



Leadership Strategies of the Head of Madrasah in Enhancing the Effectiveness of Educational Administration at Madrasah

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to describe and analyze the role of the head of madrasah in optimizing educational administration, with a particular focus on the transition toward digital administration at MTs Miftahul Jannah Mantingan, Ngawi. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method using a case study approach. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation, involving key informants consisting of the head of madrasah, vice principal for curriculum, administrative staff, and teachers. The findings reveal that the head of madrasah plays a strategic role as an administrator, manager, supervisor, and motivator in driving administrative transformation. The madrasah has initiated digitalization by utilizing Google Spreadsheet and Google Form, as well as specialized applications such as the Madrasah Budget Plan (RK) and Digital Madrasah Report (RDM), particularly in financial administration. This transition has resulted in improved work efficiency and positive responses from students' parents. However, several challenges persist, including limited internet infrastructure, financial constraints, and inadequate human resources with sufficient digital competencies. The study implies that the optimization of educational administration is highly dependent on visionary leadership of the head of madrasah, particularly in continuous planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising administrative processes, as well as in empowering educational personnel and effectively integrating information technology to establish an orderly, transparent, and accountable administrative system.

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a fundamental role in shaping the progress and competitiveness of a nation. According to the Republic of Indonesia Law Number 44 of 2009, education is a strategic pillar for national development, as it determines the quality of human resources who are capable of responding to global challenges. In the era of rapid technological advancement, societies increasingly demand educational institutions to not only transmit knowledge but also to cultivate digital competencies, critical thinking, and adaptability among learners. Wildan et al. (2024) emphasize that countries committed to sustainable development must continuously improve educational quality to remain competitive at the global level. Education is also deeply connected to human character formation, as it enables individuals to develop their potential in accordance with societal values and norms. Through this process, education fosters the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and moral values that shape responsible citizens. Therefore, improving educational management and leadership is not merely an institutional concern but a societal necessity, as effective educational systems directly contribute to social transformation, economic growth, and cultural sustainability.

Despite the recognized importance of education, many educational institutions continue to face systemic challenges that hinder the achievement of optimal educational outcomes (Alam & Mohanty, 2023; Hasanah, Munawwaroh, et al., 2024; Kusananto et al., 2023; Ma'isyah et al., 2024; Nuriyah et al., 2024). One of the most pressing issues is the gap between educational goals and the actual capacity of schools and madrasahs to manage learning processes and administrative systems effectively. Rokhman (2019) argues that educational processes strongly influence individuals' personalities, skills, and moral character; however, weak management and inefficient administration often limit this potential. In many contexts, educational institutions struggle with outdated administrative practices, limited technological integration, and insufficient human resource development (Dewi et al., 2025; Putri et al., 2024; Setiawan & Rizal, 2024; Yakin, 2025). These problems are further exacerbated by uneven access to digital infrastructure and inadequate financial support, particularly in developing regions. As a result, educational services become less efficient, less transparent, and less responsive to stakeholder needs. This situation highlights a broader societal problem in which educational leadership has not fully adapted to the demands of digital transformation, thereby limiting the ability of schools and madrasahs to function as effective agents of social change.

Empirical conditions in the field demonstrate that many madrasahs are currently navigating a complex transition toward digital-based management and learning systems (Fajariyah, 2025; Hadi & Masuwd, 2025; Maisuroh & Jamil,

2024; Mukarromah, 2025). MTs Miftahul Jannah represents a typical example of an educational institution striving to improve quality while facing practical constraints in technology adoption. Although digital tools offer significant potential to enhance efficiency and accountability, their implementation is often inconsistent and fragmented. Observations indicate that administrative tasks are still partially conducted manually, resulting in increased workload, data redundancy, and limited accuracy (Afifah, 2025; Basri et al., 2024; Mukarromah et al., 2024; Shofuro & Manshur, 2025). At the same time, teachers and administrative staff exhibit varying levels of digital literacy, which affects the effectiveness of technology utilization. The head of the madrasah plays a central role in addressing these challenges by initiating improvements, evaluating ongoing programs, and maintaining successful practices. When certain initiatives fail to meet expected targets, corrective actions are taken; conversely, effective programs are sustained and further developed. These phenomena illustrate that leadership capacity significantly influences how digital transformation unfolds at the institutional level (Hasanah, Fauzi, et al., 2024; Hikmah et al., 2025; Indayati, 2025; Jannah & Rizquha, 2025; Makiyah, 2024; Sain et al., 2024).

