



From Ethical Values to Organizational Transformation: The Emergence of Ethical-Transformational Leadership Resonance in an Islamic Educational Context

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52627/managere.v8i3.2092>

Article History:

Received: 18 March 2026

Revised: 17 September 2026

Accepted: 02 October 2026

Keywords:

Islamic Educational Leadership, Ethical Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Leadership Resonance

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Abstract :

This study explores how ethical and transformational leadership, through micro-level practices, shapes teachers' moral agency, organizational meaning-making, and sustainable development. Employing a qualitative single-case study design, this research collected data through interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The study analyzed data using reflexive thematic analysis, supported by triangulation and member checking to ensure credibility and validity. The findings indicate that leadership functions as relational praxis that connects ethical legitimacy, transformational influence, dialogue, participation, and trust. Islamic values, including amanah, adl, integrity, responsibility, and ihsan, were embedded into everyday leadership practices and transformed into meaningful actions. These practices generated Ethical-Transformational Leadership Resonance through shared interpretation, collective commitment, and relational engagement. This resonance enhanced teacher participation, professional involvement, and moral agency while strengthening shared organizational meaning and sustainable cultures grounded in trust and responsibility. The study contributes a process-based theoretical framework integrating ethical, transformational, relational, and sensemaking perspectives. Practically, the findings suggest that leadership development should emphasize ethical reflection, relational competence, participatory decision-making, and cultural responsiveness to support sustainable educational transformation.

INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership has become a crucial societal concern because schools are increasingly expected to contribute not only to academic achievement but also to ethical development, social responsibility, and sustainable community development. In today's educational environments, leaders face complex challenges tied to technological transformation, shifting expectations, teachers' professional demands, and institutional sustainability. Consequently, leadership effectiveness should be evaluated not only through administrative performance or academic indicators but also by leaders' ability to establish shared values, strengthen collaboration, and build meaningful organizational cultures. Previous studies emphasize that successful school leadership is strongly associated with professional learning communities, collaborative practices, and sustainable school improvement (Hallinger, 2020; Leithwood et al., 2020). Recent

research further indicates that leadership development in education increasingly requires attention to contextual adaptation and relational processes because leaders operate within complex social systems rather than isolated managerial structures (Cheng et al., 2024; Yoserizal et al., 2024). Therefore, understanding how leadership values are enacted within educational organizations has become essential to strengthening schools' broader social contribution.

The increasing complexity of educational challenges has encouraged scholars to move beyond traditional leadership perspectives toward approaches that integrate organizational transformation and ethical responsibility. Transformational leadership is widely recognized for inspiring a shared vision, encouraging innovation, and motivating organizational members toward institutional improvement. However, transformational processes require ethical foundations to ensure that organizational change remains aligned with moral responsibility and collective interests. Ethical leadership contributes this dimension by emphasizing integrity, fairness, accountability, and moral role modeling. Empirical evidence demonstrates that ethical leadership significantly influences teachers' organizational trust, commitment, motivation, and professional attitudes, while transformational leadership contributes to positive educational environments and teacher engagement (Alzoraiki et al., 2023; Kareem et al., 2023; Özdoğru & Sarier, 2024). Recent systematic reviews also indicate that transformational leadership remains a dominant framework in educational improvement research, yet its interaction with other leadership perspectives requires further investigation (Cheng et al., 2024; Yoserizal et al., 2024). Thus, integrated leadership perspectives are increasingly necessary for explaining sustainable educational development.

Despite significant progress in educational leadership studies, a key limitation remains in how leadership values translate into everyday organizational practices. Much existing research examines leadership as measurable characteristics or styles that influence organizational outcomes. Although this approach has generated valuable evidence on leadership effectiveness, it often offers limited insight into how teachers and other organizational members experience, interpret, and negotiate leadership. Recent reviews of ethical leadership research in education show that many studies still focus on relationships between leadership behaviors and organizational outcomes. Meanwhile, fewer studies examine how ethical leadership is enacted within specific institutional contexts (Ahmed, 2025). Similarly, transformational leadership research has frequently emphasized its impact on outcomes rather than examining the interactional mechanisms through which transformation occurs (Yoserizal et al., 2024). Therefore, research needs to examine leadership as a dynamic social process involving communication, relationships, trust formation, and the construction of collective meaning.

