrity, honesty, justice, and good behavior.
Continuous Evaluation and Monitoring	Conduct regular evaluations of religious character building programs to identify improvements and evaluate the impact of the programs.

Other research has shown that wise leadership can maintain and even enhance the traditions and values that exist in an educational institution. According to Gilli et al. (2024), effective leaders not only continue old programs but also update and adjust them to be more relevant to the challenges of the times. This is in line with the findings of El Widdah (2022), which states that madrasah leaders have a strategic role in integrating religious values into the curriculum through Islamic-based character development programs. In addition, Amin (2024) highlights the importance of parental and community involvement in shaping students' character, where this collaboration can holistically strengthen the implementation of Islamic values. Thus, the new leadership supporting the integration of religious education, character development, and community involvement significantly impacts the sustainability and development of religious values in madrasahs.

Teacher and Staff Support at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Institution

Support from teachers and staff is very important in ensuring that existing religious values are maintained at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Raudlatul Ulum. Teachers and staff play a key role in shaping students' religious character through a variety of ways. First, consistent teaching is one of the most important aspects. Teachers must consistently teach Islamic religious values, both inside and outside the classroom. This includes explaining the teachings of Islam, ethics, and morality to students, so that they can understand and practice these values in their daily lives. The results of interviews with several teachers show that the teaching of Islam has always been strengthened in every subject, which not only talks about religious science, but also relates it to daily attitudes and behaviors.

In addition, examples of good behavior from teachers and staff are very influential. All teachers and staff must be role models in living their lives in accordance with Islamic values. Good, honest, and ethical behavior from teachers can be an inspiration for students to follow in the same footsteps. One teacher stated, "We always try to show behavior that is in accordance with religious teachings, because students are more likely to imitate what they see than what they hear." By being a good example, teachers can have a stronger positive impact on students.

Furthermore, the integration of values in the curriculum also plays an important

role. At Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Raudlatul Ulum, teachers are able to integrate religious values in all curriculum and learning activities. This includes providing concrete examples of how Islamic values can be applied in real-world situations. One of the teachers added, "We always try to make every lesson a means to instill Islamic values, not only through religious lessons, but also other subjects."

Teachers also have an important role in providing guidance to students, especially in terms of understanding and practicing religious values. They can answer student questions, provide moral advice, and help students solve ethical problems they face. Guidance and counseling teachers at this school also play a role in assisting students who may have difficulties in understanding religious values.

In addition, extracurricular activities promoted by teachers and staff can strengthen religious values at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Raudlatul Ulum. For example, teachers can organize or support activities such as prayer clubs, Quranic interpretation classes, or social activities based on Islamic values. The teacher revealed, "We also hold competitions related to religious activities, such as Al-Quran memorization competitions and various activities that involve students in practicing Islamic values." With this activity, students not only learn theoretically but also practice religious teachings in their lives. The contributions of teachers and staff in maintaining religious values are very diverse and profound, and have a significant impact on shaping the religious character of students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Raudlatul Ulum.

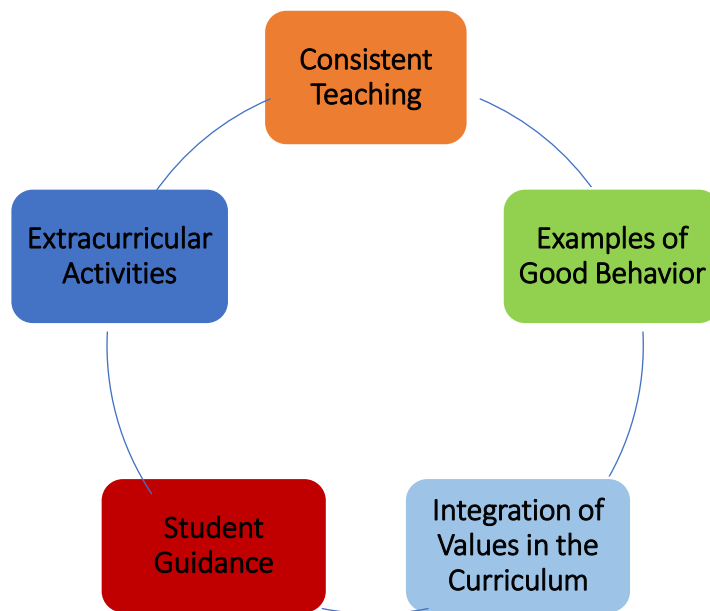


Figure 2. Teacher and Staff Support

Based on research and Figure 2, the role of teachers in maintaining religious values in madrasas is vital, primarily through consistent teaching, examples of good behaviour, and the integration of religious values throughout the curriculum. Teachers are not only in charge of transferring knowledge but also become moral and ethical models for students (Effendi et al., 2021; Wahib, 2024). In the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Raudlatul Ulum, the application of this concept can be seen through the various efforts of teachers who actively teach Islamic religious values and integrate them into each subject. Teachers in this madrasah not only teach religious knowledge but also provide examples of behaviour by Islamic teachings, thus creating an environment

conducive to forming students' religious character. The study also highlights the importance of extracurricular activities as a means to strengthen religious values by showing that activities such as prayer clubs and competitions related to religion can deepen students' understanding of religious teachings (Ataman et al., 2024; Guna & Yuwantiningrum, 2024; Zaini, 2023). This is in line with the findings at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Raudlatul Ulum, where teachers and staff actively organise activities that support Islamic values, both in academic and non-academic activities. The findings of this study are expected to provide deeper insights into how effective leadership, the integration of religious values in the curriculum, and the support of teachers and staff can contribute to the formation of religious character in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

CONCLUSION

The formation of religious values at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Raudlatul Ulum, Jabung Wetan, Paiton District, Probolinggo Regency, has an important role in maintaining the sustainability of religious education amidst changes in leadership. In this case, changes in leadership need to be managed well so that existing religious values are maintained and continue to develop. Commitment to religious education must remain the main focus, with efforts to ensure that religious teaching and the formation of religious character in students are not disrupted. New leaders have a responsibility to continue and strengthen these values, by prioritizing continuity in the implementation of religious education programs and religious character.

However, the findings of this study have limitations. This study only covers one madrasah in Paiton District and has not covered variations in other madrasahs that may have different dynamics in leadership changes and the formation of religious values. In addition, this study is limited to direct observation and interviews with internal parties of the madrasah, so it does not include the perspectives of parents of students or the surrounding community who also have an important role in the formation of students' religious character. Further research is needed with a wider sample and a more diverse approach to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the influence of leadership changes on the formation of religious values in madrasahs.

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