



The Role of Madrasah Principal Leadership in Enhancing Institutional Quality in Islamic Senior High Schools

Muli Prima Aldi M^{1*}, Tika Widiyan¹, Juni Erpida Nasution², Leni Fitrianti¹, Farida Nur Hidayah¹

¹STAI Nurul Falah Airmolek, Indonesia

²Pascasarjana IAI Diniyyah Pekanbaru, Indonesia

Email : primaastroid86@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61987/jemr.v5i1.1624>

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Madrasah principal leadership,
Institutional quality,
Islamic senior high school,
Educational leadership

*Corresponding Author

This study aims to analyze the leadership of madrasah principals in improving institutional quality at Islamic senior high schools. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, with data collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The findings indicate that the principal's leadership was categorized as optimal, achieving a performance score of 78.57%, which reflects effective practices in curriculum development, teacher supervision, school management, and student development programs. Supporting factors for institutional quality improvement include the principal's strong commitment to quality enhancement, effective communication, and collaborative relationships within the madrasah community. However, several challenges were identified, particularly limited educational facilities, constraints in human resources, and insufficient monitoring of teacher performance. The implications of this study suggest that strengthening leadership capacity, improving resource allocation, and implementing systematic teacher performance evaluation are essential strategies for enhancing institutional quality in Islamic senior high schools. These findings contribute to the understanding of effective madrasah leadership practices and provide practical insights for policymakers and school leaders seeking to improve educational quality in Islamic educational institutions.

Article History:

Received: October 2025; Revised: November 2025; Accepted: December 2025

Please cite this article in APA style as:

Muli, P. A., Widiyan, T., Nasution, J. E., Fitrianti, L., & Hidayah, F. N. (2026). The Role of Madrasah Principal Leadership in Enhancing Institutional Quality in Islamic Senior High Schools. *Journal of Educational Management Research*, 5(1), 281-292.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a fundamental role in shaping national development and human civilization by fostering intellectual capacity, moral integrity, and social responsibility (Bekele et al., 2024; Hanushek & Woessmann, 2023; Leoni, 2025). In contemporary society, educational institutions are increasingly expected to produce graduates who are not only academically competent but also ethically

grounded and adaptable to rapid social and technological change (Kumar, 2025; Ul Hassan et al., 2025). This expectation places educational leadership at the center of quality improvement efforts, particularly in faith-based institutions that carry both academic and moral mandates (Cramer, 2025). Islamic educational institutions, including madrasahs, contribute significantly to social cohesion by nurturing values such as discipline, integrity, and spiritual awareness (Maidugu & Isah, 2024). However, achieving these outcomes depends heavily on leadership effectiveness at the institutional level. Educational leaders function as key agents of change who translate educational goals into sustainable practices (Brown et al., 2023; Ritchie-Dunham et al., 2023). Without strong leadership, institutional vision remains rhetorical rather than operational. Therefore, examining madrasah principal leadership is crucial not only for institutional improvement but also for broader societal development, as the quality of leadership directly influences educational outcomes, human capital formation, and the preservation of moral values within society (Abbas et al., 2024; Ekuma, 2024).

Despite the recognized importance of leadership in education, many Islamic educational institutions continue to struggle with maintaining and improving institutional quality (Said et al., 2023; Syahlarriyadi, 2023). In Indonesia, madrasahs often face structural and managerial challenges that limit their ability to respond effectively to changing educational demands (Faizin, 2024; Haddade et al., 2024). These challenges include limited resources, inadequate professional development for teachers, and weak organizational governance. Furthermore, disparities in leadership competence contribute to inconsistent educational quality across institutions. Principals who lack strategic vision or leadership capacity often fail to optimize existing resources or foster collaborative school cultures. As a result, educational outcomes may fall short of national standards and societal expectations. Ineffective leadership frequently leads to poor school management, low teacher motivation, and minimal innovation in teaching and learning processes. This situation presents a broader societal problem, as madrasahs play a critical role in educating large segments of the population. Addressing leadership-related challenges is therefore essential to ensure that madrasahs can fulfill their educational mission and contribute meaningfully to national educational development.