This research problem becomes particularly significant within Islamic educational institutions, where leadership practices are closely connected with religious values, cultural expectations, and moral responsibilities. Islamic schools, or madrasahs, are distinctive educational environments because leadership legitimacy rests not only on managerial competence but also on demonstrating values such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *adl* (justice), *shura* (consultation), and *ihsan* (excellence). In these contexts, leaders are expected to perform multiple roles as administrators, ethical exemplars, and agents of institutional transformation. Previous studies highlight that educational leadership in Islamic contexts cannot be separated from cultural and religious meanings that shape organizational identity and leadership practices (Alazmi & Bush, 2024; Ezzani et al., 2023). At madrasah, leadership practices reflect the interaction between formal authority and relational engagement, where ethical commitments and

transformational aspirations shape decision-making, communication, and institutional development. However, empirical studies explaining how these values operate through daily leadership interactions remain limited.

Previous studies have generated substantial knowledge regarding the contribution of transformational and ethical leadership to educational improvement. Transformational leadership explains how leaders promote institutional change through vision development, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, while ethical leadership emphasizes integrity, fairness, accountability, and moral role modeling. Both perspectives have demonstrated positive relationships with teacher commitment, organizational trust, and educational effectiveness (Alzoraiki et al., 2023; Kareem et al., 2023; Özdoğru & Sarier, 2024). However, these leadership perspectives have generally developed through separate analytical traditions. Transformational leadership research tends to emphasize mechanisms of change and motivation, whereas ethical leadership research frequently focuses on moral behavior and organizational climate. Recent studies indicate that educational leadership research increasingly requires integrative approaches that explain how multiple leadership dimensions interact within complex educational environments (Cheng et al., 2024; Taufiq et al., 2024). Therefore, the relationship between ethical foundations and transformational processes remains underexplored, particularly how these dimensions operate simultaneously in everyday school practices.

Beyond the theoretical separation between leadership perspectives, another limitation is the dominance of static, outcome-oriented approaches in educational leadership research. Many studies evaluate leadership based on measurable variables and organizational outcomes, while giving limited attention to the processes through which organizational members construct leadership meanings. Leadership is fundamentally relational because it emerges through interactions, communication, and shared interpretation between leaders and followers (Maritsa et al., 2022; Ruben & Gigliotti, 2021). The leadership-as-practice perspective further emphasizes understanding leadership through everyday activities and social practices rather than solely through individual leader characteristics (Lehtonen & Seeck, 2023; Raelin, 2021). Nevertheless, these process-oriented perspectives remain relatively underexplored within Islamic educational institutions. Existing studies show that religious values and cultural contexts strongly influence Islamic educational leadership, but empirical explanations of how these values translate into leadership practices remain limited (Alazmi & Bush, 2024; Ezzani et al., 2023). Consequently, further research is required to understand how ethical values, transformational actions, and organizational meanings interact within Islamic schools.

To address these theoretical and empirical limitations, this study introduces the concept of Ethical-Transformational Leadership Resonance as a process-oriented framework for understanding leadership practices in Islamic educational organizations. The concept is developed from the assumption that ethical leadership and transformational leadership should not be treated as independent leadership styles but as interconnected processes that mutually strengthen organizational development. Ethical dimensions provide moral legitimacy, value orientation, and responsible decision-making, whereas transformational dimensions facilitate collective motivation, innovation, and institutional change. This perspective aligns with recent educational leadership research emphasizing contextual adaptation, relational processes, and integrated leadership approaches in addressing contemporary educational challenges (Hallinger, 2020; Leithwood et al., 2020; Cheng et al., 2024). Furthermore, research in

Indonesian educational contexts shows that ethical integrity can become an essential element of transformational leadership by strengthening trust, collaboration, and sustainable educational change (Christian, 2025; Zulqarnain & Ali, 2023). Therefore, this study advances leadership scholarship by examining how ethical and transformational dimensions resonate through micro-level organizational practices.

