



Situational Leadership in Developing Qur'an Memorization Programs in Islamic Secondary Education

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to examine the implementation of situational leadership in the development of a Qur'an memorization (tahfidz) program, focusing on leadership practices, program management, and their contribution to program sustainability and quality improvement. The study employed a qualitative case study approach involving the principal, curriculum vice principal, program coordinator, tahfidz teachers, and students. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, then analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing techniques. The findings reveal that situational leadership was implemented adaptively through four leadership styles: telling, selling, participating, and delegating. These approaches were applied across the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of the tahfidz program according to teachers' readiness and institutional needs. The study further demonstrates that situational leadership significantly contributed to strengthening teacher motivation, professionalism, collaboration, and program sustainability, which ultimately enhanced the overall quality of the educational institution. The findings imply that adaptive leadership practices are essential for supporting the continuous development of religious education programs in Islamic educational institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an memorization (tahfidz) program has become an increasingly important component of Islamic education because it contributes not only to students' cognitive achievement but also to the development of moral, spiritual, and social values (Fadillah & Sesmiarni, 2025; Safrida et al., 2025). In contemporary society, Islamic educational institutions are expected to produce graduates who possess strong religious character, discipline, and ethical awareness in responding to rapid social transformation (Muchtar et al., 2025; Saputra et al., 2025). The tahfidz program was initially established to foster a

genuine appreciation for Quranic memorization and encourage students to engage meaningfully with their environments (Rahma & Kabibullah, 2025). Beyond memorization, the program serves as a vital pillar for preserving religious identity (Fiteriadi et al., 2025). It also guides students in maintaining consistent memorization and internalizing Quranic values in their daily lives (Fadillah & Sesmiarni, 2025). In an educational context, this program has proven instrumental in shaping students' spiritual character (Tirtana et al., 2026; Ulya & Chamami, 2026). Therefore, the sustainability and quality of tahfidz programs have become major concerns for Islamic educational institutions seeking to improve educational quality and social relevance in contemporary society.

Despite its growing significance, the implementation of tahfidz programs in many Islamic educational institutions still faces numerous managerial and organizational challenges. Many programs are unable to achieve optimal outcomes because they are managed conventionally without systematic planning, structured supervision, and sustainable evaluation mechanisms. The tahfidz program has proven effective for cultivating students' discipline, patience, and perseverance in their daily lives. However, the role of the tahfidz program has evolved from a supplementary religious activity to a flagship program managed in a strategic, organized, and systematic manner. This level of systematic management is designed to guarantee the program's operational efficiency and ongoing success (Fadilla et al., 2024; Ahmad et al., 2023). This management, encompassing planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation, is now integrated into the madrasah educational system, contributing to enhanced program performance and madrasah quality (Ulya & Chamami, 2026). Consequently, leadership effectiveness becomes an essential factor in ensuring the sustainability and quality improvement of tahfidz programs.

In practice, many Islamic schools have transformed tahfidz programs from supplementary religious activities into flagship institutional programs managed systematically and strategically. The tahfidz program has been elevated into a flagship program characterized by deliberate and systematic management, focusing not only on memorization targets but also on fostering students' religious character (Kartika et al., 2025). Operationally, the program is structured through a comprehensive framework that includes designing the tahfidz curriculum, implementing consistent memorization sessions and muraja'ah activities, and grouping students based on their individual proficiency levels. The program is also supported by a strict monitoring and evaluation system, ensuring that students' progress is consistently tracked and aligned with institutional objectives (Nurhaida & Asdiqoh, 2026). However, the effectiveness of such programs largely depends on the ability of educational leaders to manage human resources adaptively according to organizational conditions and

teachers' readiness levels. Therefore, adaptive leadership practices are needed to ensure that every stage of program implementation can operate effectively while maintaining institutional goals and educational quality standards simultaneously.