Empirical observations reveal that many madrasahs encounter difficulties in implementing quality-oriented management practices (Frاندani et al., 2024). In practice, principals often focus on administrative routines rather than strategic leadership functions such as instructional supervision, teacher development, and organizational culture building (Cansoy et al., 2025; He et al., 2024). The rapid digital transformation in education further complicates this issue, as many madrasah leaders are insufficiently prepared to integrate technology into

teaching and learning processes. Additionally, the growing expectations of parents and communities for high-quality graduates place increased pressure on madrasah management. Field phenomena indicate that non-adaptive leadership styles frequently result in stagnant institutional performance, limited curriculum innovation, and weak monitoring of teacher effectiveness. In contrast, madrasahs led by proactive and visionary principals tend to demonstrate stronger organizational cohesion and better learning outcomes. These contrasting realities highlight the centrality of leadership in shaping institutional quality. Understanding how madrasah principals exercise leadership in real contexts is therefore necessary to identify effective practices and address persistent challenges within Islamic educational institutions.

Previous studies have extensively examined educational leadership and its impact on school effectiveness (Alzoraiki et al., 2023; Polatcan et al., 2023). Transformational leadership theory emphasizes the leader's role in inspiring, motivating, and empowering followers to achieve shared goals (Khan et al., 2025; Mudd-Fegett & Mudd, 2024). Numerous studies confirm that transformational leadership positively influences teacher performance, organizational commitment, and school improvement. In the context of Islamic education, several researchers have explored leadership models that integrate modern management principles with Islamic values (Alazmi & Bush, 2024; Rahman, 2025). However, most existing studies focus on public schools or general Islamic education without examining leadership practices within Tahfizh-based madrasahs. Moreover, many studies adopt quantitative approaches that measure leadership outcomes but provide limited insight into leadership processes. This creates a gap in understanding how madrasah principals enact leadership roles in daily institutional practices. Consequently, there is limited empirical evidence explaining how leadership functions contribute to institutional quality improvement in specific Islamic educational settings.

In addition to methodological limitations, prior research often overlooks the contextual dimensions of leadership in Islamic boarding schools (Karim et al., 2025; Mudd-Fegett & Mudd, 2024). While leadership effectiveness is widely acknowledged, few studies explore how principals balance academic management with spiritual and moral leadership. The integration of transformational leadership concepts with Islamic leadership principles, such as exemplary conduct, remains underexplored (Karim et al., 2025; Rahman, 2025). Existing literature tends to treat Islamic values as normative concepts rather than operational leadership strategies. This study positions itself within this gap by examining leadership practices in a Tahfizh-based madrasah, where religious values strongly influence institutional culture. By employing a qualitative descriptive approach, this research provides in-depth insights into leadership

behaviors, decision-making processes, and organizational dynamics. The study contributes to the literature by offering a contextualized understanding of madrasah leadership that bridges modern leadership theory and Islamic educational philosophy, addressing a critical gap in current educational leadership research.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrative perspective on leadership and institutional quality within an Islamic educational context. Unlike previous studies that focus primarily on leadership styles or outcomes, this research examines leadership as a multidimensional process encompassing curriculum management, teacher development, organizational culture, and value-based governance. By situating transformational leadership perspectives alongside Islamic leadership principles, this study advances a contextualized leadership framework relevant to madrasahs. Furthermore, the focus on a Tahfizh-based institution highlights unique leadership challenges related to balancing academic excellence and religious commitment. This state-of-the-art approach responds to the growing demand for leadership models that are culturally and spiritually responsive. Addressing this issue is crucial, as Islamic educational institutions must adapt to contemporary educational challenges without compromising their core values. Therefore, this study provides timely and relevant insights for both scholars and practitioners in Islamic educational leadership.