Previous studies have extensively examined the role of school and madrasah leadership in improving educational quality. Hamidah (2021) highlights that the head of madrasah plays a critical role in encouraging digitalization through strategic planning, implementation, evaluation, and system development. Similarly, Harahap (2022) emphasizes that madrasah leaders are responsible for formulating policies, allocating budgets, and ensuring the availability of adequate digital facilities (Di & Rembang, 2024). Other scholars argue that principals significantly influence teaching quality and student learning outcomes by setting institutional vision, engaging teachers and staff, and maintaining a student-centered learning environment. Research also suggests that effective leadership requires a balance of intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and social competencies (Pendidikan et al., 2024). These studies collectively underscore the importance of leadership in driving institutional improvement. However, most existing research focuses primarily on instructional leadership and classroom practices rather than the optimization of administrative systems through digital transformation.

Although prior research provides valuable insights into educational leadership and digitalization, several gaps remain unaddressed. First, many studies examine digital transformation in general education settings, with limited attention to madrasahs as unique institutions with distinct administrative structures and cultural contexts (Aini & Wahid, 2024; Alfarisi & Faiz, 2024; Febriyanto & Manshur, 2025; Muharromah, 2025). Second, existing research often treats digitalization as a technical issue rather than as a comprehensive

administrative reform driven by leadership roles such as administrator, manager, supervisor, and motivator. Third, there is a lack of in-depth qualitative studies that explore how heads of madrasahs navigate practical constraints such as limited infrastructure, financial challenges, and human resource capacity. Consequently, the interaction between leadership practices and administrative digitalization remains insufficiently explored. This gap is significant because administrative effectiveness directly affects learning quality, transparency, and stakeholder trust. Addressing this gap is essential to develop context-sensitive leadership models that can guide madrasahs in managing digital transformation more systematically and sustainably.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the strategic role of the head of madrasah in optimizing educational administration through digital transformation within a specific institutional context. Unlike previous studies that emphasize instructional leadership or general technology adoption, this research integrates leadership theory with administrative digitalization practices. It examines how visionary leadership translates into concrete actions such as planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising digital administrative systems. By concentrating on MTs Miftahul Jannah, this study provides a contextualized understanding of digital transformation in madrasahs, particularly in relation to financial administration, data management, and stakeholder communication. The study also highlights the interplay between leadership capacity and organizational readiness, offering a more holistic perspective on educational management. This approach contributes to the state of the art by positioning administrative digitalization as a leadership-driven process rather than a purely technological initiative, thereby emphasizing its strategic importance for institutional development.

Based on the aforementioned discussion, the central research problem of this study concerns how the head of madrasah performs strategic leadership roles in enhancing digital literacy and implementing digital administration at MTs Miftahul Jannah. This study argues that the success of administrative digitalization is largely determined by the visionary leadership of the head of madrasah, particularly in empowering teachers and staff, managing resources effectively, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. The study assumes that when leadership functions as administrator, manager, supervisor, and motivator are executed coherently, digital transformation can improve efficiency, transparency, and accountability in educational administration. The findings of this research are expected to contribute theoretically by enriching the discourse on educational leadership and digital administration, and practically by providing insights and references for other madrasah leaders seeking to develop a sustainable digital culture in their institutions.

RESEACH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design with a case study approach. The qualitative descriptive method was chosen because it enables researchers to explore social phenomena in their natural context and to gain an in-depth understanding of meanings, experiences, and processes that cannot be captured through quantitative methods. This approach emphasizes naturalistic inquiry, subjective interpretation, and inductive reasoning, which are essential for understanding complex educational and administrative phenomena. The case study design was selected as the research focused on a specific institution that exhibits particular characteristics, challenges, and strengths related to digital administrative transformation. A situation is considered a case when it involves problems, obstacles, deviations, or distinctive advantages that require comprehensive examination. By using a case study approach, this research was able to describe the phenomenon in detail, analyze leadership practices contextually, and generate rich, holistic insights regarding the role of the head of madrasah in optimizing educational administration.