Based on these gaps, this study asks: How do ethical and transformational leadership dimensions interact through micro-level leadership practices to shape teachers' moral agency and organizational meaning-making within an Islamic senior high school context? This study aims to analyze the micro-dynamic processes through which organizational members at MAN 2 Malang enact, experience, and interpret Ethical-Transformational Leadership Resonance. This research argues that leadership effectiveness in Islamic educational settings does not emerge solely from transformational capacity or ethical behavior separately, but from the interaction between moral legitimacy, relational engagement, and collective sensemaking. Theoretically, this study contributes a process-based perspective that extends educational leadership research beyond conventional leadership-style frameworks. Practically, this study provides insights for educational leaders seeking to develop sustainable school cultures grounded in ethical responsibility, trust, and transformational engagement.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative single-case study design to explore the micro-dynamic processes through which ethical and transformational leadership are enacted, negotiated, and experienced within an Islamic educational context. This approach was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of contemporary social phenomena in real-life settings and examines leadership as a relational, socially constructed process that emerges through everyday practices, communication, and organizational interactions (Alam, 2021; Priya, 2021). Qualitative case studies are particularly suitable for investigating complex organizational phenomena through “how” and “why” questions that require contextual understanding (Van Tiem et al., 2021; Patriansyah et al., 2026). Therefore, this design supports the development of an empirically grounded understanding of Ethical-Transformational Leadership Resonance as a process of leadership praxis and moral agency formation.

The study was conducted at MAN 2 Malang, an Islamic senior high school in Malang, East Java, Indonesia, purposively selected for its relevance to examining the intersection of contemporary leadership theories and Islamic educational values. The school represents an organizational context where religious principles, institutional traditions, and moral responsibilities shape leadership practices. Its established leadership structure and integration of Islamic values into school management provide an appropriate setting for examining how ethical values and transformational practices interact in daily leadership activities. Previous studies emphasize that educational leadership should be understood within its sociocultural context, as institutional norms, cultural values, and collective interpretations shape leadership meanings and practices (Hallinger, 2021; Raihani, 2020).

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their involvement in leadership processes and organizational activities, including the principal, vice principals, teachers, and administrative staff. Interviews explored participants' experiences and interpretations of ethical decision-

making, communication patterns, relational trust, and leadership influence, while observations captured leadership interactions in formal and informal settings. The study also analyzed institutional documents, including school policies, vision and mission statements, and organizational reports, to identify how institutional values were expressed. Using multiple data sources enabled methodological triangulation and strengthened contextual understanding by comparing diverse evidence (Alam, 2021; Janis, 2022).

Table 1. Informant Characteristics and Coding Scheme		
Informant Code	Position	Contribution to Findings
P	School Principal	Leadership practices, ethical values, and transformational strategies
VP	Vice Principals	Leadership implementation and organizational coordination
T	Teachers	Moral agency development and organizational meaning-making
AS	Administrative Staff	Organizational culture and relational leadership practices

The coding scheme was applied consistently throughout data analysis and reporting to maintain participant anonymity while distinguishing perspectives from different organizational roles. Semi-structured interviews explored participants’ experiences and interpretations of ethical decision-making, transformational influence, relational trust, leadership interactions, moral responsibility, and organizational meaning-making. Participant observation complemented interview findings by capturing leadership practices in formal meetings, informal communication, and daily organizational activities. We also analyzed institutional documents, including school policies, vision and mission statements, and organizational reports, to identify formal representations of institutional values and leadership expectations. Combining multiple data sources enabled a comprehensive understanding of leadership practices and strengthened the contextual interpretation of the research findings.

The collected data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke’s (2021) framework. This approach was selected because it provides a systematic process for identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns within qualitative data while integrating theoretical perspectives with emerging empirical insights. The analysis involved several stages: familiarizing with the data through repeated readings, initially coding significant statements, developing and refining themes, and interpreting relationships among themes. The analytical process drew on ethical leadership, transformational leadership, relational leadership, and sensemaking perspectives while remaining open to emerging findings. This approach enabled the study to develop an explanatory understanding of how ethical-transformational leadership resonance emerges through micro-level organizational interactions (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Mishra, & Dey, 2022).

The study established trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria. The study achieved credibility through triangulation of interviews, observations, and documents, along with member checking to validate researchers’ interpretations. The study supported transferability through detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and leadership practices. The study maintained dependability through an audit trail documenting research procedures, analytical decisions, and coding processes, and strengthened confirmability through researcher reflexivity to ensure interpretations remained grounded in empirical evidence

(Janis, 2022; Mishra, & Dey, 2022). The study also maintained ethical standards by informing participants about the research objectives, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw. The study obtained informed consent and protected participant identities through anonymization to respect autonomy, privacy, and academic integrity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Ethical-Transformational Leadership as Relational Micro-Dynamic Praxis

The first finding identifies ethical-transformational leadership as a relational micro-dynamic praxis, referring to the way leadership practices are continuously constructed through everyday interactions between the principal and organizational members. In this study, this sub-theme describes how ethical values and transformational practices operate simultaneously through decision-making processes, communication patterns, professional support, and interpersonal relationships within the madrasah. The findings indicate that leadership was exercised not primarily through formal authority or administrative control, but through relational engagement that enabled teachers and staff to understand, accept, and participate in organizational directions. The principal's leadership practice reflected three interconnected processes: ethical legitimacy through fairness and responsibility, transformational influence through vision and motivation, and relational mechanisms through dialogue and trust-building. Thus, leadership was experienced as a dynamic social process where values and actions were continuously negotiated among organizational members.

