



Spiritual Faith and Organizational Support: An Analysis of Internal and External Factors of Principals' Resilience

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Abstract :

Educational leaders increasingly face complex professional pressures that demand not only managerial competence but also strong adaptive and emotional capacities. This study examines how internal and external factors contribute to principals' resilience by integrating quantitative and qualitative evidence through a mixed-methods approach. Survey data were used to identify shared perceptions regarding resilience resources, while in-depth interviews explored how principals interpret challenges and sustain leadership effectiveness in practice. The findings reveal that resilience is shaped through the interaction between adaptive meaning-making, spiritual faith, and organizational support. Emotional regulation and a clear sense of professional purpose emerged as important internal resources, while collegial collaboration and family support functioned as reinforcing external mechanisms. Spiritual practices were found to play a significant role in stabilizing emotional responses and supporting reflective decision-making during demanding situations. Rather than operating as isolated factors, these elements interact dynamically to sustain leadership stability under pressure. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings suggests that resilience should be understood as a relational-spiritual process embedded in everyday leadership experiences. The study highlights the importance of developing leadership support systems that integrate emotional, relational, and spiritual dimensions. These findings provide practical implications for leadership development programs by emphasizing holistic resilience training that strengthens emotional regulation, collaborative organizational culture, and value-based leadership practices to support sustainable educational leadership.

INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership has increasingly been characterized by complex professional demands that require school principals to navigate organizational pressures, stakeholder expectations, and rapidly changing educational environments. In many education systems, principals are expected not only to manage administrative responsibilities but also to maintain institutional stability, support teacher performance, and respond to social accountability pressures from parents and communities (Al-Rahamneh, 2022; Dahle & Wermke, 2024; Shula & Heystek, 2024). These expanding

expectations have intensified emotional and relational challenges faced by school leaders, particularly in contexts where educational institutions operate within strong socio-cultural and religious frameworks. Reports from international education organizations emphasize that leadership sustainability has become a central concern due to increasing workload complexity and psychological stress experienced by school leaders worldwide (Connor et al., 2025; Harris et al., 2024; Kasim, 2021). As a result, resilience has emerged as a critical competency enabling principals to maintain effective leadership despite uncertainty and institutional pressure. Within Islamic educational environments, resilience may also be shaped by spiritual beliefs and collective organizational relationships, suggesting that leadership endurance cannot be fully understood through managerial competence alone but must also consider personal meaning-making and social support structures embedded in institutional life.

Recent scholarship has examined leadership resilience from multiple thematic perspectives, particularly emotional regulation, social support, and adaptive leadership practices. Studies on educational leadership resilience highlight the role of psychological resources in enabling leaders to adapt positively to professional stress and organizational change (Bellibaş et al., 2025; Karagozoglu & Boydak Ozan, 2022; Njaramba & Olukuru, 2025). Research on compassionate and relational leadership further demonstrates that supportive professional relationships contribute significantly to leaders' ability to sustain performance during crises (Jian, 2022; Kaur, 2023; Woiceshyn et al., 2022). Organizational behavior research emphasizes social support as a buffering mechanism that reduces stress and enhances coping capacity in professional settings (Avanzi et al., 2021; Hwang et al., 2025; Yu & Cheng, 2024). More recent studies have expanded this discussion by recognizing the role of personal values and belief systems in leadership adaptation, suggesting that meaning-making processes help leaders reinterpret challenges and maintain motivation (Coopersmith, 2023; Sunderman & Orsini, 2024). However, much of this literature remains grounded in psychological or organizational perspectives developed largely within Western contexts, often overlooking how spirituality functions as an operational coping mechanism in educational leadership, particularly within religiously grounded institutions. Consequently, existing studies provide important insights but still present a fragmented understanding of how internal beliefs and external organizational relationships interact in shaping principals' resilience.