Previous studies have widely discussed the importance of situational leadership in educational management and organizational development. Research consistently demonstrates that situational leadership plays a crucial role in effective human resource management (Bizany et al., 2024). Situational leadership is considered an effective approach because it enables leaders to adjust their directive and supportive behaviors according to the competence, commitment, and readiness levels of subordinates. In other studies, situational leadership has been proven to enhance individual and collective performance, elevate job satisfaction, and mitigate interpersonal conflict (Puspitaningrum et al., 2025; Wiwin & Djafri, 2025). Furthermore, situational leadership influences the quality of Islamic educational institutions by contributing to institutional resilience (Zukhruf & Azani, 2023). The flexibility embedded in situational leadership allows educational leaders to implement more contextual and humanistic managerial practices in dynamic educational environments.

Several studies have also emphasized that situational leadership serves as an adaptive framework for navigating educational transformation and organizational challenges (Fenezia & Armianti, 2025). Situational leadership theory emphasizes the importance of aligning leadership style with the readiness level of subordinates in executing specific tasks. This approach provides leaders with the flexibility to adjust their directive and supportive behaviors in response to dynamic organizational conditions and subordinates' needs. Within the Islamic education perspective, this model generally integrates leadership theories with foundational values such as trust, responsibility, fairness, and consultation (Ismanto et al., 2024). The integration of situational leadership theory with Islamic values is expected to create alignment between leadership models and adaptive, humanistic, and effective managerial practices to improve the quality and performance of Islamic educational institutions (Baroroh & Nikma, 2026). However, previous studies generally focus on leadership effectiveness in formal educational administration without specifically examining its implementation in tahfidz program development.

Although numerous studies have examined situational leadership and Islamic educational management separately, limited research specifically investigates the integration of situational leadership within the development of tahfidz programs. Existing studies tend to emphasize theoretical discussions of leadership models rather than examining their practical implementation across planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation stages of tahfidz

programs. Another limitation is that earlier studies rarely analyze how situational leadership contributes simultaneously to teacher professionalism, program sustainability, and institutional quality improvement. This gap is significant because tahfidz programs involve complex educational dynamics requiring flexible leadership approaches tailored to teachers' varying readiness levels and institutional conditions. Based on these diverse research perspectives, situational leadership holds significant potential for optimizing tahfidz programs. This model offers an effective strategic approach to addressing the dynamics of such programs because it emphasizes leaders' flexibility in adjusting leadership styles according to the specific readiness levels, professional competencies, and evolving needs of subordinates.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the implementation of situational leadership in the development of a tahfidz program, focusing on leadership practices, program management, and the contribution of situational leadership to program sustainability and institutional quality improvement. This study argues that adaptive leadership practices significantly influence the effectiveness of tahfidz program management because they enable leaders to align managerial approaches with teachers' readiness levels and organizational dynamics. Through situational leadership practices such as telling, selling, participating, and delegating, educational leaders are expected to strengthen teacher motivation, enhance professional collaboration, and optimize the implementation of tahfidz programs systematically and sustainably. Therefore, this study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of Islamic educational leadership by demonstrating that adaptive and contextual leadership practices are essential for improving the quality and sustainability of religious education programs in contemporary Islamic educational institutions.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the implementation of situational leadership in the development of the tahfidz program (Fauzi et al., 2024). A qualitative method was selected because it enables researchers to understand social phenomena comprehensively within their natural settings and to capture participants' experiences, perceptions, and interactions in depth. The case study design was specifically chosen because it allows for an intensive investigation of leadership practices within a particular institutional context, thereby providing a deeper understanding of the relationship between the madrasah principal's leadership behaviors and the development of the tahfidz program. This approach also offers a clearer perspective on the complex interaction between administrative actions, teacher

readiness, and program sustainability in Islamic educational institutions (Muzaini, 2026). The research was conducted over a two-month period from January to February 2026 at MAN 2 Jombang. The site was purposively selected because the madrasah operates within a pesantren environment with a strong tahfidz culture and has demonstrated institutional innovation in developing religious flagship programs.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation analysis to obtain comprehensive and credible findings. In-depth interviews were conducted with the madrasah principal, vice principal for curriculum, tahfidz program coordinator, tahfidz teachers, and students. The interviews aimed to explore leadership strategies, program management processes, teachers' experiences, and students' perceptions regarding the sustainability of the tahfidz program. Participant observation was conducted by directly engaging in tahfidz learning activities to observe teacher-student interactions, classroom dynamics, and the implementation of memorization and muraja'ah activities. In addition, documentation analysis was carried out by examining program planning documents, supervision records, learning activity reports, and other supporting administrative data to strengthen and triangulate the findings obtained from interviews and observations.