The interview findings revealed that ethical considerations were central to the principal's leadership practice, particularly in organizational decision-making. Participants explained that the principal tried to ensure decisions reflected collective interests rather than personal preferences. The principal emphasized the importance of listening to teachers and staff before implementing important school policies. "In making decisions, I always try to look at the conditions of various parties. This school does not belong only to the leadership; it is a shared responsibility. Therefore, decisions must consider the impact on teachers, education staff, and students." (P)

The statement indicates that ethical leadership was manifested through participatory decision-making and moral responsibility. The researcher interprets this finding as evidence that ethical legitimacy was constructed through the consistency between leadership principles and practical actions. Rather than functioning only as institutional values, fairness and responsibility became behavioral mechanisms that shaped teachers' trust toward the principal. This finding demonstrates that ethical leadership at madrasah was embedded in daily organizational practices through openness, accountability, and consideration of collective welfare.

Teachers' interview data further supported the ethical dimension of leadership practice. Teachers said that transparent communication influenced their perception of leadership credibility. Teachers perceived the principal as a leader who explained the rationale behind organizational decisions and gave them opportunities to share their opinions before implementing policies. "When there is a new policy, the principal usually explains the reason and purpose of the policy. We are allowed to provide input, so that the policy made does not feel like a one-sided order." (VP)

The researcher interprets this statement as showing that ethical leadership was developed through communication practices that recognized teachers as important

organizational actors. The interaction between transparency and participation created a sense of fairness among teachers because they felt involved in organizational processes. This finding suggests that ethical leadership operates through relational mechanisms in which trust develops gradually through repeated experiences of openness and respect.

In addition to ethical practices, observational data demonstrated that transformational leadership was reflected through the principal's efforts to encourage collaboration, communicate institutional aspirations, and motivate teachers to participate in school development programs. In formal meetings and informal interactions, the principal encouraged teachers to share ideas, discuss challenges, and propose solutions to improve teaching and learning. The observation indicated that leadership interactions were characterized by dialogue rather than one-directional instruction. Teachers were positioned as active contributors in organizational development rather than merely implementers of predetermined policies.

The researcher interprets these observations as evidence that transformational leadership at madrasah emerged through empowerment and collective engagement. The principal's role was not limited to directing organizational activities; it also involved creating conditions that encouraged teachers to develop professional commitment and ownership toward institutional goals. The observed practices indicate that transformational influence emerged through relational interaction, where recognition, communication, and shared responsibility built motivation.

Integrating interview and observation findings reveals an emerging pattern of ethical-transformational leadership praxis. As Figure 1 illustrates, ethical leadership practices provide the moral foundation that enables leaders to gain legitimacy and trust. Through relational mechanisms involving dialogue, participation, and trust-building, these ethical foundations become transformational practices that stimulate shared vision, teacher motivation, professional growth, and collective commitment.



Figure 1. Emergent Model of Ethical-Transformational Leadership

Figure 1 illustrates how Ethical-Transformational Leadership Resonance emerges as a relational and dynamic leadership phenomenon. The model demonstrates that ethical leadership practices, represented by fairness, transparency, and moral responsibility, establish the moral legitimacy of the leader, which becomes the foundation for building trust and acceptance among organizational members. This legitimacy develops through a relational micro-dynamic process of dialogue, participation, and trust-building, where leaders and teachers continuously negotiate leadership meanings. In turn, transformational leadership practices activate a shared vision, teacher motivation, professional growth, and collective commitment. The interaction between ethical legitimacy and transformational influence generates leadership resonance, suggesting that effective leadership comes not from authority alone but from integrating moral values, relational engagement, and collective transformation within educational organizations.