The research was conducted at MTs Miftahul Jannah Mantingan, Ngawi. This site was purposively selected because the madrasah is in the process of transitioning from conventional administrative practices to digital-based administration. As an Islamic educational institution, MTs Miftahul Jannah represents a relevant and meaningful context for examining leadership roles in managing digital transformation within madrasahs. Additionally, the institution faces practical challenges such as limited infrastructure, financial constraints, and varying levels of digital competence among teachers and administrative staff. These conditions make MTs Miftahul Jannah an appropriate and representative research site for studying how leadership strategies are implemented in real settings. The selection of this location allowed the researcher to obtain authentic data and to observe directly how administrative digitalization is planned, implemented, and evaluated within the institutional environment.

Data collection in this study was conducted using three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was carried out to obtain direct and contextual information regarding administrative practices, leadership interactions, and the implementation of digital systems within the madrasah. Interviews were conducted with key informants, including the head of madrasah, vice principal for curriculum, administrative staff, and teachers, to explore their perceptions, experiences, and roles related to digital administration. Documentation was used to support and validate data obtained from observations and interviews, including administrative records, policy documents, reports, and digital system outputs. These three techniques were employed simultaneously to ensure data completeness and credibility. The

primary data were obtained directly from individuals involved in the administrative and educational processes, making them original and firsthand sources relevant to the research objectives.

Data analysis was conducted using an interactive qualitative analysis model consisting of data condensation, data display, and data verification. Data condensation involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming raw data obtained from the field to highlight relevant information related to the research focus. This process included coding and categorizing interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents. Data display was then carried out by organizing the condensed data into narrative descriptions and thematic matrices to facilitate interpretation and pattern identification. Finally, data verification was conducted through continuous reflection, comparison, and interpretation to draw valid conclusions. This process ensured that findings were grounded in empirical data and reflected the actual conditions of the research setting. Through this systematic analysis, the study was able to produce credible, in-depth, and meaningful insights into the role of the head of madrasah in optimizing digital educational administration.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The findings of this study indicate that educational administration at MTs Miftahul Jannah has generally progressed and adapted to contemporary developments. Based on interviews with the head of madrasah and administrative staff, the institution has begun transitioning from conventional administrative practices toward a more modern system. Nevertheless, some administrative processes are still conducted manually, particularly in student data management and reporting. The persistence of manual systems results in paper accumulation, limited data accessibility, and inefficiencies in document retrieval. Although digital awareness has increased, full implementation remains uneven across administrative domains.

The head of madrasah has established a clear institutional vision that serves as a foundational guideline for administrative and educational planning. This vision functions as a strategic instrument in directing school development toward independence and progress. The vision and mission are not merely formal statements but are gradually integrated into curriculum planning and administrative decision-making. The leadership role of the head of madrasah as an administrator is reflected in the effort to align institutional goals with evolving educational demands, including digital transformation.

MTs Miftahul Jannah has initiated digital administration practices that have shown tangible positive impacts, particularly in improving work efficiency

and service responsiveness. Administrative staff reported that digital tools simplify routine tasks and reduce repetitive workloads. Parents also responded positively, especially regarding financial transparency and communication. However, the implementation of digital administration is not yet comprehensive and remains limited in scope.

The application of digital administration at MTs Miftahul Jannah is currently concentrated mainly in financial management. Digital applications such as the Madrasah Work Plan (RK) and Digital Madrasah Report (RDM) have been implemented consistently in this area. In contrast, other administrative sectors, including student reporting and data management, continue to rely on manual procedures in accordance with regulations issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

For lighter administrative tasks, the madrasah utilizes widely accessible digital tools such as Google Spreadsheet and Google Form. These platforms are used for monitoring teacher reports, tracking staff discipline, and collecting weekly administrative data. The use of these tools has contributed to better documentation and improved coordination among staff members, although their utilization depends heavily on individual digital competencies.