Based on the above discussion, this study seeks to address the following research problem: how does madrasah principal leadership contribute to institutional quality improvement in an Islamic senior high school context? The study argues that effective leadership, characterized by strategic management, teacher empowerment, and value-based guidance, plays a decisive role in enhancing institutional quality. By fostering collaboration, continuous improvement, and moral integrity, madrasah principals can create learning environments that support both academic and spiritual development. This research contributes theoretically by enriching leadership discourse within Islamic education and practically by providing evidence-based insights for madrasah leaders and policymakers. The findings are expected to inform leadership development programs and institutional improvement strategies, ultimately strengthening the quality and relevance of Islamic educational institutions in contemporary society.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach using a case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of madrasah principal leadership in improving institutional quality. The case study design was selected because it allows for a comprehensive exploration of leadership practices, decision-making

processes, and contextual factors within a real-life educational setting. The research was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Tahfizh Yanbu'ul Qur'an, an Islamic senior high school operating within a Tahfizh-based boarding school system. This site was purposively chosen due to its distinctive integration of academic instruction and Qur'anic memorization, which presents unique leadership and management challenges. Additionally, the institution has demonstrated ongoing efforts to improve educational quality, making it a relevant and information-rich case for examining leadership practices within the dimensions of educational management, including curriculum management, human resource development, organizational governance, and student affairs.

Data were collected using multiple qualitative techniques to ensure data triangulation and credibility. These techniques included non-participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Observations were conducted to examine leadership behaviors, managerial practices, and daily institutional activities related to educational management dimensions such as curriculum implementation, teacher supervision, and student development programs. In-depth interviews were carried out with the madrasah principal as the primary informant to capture perspectives on leadership strategies, institutional challenges, and quality improvement initiatives. Documentation analysis involved reviewing school policies, strategic plans, academic programs, and evaluation reports. The use of multiple data sources enabled a holistic understanding of how leadership functions across various dimensions of educational management.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data condensation involved selecting, focusing, and simplifying field data related to leadership practices and institutional quality improvement. The condensed data were then organized and presented through narrative descriptions and thematic matrices to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusion drawing and verification were conducted through continuous comparison of data sources and reflection on emerging patterns to ensure analytical rigor. This iterative analytical process enabled the researcher to identify key leadership strategies and challenges across educational management dimensions, ensuring the trustworthiness and validity of the research findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Madrasah Principal Leadership

Leadership in education refers to the capacity of school leaders to mobilize all institutional components toward the achievement of organizational goals. In the context of Islamic education, leadership is not merely managerial but also moral and spiritual in nature. The madrasah principal functions as a central actor

who shapes vision, directs institutional culture, and ensures the alignment between educational objectives and Islamic values. This dual responsibility places the principal in a strategic position to influence both structural performance and value internalization within the madrasah.

In practice, madrasah principal leadership is reflected through the ability to design institutional programs, guide teachers, manage resources, and foster a collaborative climate. Effective leadership requires adaptability in responding to organizational challenges, including curriculum demands, teacher professionalism, and student development. The findings of this study indicate that leadership at Madrasah Aliyah Tahfizh Yanbu'ul Qur'an demonstrates a consistent effort to integrate managerial effectiveness with ethical responsibility, which strengthens institutional stability.

Furthermore, leadership effectiveness is shaped by the principal's capacity to adjust leadership styles to situational needs. The principal does not rely on a single approach but combines directive, participative, and motivational strategies depending on teacher readiness and organizational conditions. This flexibility enables the madrasah to respond constructively to internal dynamics and external changes, particularly in balancing academic excellence with the tahfizh-oriented educational mission.

Overall, madrasah principal leadership emerges as a multidimensional construct encompassing managerial competence, instructional guidance, and spiritual authority. This combination provides a strong foundation for sustainable institutional development and serves as a driving force for continuous quality improvement.

Educational Quality

Educational quality is understood as a comprehensive concept that extends beyond academic achievement to include character formation, institutional effectiveness, and value internalization. In the madrasah context, quality education is reflected in the harmony between intellectual development, moral conduct, and spiritual discipline. This holistic orientation requires systematic management and consistent leadership to ensure that quality standards are maintained across all educational processes.