Despite growing attention to leadership resilience, several gaps remain evident in the literature. First, many studies examine resilience as an individual psychological attribute rather than as a relational and contextual process emerging from daily leadership interactions. Second, empirical investigations rarely integrate spiritual dimensions into leadership resilience frameworks, even though spirituality may influence emotional regulation and decision-making in faith-based educational environments. Third, previous research frequently relies on single-method approaches, either quantitative surveys measuring resilience traits or qualitative explorations of leadership experiences, limiting the ability to capture both shared perceptions and lived realities simultaneously. These limitations indicate the need for an integrative research approach capable of examining resilience as both a measurable perception and an experiential process. The novelty of the present study lies in its mixed-methods design, which combines quantitative assessment of shared resilience perceptions with qualitative exploration of principals' lived experiences, thereby offering a relational–spiritual interpretation of leadership resilience that extends beyond traditional factor-based analyses.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze how internal and external factors collectively shape principals' resilience within educational leadership contexts. Specifically, the research seeks to examine the roles of adaptive meaning-making, spiritual faith, and organizational support in sustaining leadership stability under professional pressure. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, the study intends to provide a comprehensive understanding of how principals interpret challenges, regulate emotional responses, and utilize relational networks to maintain leadership effectiveness. Academically, this research contributes to expanding leadership resilience literature by incorporating spiritual and relational dimensions into existing frameworks. Practically, the findings are expected to inform leadership development programs by emphasizing the importance of emotional regulation, collaborative organizational culture, and spiritual grounding as complementary resources for sustainable leadership practice.

The central argument of this study is that principals' resilience should be understood as an interactional process rather than a fixed individual capacity. Leadership endurance emerges through continuous interaction between contextual pressures, internal regulatory mechanisms, and supportive social environments. A mixed-methods approach is therefore employed to capture both the breadth of shared perceptions among principals and the depth of experiential meaning underlying their coping strategies. Through this integrative perspective, the study explores how relational challenges trigger adaptive responses that are reinforced by spiritual interpretation and organizational support systems. This analytical orientation provides the foundation for examining resilience not merely as an outcome but as an evolving leadership process, which subsequently informs the methodological design described in the following section.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to comprehensively examine internal and external factors shaping principals' resilience within educational leadership contexts. The design was selected because resilience represents a multidimensional phenomenon that involves both measurable perceptions and lived experiences, requiring the integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence (Levitt, 2024; Mohammed et al., 2022; Morrison, 2025). Specifically, the study adopted a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach, in which quantitative data were first used to identify general response patterns, followed by qualitative exploration to provide deeper interpretation of principals' experiences. This approach emphasizes combining numerical trends with contextual understanding to produce richer explanations of complex social phenomena (Jackson-Gordon & Plano Clark, 2024; Younas et al., 2023, 2025). The research was conducted in real educational settings involving school principals operating under diverse organizational demands and relational pressures. A case-oriented mixed-methods strategy was chosen to allow in-depth exploration of leadership resilience as it occurs in authentic institutional environments, thereby enabling the study to capture both shared perceptions and contextual processes shaping resilience in everyday leadership practice.

Data were collected through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to capture both broad patterns and experiential insights related to principals' resilience. The questionnaire employed Likert-scale items to identify participants' levels

of agreement regarding emotional regulation, purpose orientation, collegial support, and spiritual resources. Interviews were conducted to explore how principals interpret challenges, regulate emotions, and utilize social and spiritual resources in their leadership roles. The researcher acted as the primary instrument, facilitating interaction with participants through guided questioning while maintaining reflexive awareness during data collection. The study involved 25 school principals serving at different educational levels, allowing diverse leadership experiences to be represented. Fieldwork was conducted over a three-month period within participating schools. To enhance the credibility of findings, data triangulation was applied by comparing questionnaire results with interview narratives, and member checking was conducted to ensure accurate representation of participants' perspectives.