The data were analyzed using an interactive qualitative analysis model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification (Monaro et al., 2022; Dahal, 2025). Data condensation was conducted by selecting, simplifying, and categorizing relevant information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. Subsequently, the organized data were systematically displayed in descriptive narratives to facilitate interpretation and identify relationships among research findings. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and verifying the consistency of the findings through continuous comparison between data sources and collection techniques. To ensure research trustworthiness, the study applied four validation criteria consisting of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was achieved through source and technique triangulation, transferability through detailed descriptions of findings, dependability through consistent research procedures, and confirmability through direct verification of findings with participants to minimize researcher bias.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Situational Leadership

The findings revealed that the madrasah principal consistently implemented situational leadership by adjusting leadership styles according to the readiness, competence, and motivation levels of tahfidz teachers and staff. The implementation of situational leadership was reflected through four major leadership styles: telling, selling, participating, and delegating.

The telling style was implemented in several situations requiring immediate direction and close supervision. First, when the quality of student memorization declined, the principal intervened directly by providing detailed instructions to ensure rapid corrective action. Second, newly recruited tahfidz teachers and teachers experiencing instructional difficulties received step-by-step guidance from the principal to facilitate adaptation and improve teaching competence. Third, when evaluation outcomes failed to meet institutional standards, the principal provided direct corrective instructions to ensure improvements in learning implementation. This leadership approach was primarily applied in situations involving low teacher competence, limited experience, or urgent institutional demands requiring immediate responses.

The selling style was implemented through direct mentoring and collaborative supervision activities. The principal actively conducted classroom mentoring to maintain instructional standards and encouraged collaborative discussions between senior and junior tahfidz teachers. These discussions enabled teachers to share experiences, identify instructional challenges, and receive constructive feedback from the principal. In addition, systematic evaluations were conducted regularly to monitor teacher competence development and instructional independence. Through this approach, the principal consistently balanced technical guidance with motivational support to strengthen teachers' professional development.

The participating style was reflected in the principal's efforts to establish supportive communication and collaborative decision-making practices. The principal provided moral support through recognition and rewards for teacher achievements and facilitated professional development opportunities through workshops and training programs. Teachers were actively involved in planning discussions, institutional decision-making processes, and the formulation of tahfidz program objectives. Furthermore, the principal maintained intensive interpersonal communication with teachers to understand their personal and professional needs. This supportive environment encouraged teachers to express opinions openly and strengthened organizational solidarity within the tahfidz program.

The delegating style was implemented selectively toward tahfidz teachers who demonstrated high professional competence and strong commitment. Teachers with advanced instructional capabilities were entrusted with broader responsibilities in managing learning activities and developing instructional innovations. The principal provided these teachers with operational autonomy while maintaining indirect supervision through periodic evaluations and coordination meetings. This approach enabled teachers to develop creative learning strategies while simultaneously ensuring alignment with institutional objectives and program standards.

In addition to the implementation of situational leadership styles, the findings also indicated that the principal consistently fostered institutional values emphasizing collaboration, respect, professionalism, and trust. Teacher performance evaluations were conducted regularly to identify professional needs and support competency development. The principal also demonstrated exemplary leadership by maintaining personal attention and supportive relationships with teachers, thereby strengthening organizational trust and long-term commitment toward the tahfidz program.

Tahfidz Program

The tahfidz program was developed not only to improve institutional quality but also to strengthen students' Qur'anic memorization competence, spiritual maturity, and character development. The program was systematically organized through a collaboratively developed curriculum targeting the memorization of two juz beginning from juz 30. Several instructional methods were implemented, including talaqqi, tikrar, tasmi', and muraja'ah activities. These learning approaches were integrated strategically to improve memorization quality while accommodating students' diverse learning abilities and memorization capacities.

