



Constructing Teacher's Moral Leadership in Imam Nawawi's Educational Ethics: A Social Learning Perspective

Muhammad Tauhid Abdurrahman*, Kharis Syuhud Mujahada

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Terpadu Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Email : muhammad.tauhid.abdurrahman@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

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*Corresponding Author

This study aims to reconstruct the concept of teacher exemplarity (keteladanan guru) in Adab al-'Ālim wa al-Muta'allim by Imam al-Nawawi through the lens of Bandura's social learning theory and to examine its implications for Teacher Professional Development (TPD) within Islamic Educational Management. The study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) based on the PRISMA 2020 protocol. A total of 18 publications, including theoretical studies, conceptual papers, policy reports, and systematic reviews published between 1977 and 2025, were selected and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings identified five key social learning mechanisms reflected in both the classical text and contemporary literature: modeling, attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. These mechanisms demonstrate that teacher professional development extends beyond technical competence, functioning as a continuous process of moral and spiritual learning through exemplary behavior. Teachers serve as moral leaders whose actions and ethical consistency are observed, internalized, and reproduced within educational environments. The study implies that TPD programs and educational management practices should integrate moral exemplarity, value internalization, and continuous professional learning to strengthen teacher development and institutional effectiveness in Islamic education.

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher professional development has become a critical concern in contemporary education because educational quality is strongly influenced by teachers' professional competence, ethical conduct, and leadership capacity. Across educational systems, teachers are expected not only to facilitate learning but also to nurture values, attitudes, and behaviors that support students' holistic development. This expectation has become increasingly important in response to

rapid technological change, social transformation, and the growing need for sustainable education. Recent studies indicate that continuous professional development contributes significantly to instructional improvement, teacher effectiveness, and educational sustainability (Amemasor et al., 2025; Mieres-Chacaltana et al., 2025, Nata et al., 2025). Furthermore, contemporary perspectives emphasize that professional growth involves not only technical competence but also the development of personal and social capacities that influence students' learning experiences. Therefore, understanding teacher professional development from both professional and moral perspectives is essential because teachers remain central actors in shaping educational quality and student development.

Despite increasing attention to teacher professionalism, many professional development initiatives continue to prioritize instructional skills, curriculum implementation, and technological adaptation while giving limited attention to ethical leadership and exemplary conduct. This imbalance creates challenges because educational institutions increasingly expect teachers to foster both academic achievement and character development. Contemporary discussions on continuous professional development emphasize teachers' rights and responsibilities to engage in lifelong professional learning; however, practical implementation often focuses on measurable competencies rather than moral dimensions of teaching (Auliya et al., 2025; Kager et al., 2023, Mustika et al., 2023). Consequently, many professional development programs inadequately address how teachers can function as moral leaders and role models within educational settings. This gap becomes particularly important in value-based educational environments where ethical consistency and exemplary behavior are considered integral components of effective teaching and educational success.

The importance of teacher exemplarity is increasingly evident in educational practice, particularly in contexts where character education constitutes a primary institutional objective. Students are continuously exposed to diverse influences from digital media, peer groups, and broader social environments, making the teacher's role as a moral reference increasingly significant. Empirical evidence demonstrates that teachers' exemplary behavior contributes directly to the formation of students' discipline, responsibility, and religious character through daily interactions and observational learning processes (Febriyanti & Shanie, 2025; Lestari & Mahrus, 2025). Similarly, studies in Islamic education indicate that students tend to internalize values more effectively when educators consistently demonstrate those values in practice rather than merely teaching them theoretically. These findings suggest that teacher influence extends beyond instructional delivery and encompasses the transmission of values through observable behavior, attitudes, and interpersonal relationships within educational environments.

Contemporary scholarship has provided substantial insights into teacher professional development and its relationship with teacher effectiveness. Recent systematic reviews show that sustainable professional development enhances instructional integration, pedagogical innovation, and long-term teaching quality when implemented through collaborative and reflective learning processes (Amemasor et al., 2025). Likewise, conceptual models of continuous professional development emphasize that teacher learning occurs through interactions among individual, organizational, and professional factors that support ongoing growth (Kager et al., 2023). From a psychological perspective, teacher self-efficacy and resilience have been identified as important determinants of positive educational outcomes and prosocial behavior within learning environments (Mieres-Chacaltana et al., 2025). Although these studies contribute significantly to understanding professional learning, they predominantly focus on competency development and organizational factors while providing limited attention to ethical exemplarity as a core mechanism of teacher professional development.