Data analysis followed an integrated mixed-methods analytical procedure combining descriptive statistical analysis and qualitative thematic analysis (DeJonckheere et al., 2024; Proudfoot, 2023; Samuelsson, 2025). Quantitative data obtained from questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify patterns of agreement across resilience dimensions, enabling the identification of shared perceptions among participants. Qualitative interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis procedures informed by Miles and Huberman's interactive model, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Gupta, 2025; Lochmiller, 2021; Naeem et al., 2024). Coding was conducted inductively to allow themes to emerge directly from participants' narratives, particularly concerning adaptive meaning-making, spiritual regulation, and social support processes. Integration of findings occurred during interpretation, where quantitative trends were compared with qualitative themes to generate meta-inferences explaining how resilience operates in practice. These analytical steps enhanced the credibility of interpretations by ensuring that conclusions were grounded in converging evidence from multiple data sources, thereby supporting a comprehensive understanding of principals' resilience as both a perceptual and experiential phenomenon.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Qualitative Results

Resilience as Adaptive Meaning-Making

In this study, resilience refers to principals' capacity to sustain leadership functioning while continuously adjusting their responses to challenging situations. Conceptually, resilience is understood not merely as endurance but as an adaptive process through which individuals reinterpret difficulties and reorganize their actions in order to maintain stability in professional roles. Within school leadership practice, this adaptive capacity enables principals to remain solution-oriented despite uncertainty, institutional pressure, and evolving demands from stakeholders. The theme is closely connected to the focus of this research because it illustrates how resilience emerges from everyday leadership experiences rather than from extraordinary circumstances. Principals construct resilience through ongoing interpretation of problems, allowing challenges to be approached as situations requiring adjustment rather than as barriers that halt leadership performance. Thus, resilience appears as a practical process of meaning-making embedded in routine managerial responsibilities.

Participants consistently described resilience as the ability to recover and adapt when encountering difficulties. One informant defined resilience as, “the ability to bounce back from adversity, not solve problems, and be able to adapt to any situation to find the best solution.” This understanding emphasizes adjustment rather than resistance. Similar views were reflected in participants’ explanations that resilience involves maintaining stability while continuing to seek workable responses to emerging problems. These responses indicate that resilience is perceived as an active effort to maintain effectiveness in leadership situations that cannot always be controlled. The statements further suggest that adaptation becomes a central element in how principals interpret professional challenges.

Based on the interviews above, resilience is positioned by participants as a practical coping orientation developed through daily leadership experience. Informants do not describe resilience as an exceptional psychological strength but as a necessary response to recurring work pressures. The emphasis on adaptation indicates that principals prioritize maintaining functionality rather than eliminating problems entirely. This suggests that leadership stability is achieved through continuous adjustment of perspective and action. The responses also imply that repeated exposure to challenges contributes to the development of adaptive habits in decision-making. Consequently, resilience emerges as a process shaped by experiential learning within leadership practice, enabling principals to sustain performance despite ongoing uncertainty.

Relational Challenges as Sources of Leadership Pressure

Relational challenges refer to pressures arising from interpersonal interactions between principals and various stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and external actors. In educational leadership contexts, principals occupy a mediating position that requires balancing competing expectations and managing social tensions. These challenges extend beyond administrative responsibilities and involve emotional regulation, negotiation, and communication management. The theme is relevant to this study because it highlights the situational conditions that activate resilience among principals. Rather than technical tasks, interpersonal dynamics appear to constitute the primary source of leadership strain, shaping how principals experience stress and respond to institutional demands.

Interview responses reveal that relational interactions represent the most demanding aspect of leadership. One participant explained, “The pressure from a parent who feels the most right and always blames school policy is the toughest test.” Participants also described internal tensions involving staff relationships, indicating that leadership challenges frequently emerge from managing differing perspectives within the school environment. These accounts demonstrate that emotional and interpersonal pressures form a central part of principals’ professional experiences. The statements show that leadership stress often originates from navigating expectations rather than completing managerial procedures.