This finding suggests that ethical-transformational leadership at madrasah follows a relational process with three sequential but interconnected mechanisms. First, ethical leadership practices establish legitimacy through fairness, transparency, and responsibility. Second, transformational leadership practices mobilize collective engagement through vision, motivation, and empowerment. Third, relational mechanisms connect these dimensions through dialogue, participation, and trust-building. This pattern explains that leadership resonance occurs when organizational members perceive leadership actions as simultaneously morally appropriate and transformative. Therefore, the finding provides empirical support for understanding ethical-transformational leadership as a micro-dynamic praxis in which values, behaviors, and relationships continuously interact in shaping educational leadership practices.

The Emergence of Ethical-Transformational Leadership Resonance

The second finding is the study's central contribution, revealing the emergence of Ethical-Transformational Leadership Resonance as a distinctive leadership process within an Islamic educational context. The findings indicate that ethical leadership and transformational leadership did not function as independent leadership orientations; instead, they interacted dynamically through everyday leadership practices at the madrasah. Leadership effectiveness was perceived not only through the principal's ability to initiate institutional change but also through the extent to which that change was grounded in moral legitimacy and shared organizational values. The resonance emerged when ethical principles, including *amanah* (trustworthiness), *adl* (justice), responsibility, and integrity, were translated into transformational practices that encouraged teacher participation, professional commitment, and collective improvement. Therefore, leadership resonance was built through continuous alignment among moral values, leadership actions, and teachers' interpretations of organizational purposes.

The findings demonstrate that ethical values served as the moral foundation that enabled transformational leadership practices to gain acceptance among teachers and organizational members. At madrasah, teachers linked leadership credibility to the principal's ability to show consistency between institutional values and daily practices. Teachers did not see values such as trustworthiness, fairness, responsibility, and integrity as merely religious concepts; they were embedded in decision-making processes, communication patterns, and interpersonal relationships. Teachers indicated that their trust toward the principal was developed because leadership actions reflected collective interests rather than individual authority. One participant explained: "The principal always emphasizes that every decision should consider responsibility toward the institution and the people involved. We feel that decisions are not made based on personal interests but based on what is best for the school." (T). This statement illustrates that ethical leadership generated legitimacy because teachers interpreted leadership decisions as manifestations of responsibility and fairness. Thus, moral values became the foundation that enabled transformational processes within the organization.

The ethical foundation of leadership also showed in the principal's approach to managing organizational challenges and conflicts. Participants described that the principal prioritized understanding different perspectives, listening to teachers' concerns, and seeking solutions through discussion rather than relying solely on hierarchical authority. Such practices demonstrated that ethical leadership was enacted through relational behaviors that emphasized respect and justice. A participant stated: "When problems occur, the principal does not immediately blame teachers. The first step is

listening and understanding the situation before making a decision.” (AS). The findings indicate that teachers’ trust was not created merely by the principal’s formal position but by leadership practices perceived as morally appropriate. This moral legitimacy subsequently strengthened teachers’ willingness to accept organizational directions and participate in institutional development. Therefore, ethical values functioned as the basis through which transformational influence became meaningful and sustainable.

The findings further show that ethical values translated into organizational change through leadership mechanisms involving participation, empowerment, and shared decision-making. Rather than implementing transformation through direct instruction, the principal activated change by creating opportunities for teachers to contribute ideas and participate in organizational development. The relationship between ethical values and transformational practices can be summarized as follows:

Table 2. Ethical-Transformational Leadership Resonance Mechanism

Ethical Foundation	Leadership Enactment	Relational Mechanism	Organizational Response
<i>Amanah</i> (trustworthiness)	Demonstrating accountability and consistency	Building trust through transparent interaction	Increased teacher confidence
<i>Adl</i> (justice)	Inclusive decision-making and equal consideration	Developing perceived fairness	Greater teacher participation
<i>Integrity</i>	Alignment between words and actions	Strengthening leader credibility	Higher organizational commitment
<i>Ihsan</i> (excellence)	Encouraging professional growth and innovation	Creating shared aspirations	Continuous improvement culture

Table 2 demonstrates that ethical principles were not separated from leadership practices but were translated into concrete actions that influenced organizational behavior. For example, fairness was manifested through inclusive decision-making, while responsibility was reflected through consistent involvement and accountability. These practices encouraged teachers to perceive organizational transformation as a collective process rather than a directive imposed by formal authority.