The implementation of quality improvement in Madrasah Aliyah Tahfizh Yanbu'ul Qur'an emphasizes continuous development rather than short-term outcomes. Quality is pursued through structured planning, implementation, evaluation, and refinement of educational programs. Teachers, students, and administrators are positioned as active participants in this process, fostering shared responsibility for institutional success.

From a management perspective, educational quality is closely linked to organizational culture. A culture that values discipline, collaboration, and commitment to excellence supports the achievement of both academic and non-academic goals. The findings indicate that the madrasah has developed a quality-oriented culture, supported by clear policies, consistent supervision, and transparent administrative practices.

Thus, educational quality in this madrasah is not treated as a static target but as a dynamic process shaped by leadership commitment and institutional learning. This approach allows the madrasah to adapt to evolving educational demands while maintaining its Islamic identity.

Relationship Between Principal Leadership and Educational Quality

The relationship between madrasah principal leadership and educational quality is evident in how leadership practices translate into measurable institutional performance. Strong leadership contributes to the creation of a shared vision, coordinated work systems, and collective commitment to quality standards. In this study, leadership effectiveness is reflected in the gradual and consistent improvement across observed leadership indicators.

Based on the recapitulation of observations covering nine main leadership indicators, a total of 88 “Yes” responses and 24 “No” responses were obtained from 112 observation items. This resulted in an overall leadership achievement level of 78.57%, categorized as optimal. These findings suggest that the principal’s leadership practices are largely effective and function as a key driver of institutional quality enhancement.

Table 1. Observation Results of Madrasah Principal Leadership Aspects

No	Aspect	Total Yes	Total No	Percentage	Category
1	Curriculum development	4	0	100%	Very Optimal
2	Teacher supervision	3	1	75%	Optimal
3	School management	4	0	100%	Very Optimal
4	Administration & budgeting	4	0	100%	Very Optimal
5	Student & community activities	3	1	75%	Optimal
6	Teacher professional development	4	0	100%	Very Optimal
7	Student discipline & character	3	1	75%	Optimal
Total		88	24	78.57%	Optimal

These results indicate that leadership strength is particularly evident in strategic and managerial domains, such as curriculum development, school management, and professional development. Meanwhile, aspects related to supervision and student activities, although still optimal, show room for further strengthening to achieve more balanced leadership performance.

Consistency of Leadership Performance Across Observations

Leadership performance was also examined through four stages of observation to assess consistency and improvement over time. The results demonstrate a clear upward trend in leadership effectiveness, indicating the presence of reflective practice and continuous improvement by the madrasah principal.

Table 2. Recapitulation of Madrasah Principal Leadership Observation Results

No	Observation	Number of Indicators	Yes	No	Percentage (%)	Category
1	Observation I	28	18	10	64.28	Optimal
2	Observation II	28	20	8	71.42	Optimal
3	Observation III	28	25	3	89.28	Very Optimal
4	Observation IV	28	26	2	92.85	Very Optimal
Average		28	–	–	78.57	Optimal–Very Optimal

During the first observation, leadership effectiveness was categorized as optimal, indicating that foundational leadership functions were already in place. Subsequent observations show steady improvement, suggesting that leadership practices became more structured, consistent, and impactful over time.

The significant increase in the third and fourth observations reflects enhanced effectiveness in program development, school management, teacher professional growth, and student character development. This progression illustrates that leadership quality is not static but evolves through experience, evaluation, and adaptation.

Overall, the average leadership performance falls within the optimal to very optimal range, confirming that sustained leadership practices play a critical role in strengthening educational quality at Madrasah Aliyah Tahfizh Yanbu'ul Qur'an.