The organizational structure of the tahfidz program involved the madrasah principal, program coordinators, and tahfidz teachers with clearly defined responsibilities. The principal functioned as the primary policymaker, while coordinators and teachers managed the operational implementation of the program. Memorization assessments were conducted flexibly according to students' readiness levels and were implemented periodically until memorization targets were achieved.

The evaluation system of the tahfidz program was conducted systematically through daily, weekly, monthly, and semester evaluations. Daily evaluations were carried out through talaqqi activities focusing on students' fluency, tajweed accuracy, and memorization quality. In addition, tasmi' examinations were implemented to evaluate students' memorization endurance and consistency. Evaluation activities were conducted not only for students but also for tahfidz teachers to ensure instructional quality and program effectiveness.

Several challenges were identified throughout program implementation. Student-related challenges included fluctuating motivation, varying memorization abilities, and differences in learning pace. Teacher-related challenges primarily involved limited instructional competence among some tahfidz teachers. To address these obstacles, the principal implemented several strategic efforts, including strengthening teacher motivation, applying differentiated learning approaches, organizing professional development training, and improving communication with parents.

Situational Leadership in the Development of the Tahfidz Program

The findings demonstrated that situational leadership played a central role in the development and sustainability of the tahfidz program. The principal consistently integrated flexible leadership approaches according to institutional conditions, teacher competence, and organizational needs. Leadership practices were not limited to administrative control but also emphasized facilitation, motivation, supervision, and collaborative engagement throughout the implementation of the tahfidz program.

The principal actively involved teachers in planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating the tahfidz program to strengthen organizational solidarity and collaborative responsibility. Open communication, formal recognition, professional support, and continuous competency development programs were consistently implemented to improve teacher motivation and professionalism. The adaptive leadership approach also enabled the principal to maintain program stability while responding effectively to instructional and organizational challenges.

The pesantren-based environment surrounding the madrasah significantly supported the sustainability of the tahfidz program. Religious routines, disciplined learning culture, and strong spiritual values cultivated within the pesantren environment strengthened students' motivation and responsibility in achieving memorization targets. This institutional culture became an important supporting factor in maintaining the continuity and effectiveness of the tahfidz program.

Recognition and appreciation also emerged as important motivational strategies within the tahfidz program. Material rewards included certificates, tuition support, and professional development opportunities, while non-material rewards included recognition, trust, and institutional appreciation. These practices strengthened both teacher and student motivation while fostering a supportive learning environment within the institution.

The findings further indicated that the success of the tahfidz program was strongly influenced by the quality of interaction and communication among members of the educational community. The principal consistently promoted open communication and harmonious relationships with teachers and students, thereby creating a conducive academic environment that encouraged active participation and collaborative engagement. Through systematic management and adaptive leadership practices, the institution successfully maintained program sustainability while supporting the development of students' academic and religious competencies simultaneously.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that situational leadership plays a significant role in supporting the sustainability and effectiveness of tahfidz program development within Islamic educational institutions. The implementation of telling, selling, participating, and delegating leadership styles confirms Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory, which emphasizes the importance of adjusting leadership behavior according to subordinates' competence and readiness levels. The findings align with previous studies indicating that situational leadership contributes positively to human resource management, organizational adaptability, and institutional performance improvement (Bizany et al., 2024; Puspitaningrum et al., 2025). However, this study extends previous research by demonstrating that situational leadership is not only applicable to general educational management but is also highly relevant in managing religious flagship programs such as tahfidz education (Baidowi, 2026).