Spirituality as an Internal Resource for Stability

Spirituality in this study refers to religious beliefs and practices that principals use as personal resources to maintain emotional balance during professional challenges. Practically, spirituality encompasses activities such as prayer and surrender, which help individuals interpret difficult experiences and regain psychological calmness. Within

leadership contexts, spirituality operates as an internal source of strength that supports composure and reflective decision-making. This theme is relevant because it illustrates how resilience is supported not only by professional competence but also by personal belief systems influencing how principals regulate emotions and respond to pressure.

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Participants frequently associated resilience with spiritual practices. Informants described that “drawing close to God, praying, and surrendering” helped them experience calmness when facing demanding situations. These practices were perceived as providing emotional relief and reinforcing inner strength during periods of stress. Such statements indicate that spirituality serves as a personal coping approach used before or during decision-making processes. The responses emphasize that emotional stability is often restored through religious reflection.

The interview data suggest that spirituality functions as an internal regulation mechanism that helps principals manage emotional responses to pressure. Informants describe spiritual practices as practical actions that create psychological distance from stressful situations, allowing them to approach problems more calmly. The emphasis on surrender indicates an acceptance-based response toward conditions beyond personal control. This orientation appears to reduce emotional escalation and supports continued leadership functioning. The findings show that resilience is reinforced through internal stabilization processes grounded in personal belief, enabling principals to maintain composure and sustain professional responsibilities during challenging circumstances.

Social Support

Social support refers to emotional and practical assistance obtained from colleagues, professional peers, and family members when principals encounter work-related challenges. In school organizations, collaborative relationships allow shared problem-solving and reduce the sense of individual burden. Outside the workplace, family interactions provide emotional recovery that helps leaders restore motivation. This theme is central to the study because it demonstrates that resilience is not solely an individual attribute but is strengthened through supportive relational environments.

Participants highlighted collegial collaboration as an important source of support, particularly through “discussions to find common solutions and provide motivation.” In addition, family was described as a “place to vent and source of encouragement,” allowing principals to release emotional tension after demanding situations. These statements indicate that support systems function both practically and emotionally. The presence of trusted relationships enables principals to share responsibility and regain confidence during difficult periods.

The interview results show that resilience is reinforced through interaction with supportive social networks. Informants describe how collaborative discussions reduce perceived pressure by transforming individual problems into shared concerns. Family

support appears to provide emotional recovery that complements workplace collaboration. The data suggest that resilience develops within relational contexts where principals can express difficulties without risking professional authority. This indicates that sustained leadership performance depends partly on access to supportive environments that help regulate stress and maintain motivation. Consequently, resilience emerges as a socially supported process rather than an exclusively personal capacity.

Qualitative Results

Descriptive analysis was conducted to examine participants' levels of agreement regarding factors supporting principals' resilience. The analysis aimed to identify general response patterns related to internal and external resources perceived as important in managing leadership challenges. Overall, responses indicate consistently high levels of agreement across all measured dimensions, suggesting shared perceptions among principals regarding essential resilience resources. To provide a clear overview of these response patterns, the distribution of agreement across resilience indicators is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Results of Principals' Resilience Factors

Resilience Dimension	Statement	Agree + Strongly Agree (%)	Number of Respondents (n=25)
Purpose Orientation	Having a clear purpose at work helped me get through difficult times	96	24
Emotional Regulation	The ability to manage emotions is essential to staying calm under pressure	100	25
Collegial Support	Support from colleagues (teachers/staff) is very important when facing problems	92	23
Spiritual Resources	Spiritual values or personal beliefs give me strength	100	25

The pattern displayed in Table 1 suggests that principals do not associate resilience with a single dominant factor but rather with multiple interconnected resources. High agreement regarding emotional regulation indicates the importance of maintaining composure during demanding leadership situations, while unanimous endorsement of spiritual values highlights the role of personal belief systems in sustaining psychological strength. Meanwhile, strong agreement concerning collegial support emphasizes the importance of collaborative relationships within the school environment. Taken together, these findings indicate a convergence of perceptions in which resilience is understood as emerging from the interaction between internal capacities and external support systems.