Within Islamic educational scholarship, teacher exemplarity has traditionally been regarded as a foundational principle of education. Studies examining character education consistently highlight the importance of teachers' moral behavior in shaping students' values and ethical dispositions (Lestari & Mahrus, 2025; Febriyanti & Shanie, 2025). Furthermore, research on Islamic educational ethics emphasizes that effective educators should demonstrate integrity, consistency, and moral responsibility in their professional conduct (Munir et al., 2023). However, these studies generally examine teacher exemplarity from normative or character-education perspectives without systematically connecting it to contemporary theories of social learning and professional development. Conversely, recent research on professional development focuses primarily on instructional effectiveness, teacher efficacy, and organizational learning while rarely incorporating classical Islamic concepts of moral leadership. Consequently, a significant research gap remains regarding how teacher exemplarity rooted in Islamic educational ethics can be integrated with social learning mechanisms to enrich contemporary frameworks of teacher professional development.

This study offers a novel perspective by positioning teacher exemplarity as a bridge between classical Islamic educational ethics and contemporary educational psychology. Rather than treating moral leadership and professional development as separate domains, this research conceptualizes them as interconnected processes within a comprehensive model of teacher development. The study reconstructs the concept of teacher exemplarity derived from *Adab al-'Ālim wa al-Muta'allim* and interprets it through the mechanisms of observational learning. Through this approach, professional development is understood not

only as competence enhancement but also as a continuous process of value transmission, ethical formation, and moral leadership. This perspective expands existing discussions by introducing a conceptual synthesis that integrates spiritual, ethical, pedagogical, and psychological dimensions within a unified framework relevant to contemporary educational management.

Based on the identified gaps, this study addresses the following research problem: how can the concept of teacher exemplarity in the Islamic educational tradition be integrated with social learning theory to strengthen teacher professional development? This study argues that the principles of *adab* articulated in classical Islamic scholarship correspond closely with the mechanisms of social learning and can therefore serve as a foundation for a more holistic model of professional development. By employing a systematic literature review approach, this research seeks to analyze the concept of teacher moral leadership in *Adab al-ʿĀlim wa al-Mutaʿallim*, examine its alignment with Social Learning Theory, and construct an integrated conceptual model for Islamic Educational Management. The study contributes theoretically by enriching the discourse on teacher professional development and educational leadership, while practically providing a conceptual foundation for designing professional development programs, institutional policies, and school cultures grounded in moral exemplarity and sustainable professional learning.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach guided by the PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework. The SLR method was selected because it enables a systematic, transparent, and replicable synthesis of existing knowledge related to teacher professional development, moral leadership, social learning theory, and Islamic educational values (Page et al., 2021). Since this study focused on conceptual reconstruction rather than empirical field investigation, no specific research site was designated. Instead, the study utilized scholarly publications indexed in major academic databases as the primary source of data. Google Scholar, ERIC, and Scopus were selected due to their extensive coverage of educational research and their accessibility to high-quality peer-reviewed literature (Gusenbauer & Haddaway, 2020; Martín-Martín et al., 2018).

Data collection was conducted through a systematic literature search using combinations of the keywords *teacher professional development*, *teacher modeling*, *moral leadership*, *social learning theory*, *self-efficacy*, and *Islamic education* (Booth, 2016). The initial search identified 6,917 publications consisting of 4,700 records from Google Scholar, 2,017 from ERIC, and 200 from Scopus. To ensure