The transformational mechanism became increasingly visible through the development of shared vision and collective commitment among teachers. Participants explained that leadership influence emerged when the principal connected institutional goals with teachers’ professional responsibilities and broader educational values. One teacher stated: “The principal gives teachers space to provide suggestions. Even when not all suggestions are implemented, teachers feel respected because their opinions are considered.” (VP). This evidence indicates that transformational leadership at MAN 2 Malang was based less on charismatic influence and more on relational empowerment. Teachers developed stronger commitment because they felt involved in organizational processes and recognized as important contributors to school development. Consequently, ethical values translated into collective action through participation, dialogue, and shared responsibility.

The integration between ethical values and transformational practices produced a resonance process characterized by continuous interaction between leaders and organizational members. The findings suggest that Ethical-Transformational Leadership Resonance developed through five interconnected stages: ethical values, leadership interaction, shared interpretation, collective commitment, and organizational

transformation. Ethical values provided the normative foundation for leadership actions; leadership interactions translated these values into practical behaviors; teachers then interpreted these behaviors through processes of trust formation and value alignment; these shared interpretations generated collective commitment; and collective commitment contributed to organizational transformation. A participant described this process: “We follow the direction of the principal because we understand the purpose behind the programs. The principal explains not only what needs to be done but also why it is important for the development of the school.” (T). This finding highlights that teachers responded not only to leadership actions but also to the meanings attached to those actions. Transformation occurred because organizational members understood change as a shared moral responsibility rather than merely an administrative requirement. Based on these findings, this study proposes Ethical-Transformational Leadership Resonance as a process-based leadership model that explains how ethical legitimacy and transformational influence reinforce each other within educational organizations. The model can be represented as follows:



Figure 2. Ethical-Transformational Leadership Resonance Model

Figure 2 illustrates the Ethical-Transformational Leadership Resonance Model, demonstrating that leadership transformation within Islamic educational organizations emerges through a relational process initiated by moral foundations rather than transformational influence alone. Ethical values such as *amanah*, justice, integrity, and responsibility provide the legitimacy that enables leaders to build trust, which they then enact through ethical leadership practices, including transparent communication, fair decision-making, and moral role modeling. These practices create relational conditions for dialogue, participation, and shared meaning construction among teachers. Through this process, ethical legitimacy interacts with transformational practices to strengthen collective commitment, motivation, and professional responsibility, ultimately contributing to organizational transformation. The model extends previous leadership research by moving beyond viewing ethical and transformational leadership as separate constructs and emphasizing that sustainable educational transformation emerges through the resonance among values, relationships, and collective meaning-making processes.

Leadership Resonance and Organizational Transformation

Ethical-Transformational Leadership Resonance influences teachers' moral agency and organizational meaning-making processes. The findings indicate that leadership resonance changed not only teachers' perceptions of leadership but also how they understood their professional responsibilities within the institution. Through ongoing interaction between ethical values and transformational practices, teachers gradually shifted from viewing their roles primarily as administrative obligations to seeing teaching as a moral responsibility connected to the broader mission of Islamic education.

Leadership practices based on trust, fairness, responsibility, and shared vision encouraged teachers to internalize institutional values and apply them in their professional decisions. Thus, leadership resonance functioned as a mechanism that transformed organizational values from external expectations into personally meaningful commitments among teachers.

Teachers' moral agency was reflected in changes in their attitudes, decision-making processes, and professional engagement. Before leadership resonance emerged, teachers tended to understand their responsibilities through formal duties, institutional regulations, and assigned tasks. However, through consistent exposure to ethical and transformational leadership practices, teachers developed stronger awareness regarding the moral implications of their professional actions. They began to demonstrate greater responsibility toward students, colleagues, and institutional development because they perceived themselves as active contributors to the school's mission. A teacher explained that the principal's leadership approach encouraged teachers to work with greater commitment because they felt trusted and involved in organizational development (T). This finding suggests that leadership resonance facilitates the internalization of ethical values, enabling teachers to move beyond compliance-based behavior toward value-driven professional practices.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that leadership resonance contributed to the construction of shared organizational meaning among teachers. Teachers did not interpret madrasah merely as a workplace but as an educational community with a distinctive Islamic identity and collective purpose. Through leadership communication, symbolic actions, and daily interactions, the principal helped teachers understand the connection between institutional goals, Islamic values, and their professional responsibilities. From a sensemaking perspective, leadership operates not only by providing direction but also by enabling organizational members to interpret experiences and construct shared understanding. In this context, values such as *amanah*, *ihsan*, justice, and responsibility became meaningful through their practical enactment in decision-making, collaboration, and school development activities. Therefore, organizational meaning was constructed through the interaction between leadership practices and teachers' collective interpretations of institutional values.