Because agreement levels across all items are consistently high, the quantitative results primarily demonstrate consensus rather than variation among participants. The findings therefore reflect shared understandings of resilience among principals rather than statistical differentiation between respondents. This descriptive pattern complements the qualitative findings by confirming that the resilience dimensions identified through interviews are also widely recognized across participants' survey responses.

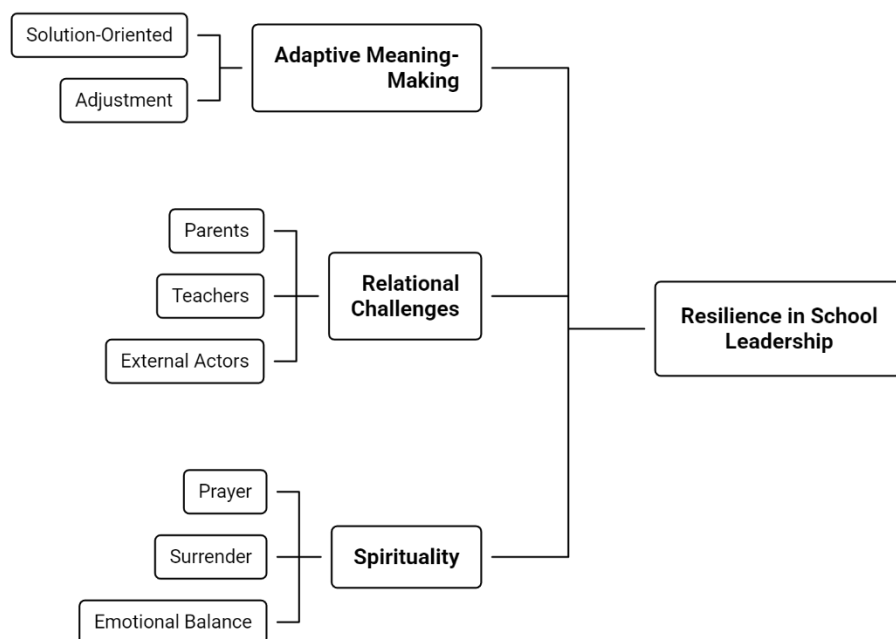


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Principals' Resilience

The quantitative results presented in Table 1 demonstrate a strong pattern of agreement among participants regarding the importance of emotional regulation, purpose orientation, collegial support, and spiritual values in sustaining leadership resilience. These findings reinforce the qualitative themes identified through interview analysis, where principals described resilience as emerging from adaptive meaning-making processes, spiritual regulation, and relational support systems. While the survey data indicate shared perceptions across respondents, the qualitative findings provide deeper insight into how these resources are experienced and enacted in daily leadership practice. The interaction among relational pressures, internal regulation processes, and social support mechanisms is conceptually illustrated in Figure 1, which synthesizes the qualitative findings into a process-based model of principals' resilience.

Discussion

This study reveals that principals' resilience is constructed through the interaction between internal regulatory capacities and external relational support systems rather than emerging solely from individual psychological strength. The findings indicate that resilience develops as a dynamic process triggered by relational pressures, including interactions with parents and internal staff dynamics, which require principals to adapt their leadership responses continuously. Within this process, adaptive meaning-making enables principals to reinterpret challenges as manageable situations, while spirituality functions as an internal stabilizing resource that supports emotional balance and decision-making. In addition, social support from colleagues and family members reinforces principals' ability to sustain leadership performance under pressure. Quantitative results further demonstrate a strong consensus among participants, with high levels of agreement regarding emotional regulation, purpose orientation, collegial collaboration, and spiritual values as essential resilience resources. Together, the findings suggest that resilience in school leadership is not merely an individual coping mechanism but a relational-spiritual process shaped by everyday leadership experiences. This

integrated understanding highlights resilience as an ongoing practice embedded within organizational and socio-religious contexts rather than as a fixed personal trait.