relevance and quality, inclusion criteria were established, including peer-reviewed publications, studies grounded in clear theoretical frameworks, educationally relevant works, and publications issued between 2020 and 2025, with exceptions for seminal theoretical references. Duplicate records, non-peer-reviewed works, and studies unrelated to the research focus were excluded (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007). Additional sources were identified through backward and forward citation tracking to capture influential theoretical and empirical contributions (Webster & Watson, 2002). Following the screening and eligibility assessment stages, 18 studies met the established criteria and were included in the review.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis to identify recurring concepts, theoretical patterns, and emerging themes across the selected literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analytical process followed four stages: data condensation, data reduction, data display, and conclusion verification. During data condensation, key information related to teacher exemplarity, social learning mechanisms, and professional development was extracted and organized. Subsequently, irrelevant information was reduced to maintain analytical focus. The selected data were then displayed through thematic categorization to facilitate comparison and synthesis across studies. Finally, conclusions were verified through iterative examination of the evidence to ensure conceptual consistency and theoretical coherence. All review procedures were documented and reported using the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram to provide transparency regarding the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion processes (Page et al., 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

A Teacher Professional Development in Islamic Education Management

A total of 18 articles met the inclusion criteria and were analyzed in this systematic literature review. These articles were drawn from a range of national and international journals in the fields of education and teacher professional development, with publication dates spanning from 1977 to 2025, encompassing both classical theoretical works and contemporary studies.

The included studies comprised systematic literature reviews, theoretical reviews, conceptual analyses, and policy reports, with a primary focus on teacher professional development, exemplarity, social learning, and moral values within educational contexts. In the context of online-based professional learning, several studies indicate that digital professional learning networks enable teachers to develop competencies through sustained observation, interaction, and reflective practice. Classical texts such as *Adab al-ʿĀlim wa al-Mutaʿallim* also contain

explicit descriptions of teachers' behaviors, attitudes, and ethical conduct, positioning educators as concrete role models for students within the educational process (Bandura, 1977; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone, 2009; Imam An-Nawawi, 1987; Li, 2023; Trust et al., 2017).

Based on an analysis of research foci, the included articles address several key aspects, namely: teacher professional development, teacher exemplarity and modeling, self-efficacy and social learning, as well as moral values, ethics, and adab of educators (Lu & Mustafa, 2021; Mieres-Chacaltana et al., 2025; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

To obtain a systematic overview of the characteristics and research foci of the included articles, a data synthesis process was conducted in the form of a table. This synthesis presents information on educational contexts, the focus of teacher professional development, reported dimensions of social learning, and aspects of Islamic Education Management identified in each article.

The results of the synthesis are presented in Table 1, which maps the included articles based on representations of teacher professional development from the perspective of Islamic Education Management. The presentation of data in tabular form is intended to provide a structured visualization of the research findings and to facilitate the identification of study characteristics as well as emerging thematic patterns within the literature.

Table 1. Synthesis of Included Articles Based on Representations of Teacher Professional Development in the Perspective of Islamic Education Management

No	Author & Year	Educational Context	Focus on Teacher Professional Development	Dimensions of Social Learning	Reported IEM Aspects
1.	Bandura, 1977	General education / educational psychology	Learning through observation and role models	Attention; Retention; Reproduction; Motivation	Development of educational human resources (conceptual)
2.	Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020	Teacher education / educational psychology	Self-efficacy and social learning in educational practice	Attention; Retention; Motivation	Development of educator competencies
3.	Harmita, D., Nurbika, D., & Asiyah (2025)	Islamic Religious Education at	The exemplary role of Islamic Education teachers in	Retention and Reproduction through habituation	Strengthening teachers' moral leadership,

		the school level	internalizing noble character values	and repetition of behavior	establishing a religious culture, and internalizing values of etiquette in educational practice
4.	Suandi, 2019	Islamic Education	The role of teachers as moral role models	Modeling; Reproduction	The culture of Islamic educational institutions
5.	Lestari & Mahrus, 2025	Islamic Education	The formation of manners and character through the example set by teachers	Modeling; Reproduction	Ethics and institutional values of Islamic education
6.	Saputra et al., 2023	Formal Islamic education	Teachers' exemplary behavior in shaping students' character	Modeling; Reproduction	Teacher leadership and Islamic school culture
7.	Munir et al., 2025	Islamic Education	Teachers' manners and ethics education according to Imam al-Nawawi	Modeling; Attention	Ethics and institutional values of Islamic education
8.	Mieres-Chacaltana et al., 2024	Teacher education	Professional ethics and professional development of teachers	Attention; Motivation	Professional development of educators
9.	Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2017	Teacher education	Effective teacher professional development model	Retention; Motivation	Development of human resources for educators
10.	Guskey, 2002	Pendidikan guru	Evaluasi pengembangan profesional guru	Retention; Reproduction	Educator development management
11.	Opfer & Pedder, 2011	Teacher education	Conceptual framework for teacher	Retention; Motivation	Development of