Several obstacles were identified as major challenges in the transition toward digital administration. Limited internet connectivity and unstable network quality were reported as the most significant barriers. In addition, the madrasah faces constraints related to financial capacity and the availability of human resources with adequate digital skills. These factors hinder the expansion of digital systems across all administrative units.

Despite these challenges, the overall optimization of educational administration at MTs Miftahul Jannah is perceived as effective and beneficial. Administrative activities are integrated into the Madrasah Work Plan (RKM) and involve multiple stakeholders, including the head of madrasah, administrative head, vice principals, teachers, and the school committee. Regular coordination meetings are conducted weekly and monthly to evaluate progress and address both short-term and long-term issues. The long-term objective of this transition is to establish MTs Miftahul Jannah as a fully digital madrasah within the next five to eight years.

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that the gradual transition from manual to digital administration aligns with broader trends in public and educational governance, where digital systems are increasingly used to enhance efficiency, transparency, and service quality (Sosial et al., 2025). The continued reliance on manual systems in some administrative areas reflects a transitional phase rather

than resistance to change, highlighting the need for systematic capacity building and infrastructural support.

The role of the head of madrasah in establishing and internalizing a clear institutional vision is consistent with leadership theories that emphasize visionary planning as a core function of educational administration (Mujiburrohman, 2025; Mulyati et al., 2024). A well-articulated vision serves as a strategic compass that guides curriculum development, administrative reform, and organizational culture (Motivasi, 2024). In this context, leadership is not limited to policy formulation but extends to shaping future-oriented institutional identity.

The positive impact of digital administration on efficiency and stakeholder satisfaction supports previous findings that digital governance improves internal processes such as data management, communication, and documentation (Sosial et al., 2025). The favorable response from parents indicates that digital transparency strengthens trust between educational institutions and the community, particularly in financial administration.

However, the limited scope of digital implementation—primarily confined to financial administration—reveals structural and regulatory constraints. The continued use of manual systems for student data and reporting, as mandated by external regulations, illustrates how policy frameworks can influence the pace and extent of digital transformation. This condition confirms that administrative digitalization is not solely a technical issue but also a regulatory and organizational one (Komunikasi, 2024).

The use of accessible digital platforms such as Google Spreadsheet and Google Form demonstrates an adaptive strategy in responding to limited resources. These tools function as interim solutions that enable basic digital monitoring and reporting while more integrated systems are gradually developed. Nevertheless, dependence on individual digital literacy underscores the importance of continuous professional development for administrative staff and teachers (Komunikasi, 2024).

Overall, the findings reinforce the argument that successful digital administrative transformation depends heavily on leadership capacity, institutional readiness, and stakeholder collaboration. The integration of administrative management into the Madrasah Work Plan and the involvement of multiple actors reflect a participatory approach that enhances accountability and sustainability. Consistent with previous studies, effective educational administration requires coherent management of operational activities to ensure that administrative systems support, rather than hinder, the achievement of educational goals (Komunikasi, 2024).

CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this study reveals that the optimization of educational administration in madrasahs is fundamentally determined by the leadership capacity of the head of madrasah. This research demonstrates that the head of madrasah plays a multifaceted and strategic role not only as a formal leader but also as a manager, administrator, supervisor, and motivator who orchestrates administrative processes in a systematic and sustainable manner. Through comprehensive planning, clear organizational structuring, coordinated implementation, and continuous supervision, the head of madrasah is able to establish an administrative system that is orderly, transparent, and accountable. An essential lesson derived from this study is that visionary and communicative leadership, combined with the effective use of information technology and the empowerment of educational personnel, significantly enhances administrative efficiency and supports the overall achievement of madrasah educational objectives.

From an academic perspective, this study contributes to the field of educational management by providing empirical evidence on how leadership practices directly influence the digital transformation and optimization of educational administration in madrasahs. The strength of this research lies in its in-depth qualitative analysis, which captures the complexity of leadership roles within a specific institutional context. However, this study is limited to a single madrasah and focuses primarily on administrative processes, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research is therefore encouraged to involve comparative studies across multiple madrasahs, integrate quantitative approaches, and examine the long-term impact of digital administrative systems on teaching quality, student outcomes, and institutional performance.

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