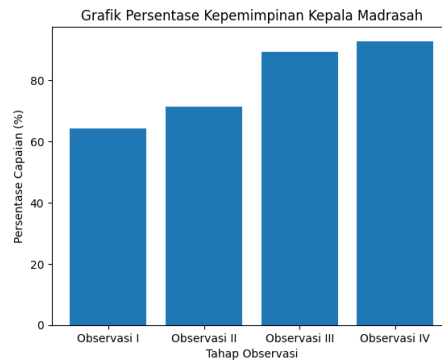


Figure 1. Leadership Performance Trend

The figure demonstrates a consistent increase in leadership performance across observation stages. This trend reflects continuous improvement in managerial execution, academic leadership, and the guidance of madrasah stakeholders. The visual pattern reinforces the quantitative findings, highlighting leadership as a dynamic and progressive process.

Key Dimensions of Madrasah Principal Leadership

Leadership in Curriculum Development

The madrasah principal actively aligns the curriculum with student needs and contemporary educational demands while maintaining a strong tahfizh orientation. Curriculum management is approached strategically, ensuring relevance, flexibility, and integration between general subjects and Qur'anic memorization. This approach supports balanced student development and reinforces the madrasah's distinctive educational identity.

Human Resource Development

Leadership in teacher development is characterized by continuous guidance, mentoring, and capacity building. Teachers are encouraged to improve pedagogical competence and professional commitment through structured development programs. This strategy enhances instructional quality and fosters a culture of lifelong learning within the institution.

School Management and Transparency

Administrative and financial management is conducted transparently and accountably. Clear procedures, measurable programs, and documented reporting systems contribute to institutional trust and operational efficiency. Such governance practices strengthen organizational credibility and support sustainable quality improvement.

Spiritual Leadership and Islamic Values

Spiritual leadership is embedded in daily managerial practices through the internalization of Islamic values such as trustworthiness, responsibility, and fairness. The principal's role as a moral exemplar reinforces ethical behavior among teachers and students, creating a value-driven institutional environment.

Integration of Leadership Approaches

Overall, the madrasah principal demonstrates an integrated leadership model that combines transformational, situational, and spiritual dimensions. This integration enables adaptive decision-making, motivates stakeholders through shared vision, and embeds religious values within organizational processes. Such leadership coherence significantly contributes to sustained educational quality improvement.

CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this study is that consistent and value-based madrasah principal leadership plays a decisive role in improving educational quality. The gradual increase in leadership performance—from 64.28% in the initial observation to 92.85% in the final observation—demonstrates that effective leadership is a dynamic and developmental process rather than a static condition. The study highlights that leadership grounded in strategic management, continuous teacher development, curriculum adaptation, and Islamic moral values fosters a sustainable quality culture within the madrasah. The key lesson derived from this research is that educational quality improvement in Islamic institutions is most effective when managerial competence is integrated with spiritual leadership and collaborative practices.

From a scholarly perspective, this study contributes to the field of educational leadership by providing empirical evidence from a Tahfizh-based Islamic senior high school, an area that remains underrepresented in leadership research. It enriches the literature by integrating transformational, situational, and spiritual leadership frameworks within the context of Islamic education. However, this study is limited by its single-case design and reliance on qualitative observation, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research is encouraged to employ comparative or mixed-methods approaches across multiple madrasahs to further validate and expand upon these findings, as well as to explore the long-term impact of leadership practices on student learning outcomes and institutional sustainability.

REFERENCES

- Abbas, A., Ekowati, D., Suhariadi, F., & Anwar, A. (2024). Human capital creation: a collective psychological, social, organizational and religious perspective. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 63(3), 2168–2200.
- Alazmi, A. A., & Bush, T. (2024). An Islamic-oriented educational leadership model: towards a new theory of school leadership in Muslim societies. *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 56(3), 312–334.