The findings extend existing scholarship on leadership resilience by emphasizing the relational and spiritual dimensions of coping within educational leadership contexts. Previous studies have identified resilience as the ability to adapt positively to adversity Harris (2024) and as a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional and social competencies (Al-Rahamneh, 2022; Dahle & Wermke, 2024; Shula & Heystek, 2024). The present study supports these perspectives while demonstrating that resilience among principals is strongly activated through interpersonal pressures rather than administrative workload alone. This aligns with research highlighting the importance of social support as a buffering mechanism against stress Yu (2024), yet the findings further show that support operates alongside spiritual practices that help principals regulate emotional responses. Unlike studies that primarily frame resilience within psychological or organizational perspectives, this research highlights spirituality as an operational coping strategy embedded in leadership practice (Avanzi et al., 2021; Hwang et al., 2025; Sunderman & Orsini, 2024). In doing so, the study addresses a gap in leadership resilience literature, which has often underexplored how religious meaning-making contributes to leadership stability, particularly in non-Western educational settings. The findings therefore expand existing resilience frameworks by integrating spiritual interpretation into the broader discourse on educational leadership adaptation.

This study contributes to the field of Islamic educational management by demonstrating that leadership resilience in educational institutions cannot be fully understood through managerial competence alone but must also consider spiritual and relational dimensions rooted in Islamic values. The findings show that practices such as prayer, surrender, and reliance on spiritual beliefs function as practical mechanisms for emotional regulation and reflective decision-making. This insight enriches discussions within Islamic educational management by illustrating how spiritual orientation operates as a leadership resource that supports ethical responsibility, emotional composure, and sustained organizational stability. Furthermore, the study advances previous research by conceptualizing resilience as a relational–spiritual process rather than an individual psychological attribute, thereby bridging managerial leadership perspectives with faith-based leadership practices. From a practical standpoint, the findings suggest that leadership development programs in Islamic educational institutions should integrate resilience training that includes emotional regulation, collaborative leadership practices, and spiritual reflection. By highlighting the interaction between organizational relationships and spiritual meaning-making, the study provides a contextualized understanding of leadership resilience that reflects the lived realities of principals within Islamic educational environments.

CONCLUSION

Educational leadership increasingly requires principals to navigate complex relational pressures, organizational expectations, and emotional demands that challenge their capacity to sustain effective leadership. This study addressed the need to understand how principals maintain resilience within such conditions, particularly by examining the internal and external factors that support their ability to remain stable and adaptive in their roles. The findings demonstrate that resilience is shaped through the interaction between adaptive meaning-making, spiritual grounding, and relational

support rather than emerging solely from individual psychological strength. Principals interpret challenges through continuous adjustment of perspective, regulate emotional responses through spiritual practices, and rely on collaborative relationships with colleagues and family members to maintain professional balance. The convergence between qualitative insights and quantitative agreement further indicates that these resources are collectively recognized as essential elements sustaining leadership performance in demanding educational contexts.

These findings highlight the broader implication that resilience in educational leadership should be understood as a holistic and contextually embedded process integrating personal, relational, and spiritual dimensions. For Islamic educational management, the results emphasize the importance of incorporating spiritual reflection, emotional regulation, and collaborative practices into leadership development programs, moving beyond purely managerial training approaches. Practically, institutions and policymakers may consider designing professional support systems that strengthen collegial networks and acknowledge the role of spirituality as a legitimate leadership resource. Future research may explore how resilience develops across different institutional cultures or longitudinally across leadership careers to deepen understanding of sustainable leadership practices. By framing resilience as an interactional process rather than a fixed trait, this study contributes to ongoing efforts to develop leadership models capable of responding to increasingly complex educational environments.

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