			professional development		educational organizations
12.	Desimone, 2009	Teacher education	Effectiveness of teacher professional development programs	Retention; Motivation	Educator quality improvement management
13.	Huang et al., 2022	STEM education	Trends in STEM teacher professional development	Attention; Retention	Development of educator competencies
14.	Kager et al., 2023	Teacher education	Lesson study as continuous professional development	Reproduction; Motivation	Development of educator collaboration
15.	Lu & Osman, 2025	Teacher education	Strategies for teacher professional development in service	Retention; Motivation	Development of human resources for educators
16.	Amemasor et al., 2025	Formal education	The impact of teacher professional development on teaching practices	Reproduction; Motivation	Improvement in educator performance
17.	Trust et al., 2017	Online education	Online-based professional learning for teachers	Attention; Retention	Professional learning management
18.	Auliya et al., 2025	Formal education	Teacher welfare and professional development	Motivation	Educator welfare management

Based on the synthesis of the included articles presented in Table 1, thematic analysis generated five main themes related to mechanisms of social learning and teacher exemplarity within the context of Islamic education. These themes are elaborated in detail in the following subsections.

Moral Exemplarity and Observational Learning in Islamic Education

Through thematic analysis of the included articles, five main conceptual themes were identified that consistently appear in both the classical literature of *Adab al-ʿĀlim wa al-Mutaʿallim*—which also documents students’ ethical practices (*adab al-mutaʿallim*) related to these themes—and contemporary studies. These five themes are: modeling (exemplarity), attention, retention

(encoding and understanding), reproduction (behavioral enactment), and motivation. These themes originate from the framework of Social Learning Theory and are widely employed across studies to classify observational learning processes within educational contexts and teacher professional development (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Li, 2023).

The analyzed articles document various approaches to teacher professional development, including continuous professional learning, teacher collaboration, reflective teaching practice, and community-based learning (Desimone & Garet, 2015; Kager et al., 2023; Pedder & Opfer, 2011). Several articles in this review also incorporate discussions of moral values and educators' adab derived from the Islamic educational tradition (Imam An-Nawawi, 1987; Lestari & Mahrus, 2025; Munir et al., 2023). Details of the study characteristics are presented in the PRISMA flow diagram in Figure 1 (Haddaway et al., 2022).