- Alzoraiki, M., Ahmad, A. R., Ateeq, A. A., Naji, G. M. A., Almaamari, Q., & Beshr, B. A. H. (2023). Impact of teachers' commitment to the relationship between transformational leadership and sustainable teaching performance. *Sustainability*, 15(5), 4620.
- Bekele, M., Sassi, M., Jemal, K., & Ahmed, B. (2024). Human capital development and economic sustainability linkage in Sub-Saharan African countries: Novel evidence from augmented mean group approach. *Heliyon*, 10(2).
- Brown, C., White, R., & Kelly, A. (2023). Teachers as educational change agents: What do we currently know? Findings from a systematic review. *Emerald Open Research*, 1(3).
- Cansoy, R., Gümüş, S., & Walker, A. (2025). Challenges in implementing instructional leadership: Insights from Turkish school principals. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 53(5), 991–1015.
- Crager, S. (2025). *Vision to Reality: How Principals' Leadership Styles Shape a Culture of Faith and Academic Excellence in Christian Schools*. Northwest Nazarene University.
- Ekuma, K. (2024). Artificial intelligence and automation in human resource development: A systematic review. *Human Resource Development Review*, 23(2), 199–229.
- Faizin, M. A. (2024). Islamic Boarding Education Management Reform: Transformation Strategies to Improve Competitiveness and Relevance. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 16(2), 2497–2506.
- Frاندani, M., Tamam, A. M., & Ahmad, A. (2024). Internal Quality Management Model in Islamic Boarding School-Based Madrasah. *QALAMUNA: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial, Dan Agama*, 16(1), 219–240.
- Haddade, H., Nur, A., Achruh, A., Rasyid, M. N. A., & Ibrahim, A. (2024). Madrasah management strategies through Madrasah Reform program: an evidence from Indonesia. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 38(5), 1289–1304.
- Hanushek, E. A., & Woessmann, L. (2023). *The knowledge capital of nations: Education and the economics of growth*. MIT press.
- He, P., Guo, F., & Abazie, G. A. (2024). School principals' instructional leadership as a predictor of teacher's professional development. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, 9(1), 63.
- Karim, A., Fathurohman, O., Sulaiman, S., Marliani, L., Muhammadun, M., & Firmansyah, B. (2025). How do principals act as leaders and managers in boarding and public schools in Indonesia? *Cogent Education*, 12(1), 2445354.
- Khan, I. U., Amin, R. U., & Saif, N. (2025). Individualized consideration and idealized influence of transformational leadership: Mediating role of inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 28(6), 1322–1332.

- Kumar, S. (2025). Education 4.0: Transforming Learning for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. *Higher Education for the Future*, 23476311251326140.
- Leoni, S. (2025). A historical review of the role of education: From human capital to human capabilities. *Review of Political Economy*, 37(1), 227–244.
- Maidugu, U. A., & Isah, A. T. (2024). Islamic Education and its Value: A Vital Means for the Formation National Character. *Bulletin of Islamic Research*, 2(4), 725–744.
- Mudd-Fegett, K., & Mudd, H. K. (2024). Transformational Leadership. In *Transformational Learning in Social Work and Human Services Education* (pp. 63–83). IGI Global.
- Polatcan, M., Arslan, P., & Balci, A. (2023). The mediating effect of teacher self-efficacy regarding the relationship between transformational school leadership and teacher agency. *Educational Studies*, 49(5), 823–841.
- Rahman, G. (2025). Transforming Islamic Education Through Value-Based Leadership: A Narrative Review. *Sinergi International Journal of Islamic Studies*, 3(2), 83–95.
- Ritchie-Dunham, J. L., Gonçalves, A. C., Huerta, M. A., Mataix, C., Lumbreras, J., Moreno-Serna, J., Spengler, J. D., & Purcell, W. M. (2023). Advancing sustainability leadership by shifting relational ‘agreement structures’: A transformational higher education change program. *Journal of Integrative Environmental Sciences*, 20(1), 2190385.
- Said, S. M., Sharif, S., & Abdullah, M. K. J. (2023). Unveiling the excellent leadership qualities and practices of principals in Islamic schools: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 22(9), 43–61.
- Syahlarriyadi, S. (2023). The role of leaders of islamic educational institutions in increasing the quality of islamic education in madrasah. *Proceeding of The Postgraduate School Universitas Muhammadiyah Jakarta*, 1, 443–470.
- Ul Hassan, M., Murtaza, A., & Rashid, K. (2025). Redefining higher education institutions (HEIs) in the era of globalisation and global crises: A proposal for future sustainability. *European Journal of Education*, 60(1), e12822.