The process of organizational meaning-making further shows that Islamic values in the school context were not limited to formal statements or symbolic representations but became embedded in everyday organizational practices. Teachers interpreted leadership initiatives, professional expectations, and institutional programs through a shared moral framework that emphasized service, responsibility, and collective improvement. The principal's role was therefore not only to manage organizational activities but also to facilitate shared narratives about the school's identity and future direction. This finding indicates that leadership resonance connects individual moral awareness with collective organizational identity, aligning teachers' personal commitments with institutional values. Consequently, leadership practices contribute to a culture in which organizational members understand not only what they do but also why their actions matter within the broader educational mission.

Overall, the findings suggest that Ethical-Transformational Leadership Resonance serves as a developmental pathway connecting leadership practices with sustainable organizational culture. The process begins with ethical-transformational resonance, where moral values and transformational influence reinforce each other through relational leadership practices. This process strengthens teachers' moral agency by encouraging them to internalize organizational values and motivating value-based

professional behavior. Subsequently, increased moral agency contributes to the construction of shared organizational meaning, where teachers collectively understand and support the institution's mission. Through this mechanism, leadership resonance contributes to a sustainable school culture characterized by trust, commitment, collaboration, and shared responsibility. The findings therefore propose the following outcome mechanism:

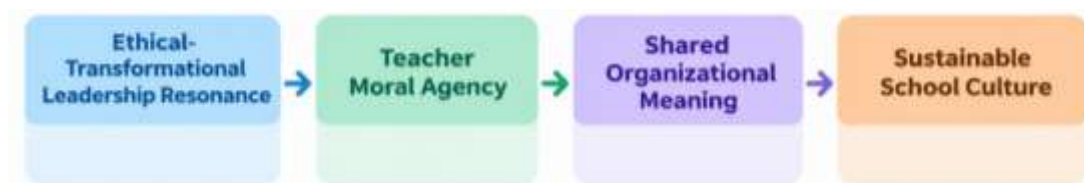


Figure 3. Leadership Resonance Pathway toward Sustainable School Culture

Figure 3 highlights that leadership effectiveness in Islamic educational settings is not limited to achieving organizational objectives; it also involves cultivating moral consciousness and collective identity among organizational members. This finding shows that leadership resonance bridges leadership practices and organizational transformation. By shaping both individual moral agency and collective meaning-making, ethical-transformational leadership becomes a process through which educational organizations develop sustainable cultures grounded in shared values.

Discussion

The first finding shows that ethical-transformational leadership is enacted as a relational micro-dynamic praxis, where leadership emerges through continuous interactions rather than being determined solely by formal authority. This finding supports recent educational leadership perspectives that conceptualize leadership as a socially constructed process influenced by context, relationships, and organizational practices (Hallinger, 2021; Toprak et al., 2023). Previous studies have established that transformational leadership contributes to school improvement through vision development, motivation, and teacher empowerment, while ethical leadership strengthens trust, fairness, and responsible organizational behavior (Kareem et al., 2023; Guo et al., 2023). However, this study extends previous research by demonstrating that these two dimensions operate simultaneously through relational mechanisms, including dialogue, participation, and trust-building. The theoretical implication is that leadership effectiveness should not be understood merely through leadership characteristics or styles, but through the processes by which values are translated into actions and interpreted by organizational members. Practically, this finding highlights the importance of developing school leaders who possess relational competence, ethical awareness, and collaborative decision-making abilities.

The second finding provides the study's central theoretical contribution by introducing Ethical-Transformational Leadership Resonance as a process that explains how ethical values and transformational influence mutually reinforce each other. Previous research has generally examined ethical leadership and transformational leadership as separate constructs with different explanatory functions (Alazmi & Bush, 2024; Guo et al., 2023). Ethical leadership emphasizes moral integrity, fairness, and accountability, whereas transformational leadership focuses on vision, motivation, and organizational change. Although previous studies have recognized the complementary

relationship between these leadership approaches, they have paid limited attention to how their interaction develops through everyday organizational practices. This study extends the literature by showing that transformational influence becomes meaningful when grounded in ethical legitimacy. The findings align with research showing that ethical leadership supports teacher participation and professional agency by creating trust-based environments (Mphatsoane-Sesoane & Jita, 2025; Hajarana et al., 2025). However, this study advances previous perspectives by conceptualizing resonance as a dynamic mechanism connecting moral foundations, leadership actions, shared interpretation, and organizational transformation.