This study further reveals that adaptive leadership practices significantly strengthen teacher professionalism and organizational collaboration within the tahfidz program. The implementation of mentoring, collaborative discussions, training programs, and participatory decision-making confirms previous findings that situational leadership enhances employee confidence, motivation, and professional engagement (Wiwin & Djafri, 2025). Nevertheless, unlike earlier studies that mainly focus on formal administrative performance, this research highlights how situational leadership contributes directly to pedagogical quality and religious program sustainability (Fadilla et al., 2024). The findings indicate that leadership flexibility enables principals to respond effectively to diverse teacher competencies and instructional challenges, thereby improving both learning quality and institutional stability simultaneously.

Another important finding concerns the integration of situational leadership with Islamic educational values such as trustworthiness, responsibility, empathy, and consultation. This finding supports previous studies emphasizing that leadership effectiveness within Islamic educational institutions should integrate managerial competence with moral and spiritual values (Baroroh & Nikma, 2026). The principal's practices of maintaining open communication, providing personal attention, and fostering supportive relationships reflect the implementation of qudwah and ri'ayah principles in educational leadership. These findings demonstrate that situational leadership within Islamic education is not merely technical or managerial but also deeply relational and value-oriented. Consequently, this study contributes theoretically by contextualizing situational leadership theory within Islamic educational culture and religious program management.

The findings also demonstrate that institutional culture significantly influences the success of situational leadership implementation within the tahfidz program. The pesantren-based environment strengthened students' discipline, spiritual awareness, and commitment toward memorization activities, thereby supporting program sustainability. This finding complements previous studies asserting that Islamic boarding school culture contributes to the development of disciplined religious character and educational resilience (Yahya et al., 2026). However, this study provides a more specific contribution by illustrating how situational leadership interacts with pesantren culture to create a supportive institutional environment for tahfidz education. The integration between adaptive leadership and religious institutional culture represents an important novelty that has received limited attention in previous leadership studies.

From a practical perspective, the findings imply that Islamic educational leaders should adopt flexible and adaptive leadership approaches when managing religious flagship programs (Ayep et al., 2022). Leadership effectiveness cannot rely solely on administrative authority but must involve continuous mentoring, emotional support, professional development, and collaborative engagement with teachers and staff. The implementation of differentiated leadership styles according to teachers' readiness levels enables institutions to improve teacher competence, strengthen organizational commitment, and optimize program quality more effectively. Furthermore, systematic evaluation mechanisms and recognition practices proved essential in strengthening teacher and student motivation. These findings provide practical guidance for educational institutions seeking to improve the sustainability and quality of tahfidz programs through adaptive leadership strategies.

The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive examination of situational leadership implementation specifically within the context of tahfidz program development in Islamic educational institutions. Previous studies generally examine situational leadership in broader educational administration contexts, whereas this research specifically investigates how adaptive leadership practices influence religious program management, teacher professionalism, institutional culture, and program sustainability simultaneously. Therefore, this study contributes both theoretically and practically by expanding the application of situational leadership theory into religious education contexts and by offering an integrative leadership framework for strengthening tahfidz-based educational programs. The findings affirm that adaptive and contextual leadership practices are essential for improving institutional quality and ensuring the long-term sustainability of religious education programs in contemporary Islamic educational institutions (Anggraeni et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that situational leadership serves as a crucial leadership approach in ensuring the effectiveness, sustainability, and quality improvement of tahfidz program development within Islamic educational institutions. The most significant finding demonstrates that adaptive leadership practices, reflected through telling, selling, participating, and delegating styles, enable educational leaders to respond effectively to teachers' varying competence, motivation, and readiness levels. As a result, situational leadership not only strengthens teacher professionalism, independence, and organizational collaboration but also supports the systematic implementation of tahfidz programs through structured planning, implementation, and evaluation processes. The study contributes theoretically by expanding the application of situational leadership theory into the context of religious education and by integrating leadership adaptability with Islamic educational values and pesantren culture. Practically, the findings provide strategic insights for Islamic educational leaders in managing religious flagship programs more effectively and sustainably. However, this study is limited to a single institutional setting and focuses primarily on leadership practices within one tahfidz program context. Therefore, future studies are recommended to involve broader institutional settings, comparative approaches, and mixed research methods to generate more comprehensive findings regarding situational leadership and religious education management in diverse Islamic educational environments.

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