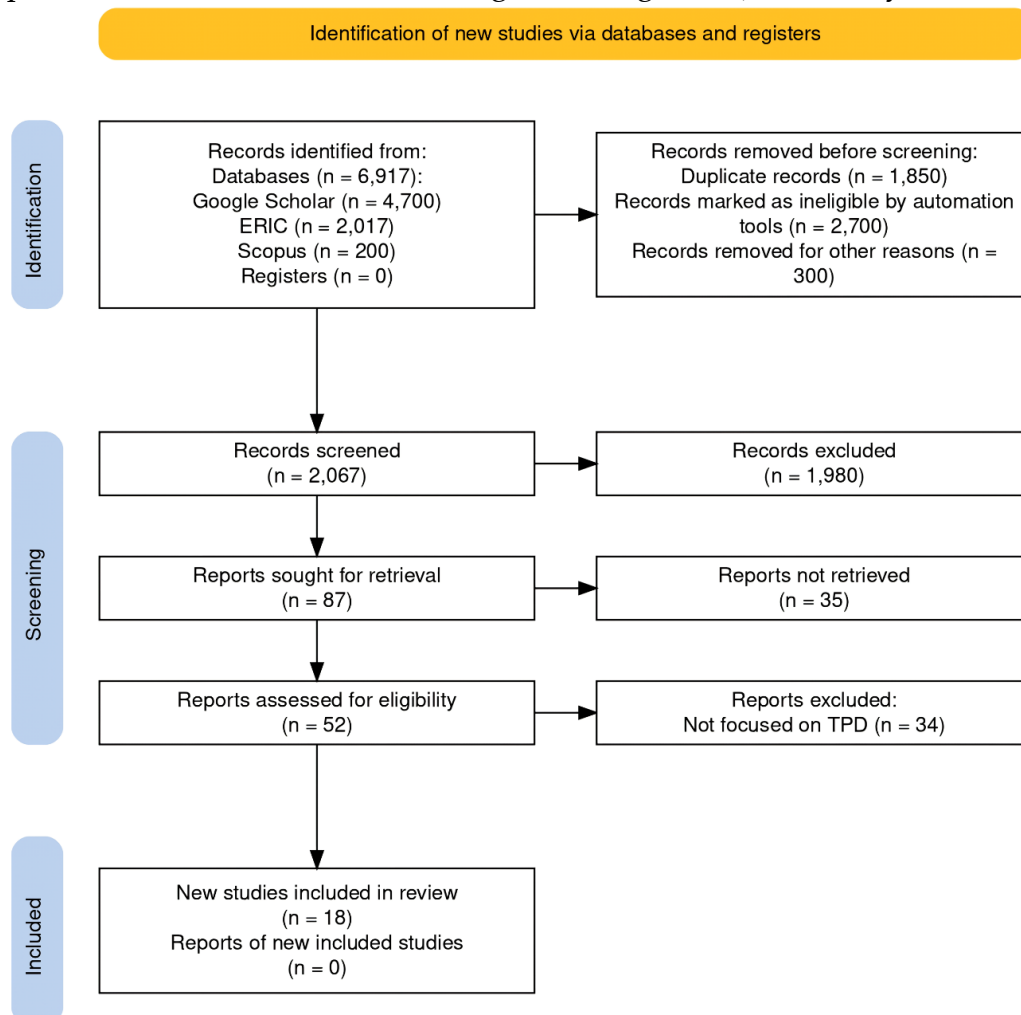


Figure 1. The PRISMA 2020 flow in this study. Note: Not focused on TPD = Articles that do not directly discuss the process, mechanism, or strategy of teacher professional development.

Discussion

The findings of this systematic literature review demonstrate that teacher professional development (TPD) in Islamic educational contexts extends beyond the enhancement of pedagogical and technical competencies. The synthesis of the reviewed literature reveals that professional development is fundamentally embedded in social learning processes through which professional values, ethical conduct, and educational practices are observed, internalized, and reproduced. The five themes identified in this review—modeling, attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation—collectively illustrate that teachers' professional growth occurs through continuous interaction with professional models and educational environments. These findings support recent studies emphasizing that effective professional development is sustained through reflective practice, professional interaction, and contextual learning rather than isolated training activities (Amemasor et al., 2025; Lu & Osman, 2025; Mieres-Chacaltana et al., 2024).

A significant finding of this study is that the concept of teacher exemplarity articulated in *Adab al-ʿĀlim wa al-Mutaʿallim* aligns conceptually with the mechanisms of Social Learning Theory. Imam al-Nawawi emphasizes the importance of sincerity, moral integrity, humility, discipline, and consistency between knowledge and action as essential characteristics of educators (Imam An-Nawawi, 1987). These principles correspond closely with the modeling mechanism proposed by Bandura, in which individuals learn through observing and imitating influential figures (Bandura, 1986). The reviewed studies further indicate that students are more likely to internalize values and professional behaviors when teachers consistently demonstrate them in everyday educational practice (Harmita et al., 2025; Lestari & Mahrus, 2025; Munir et al., 2025). Therefore, teacher exemplarity should be understood not merely as a moral expectation but as a strategic mechanism of professional learning and value transmission.