The third finding reveals that Ethical-Transformational Leadership Resonance contributes to the development of teachers' moral agency and organizational meaning-making. This finding supports previous studies suggesting that teacher agency is shaped through social relationships, professional opportunities, and organizational conditions rather than individual capacity alone (Pantić et al., 2022; Chaaban et al., 2021). Previous research has mainly discussed teacher agency in relation to professional autonomy and instructional practice. However, this study extends the discussion by demonstrating that teachers' moral agency develops through the internalization of organizational values facilitated by leadership practices. The findings indicate that teachers gradually moved from viewing their roles as administrative responsibilities toward understanding teaching as a moral commitment connected to the institutional mission. This process is consistent with research showing that ethical leadership can strengthen teacher agency by encouraging participation, collaboration, and professional ownership (Mphatsoane-Sesoane & Jita, 2025; Suratman & Sugiyono, 2025). Therefore, the present study contributes by explaining how leadership processes transform organizational values into individual professional commitments.

Furthermore, the findings contribute to the literature on organizational meaning-making by demonstrating that leadership resonance enables teachers to construct shared interpretations of institutional identity and purpose. Previous studies on sensemaking emphasize that leaders influence organizations not only through strategic direction but also by helping members interpret experiences and develop collective understanding (Maitlis & Christianson, 2022; Yoeliyanto et al., 2025). In this study, Islamic values such as *amanah*, *adl*, responsibility, and integrity were not merely symbolic principles; they became meaningful through enactment in daily leadership practices. This finding expands culturally embedded leadership perspectives by showing that religious values can serve as practical mechanisms that shape communication, decision-making, and organizational relationships (Arar & Saiti, 2022; Ilmi, 2024). This implies that leadership theories developed in general organizational contexts require contextual adaptation to explain leadership practices in culturally and religiously grounded institutions. Practically, Islamic educational organizations may strengthen their sustainability by integrating contemporary leadership approaches with locally meaningful ethical frameworks.

Overall, this study contributes a process-based model explaining how ethical-transformational leadership generates sustainable organizational transformation through interconnected mechanisms of ethical values, relational interaction, shared meaning construction, teacher moral agency, and organizational culture. Unlike previous studies that predominantly examine leadership through isolated constructs or measurable outcomes, this research explains the underlying process through which

leadership becomes meaningful for organizational members. The proposed Ethical-Transformational Leadership Resonance model extends educational leadership theory by integrating ethical leadership, transformational leadership, relational leadership, and sensemaking perspectives within an Islamic educational context. Practically, leadership development programs should move beyond managerial competence to include ethical reflection, participatory governance, relational skills, and cultural responsiveness. By strengthening these dimensions, educational institutions can develop sustainable cultures characterized by trust, collective commitment, and shared responsibility.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that effective leadership in Islamic educational institutions depends on the integration of ethical values and transformational practices through dialogue, participation, trust, and shared meaning-making. The central lesson is that values such as *amanah*, *adl*, integrity, responsibility, and *ihsan* become organizationally meaningful when consistently translated into relational practices that strengthen teacher motivation, moral agency, professional commitment, and collective responsibility. The principal scholarly contribution is the development of Ethical-Transformational Leadership Resonance as a process-based framework that integrates ethical, transformational, relational, and sensemaking perspectives, extending conventional leadership approaches by explaining how moral values acquire practical significance through everyday interactions. The research implications highlight the importance of leadership development programs that combine ethical reflection, relational competence, participatory decision-making, and cultural responsiveness to cultivate trust and sustainable school cultures. However, the study's qualitative single-case design and context-specific evidence limit the transferability of its findings to other educational settings. Future research should examine the framework across diverse Islamic and non-Islamic educational institutions using comparative case studies, longitudinal approaches, or mixed-methods designs to assess how leadership resonance develops over time and influences teacher performance, organizational commitment, and institutional sustainability.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We sincerely thank MAN 2 Malang for providing valuable support, access, and cooperation throughout this research process. We also thank all participants who shared their experiences and insights, contributing meaningful perspectives to this study. Their openness and assistance were essential to completing this research.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY

During the development of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) solely for language refinement and improving manuscript clarity. The authors critically reviewed, revised, and verified all content and remain fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the work.

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