Another important finding concerns the interconnected nature of attention, retention, and reproduction within teacher professional development. The literature suggests that professional values cannot be transferred solely through formal instruction; rather, they require sustained observation, cognitive internalization, and repeated enactment in authentic educational settings. This process is particularly evident in Islamic educational environments, where teachers' behaviors are continuously observed and interpreted as references for appropriate conduct. Recent studies show that sustained exposure to exemplary professional practices contributes to the development of professional confidence,

ethical awareness, and long-term behavioral consistency among educators and learners (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020; Harmita et al., 2025; Mieres-Chacaltana et al., 2024). Consequently, professional development should be viewed as a holistic learning process that integrates cognitive, behavioral, and ethical dimensions.

The findings also highlight the central role of motivation in sustaining professional learning. Motivation functions as a reinforcing mechanism that determines whether observed and internalized behaviors are maintained over time. In contemporary TPD literature, intrinsic commitment, institutional support, collaborative learning cultures, and professional recognition are identified as critical factors influencing the sustainability of professional growth (Auliya et al., 2025; Lu & Osman, 2025). Similarly, Islamic educational thought emphasizes sincerity (*ikhlas*), perseverance, and dedication to knowledge as spiritual foundations for continuous self-improvement (Imam An-Nawawi, 1987). This convergence suggests that sustainable teacher development requires both organizational support and internal moral commitment. As a result, motivation should be positioned not merely as an individual psychological factor but as a multidimensional element shaped by personal, social, and institutional influences.

The primary novelty of this study lies in its integration of Social Learning Theory and the concept of educators' *adab* within a unified framework of teacher professional development. Previous studies have generally examined professional development from psychological, managerial, or pedagogical perspectives, while research on Islamic educational ethics has often remained normative and philosophical. This review bridges these two traditions by demonstrating that classical Islamic concepts of teacher exemplarity can be interpreted through contemporary social learning mechanisms. Through this integration, teacher exemplarity emerges as a professional development strategy rather than solely a moral ideal. This conceptual synthesis contributes to the advancement of Islamic Education Management by introducing a model of professional development that incorporates ethical, spiritual, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions within a single theoretical framework.

The study further contributes to the literature by proposing that teacher professional development in Islamic educational institutions should be reconceptualized as a process of moral and professional identity formation. The findings suggest that effective development policies should not focus exclusively on competency enhancement but should also facilitate value internalization, exemplarity, reflective learning, and ethical leadership. Within the framework of Islamic Education Management, teacher exemplarity functions as cultural capital that shapes organizational culture, learning environments, and institutional effectiveness. Accordingly, this study provides both theoretical and practical

contributions by offering a conceptual foundation for developing value-based professional development programs, leadership practices, and educational policies that integrate professional competence with moral and spiritual excellence (Amemasor et al., 2025; Lu & Osman, 2025; Harmita et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that teacher exemplarity, as articulated in *Adab al-ʿĀlim wa al-Mutaʿallim* by Imam al-Nawawi, can be systematically understood through the mechanisms of Bandura's Social Learning Theory, namely modeling, attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. The most important finding is that teacher professional development in Islamic education is not merely a process of enhancing pedagogical competence but a continuous process of moral, spiritual, and professional formation rooted in exemplarity. The study highlights that teachers function as moral leaders whose behaviors, attitudes, and ethical consistency become sources of professional learning for students and educational communities. The principal contribution of this study lies in its integration of classical Islamic educational ethics with contemporary educational psychology, resulting in an exemplarity-based conceptual model of Teacher Professional Development within the framework of Islamic Education Management. This synthesis expands the theoretical discourse on teacher professional development by incorporating ethical, moral, and spiritual dimensions as integral elements of professional learning.

Despite its contributions, this study is limited by its reliance on a Systematic Literature Review approach, which focuses on conceptual and theoretical evidence rather than direct empirical observations. Consequently, the proposed conceptual model has not yet been tested in actual educational settings. Future research is therefore recommended to examine the implementation of exemplarity-based teacher professional development in diverse Islamic educational institutions through qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method approaches. Further studies may also explore the roles of educational leadership, organizational culture, and professional evaluation systems in strengthening the integration of social learning mechanisms and Islamic educational values within sustainable Islamic Education Management practices

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